When the Metropolitan or one of our bishops celebrates the liturgy, the local church shows us what Christ meant when he prayed in His prayer, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.” No act shows this more clearly than when, in the liturgy, the bishop kneels before the gifts of the people, the people pray the Creed, and the presbyters wave the aer (chalice covers) over the gifts and the bishop. This liturgical act typifies who we are as the Church. The bishop connects us to Christ and all of the church by his responsibility to all, and for all, in the Church, that is, all of the Orthodox bishops, all of the bishop’s presbyters, and all of God’s people. The Faith as expressed in the praying of the Creed shows that we are in the faith of the Apostles. This profession unites us one to another and to Christ through His Church. The gifts of the people spread forth are given back to God, who returns them to us as His own. We are His, and in Him. He shows us ultimately who we are created to be, claimed by baptism as Christians, or “little christs.” Together we are the Church, which from all time is the Body of Christ, and unites us to God. By loving one another and sharing God with each other and the world, we express the Kingdom to come, which in the Church is accessible to us now! This is our destiny: to be One as God is One. We are united in Christ to God the Father and to each other. Our identity, our Christianity, our life.

Steadfastness in the Apostles’ doctrine is continuously experiencing God’s truth and living in the light of it – 

“THEY CONTINUED STEADFASTLY IN THE APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE AND FELLOWSHIP, IN BREAKING OF BREAD, AND IN PRAYERS.” ACTS 2:42
God's way. Christianity is experienced as a way of life, with Christ at the center. It is about living ever more fully, by enjoying love in and through the other. It is about sharing the truth of the Trinity and God's desire to save us through His Church. The Apostles' doctrine is the understanding of the prophecies of the Scriptures and their fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. We must not stray from the fullness of truth. Straying includes settling for a spirituality without God. Our religious experience is about being with Christ in the Holy Trinity, and cannot be reduced to spiritual feelings for some kind of self-gratification. We need the authentic experience of the Apostles, martyrs and saints. This is union in Christ.

Likewise, Christian fellowship cannot be reduced to parish bowling leagues and basketball. Even if bowling and basketball is our parish tradition, fellowship is more than activities; it is being Christ to each other. It is about loving and mentoring each other, carrying each other's burdens, and redirecting each other to Truth, that is, Christ. Love means speaking the truth kindly and effectively for each other's salvation. It is never boastful or self-serving, judgmental or harsh. Witness in fellowship is revealing God to each other; it is kind, gentle and loving.

The bishop and his representatives lead the steadfast, continuous community from generation to generation in the breaking of bread and prayers, which is the Eucharist and liturgical prayers. This community, of course, is the one authorized and empowered by the Metropolitan and bishops. Together, we "lay aside all earthly cares" that we have set forth in our prayers, to be one with God and each other. The height of this is found in silence, which expresses our understanding beyond words. It is expressed in who we are as Christians, freed from the bondage of sin, temptation, self-interest and pleasures. It is a continual goal and calling.

This year's Parish Life Conference theme is taken from the Acts of the Apostles. It describes who we are as a Church and as a community, and who each of us is as a Christian. The clergy will preach and our speakers will reflect on who we are, and why we are.

Bishop JOHN

It would have remained so, had it not been for the incarnation of the Son of God (Jean-Claude Larchet, The Theology of Spiritual Illness, 2012). In his letter to Cle德ious St Gregory of Nazianzus explains "For that which He has not been assumed He has not healed." In humility and love, God the Son chose to condescend and become man, so that our humanity could be united with His divinity. His life, suffering, death and resurrection revealed to us our true identity as children of God and showed us the path of restoration to man's pristine condition before the fall of Adam (Larchet). It is when we are united with Christ that we are able to carry out the two great Gospel commandments of love by fulfilling their ontological dimensions (Sophrony, 1997). The hypostatic principle, according to the Elder, is therefore the basis of man's personhood in God's image.

