I was lamenting how people have seemed to have lost their hunger for church; these days when I was visiting with Fr. Dan Keller (I mention this just in case you wondered what kind of things bishops and priests talk about when they have time off.) He reminded me of a point made by Fr. Alexander Schmemann: we aren’t people going to church; rather, we are the people of God who gather regularly at our home, a home which is in heaven. This home is the body of Christ. (That is heaven itself. Church is home for Christians.) We gather at home in Church, and some play rehearsal and being enlivened in Christ. We could say that we choose between play practice and being enlivened in Christ. We could say that we choose between a school social gathering. It is crazy to choose between a school sport event or an absolutely crazy that we choose between gathering and holy writings, and to be fed His life-giving life at His table in heaven now.

God forgive me for being so frank, but it is just in case you wondered what kind of things was visiting with Fr. Dan Keller. (I mention this lost their hunger for church these days when I was lamenting how people have seemed to have from the dead and carries us up in His Ascension. Christ stood in the midst of the Jordan, revealing the Trinity and reclaiming creation. For this fallen world our Lord took on flesh, became man and reclaimed us. Christ’s Resurrection is home is the body of Christ. (That is heaven itself. Church is home for Christians.) We gather at home in Church, and some play rehearsal and being enlivened in Christ. We could say that we choose between play practice and being alive! I am haunted by a memory of a family who didn’t bring their children to Sunday School because they found Sunday morning cartoons too compelling. What a surprise the dad had when the children raised their hands and said, “We want to go to church!”

Letters to the editor are welcome and should include full name and parish. Submissions for “Communities in Action” must be approved by the local pastor. Each may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All submissions e-mailed and printed on a “Microsoft Word” text or editable PDF. Please do not embed artwork into the word document. All artwork must be high resolution: at least 300dpi.

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A pagan, Pontius Pilate, posed one of the most profound, significant questions in the Bible when he cynically asked, “What is truth?” Tragically, two thousand years later, our post-modern society breathes Pilate’s cynicism.

Author James Site recognizes that the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy came to its full fruition in the post-modern movement, when Site wrote, “The acknowledgement of the death of God is the beginning of post-moderns ‘wisdom.’” For if God is dead, then the inescapable logic is that there is no ultimate reality or eternal truth. With the beginning of post-modern wisdom, however, the bells began tolling for the end of wisdom itself. With the “death of God,” Friedrich Nietzsche did not mean that God had ceased to be, but rather that the idea of God no longer has any moral or spiritual force for modern man.

With the “death of God,” there is no virtue that is embedded in an objective truth and morality, binding on all members of society. Instead, there are only subjective and relative personal values. With the dethroning of truth to democratized “values,” equal rights to “truth” are granted to all. Hence we now have Marxist truths, feminist truths, homosexual truths, and Afro-American truths, and so forth. Truth-claims are created by “belief communions,” not discovered by reason, observation, or revelation. Since all values arise within specific cultures, there is no moral code that applies to all people, all the time. Therefore, there is no culture that can be judged as better or superior to another, and we should not impose our values on other societies. The only real sin is judgment: criticizing someone else’s views or moral choices, and insisting that your truth is the truth, is to be guilty of colossal arrogance. Furthermore, every time you claim to be in possession of the truth (especially religious truth), by necessity you end up repressing people. So, we are told, it is best to make no claims to truth at all.

In John 14:6, Jesus says, “I am the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” On this bedrock, meaningful distinctions in matters of right and wrong (as well as spiritual truth and falsehood) obviously exist, and any contrary claims from competing religions must be incorrect. Such a position, however diplomatically and softly stated, will produce negative reactions from post-modernists. Herein lies the challenge for Christians. In the not-too-distant past, you could discuss the truth of the Christian message to a public that accepted the existence of objective truth. Now, however, before we begin we have to convince many people that objective truth even exists. Of course, all this makes communication for Christians much more difficult.

The post-modern era began around 1980, with the rejection of the modernist assumption that reality can be understood and described objectively. In contrast, post-modernism insists that reality is not something concrete that can be known or described objectively. Rather, it is a fluid, constantly changing, unfolding, limitless “open universe.” In the post-modern universe, there are no absolutes that define its limits, for there can only be culturally relative “truth” about reality and morality. The popular evangelist Ravi Zacharias encountered a visual picture of post-modern thought when he wrote, “Some years ago I was speaking at Ohio State University. And I was taken to see the Wexner Center of the Arts. They wanted me to see it, and I wondered why. And when I walked into that building I said, ‘What is this building all about?’ There are staircases that go nowhere. There are pillars that serve no purposes. And the man [showing me around] said, ‘This is America’s first post-modern building, and the architect said, if life has no purpose, why should our buildings have any design or any purpose? So he built it at random, without any purpose, as it were. I said, I have one question for you…. Did he do that with the foundation as well?’”

Those benign, gentle, non-confrontational, post-modern buzzwords like “tolerance,” “inclusiveness” and “openness” (without the restraint of reason) assure that absolutes will have no place in public discourse. Tolerance and genuine compassion are hallmarks of a civilized society; however, when tolerance is pushed to extremes and hides behind a non-judgmental facade, it becomes a licit, an invitation to license, reducing morality to the level of mere custom and social conventions. If human beings are merely products of their culture, then our culturally biased perceptions are the only window we have onto a very personal reality that shapes our subjective opinions. Jean-Paul Sartre presents the viewpoint well: “Life has no
meaning a priori … It is up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing but the meaning that you choose.” According to post-modernists, a thing is true because I believe it; I do not believe it because it is true. It is hard to conceive of a more quintessentially epocentric philosophy. I am the centre of my world, in which “the ego focuses that field exclusively on the finite personal dimension of experience in a way that results in a greatly overinflated sense of self.”

This modern philosophy is definitely not new, for philosophical movements have a habit of re-inventing themselves and, as we are reminded, “that which has been is what will be. That which is done is what will be done. And there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9-14). In fifth-century Athens, sophist philosophers (“sophie” means wise) such as Protagoras, Gorgias and Thrasymachus taught, as do today’s post-modernists, that it is a person’s individual culture that defines what is right and what is wrong, not objective reason. Hence, my reality is just as valid as yours, because both are nothing but cultural constructs.

The fifth-century Greek sophists are the founding fathers of relativism; the post-modernists are the “camp followers” and, in keeping with the sophists, post-modernism does have one absolute claim, and that is that there is absolutely no objective truth and that is absolutely true. The post-modern motto should be, “There’s no truth like my truth.” In making this claim, they have to recognize the existence of objective truth, if the post-modernist view is correct. The inherent contradiction embedded in the post-modern view certainly hasn’t slowed it down. In fact, its influence has been pervasive, spawning ideas such as political correctness, radical feminism, moral relativism, multiculturalism, New Age spirituality, religious syncretism, (the fusion of different belief systems allowing for a “tailor-made” religion) and homosexual rights. These ideas have exercised considerable influence on many important areas of society, such as health care, literature, education, history, psychotherapy, law, science, and religion. In the field of education, Dr. Jordan Peterson, professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto is adamant that there are no barriers to human knowledge. Given enough time, science and human reason would be perfectly capable of uncovering the whole of reality, leaving nothing unknown. In the ethical sphere, Christians agree with post-modernists that reason alone is insufficient to create a reasonable world. The Twentieth Century was dominated by murderous totalitarianism and warfare that left a violent, desolate, fractured world at its close. It was obvious that “reason” and rationality alone could not create perfect people and perfect societies. It also could not prevent the most educated and civilized nations from slaughtering each other in two horrific world wars. However, Christians part company with the post-modernists in their complete denial of the ability of the human mind to discover truth by employing reason.

For most people, the post-modern point of view has been unconsciously absorbed predominantly via the media. It is not something about which they have thought deeply before committing themselves, but just the currently socially appropriate attitude. As a result, their assumptions are held somewhat tenuously, and their thought is often confused when their opinions are gently challenged. To bridge the gap between ourselves and post-modern thinkers, we need to introduce additional steps in the communication process. Communicating with post-modern culture is not impossible; it’s just more difficult.

The first step for them is to accept the existence of objective truth, by focusing on what is, in my view, the Achilles heel of post-modern relativism: the reality of evil. A Socratic dialogue that gently raises questions will produce a better response than giving preachy, authoritative opinions. Evil is seen as a quaint modern concept that is redundant in a world of subjective values and moral relativism. When they insist that all distinctions between right and wrong have no relation to absolutes, but are instead social constructions, we should ask if the Holocaust or the massacres of ISIS are only evil or if some part of them reflects the human suffering of the innocent as a result of human cruelty. When faced with the reality of evil, post-modern theory starts to unravel because it cannot coherently address the difficult moral challenges of our age.