In his lectures on the hypostatic principle, Father Zacharias (2015) tells us that Elder Sophrony provided four central points of his theology of the person, a few of which are:

i. Christ is the true person as was revealed to Moses: "I am He who is."

ii. Man also is a person created in God's image and likeness.

THE HYPOSTATIC PRINCIPLE AND ITS ILLUMINATION OF THE MEANING OF SUFFERING

Tina Cooper

ELDER SOPHRONY'S LIFE AND MINISTRY REFLECTS AN IMPORTANT TRUTH FOR A WORLD THAT DESPERATELY SEeks MEANING AND PURPOSE: CHRIST, AS THE TRUE PERSON, IS THE FULLNESS OF BEING AND MANKIND, CREATED IN HIS IMAGE AND LIKENESS, HAS BEEN GIVEN THE POTENTIAL TO FULFILL OUR TRUE PERSONHOOD THROUGH UNION WITH HIM. CHRIST THEREFORE IS THE FORERUNNER OF OUR RESTORED HUMANITY, AND THE ELDER'S MESSAGE PERTAINS TO THE Wondrous TRUTH OF OUR IDENTITY AS BEINGS CREATED IN THE LIKENESS OF GOD. THIS DIVINE SEED IS PLANTED IN MAN'S "Deep Heart," HIDDEN FROM OUR FALLEN AWARENESS.

Tina Cooper
The Hypostatic Principle

iii. The content of the person of Christ is His self-embracing love unto the end, by which He accomplished the salvation of the world.

iv. Man likewise proves himself a person when he chooses to be his own god, acquiring love for God to the point of self-hatred, purifying his heart, and making himself a person (Larchet). He is the true archetype of man, and in the possession of our souls (Larchet). He came not just to deliver us from our sins, but for our healing, which is inseparable from our salvation. Larchet describes this as an ontological restoration of human nature, a reorientation of our faculties, and a re-appropriation of man’s true destiny.

In his third point on the subject of the hypostatic principle, Elder Sophrony states that it is Christ’s self-embracing love, His kenosis, made manifest by His voluntary suffering and death on our behalf, that is the content of His personhood. This is again reflected in Hebrews 2:10. Therefore, to realize the potential of our hypostatic being, we too, as Christological beings, must walk the path of self-denial in our own kenosis. In His Life & Mine, Elder Sophrony observes that to actualize our being as hypostasis, we need to grow, and that our growth is linked with our submission to prayer and only initiation with the divine, in ceaseless glorification of His creator and connected to all creation (Larchet).

When Adam sinned by choosing to be his own god, mankind was separated from His creator. Man’s sinning, no longer directed towards the worship of God became re-oriented towards love of self. Man’s being, no longer directed towards the healing of his soul may open to communion with God (the grace of His energies) and our spirit can be reoriented to Him. Suffering in its various forms is a type of asceticism, in that it involves a discomfort and displeasure that awakens man from the sleep of his fallen state. In these times of pain and weakness, our humble abandonment to the will of God in the midst of our powerlessness invites the glory of His power and love to be made manifest in us. This brings healing to our soul and liberates us from the bondage of the passions that dominate our will. We can hear this truth in these beautiful words famously attributed to St. Augustine: “In my deepest wound, I held my glory.”

In the world in which we live, pain, suffering, tragedies, and death continually surround us. If we have not yet been touched by adversity, there always remains an underlying anxiety: we know that it is inevitable. The world offers its own pain medication, a plethora of sleeping aids that can consume or numb the pain, but there are places where we cannot forget, e.g., airports, prisons, mental institutions, hospitals, nursing homes. Like these places, which hold within them death, sickness, separation and pain, our trials or the trials of those around us can open the door for grace to enter. This grace inspires us to desire a turn and seek the One Whom our soul was created to love.