Evil is a spiritual reality, a dark presence that is felt in every area of human life, always existing in the yawning chasm between what is, and what ought to be. It lurks in the recesses of every human soul, haunting our imagination, waiting for its host to give it free rein, or for that guarded moment that we are all too familiar with. It is one of the greatest mysteries of human existence, because we are heavily tainted with the condition we question. The one who considers evil must include himself as he pursues his object. God created human beings with the power of acting without the constraint of necessity, or fate. We have free wills, to do good or evil. As evil is a problem of choice, it is logically impossible in the world we know for free will to exist without the possibility of evil. The assumption of a free will lies at the very base of our Judeo-Christian heritage and our judicial system. Most people know this intuitively; they are convinced that they have a free will and responsibility for it, an assumption that is untouched by any philosophical arguments to the contrary. Without free will, we lose our humanity, and our judicial system loses its moral seriousness, based as it is on personal responsibility and accountability. The post-modern rejection of individual acts of evil is ironic since “the repertoire of evil has never been richer. Yet never have our responses been so weak.” Every age has its own concept and ours is that the human race has “come of age.” This conceit, with its accompanying rejection of personal evil, is very strange when we consider that the Twentieth Century is unmatched in brutality and butchery, a situation the social sciences failed to predict or adequately explain. While suffering under an evil regime in a Soviet gulag, the great Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn gave an eloquent Christian response to the reality of evil: “And it was only when I lay there on rotting straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either – but right through every human heart – and through all human hearts.”

The Christian Gospel message is the only true answer to the moral chaos which post-modern relativism spawns. It is therefore encouraging to see increasing numbers of people turning to religion in seeking answers to the deep problems of human experience.

When faced with the reality of evil, post-modern theory starts to unravel because it cannot coherently address the difficult moral challenges of our age.
Ascetic labor and struggle: the very words may cause rumbles of discomfort within us. Asceticism is hard work, and we know it. It means to curb and discipline ourselves in ways that do not come easily to most people. Our Father among the Saints Benedict of Nursia (d. 547) sought to encourage those learning to walk in the way of Christ, a way that is, by definition, paved with ascetic self-denial.

Therefore, must we establish a school of the Lord’s service; in founding which we hope to ordain nothing that is harsh or burdensome. But if, for good reason, for the amendment of evil habit or the preservation of charity, there be some strictness of discipline, do not be at once dismayed and run away from the way of salvation, of which the entrance must needs be narrow. But as we progress… our hearts shall be enlarged, and we shall run with unspeakable sweetness of love in the way of God’s commandments; so that… persevering in his teaching… until death, we shall share by patience in the sufferings of Christ, that we may deserve to be partakers also of his kingdom.

OF DRIVES AND DISCIPLINES

The prayer with which this article began brings together the three ascetic disciplines, and sets forth the relationship between them, that are the cornerstones of Orthodox Lenten observance: prayer; fasting; and almsgiving.

In a homily for the First Sunday of Lent, to which I will refer several times, St. Gregory the Great said, “Let each one, as far as his strength allows, vex his body and affict his desires. Let each one put to death his base desires, so that, in the words of [St.] Paul, he may become a living, sacrificial victim” [cf. Romans 12:1].

We are all of us subject to a multiplicity of drives and desires, called in our theological language, “the passions.” These drives have a fundamental purpose and place in our lives. Because of the fall and the corruption of human nature, however, and through our ongoing quest for self-actualization and self-preservation, these drives are now disordered and assume a disproportionate place in our lives. It is to the taming and re-ordering of these passions that spiritual disciplines are directed. These disciplines are neither ends in themselves, nor are they bargaining chips with God. They are steps towards opening our lives to the powerful action of God’s grace – grace that is freely given, but must also be freely accepted – along with the transformation this causes in our ways of thinking and living.

St. Maximus the Confessor says, “Almsgiving heals the soul’s incensive power; fasting withers sensual desire; prayer purifies the intellect and prepares it for contemplation of created beings. For the Lord has given us commandments which correspond to the powers of the soul.”

PRAYER

Prayer is not only a Lenten discipline. It is a daily sine qua non of a positive relationship with the God whose
Disciplines of Lent

overthrowing love has created, redeemed, and sanctified us. St. Paul wrote to the Christians at Ephesus that they should “take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:17, 18). This follows quite naturally upon the admonition of our Lord Himself, that we should pray always, recorded twice in St. Luke’s Gospel (18:11, 21:36).

The key to understanding the role of prayer as a Lenten discipline must be sought not in the mere doing of it, as if it were an isolated “thing,” but rather in understanding it as the unifying agent for all aspects of our ascetic struggle in Lent (and throughout the year).

For Christians, it is not the mere act of fasting, or almsgiving, or even of praying, that puts us right with God. Only the saving Life, Death, and Resurrection of the God-man Jesus Christ do this. Bodily disciplines cannot save us: only a living relationship with God, through Christ, can free us from the bonds of the passions and sins that beset us. This is why St. Paul was adamant that merely keeping the Mosaic Law, with its “works,” could never justify us. As he wrote to the Church at Colossus, “If you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Colossians 2:20–23).

It is prayer — understood as heart-to-heart conversation with God — not rote observance, that makes bodily disciplines fruitful against the indulgence of the flesh.

Sincere, fruitful prayer presumes a willingness to order one’s life according to God’s will and commandments. Therefore, St. Benedict begins his list of the “Tools of Good Works” with the great commandments that sum up all the Law and the Prophets, gives a brief summary of the Decalogue, and only then goes on to list things that we consider to be ascetic.

As we grow in the love of God and of neighbor, and nurture that love in prayerful communion with Love Himself, our hearts begin to recognize that real beauty, truth, and goodness so far surpass our fallen conception of them, as the sun surpasses the moon in brightness and warmth. Recognizing that we have settled for what is but a pale reflection, we come to long for the genuine source of Light and Life, and as best we are able, we endeavor to clear away from the path anything that might obstruct our journey towards that wondrous Source. And that brings us to our second key discipline.

**Fasting**

St. Gregory the Great wrote, “The author of our death broke the commandments by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree of life” (cf. Genesis 2:9, 17; 5:1–6).

Let us who have fallen away from the joys of paradise through food, rise up to them again, as much as we can, through fasting.”

To the question, “Why do we fast?” the first answer we might give is that humanity went boldly into the kingdom of sin and death through eating. Duped by the serpent — the “murderers from the beginning” and “liars,” as our Lord called him (John 8:44) — we presumed that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “was good for food, that it was ‘pleasant to the eyes,’ and ‘desirable to make one wise’” (Genesis 3:6).

The prospect of a great meal led us to doubt and mistrust God and put our trust in someone, and something, that was less than Him.

Food is necessary for life; it is, in itself, good. But not every good food is good for every person. Different foods are appropriate to the progressive stages of our life: we do not feed Beef Wellington to a newborn, nor postage to a healthy 18-year-old. In addition, there are many health issues that make it wise for us to choose carefully what we eat.

God knew what food was good for us at the beginning of our existence: He provided it in abundance and bade us be content with it. He told us what food was not good for us and warned us what the consequences would be if we ate it. And for the sake of some tasty looking fruit, we accounted the generous God of Truth to be a stringy liar.

We fast, therefore, as a countermeasure to the unruly passion for life and pleasure that lead us into distress and death. We fast in repentance for the selfishness and pride that led us to choose the lies of Satan over the truth of God.

To learn the power of food in our lives, we have only to go without it for a day. Hunger is annoying, then unpleasant, even downright scary. It confronts us with the unpleasant reality that we are dust, and to dust we shall return if we cease to be fed with what our bodies require. Fasting helps us to confront our contingent nature, and to choose how we will respond to it: by grasping at whatever fills us and makes us feel good; or, by turning to the Love that created us and acknowledging that we are dependent upon Him for the sustenance of the life that He Himself gave us. And doesn’t that lead us back to prayer? Our Lord said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7, 16). Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storeroom nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? (Luke 12:24).

Abstinence from food is important, but it is only the first stage of a genuine fast. Having tamed our stomachs, we must go on to tame our ego, our oft-inflated sense of importance and position in the world. St. Benedict’s “tools of good works” characterize this stage of fasting as “not to yield to anger; not to nurse a grudge; not to hold grudges in one’s heart; … not to render evil for evil; do to none wrong, and to bear patiently wrongs done to oneself …,” and so much more. Abstaining from food is only a preparation for these, much harder ascetic struggles.

Fasting — fulfilled in prayer and practiced as a component of fasting. We voluntarily fast from what we have, so that we may share with those whose fasting is involuntary. We freely eat and drink for ourselves, so that we may comfort those whose discomfort is imposed upon them. Again, from St. Gregory, citing the Prophet Zachariah:

The Lord says through the prophet: When you fasted and mourned, did you fast for me? And when you ate and drank, for whom did you eat and drink? For the Lord says through the prophet: ‘When you starve your body … , instead, feed the prophet Zachariah’ (Zachariah 7:5–6). He eats and drinks for himself who nourishes his body with the Creator’s common gifts, without regard for the needy; and he fasts for himself if he does not bestow upon the poor what he takes for a time from his own use, but keeps it instead to fill his own stomach later.

By afflicting ourselves while benefiting others we acknowledge that what we have is a gift from Divine Providence, and not something we own by right — not even if we have “worked” for it (cf. Deuteronomy 15:11; Psalms 82:5–4:109:15–17; Matthew 6:25–27; 21:1–6; 2 Corinthians 9:5–16).

In his usual, blunt manner, St. Basil the Great asked,

> Did you not fall naked from the womb? Will you not go back naked to the earth? Where is your present property from? If you think that it came to

what degree Christ’s words “abide” in us. The “pudding” in which the “proof” of this truth is found, is the third of our Lenten disciplines.

**Almsgiving**

Again, we turn to St. Gregory’s Homily on the First Sunday in Lent.