Understanding our nature and the beautiful gift of personhood that God has placed in our depths radically reframes our understanding of suffering and adversity. In doing so, it does not offer direct answers to the question of why we are suffering — this is knowledge reserved for God alone, as we witness in the story of Job. Instead, we can understand suffering as a necessary vehicle for the actualization of our true being through the testing of our faith. We read in 1 Peter 1:6–7: “In this you greatly rejoice, though you have been grievously trialed by various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory to the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

When, on the other hand, we set our sights on the avoidance of suffering at all costs, we deny ourselves grace-filled opportunities to grow into our hypostasis. In enabling others to do the same — although this may be well-intentioned — we may only be helping them avoid an experience that could bring them closer to the truth of their hypostatic calling. Suffering not only provides an opportunity for the revelation of Divine Love within us, but also for those around us (Nikolaos). The humble acceptance of God’s will in those who suffer is a powerful revelation of God’s love and presence. Metropolitan Nikolaos observes that suffering generates love in the people around us, and we become bonded together in mutual compassion. When people offer their love to those who suffer, it can bring with it a powerful grace of consolation that overcomes the weight of suffering. In this shared space, a tangible love is revealed. Muse (2011) remarks the church as the logos, as the transformative encounter between persons where Christ’s presence “in the midst of two or three” converts dialogue into “trialogue” and provides noetic illumination through a meeting of the uncreated with the created. Christ-in-us-midst is revealed in true hospitality and communion between persons as He brings a mutual awakening of our hearts into deeper truths of being. This can be especially therapeutic and powerful when we share together in each other’s suffering.

“through the fire and water the Lord brings us to a place of abundance.”
Elder Sophrony once said that “suffering can destroy or beautify.” “We must see both of these potentials when we encounter others.” The four points of the hypostatic principle give us a caregivers the lens by which we can perceive what those in our care are experiencing. We must always be able to bring into our mind what is going on in a person’s life, the wider context, rather than simply be dazzled by the presence of pain and suffering. We know that it is God’s “good pleasure” for His image to be restored in us and for man to be transformed into His likeness and united in Him. We were created for a purpose, and that purpose is an identity, the fulfillment of our personhood. Father Zacharias tells us in his lectures that “man’s ontological content develops in the measure of his participation in the fulness of the Energies of His Maker.” We must come alongside others who are suffering and help illuminate their darkness by guiding them to respond to God’s invitation of synergy with His divine grace.

In my own Christian ministry, I meet with a person who suffers from depression, anxiety and panic attacks. He often feels burdened by the weight of his suffering, and struggles to fit in with others. As a result, he feels lonely and outcast in the Church environment. To this, I have said, “He is gifted with a special love for God and a rare compassion for others. It is not simply be dazzled by the presence of pain and suffering. We must always be able to bring into our mind what is going on in a person’s life, the wider context, rather than simply be dazzled by the presence of pain and suffering. We know that it is God’s “good pleasure” for His image to be restored in us and for man to be transformed into His likeness and united in Him. We were created for a purpose, and that purpose is an identity, the fulfillment of our personhood. Father Zacharias tells us in his lectures that “man’s ontological content develops in the measure of his participation in the fulness of the Energies of His Maker.” We must come alongside others who are suffering and help illuminate their darkness by guiding them to respond to God’s invitation of synergy with His divine grace.

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THE HEALING POWER OF REMEMBRANCE

Fr. Joshua Makoul

The significance of our experiences has a lot to do with how well we remember events. You see, we have something called emotional memories. Emotional memories occur when we associate strong emotional experiences with a certain event, place, or time of year. This is very good for us to know because it affects most if not all of us to varying degrees. For example, there is something called the Anniversary Reaction. An Anniversary Reaction is when we re-experience powerful emotions during a certain time of year that in which a significant event had taken place in the past. This is especially common with anniversaries of the death of a loved one or some other painful event. Oftentimes in the days and weeks leading up to the anniversary of the passing of someone close to us we start to feel uptight, tense, and begin to feel all those painful feelings of loss and grief that we did when the event occurred. Then, when the anniversary passes, our emotional state goes back to normal. We get a glimpse into how our mind remembers, it remembers not only the event, but also the emotions and feelings tied to the event. We not only remember memories but we feel them.