But no one should believe that this fast alone can suffice for him, [since the Lord] says through the prophet: I have not chosen such a fast, instead, “Break your bread for the hungry, and bring the needy and the vagrants into your home. If you see someone naked clothe him, and do not turn away your own kin” (Isaiah 58:6–7). Fast, then, by lifting up acts of almsgiving before [God’s] eyes, by doing what you do with love of your neighbor, by being holy. What you take from yourself give to someone else so that your needy neighbor’s body may be restored by the affection of your own.

Almsgiving, the practical application of growth in true charity – the greatest of the “three things that endure” (1 Corinthians 13:13) – is an integral component of fasting. We voluntarily fast from what we have, so that we may share with those whose fasting is involuntary. We freely eat and drink for ourselves, so that we may comfort those whose discomfort is imposed upon them. Again, from St. Gregory, citing the Prophet Zachariah:

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Disciplines of Lent

1. The Role of St. Benedict: 
2. He refers to our tendency to become excited, provoked, or inflamed by our desires.
3. First Century as Lent, no. 39.
4. Unwind for the First Sunday of Lent.
5. Chapter 14, on Matthew 4:1–11.
7. Practical and Theological Principles, No. 125, from Writings from the Philadelphia on Prophets of the Heart (Valeo & Bisti, p. 127).
9. Samuel Crossman (d. 1681), “My song is love unknown.”

you by yourself, do not believe in God, you don’t acknowledge the creator and you are not thankful to Him who gave it to you. But if you agree and confess that you have it from God, tell us the reason why He gave it to you…. Isn’t it, if for no other reason, so that you can gain a reward for your kindness and faithful stewardship, and for him to be honored with the great virtue of patience…?”

This sharing, however, is meant to spring from grateful hearts, grounded in faith. In the words of St. Symeon the New Theologian, “Just as the poor should give thanks to God and return rich love to those who assist them, so all the more should the wealthy give thanks, for through God’s providence they are able to perform acts of charity and so are saved both in this age and in the age to be. For without the poor they cannot save their souls or flee the temptations of wealth.”

True charity goes beyond tossing money at the poor out of pity, or sending a check to a charitable organization so that they can interact with the needy on our behalf: our interior disposition matters in the sight of God who “searches the heart” (1 Chronicles 28:9; Revelation 2:23). Do we, together with material gifts, also hold sufficient respect for the image of God in the unique personhood of the recipients? Material gifts that come, for instance, from self-serving motives can do more harm than good. Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh warned: “It is not enough to give. We must have a heart that gives. In order to give, we must have a compassion deep enough for our gift to be forgiven, because if we give dutifully, if we are charitable only in our actions, the recipient receives humiliation and sorrow and pain together with our gift.”

Almsgiving is at its best when it conveys the character of the All-generous God’s charity towards us. He “makes his sun rise on the evil and the good” without distinction (Matthew 5:44–46). As Orthodox Christians we do not concern ourselves with judging who is, or is not, “worthy” of our charity. St. Maximus the Confessor explains: “He who gives alms in imitation of God does not discriminate between the wicked and the virtuous, the just and the unjust, when providing for men’s bodily needs.”

Our almsgiving must not be an exercise in judging others: we do not share in God’s ability to read someone else’s heart. It is our own heart, our own motives, with which we are to be concerned. Yes, we should exercise discernment as to whether what we offer will do good or bring harm: we do not give an alcoholic beverage a bottle of whiskey to “keep him warm.” We are responsible, however, primarily for the openness of our own hands and the purity of our own hearts, not those of others.

Giving material aid to those in need is not the only form of almsgiving that we may practice. There are many kinds of need in our broken world. Does our charity extend to the gift of our time, the alms of our presence in the face of another’s pain, grief, indignity, or desolation? Are we willing to embrace inconvenience for the sake of our neighbor? Are we mindful of how Christ defined “neighbor” in one of his best-known parables? (Luke 10:25–37). Are we courageous enough to actually touch a homeless person’s hand in friendship while giving alms? Are we, in short, faithul enough to imitate God through “love to the loveless shown, that they might lovely be?”

Such giving of alms presents an opportunity for prayer: prayer of thanksgiving to the God who has allowed us to have something to give, be it great or small, prayer of intercession for the recipient whose needs likely extend far beyond our limited ability to bring relief, and prayer for our own deliverance from judging, from self-satisfaction, or from spiritual pride, since our Lord tells us that “when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’” (Luke 17:10).

The Fruit of an Integrated Lent

We see how fasting and almsgiving bring us full circle to prayer: humble, loving, constant communion with God, which is the fountain not only of our Lenten discipline, but of our Paschal joy. Without such prayer, our external acts remain merely external. Without its external expressions, prayer risks being little more than a conversation with ourselves. A Christian life is a life in which the internal and the external are brought into harmony and transparency with each other and with God, a life of integrity in the fullest sense of the word. Such a life is no less than the “wedding garment” without which we cannot justifiably hope to be admitted to the heavenly “Wedding Feast of the Lamb” (cf. Matthew 22:1-14), in which ascetic labor and struggle will be laid aside, and rest, feasting, and joy will fulfill each soul to whom the Lord shall say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21, 23).

The Rev. Dom Theodore, Prior 
The Monastery of Our Lady and Saint Laurence

Why did Christ give some as evangelists? The answer: “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). He did not say, specifically, “For them to go start missions.” To what end? “Until we all come to faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That we would no longer be children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:11–14).

If we look at the meaning of the word evangelist, we could say that it is one who brings the message of the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And what is the fundamental message of the Gospel? Both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ himself state it so succinctly: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

Who needs to hear these words in the world we live in today? Do we take this message out into the highways and byways of life in this fallen world we live in? We were honest with ourselves, I think we would have to say that this fallen world we live in is dominating our own church membership. It is our own churches, our own parishes that need to repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near at hand with them than it is with those on the outside.

We need to revitalize our own parishes; to use a tired and often misunderstood term, we need a revival. We would like to suggest that the role of the evangelist in our current situation should be directed towards renewal in our own parishes for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. For how long? “Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Even if we look at our own body of bishops in our Archdiocese, I think we can see that some are apostles, some are prophets, some are evangelists, and some are...
Parish Evangelism

14 March 2018

Fi bene so forth, into the parishes that His Eminence feels would Evangelism could serve as a means of coordinating and and then out to bear witness.

This twofold mission of the church constitutes the Lord.”

The light and the life we have received, and to communicate it to the world which we live? and 2. To be sent back into this world as witnesses of Almighty God, and to receive the eternal life and light from ascend into the heavenly holy of holies, to worship the describes the Mission of the Church as twofold: 1. To
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series: practical workshops in music, chanting, reading the scriptures, greeting visitors, assessing the appearance of the church from the standpoint of a first-time visitor, and in general calling upon the membership to re-dedicate their lives to Christ and the Church.

We don’t have an “altar call” in our church, or do we? And every Divine Liturgy we are called forward to the altar of God to receive the life and the light from above. Are we just going through the motions, or are we really and truly presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, re-dedicating our lives to him, prepared to take the life and light we have received from God back into this world, and to communicate it to the world which we live?

Father Alexander Schmemann, of blessed memory, describes the Mission of the Church as twofold: 1. To ascend into the heavenly holy of holies, to worship the Almighty God, and to receive the eternal life and light from him, and 2. To be sent back into this world as witnesses of the light and the life we have received, and to communicate that to the world. “Let us go forth in peace; in the Name of the Lord.” This twofold mission of the church constitutes the rhythm of our whole life, in which we go up and in, and then out to bear witness.

Conceivably, the Department of Missions and Evangelism could serve as a means of coordinating and sending out teams of evangelists, teachers, singers, and so forth, into the parishes that His Eminence feels would benefit from such inspiration and challenge. Such a great task cannot be accomplished in a parish in one weekend, but we must start somewhere, and we can follow up where there is a positive response.

God knows the people outside of the One, Holy Catholic, and Apostolic Church who are seeking Him in a deeper way. He knows where they are, but we must let down our nets, that is, we must do our part. If our nets, that are our parishes, are in good condition, if they are healthy spiritually, the Lord Jesus Christ will call these people into the net. If our churches are not healthy, however, if our nets are torn by sin and disbelief, having been heaped up by the surrounding society, will He call them into those nets?

During a recent Clergy Seminar in Alhambra, Metropolitan JOSEPH stated, “I’m afraid the priests are moving toward running their parishes like a business.” To his statement, I added the following thought in my notes: “The more the priests become like businessmen and the parish is their business, the less we grow in terms of establishing new missions.”

When St. John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if He were the one who is to come, or whether they should look for another, He responded to them that, among other things, the poor had the gospel preached to them. This is another area of missions and evangelism, not simply for the Department of Missions and Evangelism, but for an understanding of what it means on the part of each individual member of the body of Christ to be sent back into this world as witnesses of the light and the life we have received. We must witness to that life by giving hope and showing love to the poor and needy. These types of concepts as well as others could be shared in such a weekend as has been described above.

I would like to suggest that after 31 years of working the mission side of the missions and evangelism formula, that we turn now and focus on the evangelism side of the formula, but directed to our own parishes, “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (Matt 28:20) This means equipping them, with the help of God’s grace, in fact to grow both spiritually and numerically in such a way that it gives birth to the establishment of new missions across this great continent of North America.

I once heard that a bishop had said, “Departments don’t start churches; churches start churches.” When I first heard it, I was offended, but the more I have thought about it over the years, the more I believe he is correct. Let us mend our nets! Let us be that church that gratefully bears witness to the light and life we have received.

Rekindling their friendship, His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH paid a visit to His Eminence Archbishop DEMETRIOS, Geron of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, at his Manhattan headquarters. The two primates discussed issues of mutual importance to their respective flocks in a filial meeting on Tuesday, January 23, 2018. Metropolitan JOSEPH was grateful to Archbishop DEMETRIOS for his hospitality. Afterward, Archbishop DEMETRIOS hosted lunch for Metropolitan JOSEPH and his company: Archpriest Thomas Zain, Vicar General of the Antiochian Archdiocese; Deacon John El-Masih, assistant to Sayidna JOSEPH; and Mr. Charles Ajalat, former Archdiocesan Chancellor. Joining them from the Greek Archdiocese were His Grace Bishop SEVASTIANOS and Archimandrite Nathanael Symeonides.

Fathers and teachers. On the local level we would see the same with pastors of parishes: some are apostles, some are prophets, some are evangelists, and some are pastors and teachers. Speaking personally as a priest, I would say that the sacramental ministry is where my strength lies, that is, in what we might call the ministry of the services and sacraments. I think I am adequate as a preacher and teacher, but perhaps not as adequate as a pastor, that is, a shepherd of souls who really cares about people, and I must work on that aspect of my priestly ministry.

So the evangelist, or, if we like, the missionary, could serve as a way of helping pastors to bring their communities to repentance and to teach them the Faith. They could serve, too, in helping pastors to defend it against the onslaughts of our culture, which is in a freewill into the abyss, and to observe how the liturgical life can be improved, both to inspire parishioners to loftier things, and to attract those who are seeking the true Faith.

What I am trying to set forth here briefly is more of a vision than the practical implementation. But we must have a vision before we have a plan. Even so, as a beginning point, I could see establishing teams of two that might go into a parish over a weekend and do a teaching series: practical workshops in music, chanting, reading the scriptures, greeting visitors, assessing the appearance of the church from the standpoint of a first-time visitor, and in general calling upon the membership to re-dedicate their lives to Christ and the Church.

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P. John D. Finley, Chairman Department of Missions and Evangelism

DEMETRIOS at Greek Archdiocese Headquarters

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The early centuries of the Church were renowned for some of the greatest of saints. Of them, however, only one has been accorded the title “the father of Orthodoxy.” This was St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (295–373 A.D.). Athanasius was “one of the most imposing figures in all ecclesiastical history, and the most outstanding of all Alexandrian bishops.... [O]f undaunted courage, unflinching in the face of danger andcowed by no man, he was the steadfast champion and great defender of the faith of Nicea, ‘the pillar of the Church.’” Although not a martyr, few have “fought the good fight” as did St. Athanasius. Few have contended for Christ as he did. His accomplishments, his theology and his writings have had a lasting and permanent effect on the life of the Church. His life and work have been a great blessing for Christians of all generations. As Orthodox Christians, we still live in a Church at least partly shaped by St. Athanasius. In so many Christian denominations the achievements of Athanasius have been long forgotten. Had they remembered this man and his work, Christianity would look very different today.

The enduring legacy of St. Athanasius is a result of three things: his defense of the teaching of the Council of Nicea (325) which affirmed the divinity of Christ; his theology of the Incarnation which he saw as the foundation of our salvation; and his biography of St. Antony, the father of the monks.

Athanasius was born to a Christian family in Alexandria about 295 A.D. The last great persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire occurred in his early childhood. He was only the beginning. Arianism was the title “the father of Orthodoxy.”

Three years after the Council of Nicea, Constantine asked for the restoration of Arius to the Church. Athanasius refused. As a consequence he was summoned to a synod in Tyre in 335, where he was condemned by the pro-Arian bishops. Athanasius went to Constantinople and appeared before Constantine to ask for a hearing. His efforts at restoration were unsuccessful and he was exiled to Trier in the West.

St. ATHANASIUS, A MOST INFLUENTIAL BISHOP

Fr. Daniel Daly

In 325 Constantinople called 318 bishops of the Church to the city of Nicea to resolve the issue. The result of the Council was the first part of the Nicene Creed, which professed that Jesus, the Son of God, was God from God, begotten not made, of one essence (homoousios) with the Father. Athanasius came with Bishop Alexander as a deacon to the Council. It was here that he gained his reputation as a theologian. He was said to have boldly risen up against the impiety of the Arians. The battle against Arianism, however, was by no means over in 325. For the rest of his life Athanasius was the champion of Nicea. Three years after the Council of Nicea, despite the fact that he was not thirty years of age, he became Bishop of Alexandria by popular demand of the laity.

The years between the Council of Nicea and the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. were years of warfare. This time was rightly characterized by his contemporaries as “Athanasius against the world.” Many bishops were not happy with the term homoousios (i.e., “one nature” or “similar nature”) to describe the essences of the Son and the Father. Others believed that Nicea had not made the distinction between the three Persons sufficiently clear. Confusion reigned. The following decades produced “a maze of creeds,” all of which avoided the term homoousios.

Under the influence of Eusebius of Nicomedia, Constantine asked for the restoration of Arius to the Church. Athanasius refused. As a consequence he was summoned to a synod in Tyre in 335, where he was condemned by the pro-Arian bishops. Athanasius went to Constantinople and appeared before Constantine to ask for a hearing. His efforts at restoration were unsuccessful and he was exiled to Trier in the West.
After the death of Constantine in 337, his family became supporters of the Arians. This resulted in a second exile, this time to Rome, where he was graciously received by Pope Julius I. After many intrigues, he was able to return to Alexandria in 346. But when his protector, Constans, the only member of Constantine’s family who supported Nicca had died, Athanasius was again exiled. This time Athanasius spent six years living with the monks in the desert. As defender of Nicca, and adversary of the imperial family, Athanasius was exiled five times. In 366 he returned to Alexandria where he lived until 373.

The eminent Russian Orthodox theologian Fr. Georges Florovsky observes:

At the end of this long and confused struggle, which was complicated by deceit, duplicity, treachery, and the military intervention of various emperors, it turned out that no creed except the Nicene was capable of expressing and protecting the true and orthodox faith. It was in this sense that St. Athanasius called the Nicene Creed, "the expression of the truth." He predicted that the dissent and confusion would not until the "anti-Nicenes" came to their senses and said, “Let us arise and go to our fathers and ask of them, 'We proclaim our fathers and say to them, 'We proclaim our faith to be pure and orthodox faith. It was in this sense that St. Athanasius believed that the Nicene Creed and his Second Epistle: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature..." St. Athanasius made the startling statement that "He was incarnate (also translated "made man") that we might become God." The Fathers of the Church understood this not as man’s participation in the essence of God, which would imply a form of pantheism, but rather his participation in the "energies" of God. This participation is the foundation of the Orthodox theology of divinity or divization. The henoity of the Holy Spirit is also the face of this theology. Denying the divinity of Christ, it left man as he was in an undeemed state.

In the Incarnation of the Word human nature was not merely united with a superabundant overflowing of grace, but was assumed into an intimate and hypostatic union with the Divinity itself. In that lifting up of human nature into an everlasting communion with the Divine life, the Fathers of the early Church unanimously saw the very essence of salvation, the basis of the whole redemptive work of Christ... But the climax of the Gospel is the Cross, the death of the Incarnate. Life has been revealed in full through death. This is the paradoxical mystery of the Christian faith: life through death, life from the grave and out of the grave, the mystery of the life-bearing grave. The theology of Athanasius explains in detail the foundation of the Orthodox understanding of salvation: the destruction of death, our ultimate divinization. It is in contrast to the Western theology of salvation based in the thought of St. Augustine, which stressed a legal resolution of the fallen state of man. The Western line of thought culminated later in the theology of Anselm of Canterbury, who saw the death of Christ in feudal and forensic terms as having made "satisfaction" for our sins. Monasticism was not an original development in the Western Church, but entirely derived from the East. We know little about its origins, which go back to the fourth century. The first contact with eastern monastics seem to have been when Athanasius came to Rome in 340, accompanied, it is said, by two disciples of Anthony, and there they communicated the enthusiasm for the life of the Egyptian monks to which he would later give permanent expression. An account is applies not only to monks, but to every Christian. It is his reward that he now remains when he did not move from his place. His life was also one of a prolonged fight against Satan and the demons. He was the teacher of the ascetic life to the monks who came to him for guidance. A large part of the biography includes a lengthy sermon to fellow monks. He advised the monks that the path to virtue was possible. It was, without question, a fight with the demons. Athanasius teaches the monks that this struggle is not from without, but rather from within themselves. To fit means to guard the thoughts. This applies not only to monks, but to every Christian.

The epistle of Antony mentions the story of St. Antony. He was the “Father of the Monks.” He was not the first to live a life of consecrated celibacy. Consecrated men and women had existed since the time of the Apostles. What set Antony apart was his flight from the world and his life in the desert. During his lifetime, which spanned over a hundred years, hundreds of men and women filled the Egyptian desert, living in the monastic life. Antony was a personal example to many, but it was his biography that took his fame throughout the entire Mediterranean world. This biography was written by St. Anthony, Antony, who Athanasius knew in the desert, had been his colleague in his fight against Arianism. The biography tells how, after the death of his parents, Anthony left for a life in the desert. Beginning near his home, Antony went progressively further into the desert over his lifetime, seeking solitude. Nonetheless, he continually attracted many people. Antony was a hermit. He did not move from his cell and his monastic community. His life became one of asceticism. In this, his life stands as an example to all future monks.