Everyone remembers differently, in varying detail and clarity. Some are more affected by Anniversary Reactions than others, the reason for this is not yet understood. If we are acutely or deeply affected by these events than it might be a sign we have to do more work; more processing, talking, and perhaps more grieving over what had happened. However, there is no need for us to fear remembering, there is no need for us to fear our memories, or these painful anniversaries. Simply being aware of them and prepared for them emotionally helps us navigate through them. They can also be great opportunities for us. If we play close attention to ourselves we can learn from them. If navigated properly, they can give us opportunities to further heal so that the next anniversary is not so difficult. These anniversaries might also reveal to us aspects of our grief or memories that we did not process enough or grieve enough. There is a healing to our remembering.

We even form emotional memories of people. We associate certain people with certain experiences and the emotions related to those experiences. This can have huge implications for our ability to forgive. This is one of the reasons why forgiveness is often a process and not instant for many people. What does one do when they forgive someone but continue to feel unsafe around them? This can lead to a great deal of confusion in someone. Have I forgiven them, or haven’t I? Cognitively, intellectually I have forgiven, but my feelings are telling me I have not forgiven. This is completely normal. It means there are emotional memories that need to be worked through and this takes more time. If we do not work through the emotional memories, the spiritual danger is that fear will linger and where fear lingers anger and resentment are soon to follow.

Does the church remember? Indeed she does. Throughout the year, indeed every day, the church is in a constant state of remembrance and commemoration. Some of us are better at remembering than others. It could be said that some us remember too little and perhaps some us remember too much. An excellent memory can be a great blessing but at times it can seem like a burden or a curse depending on how we choose to remember events, the remembrance of people, places, and events plays such a critical role in our lives and it is a process and activity that is constantly taking place in our minds and even in the church.
Healing Power of Remembrance

from Jerusalem and in exile in Babylon, we face the reality of Heaven, the New Jerusalem, that should hang like a promise. This world is not it. There is the Kingdom and be driven to despair. However God has made us only in the light of this world, we can become stuck crucifixion. When our painful memories and experiences to go through this process is excruciating. It is indeed a new life. The church gives us a new lens through which to turn our losses into gains, how to turn our crosses into light of God's promise.

So it is precisely the context in which we remember the anniversary or commemoration of that event. It becomes the lens through which we turn our losses into gains, how to turn our crosses into new life. The church gives us a new lens through which to understand and see the tragedies and painful events in our own life. It must be said and acknowledged that tragedies in this life and all of the remembrance of the losses and pain, for the former things have passed away".

“Learn by Doing,” the motto of my college alma mater, often makes me laugh. This is not because hands-on, learning is funny, but because I seem chiefly to learn after not doing, or by doing things wrong. At any rate, Orthodox Christian parents will do well to take this motto to heart when instructing their children in the faith. There are parts of what we do — of what makes us Orthodox — that have to be taught explicitly to most children.

When I think about how my parents raised me, while deeply immersed in the Orthodox Church, it feels like their philosophy must have been: “Learn by watching.” Somehow, through osmosis and eager imitation, they expected me to make the decision to venerate icons, or to go to confession, or to ask priests for a blessing, all of which I may never have taken the leaps of faith that are the quiet, subtle parts of being Orthodox, the wonderful and varied tools in our tool kit. I had to be nudged to go to confession, and then was so glad that I did. When our high school youth group visited a new church, I had a friend tell me: “Shed, Keidi, just kiss the icons when you go into a church!” I didn’t feel chastised, I felt invited.