2. Part 2.1.
5. Hans Von Campenhausen (1903-1989) was a German Proto- terist theologian and professor of Church History at Heidelberg University.

The legacy of St. Athanasius lives on in the life of the Orthodox Church in the creed we profess each Sunday morning, in our understanding of what was achieved by the Incarnation of the Word of God, and in the continued presence of consecrated monastic men and women who have served the Church down through the centuries in countless ways. Athanasius is truly the father of orthodoxy. C. S. Lewis speaks of the timeless truth of this great saint. “He stood for the Trinitarian doctrine, ‘whole and undefiled,’ when it looked as if all the civilized world was slipping back from Christianity to the faith of Arius – into one of those ‘sensible’ synthetic religions which are so strongly recommended today and which, then as now, included among its devotees many highly cultivated debonairs. It is to his glory that he did not move with the times; it is his reward that he now remains when those times, as times do, have moved away.”

Fr. Daniel D'Ally, OFM, in a reprinted Athanasian prayer found in Austin, Texas.
SUITABILITY FOR A PARTICULAR VOCATION:

March 2018

In vocation, we each have a vocation to ‘missio’ which gives our life a sense of purpose which they would not have had otherwise. Each person whom I met and who shared their stories with us inspired me with the desire to be a part of mission work for the Orthodox Church in India. I was led to undertake missionary work in Athens for four years, from 2002-06. There I met Shannon and, when we were married, we joined OCMC as a missionary family, and we became fully committed to service.

The Antiochian Women
North American Board 2018 Project

Strengthening the Ministries of Our Church: Vocations

When the word vocation is used in our Church, most people immediately think of the ordained ministry. We may say, “That young man has a vocation,” meaning that he has a natural set of abilities and a sense of calling that will lead him to enter into a life of service to the Church as a deacon, priest, or bishop.

God, however, calls all of us to use our talents and abilities to serve the Church! The vocation of ministry begins at Holy Baptism. Then, with the descent of God the Holy Spirit upon us at our Chrismation, God begins at Holy Baptism. The poster for our 2018 Project highlights a few of the vocations through which ministry is exercised in our Archdiocese. This article is meant to introduce some of the people who have heard God’s calling, and who have dedicated their lives and careers to building up the Body of Christ, and to extending the reach of Christ into the world.

I felt blessed to be able interview these dedicated members of our Archdiocese. I felt a sense of inspiration as I heard their stories. They each had a powerful sense that God was calling them to dedicate their talents and abilities to ministry. They have used their professional skills and training for vocations in the Church instead of secular careers. There are many challenges involved with “vocation of ministry,” such as lack of recognition for their hard work, and sometimes being seen as inferior to their peers in secular professions – not to mention the financial sacrifices they make by working in the Church rather than in the world. Each person whom I interviewed, however, said that their ministry gives them life a sense of purpose which they would not have had anywhere else.

These seven represent the many dedicated servants of Christ who minister daily to you and me, whether we realize it or not. For example, when we look at our Archdiocesan website, do we think about the dedicated men and women who work hard to keep it up and running? And when we hear our parish choir singing so beautifully at each Liturgy, do we realize that there is a dedicated team in our Archdiocese which prepares the music for our own dedicated Choir Director to use each week? The bulletin in our hand was probably prepared by a dedicated church secretary, the floors and wastebaskets are clean because someone in our parish is dedicated to that humble and unsung labor, the list goes on and on.

As our 2018 Project poster says, we need to “Encourage – Support – Fund” these ministries and our brothers and sisters who have answered the call to dedicate their lives to vocations of ministry. I hope this article will inspire each of us to serve as do those who serve us so unselfishly.

Panayiotis (“Peter”) Sakellariou
Owner of Synergy HomeCare, Norwood, MA.
Member of St. Mary’s Parish, Cambridge, MA.

“My wife, Shannon, my two daughters, and I have built our lives around serving Christ by ministering to others. My first opportunity to serve the Church was as a volunteer in India. I graduated from Case Western University in 1993 and pursued graduate studies in Japan from 1994-99. After graduating, I volunteered for mission work for the Orthodox Church in India. I helped by feeding the poor and teaching English as an orphanage. It was here that my interest in serving others really began to develop.

“This led me to undertake missionary work In Athens for four years, from 2002-06. There I met Shannon, and when we were married, we joined OCMC as a missionary family, and we became fully committed to service.

“I felt the need to develop a theological basis for the service work that our family was committed to, and so upon returning to the United States I entered Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston. My theological studies, worship experience, and the community we found with our fellow students, provided me with a critical piece of formation as an Orthodox Christian. I truly understood that we do ministry as a part of Christ’s Body, on behalf of Him, with the support of all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. My family and I may be the means of that ministry, but our work represents and is supported by everyone in the Church.

“Immediately after graduation, I began work for the Department of Marriage and Family at the Greek Archdiocese where I served for 6 years. This position enabled me and my family to return to Albania as leaders of a family mission trip, where we established the first family camp in Albania. Witnessing the spiritual growth of the families we had known for so many years in our previous OCMC mission work was a true blessing for us.”

In 2014, Peter began a new career of service as chaplain at a Hospice agency in the Boston area. For the next two years, this experience became a real “eye-opener” and showed him the diversity of life styles and the plight of many diverse populations – especially senior citizens, many of whom live alone, and struggle to maintain their independence at home under very difficult circumstances.

Witnessing this profound need led Peter and Shannon to search for some way to offer assistance to senior citizens in an ongoing and systematic manner. They were able to affiliate with a national provider of homecare services, Synergy HomeCare (https://www.synergyhomecare.com), which coordinates non-medical care resources for families impacted by age or illness, and are dedicated to serving the needs of the elderly in the greater-Boston area.

Peter says, “We provide coordination of caregiver services to help the elderly remain in their homes and to stay safe and healthy while maintaining their independence and dignity. We pray daily for the caregivers we employ and for each of our clients. By our loving example we hope to bring an image of Christ into their lives. Many of our clients are from the Orthodox community in and around Boston, so we feel especially blessed to be able to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ.

“As lay people, we have an opportunity to offer our daily work to God so that He will bless and sanctify our labor. We trust that God will bless the work of our hands. As Christians, we know we can’t accomplish anything apart from God. We dedicate our labor as a daily offering to Him. Our vocation is to serve everyone who comes to us, one-by-one, to help build Christ’s Kingdom here in this world.”
Antiochian Woman

To the work. Constant prayer gave me the strength and His desire for the people in my care. I threw “success” the ministry over to Christ and pursued His agenda and filling joy was when I gave percep
tions of what I thought success looked like. When expectations of others, and I lost sleep over my own scary being ‘good’ at the job. I judged myself, I had unfair
ternt experiences I had as a young adult and got clear revelations of what God designed my life for.

“I would say that the reason why my life is aligned with the ministries I care for is because of my vocation. As soon as I began college, I discovered that I was called to be alongside young people in their journey to discover their true selves in Christ. I saw the fruit that came from different experiences I had as a young adult and got clear
glances of what God designed my life for.

“I truly and clearly see God’s hand in my vocation. Sometimes I disappear so much that all I can see is Him and what He is doing. When I see the good that is happening despite my failings and imperfections, I know that God is using me for His work. I have come to know that the best place to put my energy is in the quality of the programs I’m entrusted with, so that He can work uniquely in the lives of the participants.

“The work only brings joy when it first brings and others.

“...The counselors were

ADAM LOWELL ROBERTS

ADAM LOWELL ROBERTS

KATRINA BITAR

KATRINA BITAR

Director of the “YES” program (F.O.C.U.S. North America)

Katrina Bitar is no stranger to full-time vocation in the ministry. She is the daughter of Fr. Elias and Kh. Joanne Bitar, of blessed memory. The following is her story:

“...Motivations for ministry. It lead me to where I am today. The Lord has directed my efforts in camping ministry and the YES Program towards creating communities where oneness with Christ and others is the foundation, the destination, and the reality.”

TRULY HUMAN series

BECOMING TRULY HUMAN is the first national outreach ministry, by any jurisdiction, which empowers parishes in their local communities to make the Orthodox Faith accessible to people of all religious backgrounds, with an emphasis on those in the category of being a “nave” (that is, of those checking “none of the above” when asked about their religion). BECOMING TRULY HUMAN is a five-week course sponsored by an Orthodox parish, but based in parishioners’ homes. Each week begins with a meal, and then is followed by a short video presentation, and then concludes with a discussion of fundamental questions sparked by the videos by the participants.

Adam lives in Nashville, TN, with his wife and three children. He travels throughout our Archdiocese, training, parish leaders and parishioners about the BECOMING TRULY HUMAN approach to evangelism. He offers the nuts-and-bolts process of hosting, group leadership, and follow-up for this unique missionary tool. To date, he has trained almost 200 people and established over 60 discussion groups across North America.

Adam says, “My ministry is all about lifting up the natural ministry of the laity in our parishes, with the clergy serving as advisors, so that our laity become excited about our Orthodox Faith and thereby become empowered to offer that Faith to their friends, neighbors, and others.