So we are called to keep an unceasing spiritual vigil in our hearts while in this world. A silent vigil for the martyrs and events that though tragic in our hearts while in this world. It becomes the lens through which we see the events, both good and bad, that occur in our life. So though in exile, we are to make the most of our time here. We are to enjoy each other and wholesome earthly activities and events, and silently in our hearts, we keep a vigil for the Kingdom of Heaven, never losing sight of the context in which all of our life events take place.

Yes we must wait, yes we must hope, and yes there will be days of discouragement, however those days of discouragement cannot change the reality that in God's time all our sadness, tragedy, pain, and loss will be consumed by the love of God and in a new life. As promised in the Book of Revelation, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away".

This world that wails and is in tribulation will indeed be consumed by the love of God and in a new life. As the Lord told us at the last supper, just as a woman who has gone through child birth no longer remembers the pain of the birth process due to the joy of the new child, so we will not remember, nor our pain in this world has prepared for them that love Him" then suddenly violent deaths of the saints upon first reflection seem tragic. However when seen in the light of the Resurrection, that tragedy is engulfed by joy and triumph. The martyrdom however when seen in the light of the Resurrection, that tragedy is engulfed by joy and triumph. It is precisely when we begin to get too settled and too comfortable in this world, and begin to lose focus on our true home, that our struggle and suffering increases. It is when this occurs, when we lose the hope filled context for our experiences and memories, that despair becomes inevitable.

So it is precisely the context in which we remember our departured, our sufferings, and our losses in our life that has huge ramifications for what impact those memories have on us both emotionally and spiritually. Every thought, every sigh, every reflection, and every prayer is to be made in the awareness of this present life being our exile and our true life being the Kingdom of Heaven. However, though we are in exile we still must function and engage our life in this world, and with this reality comes the danger of getting too comfortable here and developing unrealistic expectations of our life in this world. Like the Israelites who found themselves expelled from Jerusalem and in exile in Babylon, we face the same struggle and temptation that they did of getting too comfortable in exile and forgetting our true home. It is precisely when we begin to get too settled and too comfortable in this world, and begin to lose focus on our true home, that our struggle and suffering increases. It is when this occurs, when we lose the hope filled context for our experiences and memories, that despair becomes inevitable.

The church teaches us how to remember. We do not need to fear remembering, the only way to true healing is through remembering. The church teaches us how to turn our losses into gains, how to turn our crosses into new life. The church gives us a new lens through which to understand and see the tragedies and painful events in our own life. It must be said and acknowledged that tragedies in this life and all of the remembrance of the losses and pain, for the former things have passed away”.

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Serpents and Dragons in Christian Sacred Art

Christian sacred art has been an important part of Christianity since soon after Christianity began. The earliest surviving Christian sacred art is from the Third Century: frescoes in Roman catacombs, carvings on sarcophagi of Christians in Rome, and wall paintings in the church of Dura-Europos, Syria. Numerous comments upon Christian sacred art show that it was used both for didactic purposes (to teach the tenets and history of the Faith) and in worship (with veneration of images as a way to honor Christ and to call to mind the deeds of his servants), just as it still is today in Orthodox churches. Whether in teaching or in worship, sacred art best serves its purpose if the viewer understands its symbology and meaning. Here we will explore the symbology and meaning of serpents and dragons in Christian sacred art.

One of the most oft-repeated images in the earliest surviving Christian sacred art is that of Adam and Eve with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. It is present among the wall paintings of the Dura-Europos church, on numerous fourth-century Roman sarcophagi, and on fourth-century medallions that were pressed into the soft walls of the loculi of Roman catacombs. Its popularity, which has continued through the centuries, is unsurprising, for it is a warning against giving in to temptation. That warning is a core Christian doctrine that is repeated myriad times in the writings of the Old and New Testaments, and in the Church Fathers.

A related image, that of the serpent beneath the feet of the Virgin Mary, was popular in the sacred art of the Christian West since the Middle Ages. Christian theologians have long considered Mary a second and opposite Eve. Whereas the first Eve brought condemnation via disobedience, the second Eve brought salvation via her obedience, through which the Saviour was born. Part of the punishment of the Eden serpent was to be crushed underfoot by the offspring of Eve (Genesis 3:14–15). Accordingly, in this iconographic motif the serpent is crushed underfoot by the second Eve. The motif often includes twelve stars around Mary’s head, the moon beneath her feet, and the radiance of the sun around her. The celestial objects refer to Chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation. In that chapter, St. John describes a vision of a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars. The woman gives birth to a child who will rule all nations. She is pursued by a dragon that is defeated in battle by the Archangel Michael. Theologians have long considered the vision to represent Mary’s giving birth to Christ, and the defeat of Christ’s opponent (the devil).

Another image that is often found in the sacred art of the Christian West is that of the Apostle John holding a cup with a snake in it. This is a visual reference to a medieval legend in which the Apostle’s drink was poisoned, but the poison miraculously crawled out of the cup in the form of a snake, making the beverage safe to drink. The snake in the cup identifies the saint as the Apostle John. This is important, for in western Christian sacred art, it is rare for the iconographer to identify the people in the images by writing their names next to them, as Orthodox iconographers do. Instead, in sacred art of the Christian West, saints are more often identified by attributes such as symbols or associated objects. For example, St. Rocco is shown with a sore on his thigh and is often accompanied by a dog. St. Paul is bald and often holds a sword, and the Apostle Simon often holds a saw (with which he was supposedly martyred).

Serpents are often present on the crozier, the staff that a bishop carries. In the Christian West, the head of a crozier is usually shaped like that of a shepherd’s crook, and may terminate in a serpent that opposes a lamb. In such cases, the imagery represents confrontation between the devil (the serpent) and Christ, the Lamb of God. In the Christian East, the head of the crozier of an Orthodox bishop is usually tipped with a pair of serpents that face each other, or that face a cross between them. Opinions differ as to the meaning of the serpents on the Orthodox crozier. According to some commentators, the serpents are a reminder that bishops should be “wise as serpents” (Matthew 10:16). According to others, they represent the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness, so that the Israelites who had been bitten by venomous snakes could look upon it and be healed (Numbers 21:4–9), a type of Christ (John 3:14–15). Other commentators see the serpents on the staff as a visual reference to Exodus 4:4 and 7, in which Moses’ and Aaron’s staffs become serpents and then became staffs again. That is, the serpents signify that the bishop is God’s spokesman (as Moses was) and is a priest (as Aaron was).

The story of Aaron’s staff illustrates an important point about serpents and dragons: they were originally...
one and the same. In the Hebrew text of Exodus 7, Aaron’s staff is said to become a nāhāsh as ̀dvoy (יִפְתָּן), the generic ancient Greek term for “snake.” It usually translates nāhāsh as ὄφις (óphis), the word that eventually gave rise to the English term dragon. Accordingly, the King James Version of the Bible usually translates nāhāsh as “serpent” and tannîn as “dragon.” To the ancient Greeks, the word drakōn simply meant “serpent.” Several ancient Greek works mention an animal that is called a drakōn on one line and an ὄφις on the next. This even occurs in the New Testament (Revelation 12:9 and 20:2). In addition to such written works, ancient Greek paintings and sculptures also demonstrate that drakōn meant “serpent” to the ancient Greeks. Every work of ancient Greek art that depicts a mythological creature demonstrates that the word drakōn meant “serpent.” In the Hebrew text of Exodus 7, Aaron’s staff is said to become a drakōn. The story of Aaron’s staff being turned into a drakōn was used as a metaphor for Moses’ snake SPEAKING fire. The Serpent in the Garden of Eden, as depicted in the Book of Genesis, was a drakōn/deamonism (drakōn), the broadest ancient Greek term for “snake.” This demonstrates the equivalence between the two Hebrew terms. Nāhāsh is the generic Hebrew term for “snake.” The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament that the early Church used, translates nāhāsh as ὄφις (óphis), the generic ancient Greek term for “snake.” It usually translates nāhāsh as ὄφις (óphis), the word that eventually gave rise to the English term dragon. Accordingly, the King James Version of the Bible usually translates nāhāsh as “serpent” and tannîn as “dragon.” To the ancient Greeks, the word drakōn simply meant “serpent.” Several ancient Greek works mention an animal that is called a drakōn on one line and an ὄφις on the next. This even occurs in the New Testament (Revelation 12:9 and 20:2). In addition to such written works, ancient Greek paintings and sculptures also demonstrate that drakōn meant “serpent” to the ancient Greeks. Every work of ancient Greek art that depicts a mythological creature demonstrates that the word drakōn meant “serpent.” In the Hebrew text of Exodus 7, Aaron’s staff is said to become a drakōn. The story of Aaron’s staff being turned into a drakōn was used as a metaphor for Moses’ snake SPEAKING fire. The Serpent in the Garden of Eden, as depicted in the Book of Genesis, was a drakōn/draco (the Latin equivalent of drakōn). Such works of art demonstrate that the term drakōn originally referred to snakes, not to bat-winged, fire-breathing monsters.