“I view my ministry as having two major parts: First getting the necessary tools and resources to the parishes, and then, secondly, helping the parish to grow spiritually.

“I feel that I was led to this ministry – this Vocation. This was a ‘God-ordained’ ministry on many fronts. I had a unique set of skills that providentially happened to fit the vision that our Archdiocese had for this BECOMING TRULY HUMAN project.

“It just so happens that my undergraduate degree is in Management and Human Resources, so the ‘people skills’ I learned are directly applicable to my vocation. I also spent part of my undergraduate program as a theatre major, so this helped me become a proficient public speaker. My genuine interest in evangelism led me to podcast interviews on Ancient Faith Radio. The combination of my skills, interests, and experience came together at the right time for me to step into this ministry.

“As St. Paul writes: ‘And He, Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.’ (Ephesians 4:11-12). I feel like my ministry is all about ‘equipping the saints’ for their ministries in our parishes; this gives me great joy.”

CHRIS SHADID

Assistant Camp Director, Antiochian Village; and Vice-Chair of the Department of Camping

“I was raised in the Church. My parents showed me the love of God. I always loved serving the church. The more I learned, the more I participated and my love grew.

“I served as an altar boy, and a chanter. I became a camper at the Village; then a camp counselor. I realized I wanted to attend seminary. I wanted to serve God through the camp; to help foster a Christian environment.

“So much of what I do at the camp is not related to what I learned in Seminary. Sometimes I think, ‘I didn’t go to Seminary to learn how to fold rape’ – but I am doing God’s work.

“So often when I speak to campers and staff, I pray to God to use me as His instrument. I know that anything I say that is impactful is from God, not from me.

“My vocation gives me great joy. I love it.

“I remember one example of a moment that gave me great joy and a sense of confirmation that what I was doing with my life was part of God’s plan. It happened during training week before the campers arrived at the Village. I was speaking about how to become a good counselor. I felt that the room was filled with love for the camp and the future campers. The counselors were so ‘on fire’ for God.

“I really believe that I have been ‘called’ to a vocation of service to others. My ministry is all about opening the hearts of our campers to the reality of God, and helping them to experience His love for them. I feel so fortunate that God called me to a life that is filled with joy.”

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Assistant Camp Director, Antiochian Village; and Vice-Chair of the Department of Camping

“I was raised in the Church. My parents showed me the love of God. I always loved serving the church. The more I learned, the more I participated and my love grew.

“I served as an altar boy, and a chanter. I became a camper at the Village; then a camp counselor. I realized I wanted to attend seminary. I wanted to serve God through the camp; to help foster a Christian environment.

“So much of what I do at the camp is not related to what I learned in Seminary. Sometimes I think, ‘I didn’t go to Seminary to learn how to fold rape’ – but I am doing God’s work.

“So often when I speak to campers and staff, I pray to God to use me as His instrument. I know that anything I say that is impactful is from God, not from me.

“My vocation gives me great joy. I love it.

“I remember one example of a moment that gave me great joy and a sense of confirmation that what I was doing with my life was part of God’s plan. It happened during training week before the campers arrived at the Village. I was speaking about how to become a good counselor. I felt that the room was filled with love for the camp and the future campers. The counselors were so ‘on fire’ for God.

“I really believe that I have been ‘called’ to a vocation of service to others. My ministry is all about opening the hearts of our campers to the reality of God, and helping them to experience His love for them. I feel so fortunate that God called me to a life that is filled with joy.”
Chairperson, Antiochian Archdiocese Department of Sacred Music

“Vocation is a gift from God. All that we must do is accept it with humility and great devotion. I always knew that music was going to be a huge part of my life. As a teenager, I realized that my passion, the thing that brought me the greatest inner peace and joy, was going to church and worshipping our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through music. I conducted my first Cherubic Hymn at the age of 14 and the rest is history.

As I matured, I realized that God gave me another gift: the ability to lead and help my fellow brothers and sisters. This, too, was part of His plan. From the moment I wake up each morning, until the time I lay my head on my pillow at night, I hope, I pray, that I use my talents to Glorify Him.

Music has the power to heal and unite us all. This gift, this vocation, is the greatest joy and the biggest responsibility one could ever receive. “God calls us — and for every time we use our gift in His name, to serve HIM, He rewards us one hundredfold, for ever and ever. AMEN.”

Director of the St. Herman House of Hospitality in Cleveland (F.O.C.U.S. North America)

“The St. Herman House/FOCUS Cleveland is an Orthodox Christian ‘house of hospitality.’ We are a non-profit, 501(c)(3), charitable organization committed to serving the homeless and needy poorness of Ohio City and Inner City Cleveland in a spirit of love and hospitality. We have been in operation since September of 1977. St. Herman’s is solely owned and operated by FOCUS North America which conducts outreach centers and programs in 30 cities around the country.

Our mission is to serve as an expression of Christ’s love by serving those who are hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned. We provide food, clothing, shelter, occupational training, and understanding. To me, ‘vocation’ implies a sense of calling. All of us are called to live a Christian life – it aligns in a very special way with what a person is to do. Following a vocation is the right thing to do. John the Baptist did the right thing, but it cost him his life. We do Christ’s work because it is right, not because everything will be great.

I see my ministry as having a two-fold purpose. First, there is the opportunity to serve those in need. The homeless residents come to us for shelter and this is a ministry. And, secondly, our ministry here is a way for us to serve the volunteers who come here to help us serve the needy. St. Herman House gives them a place to minister, a way to serve. When we serve those who are in need, we have to learn to put away our needs and wants. In my vocation, I am serving the most underserved, needy, estranged-from-home persons; those who are financially at the bottom. I see God’s hand in my work. It’s crystal clear. I am at the end of the Pipeline where God’s Grace gets mediated through our ministry. It’s a satisfying place to be. The Church needs an end-of-the-line for all God’s goodness, a place where every sock and spoon of food means a great deal to someone.

“My vocation gives me great joy, but if you do it for joy, you would quit. You must give expecting nothing in return, or you will be faced with despair. When the good things happen, it is great joy.

“How do I feel that God prepared me to be in this place, to serve in this way? I received training through pastoral ministry, through my service at camps and at the Antiochian Village. I have drawn on my own experiences and failures. I have found that my own personal hand-knocks and failures have been invaluable. These tough places in my own life gives me a place to begin to try and understand the devastation that our clients have had to live through. God is good. He joins His own suffering (on the Cross) with our suffering. And then He calls us to give each other a hand so we don’t have to suffer alone, and so that our neighbor’s suffering can be lightened by our efforts. I’m glad God has called me to give my whole life to serve others. In a small way, I’m just doing what He does for each of us every second of every day.”

Director of Prison Ministry of the Antiochian Orthodox Church

“I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” (Matthew 25:36)

Fr. David Randolf says, “Christ clearly instructs us to minister to those in prison, but few are prepared to do this. Working with offenders and ex-offenders is a difficult task. Proper training is necessary to work effectively within the system, and to avoid manipulation by those we are trying to serve.”

Teleios Ministries was formed and is under the direction of the Fr. David Randolph. Teleios Ministries seeks to fill the need for qualified counselors by training interested individuals (both clergy and lay) across the Archdiocese to minister to this troubled population. All ministry is spiritually based on the teachings and practices of the Orthodox Church. Currently, those who have been trained by Teleios Ministries serve in six prisons, as well as one juvenile facility, and three county jails. Inmates are referred to their support ministry by families, clergy, and from inmates who have been involved in the program already.

“My idea of ministry is ‘practical application’ – How can I apply this form of ministry to practical life? Many of the people I am working with are women who are ready to be released. They need financial support, and employment opportunities. They also need to learn how to manage money and avoid scams. Most of these women (about 85%) have been victims of domestic or sexual abuse. They need to learn how to set goals; they need to learn how to have healthy family and interpersonal relationships.

“I remember being in a county jail years ago. There was an old man in one of the cells. He was covered in dirt and his clothing was filthy. It dawned on me – this man was made in the image of Christ as much as you or me. Christ is in every man, women, and child.

“I obtained training for my ministry by apprenticing with a national prison ministry in a county jail. I became an assistant county chaplain, and I also did some work in the Florida prison system.

“The opportunity to serve these people, to show God’s love and compassion, is what motivates me to have a vocation in this particular ministry. I hear the words of our Lord when I am counseling and working for our clients: ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ (Matthew 25:40)”
saw people writing Icons, I knew that was what I wanted to do. When I went back home, I told my parish priest (who is now Bishop BASHIL) what I had experienced. He made it possible for me to travel to the Dormition Skete in Buna Vista, Colorado. I was given a great blessing by God to be able to study with Fr. Gregory (who is now Bishop GREGORY). “I feel I have the best job in the whole world. One where I can spend my whole day in prayer. I have a silent ministry. While I write my icons, I am praying for people.”

“When my icons are completed, others are finding God and building a relationship through my work, through a particular saint, they can come to know God more fully. I have even found that non-Orthodox people who have been interested in my projects (craftspeople, plasterers, etc.) have been awestruck by the power of the Icons of their history and their beauty. It has made me realize that the Holy Icons build relationships.”