In the early centuries of the Christian Era, stories began to circulate of saints who confronted venom-spitting dragons. By the Fourth Century, the dragon, in some of the stories were spitting fire. Dragons were still depicted simply as snakes in the artwork of the next few centuries. In the Eighth Century, however, Christian artists began adding a pair of feathered wings and a pair of legs to the dragons in art. In the Thirteenth Century, some artists added raven’s feathers for leathery bat wings, a feature that became popular in the Fifteenth Century. In the Fourteenth Century, some artists began to add a second pair of legs to the drakōn. This had become common by the Sixteenth Century. From then on, it was common to depict the dragon as a bat-winged quadrupod with spiny legs. Some European artists were therefore depicting the dragon as a winged quadruped by the time Marco Polo visited China. Had such not been the case, Europeans might never have given the name “dragon” to the mythical creature that the Chinese call the lóng and which is often called the “Chinese dragon” today. The Chinese were depicting the lóng as a winged quadruped centuries before the birth of Christ, when the Greeks and Romans were still painting and carving the drakōn down as a snake. The tendency to call the lóng a “dragon” has caused much confusion, for the lóng and the western dragon are unrelated things. The Greeks and Romans used the term drakōn originally for a natural animal that was legless and wingless, whereas the Chinese lóng was not a natural animal but a weather spirit that was thought to be formless but was depicted in a winged quadruped.1 The theme of the saint confronting a dragon is an old one. The Septuagint’s version of the story of Daniel—which is in Orthodox and Catholic but not Protestant Bibles—tells of such a confrontation (Daniel 14). According to the story, the Babylonians worshiped a drakōn as a god. Daniel proved that the drakōn was mortal by feeding it a mixture of tar, fat, and hair, which killed the animal. Carvings from Daniel feeding the mixture to the serpent are present on some fourth-century Christian sarcophagi from Rome. They are the earliest known surviving images of a saint confronting a dragon. Their message appears to be a warning against reverting to idolatry, a reminder that false gods are no gods at all.

The fourth-century church historian Eusebius mentions another fourth-century image of a saint confronting a dragon, in Life of Constantine 3:3. According to Eusebius, Emperor Constantine commissioned a painting of himself and his children. Beneath their feet was a dragon speared with a dart and cast into the sea, and above St. Constantine’s head was a cross. This was meant to represent the defeat of Satan by Christ. The speared dragon was also depicted beneath the feet of the Emperor and his family also introduced the iconographic motif of the dragon Satan as enemy of the state. In the First Century, B.C. Julius Caesar had introduced the motif of the dragon as enemy of the state, on coins that showed the emperor as an elephant trampling a dragon. However, St. Constantine’s painting was the first to depict Satan as the dragon—enemy of the state.