“I do not feel I am a good artist. Every single day, God is taking what I have and making it into something of His. There are times when I have difficulty finding reference materials for certain Icons, maybe a Saint that is not as well known, for example. I ask for prayers from people and God provides answers for me. God leads me to where I need to be. If I can put myself in a position of humility, it comes. “I would not do what I do if I did not think it was bigger than me.”

As I spoke to each of these “saints” within our church, one thing struck me: God has made each of us with unique gifts and talents that we can choose to give back to Him through service to others. As St. Peter writes, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10)

In the book “Becoming a Healing Presence,” Dr. Albert Rossi writes: “My vocation is not my career or my role in life. Rather, my vocation is my call from Christ to do what He has me on this planet to do, to cooperate in building up His Kingdom on Earth… With each singular vocation, each person is called in a different way to love God fully and her neighbor as herself uniquely.”

I hope that by reading how some of our brothers and sisters in Christ have devoted their lives to serving others, you may be inspired to ask how God would want you to use your unique gifts and talents. We may not be able to have full-time careers in ministry, but we can all devote some portion of our life in service to others.

The VOCATION we received in Baptism is to live our lives not for ourselves, but for the good of others. To be a Christian is to be a servant; the only question is where, when, and how? If we are open to the Holy Spirit working in our life, then the answer to those questions will become clear. The only thing left for you and me to do is to act on His “call.” The unique skills and talents which God has given only to you, can be given back to Him in a MINISTRY of SERVICE that you, alone, can fulfill.

ZHOU ERIK FARRA KIMMETT
Iconographer
“I always loved art and doing projects. As a child growing up, there were always art and craft projects in some stage of construction on our kitchen table. It was a part of me. It’s who I am.”

“In college, I majored in Graphic Design and then worked in the field. When I wasn’t working, I would spend all my free time at our church. I knew I could glorify God in whatever job I had if I gave it over to Him. But I really felt that my calling was to do something directly in the Church. I felt I wanted a vocation within the Church.”

“One summer, I volunteered at the Antiochian Village and visited the Icon Studio of Phil Zimmermann. When I saw people writing Icons, I knew that was what I wanted to do.

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One of the most important things parents can do, aside from keeping their children safe and healthy, is to read with them. Teachers, pediatricians, and librarians all extol the benefits of reading to children, with and by them. We know this and most of us do this. My question is, What are you reading with your children? Browse through your children’s books at home. Are there any titles speaking to our Orthodox Christian perspective? Unfortunately, many of us would have to respond, No! Antiochian Women of North America are challenging you to help us expand the literature choices our children are exposed to. We are interested in strengthening the ministries of our church by nurturing and educating them and us in the history, folklore, and literature highlighting our Holy Orthodox Faith.

March is celebrated as Antiochian Women’s month throughout the Archdiocese. The past several years we have been presenting each woman who enters one of our churches with a token gift: a bookmark, icon card, decal, and so forth. This year our focus has changed. Antiochian Women will present each diocese with a set of children’s books geared to ages 3 to 18, written in various styles on different topics. This collection will be available for purchase, but, more importantly, it will be at our Parish Life Conferences, ready to be read by the children and shared with families. The titles are as follows:

**Goodnight Jesus**

The Little Angels Book of Prayers

ABC’s of Orthodoxy

H is for Holy

The Edge of Mysterion

We Pray

Keeper of the Light, St. Macrina, The Elder

Grandmother of Saints

Noah and the Ark of Salvation

This is a collection chosen from many books available at the Antiochian Village Bookstore (https://store.antiochianvillage.org). It is our hope that, by immersing our children in good Orthodox literature, our children’s curiosity about our Faith will lead to a vocation in our faith. Hopefully, they will experience spiritual growth as they learn of the lives of the saints, read stories of miracles, and feel the profound love of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Communities in Action**

**Clergy from the Diocese of New York and Washington, D.C. Hold Annual Meeting**

The annual diocesan clergy meeting for the Diocese of New York and Washington, D.C., was held at the headquarters of the Antiochian Archdiocese in Englewood, New Jersey, on January 16, 2018. His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH presided over the meeting, which was also attended by His Grace Bishop JOHN, and many clergy from the Diocese, both priests and deacons. Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat from Mexico City also attended.

In the meeting, the attendees decided on a patron saint, forming The Brotherhood of Saint John of Damascus. The Very Reverend Thomas Zain, Archdiocesan Vicar General and Dean of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York, was appointed the Dean of The Brotherhood.

The meeting commenced with prayer and the reading of the Epistle and Gospel. Metropolitan JOSEPH and the clergy then discussed various topics, including liturgical practices, the education of priests, and dealing with both parish and external organizations, including government entities. The underlying themes of pastoral care and the dignity of the priesthood informed the entire discussion.

**First-Ever Visit of Bishop Nicholas to St. Ignatius, Franklin**

On the weekend of December 15th–17th, His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS made his first-ever visit to the parish of St. Ignatius in Franklin, Tennessee. Among the many highlights from that weekend were the meetings between His Grace and the youth of St. Ignatius, the ordination of Brian Short to the rank of Sub-deacon, the consecration of the Altar, as well as the induction of six new members to the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. We eagerly look forward to His Grace’s next visit. May God grant him many years as our new shepherd in the Diocese of Miami and the Southeast!

Fr. Philip Bagley, Senior Pastor
St. Ignatius, Franklin, Tennessee
followed by the 25th Anniversary Banquet in the parish social hall. Honored clergy were presented with beautiful, hand-painted icons. Metropolitan JOSEPH and Bishop THOMAS received icons of their patron saints. Fr. Peter received an icon of St. John Chrysostom, and Deacon John Shumski and Deacon Jerome Atherton, who are attached to the parish, received icons of St. Stephen, the Deacon. In addition, Khouira Pamela Petr, Rosemary Shumski, and Leslie Atherholt received mother-of-pearl pendants of the Virgin Mary, Luke 1:46–55), and Deacon John Shumski and Deacon Michael Hovanessian were presented with icons of their patron saints. Fr. Peter received a special icon of the Virgin Mary prepared and presented by the Monastery of St. Herman of Alaska, which now serves as the parish iconostasis, and Deacon Michael Hovanessian received icons of the Virgin Mary, Luke 1:46–55).

Metropolitan JOSEPH spoke with members of the congregation continued to flourish, and we are most grateful for his hard work, dedication, sacrifice, and love.

On January 7, Sunday Orthros and a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy were celebrated. After Liturgy, four members of the parish were inducted into the Order of St. Ignatius. The Sunday School Church School students presented the Metropolitan with flowers and sang the 2018 Creative Festival theme song to him. After a covered-dish luncheon, the Metropolitan spoke with members of Teen SOYO.

Throughout the entire weekend, we were inspired by the Metropolitan’s presence and his thoughtful words as he encouraged us to continue to pray, attend services, and read the Bible. This was his first visit to St. John Chrysostom Orthodox Church, and he assured us that it would not be his last. It was a great joy to welcome Metropolitan JOSEPH to our parish. May God grant His Eminence, our Chief Shepherd in Christ, many years!

BEHOLD A GREAT PRIEST, WHO IN HIS DAYS PLEASED GOD …

Chanting these traditional words of greeting, the monks and nuns of the Western-rite Monasteries of Our Lady and Saint Laurence welcomed His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH as he entered the monastery church to begin his official Visit with us on February 1, 2018. Accompanied by His Grace Bishop JOHN, His Eminence was at last able to come in person to see the beautiful campus, meet the monastics, and join with all present in worship, fellowship, and planning.

Also present to welcome the bishops were the Very Rev. John C. Connelly, Obl.SB. President of the Board of Directors of the Benedictine Fellowship of Saint Laurence (the not-for-profit corporation that owns the 600-acre property on which the Monastery sits), and Our Lady and Saint Laurence (as our two communities of men and women are now so to be known) and bestowed upon the new Abbot Theodore his solemn pontifical blessing.

Although His Eminence’s visit was a short one, it was nonetheless a great blessing to our young communities and will benefit us greatly in the days to come. May God grant him, and all our hierarchs, many years!

(Endnotes)

1. Obl.SB stands for Oblate of St. Benedict. Oblate are clergy or lay persons who have undergone a period of formation and then made a formal affiliation with a monastery, seeking to put the underlying values and disciplines of the Rule of St. Benedict into action in their families, work, and service to the Church.

2. “Chapter” is the name given, in the Benedictine tradition, to the regular meeting of the monastics to hear a chapter of the Rule, recite the daily office, and discuss important business. In the Eastern tradition, the equivalent is known as a synaxis.

20th ANNUAL MIDWEST DIOCESE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

St. George Church of Canton, Ohio, hosted the 20th Annual Midwest Diocese Basketball Tournament January 19–21, 2018. Twenty years ago, Canton’s Teen SOYO initiated this tournament. Since then, it has grown to become a mini-convention, drawing youth from around the diocese. His Grace Bishop ANTHONY presided over the weekend, ordaining Deacon Anthony Westerman of Louisville, Kentucky during Sunday’s Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Bishop ANTHONY also presented the Archdiocese Meritorious Service Award to Ms. Sadie Kanam of Canton on behalf of His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH. Deacon Anthony presented a retreat on Friday evening entitled “The Armor of God,” tying in his own personal experience as a U.S. Marine, now looking forward to becoming a chaplain in the U.S. Navy. On Saturday, basketball games were held among three divisions, with a lot of excited cheers and encouragement. Following Great Vespers on Saturday evening, Canton SOYO President Mareena Michael welcomed everyone to the Awards Banquet and Halfl, capping off a beautiful day of great sportsmanship and fellowship. Serving with His Grace Bishop ANTHONY on Sunday were Fr. Michael Corbin and Fr. Basil Shuleen of St. George, Canton, along with the Midwest SOYO Spiritual Advisor Fr. Michael Saktan of St. John, Ft. Wayne and Deacon Joseph Olos of St. George, Indianapolis.

A beautiful Farewell Luncheon then capped off this historic and exciting weekend! A special thanks to longtime Tournament Chair Nick Michael, Sub-Deacon Dr. K. J. Shuleen, and all the wonderful volunteers at St. George. We look forward to hosting you again next year in Canton, so mark January 18–20, 2019, on your calendar! The winners of this year’s tournament are as follows:

Division I (Ages 12–15)
1. St. George, Akron, OH
2. St. George, Canton, OH
3. St. George, Flint, MI

Division II (Ages 15–18)
1. St. Matthew, North Royalton, OH
2. St. John Chrysostom, Canton, OH
3. St. George, Akron, OH

Many thanks to the volunteers of Teen SOYO and the countless volunteers throughout the Archdiocese for making this event a success. A special thanks to the City of Canton for hosting this event and making it possible.

St. John Chrysostom rededicated the new church last year, and the following year marks eleven years of operations at the new church. Canton SOYO, which was authorized by His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, is focused on the Greater Chapter of Abbot.

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Jesus says this when describing the Temple of God. He enters the holy Temple and, to his disgust, money-changers and businessmen are cheating people for their money. Jesus is furious. He is justified in his anger, because the Temple is supposed to be a place to meet God. It is a place to pray to the Lord, listen to his guidance, and celebrate in the liturgy. These money-changers were taking advantage of others in God's house. Today, many continue to betray the ideals of a house of prayer. Church leaders have misused church funds: a pastor in Dallas embezzled over half a million dollars. Many church members, like the money-changers, use church relationships for personal gains, instead of building up the kingdom of God. This is truly a cynical act that must come from someone who never truly experienced the love of God.

Let's explore together how the church, family, and each of us is “the house of prayer.” The church is God's temple. It should be treated with the greatest respect. When people go into the church they should be ready for prayer, for it is where we connect with God. According to Mother Alexandra, former Abbess and founder of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, “the angels are already praying when we enter the church and we ought not to disturb them. When Orthodox gather, they are already at the throne of Christ.” As a Christian, I have been taught this my whole life by family members and clergy. Upon reflection, I realize that I haven't been doing this at all. I should be reading Scripture, praying, and listening to God more often. Instead, I listen to music – not the type my mother would like me to – and play games as I get ready for church. I am an altar server, yet I remember times in church when I was staring blankly in front of me, thinking about the Paxton game I intended to watch that afternoon. Now, I ask myself, “What is wrong with me? Why can't I focus on what really matters? Why am I becoming like these money-changers and sycophants who go to the Temple, acting self-righteous and just turning out to be unfocused, and not being genuine? Why do I shame this holy house of prayer?”

I confess I have conflicting interests and motivations. Like Saint Paul, “I do what I don't want to do, and I don't do what I want to do.” In no way do I intend to hide my shame or put the blame on others. A role-model once said to me, “Falling into temptation comes down to one thing: a choice,” and that, “even if you slip up, God still loves you.” What I have realized is that, though I have made so many bad decisions, God still loves me, and in no way should I take that for granted. He is still willing to forgive me if I come to Him and ask. As James 4:2 says, “You do not have because you do not ask.” He also says, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” So I go to His house of prayer. I go for forgiveness, guidance, understanding, and improvement in my walk of faith. This ability is a blessing. It is never something to be missed.

That's why I need to make sure that I take full advantage of this awesome opportunity that God has given me to worship him in freedom, because there are some oceans away who are less fortunate. Many in Syria and other places are persecuted for their faith and worship. The home is where we reside. We go there for sleep, comfort, and happiness. This is another example of a house of prayer. In his book on marriage, Fr. John Meyendorff, former Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary and Patrology scholar, said, “The Church itself – a Mysterious union of God with His people – is the sacrament.” This is often applied to family. In the home we are family, and we share life with each other and with friends. In Matthew 18:20, Jesus says, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Any Christian house with a family is always a house containing two or more. Therefore Jesus is always with us in our homes. We are able to make our homes houses of prayer. I have an obligation to share the Christian faith with others and to remain focused on Christ. To do this, I surround myself with icons, a specific place to pray, time set in my day to pray, and an understanding of God's presence.

I now want to focus on the person as a kind of house of God. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.” Since I am the temple of the Holy Spirit, I must act as His house of prayer. I must respect my body at all times and must cleanse it of the robbers and thieves. Inside of me the robbers and thieves are temptations and distractions. Since no one is perfect, and we are all susceptible to temptation, when sin does creep into our lives we do as Jesus did to the Temple, and make our bodies, the temples of the Holy Spirit, clean again.

In the middle of the verse, Jesus says His house is a house of prayer for all nations. This means that every person, regardless of ethnicity or nationality, is called to be God's house and worship in God's house. This means that all of God's children who have accepted Him into their hearts have built His temple within them. Therefore, every heart should be filled with the love and power of the Holy Trinity, and that starts with me. The house of God is our church, our home, you, and me. At home we are God's house. In prayer and Orthodox living, each of us is God's house. Together, we are God's house.

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**The Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada & Upstate New York**

65th Annual Parish Life Conference

**Parish Life Conference Diocese of Worcester and New England**

June 23, 2018 held at St John of Damascus Church, Dedham

9:00 AM Orthsos and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy
11:30 AM Luncheons for Antiochian Women, Teens and Conferences
1:00 PM Keynotes Address and discussion led by Michelle Moujaes of Faithtree Ministries & Bible Bowl
3:30 PM Great Vespers and presentation by 2 Oratorical Judges Choices
5:30 PM Dinner, Awards and Entertainment

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June 28 – July 1

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32 March 2018
2018 PLC Schedule

Diocese of Worcester
Hosted by: Diocese Ministry Council, held at St. John of Damascus Church, Dedham, MA
June 23-24, 2018

Diocese of Miami
Hosted by: St. Mary Church, West Palm Beach, FL
June 13-16, 2018

Diocese of Wichita
Hosted by: Holy Trinity Church, Santa Fe, NM
June 13-16, 2018

Diocese of Toledo
Hosted by: St. Elias Church, Sylvania, OH
June 20-24, 2018

Dioceses of New York and Washington D.C. & Oakland, Charleston and Mid-Atlantic
Hosted by St. Philip Church, Souderton, PA; St. George Church, Upper Darby, PA and Holy Ascension Mission, West Chester, PA
June 27-July 1, 2018

Diocese of Ottawa
Hosted by: St. Anthony St. Antioch, Church, Hatfield, NS
June 29-July 1, 2018

Diocese of Los Angeles/Eagle River
Hosted by: St. George Church, Portland, OR
July 4-8, 2018

Clergy Symposium
Antiochian Village July 16-20
2019 Archdiocese Convention
54th Biannual Archdiocese Convention
St. Nicholas Church, Grand Rapids, MI
July 21-28, 2019

Parish Life Conference 2018
Holy Trinity Orthodox Church
El Dorado Hotel & Spa in Santa Fe, New Mexico
June 13-16, 2018
Changing Lives

Don’t take our word for it, take theirs...

Your annual or lifetime gift touches the lives of many that you never would have been able to reach alone.

... Being a camp counselor the past two years has been some of the most phenomenal weeks of my life. Knowing that this many children want to deepen their relationship with God gives me hope for the future of the church. Thank you so much for providing the opportunity for so many of my friends to come to camp! It is a real blessing to interact with Orthodox Christians my age and I am so thankful you all make that possible.
- Camp St. Thekla Counselor, 2016

... As a seminarian it is difficult at times to financially maintain a home life and pursue God’s calling of service. Last month, after two years of faithfully paying the bills and saving every penny, my wife and I were left with very little in the bank. The reassurance that God will provide through the generosity of others such as the Order, Thank you and God bless The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch for all that you’ve done for us;
- Married Seminarian, 2015

... 3 years ago I lost my job during the financial turmoil. Thank God my husband was able to keep his job but it was difficult living on a single income. Many things we enjoyed giving up family to be able to send our daughter to camp. The financial difficulty we went through affected us all and especially our daughter. Through the camp scholarship offered by the Order of St. Ignatius, we were able to send our daughter to camp. Thank you for all that meant to us to be able to let her be worry free for a little while.
- Parent of Antiochian Village Camper, 2010

Thank you so much for providing the opportunity for so many of my friends to come to camp! It is a real blessing to interact with Orthodox Christians my age and I am so thankful you all make that possible.
- Camp St. Thekla Camper, 2016

... God bless them for being so willing to contribute. My mom is part of the Order of St. Ignatius and is always encouraging me to join when I get older. It would be a great way to still support the Order when I’m an adult.
- NAC SOYO Officer, 2016

Thank you for all that you do. Without y’all I wouldn’t be able to go to camp and wouldn’t know some of my closest friends. Thanks to the Order of St. Ignatius, I have been able to go to camp for 6 years and grow in my faith. Thank you again.
- Antiochian Village Camper, 2016