That motif was continued by St. Constantine’s son Co-Nektattius II, who commissioned coins that depicted a speared dragon. The fifth-century Byzantine emperor Valentinian III had coins struck that showed him with his foot upon the head of a human-headed dragon that he was spearing with a lance topped with a cross. In the same century, the barbarian kings of the Suevi and Vandals had iconoclastic icons struck. The Mediterranean world was thus flooded with images of monarchs versus the dragon Satan, enemy of the state. Soon, military saints were depicted spearing the dragon, Satan, enemy of the state. The earliest known such images are on two sixth-century Byzantine altarpieces from Attaroussi, Syria. Each chalice’s dragon-slaying saint is bearded and unnamed. Labelled images of the military-saints George, Theodore Tiron, and Phileotheus spearing dragons that apparently represent Satan, enemy of the state, appeared in the Seventh Century. The stories of Sts. Theodore and George spearing literal dragons appeared later and were apparently inspired by the iconography, not the other way around.

Stories of saints confronting (and in some cases slaying) dragons accumulated in the Middle Ages. Literary dragon confrontations occurred with Sts. Perpetua and Thomas in the Third Century; Sts. Peter, Sylvestern, and Hilarius in the Fourth Century; Sts. Ammon, Donatus, and Victoria in the Fifth Century; Sts. Andrew, Calypson, and Melleus in the Sixth Century; St. Simon in the Seventh Century; St. Theodore Enon in the Eighth Century; St. Margaret in the Ninth Century; Sts. George and Martha in the Twelfth Century; and St. Matthew and the Disciples of St. James in the Thirteenth Century. Most such stories appeared much too long after the saint’s death to have been based on actual events, and some were based on previous stories. For example, the salient elements of St. George’s dragon-slaying story are taken from the Greek myth of Perseus, and those of St. Philip’s dragon-confrontation story are taken from the story of Moses lifting the brazen serpent in the wilderness. In iconography of the Christian West, the attributes of the dragon confrontation story often identify the saint. St. Margaret of Antioch was said to have been swallowed...
white by a dragon while imprisoned. She killed the dragon by cutting her way out of its abdomen with a crucifix. Accordingly, she is often depicted emerging from the dragon’s body, with the tip of her cloak still hanging from the dragon’s mouth. St. Martha, the sister of Lazarus, was said to have moved to France, where she encountered a dragon that had been terrorizing the locals. She tamed it with prayer and brought it on a leash to the locals, who slew it. Accordingly, she is often depicted holding a dragon on a leash.

In Christian sacred art, wings on a dragon-speaker identify him as the Archangel St. Michael. His dragon-battling story is told in Revelation 12, in which he defeats the dragon Satan. Images of St. Michael versus the dragon appear as early as the Sixth Century on Coptic textiles.

Dragons are also associated with baptism in Christian iconography. In reference to Christ’s baptism in the Jordan River, the Orthodox baptismal service includes the following line: “You did hallow the streams of Jordan, sending down from heaven upon them your Holy Spirit, and did crush the heads of the dragons who lurked there.” The last phrase is taken from Psalm 74:14: “You dried the heads of the dragons in the waters.” Orthodox icons of Christ’s baptism therefore sometimes include the heads of dragons near Jesus’ feet. In such icons there is often another figure that one must be careful not to confuse with a dragon. It is a sea monster (representing the devil) which is usually paired with a human figure (a dragon) as a symbol of the Dragon Satan. One such icon is described by St. Ignatius of Antioch: “When the lion and dragon are shown battling to Paschal lamb that is depicted as a lion or dragon is sometimes a cross with peridexion fruit at its tips, with or without a pair of dragons lurking below. This, too, conveys the message that Christ is a safe haven for believers who heard this account would realize that there can be no battle, for there is no god or chaos-spirit equal to Him who has vanquished all.”

Serpents and dragons have long been and continue to be parts of important iconographic motifs in Christian sacred art. To understand those motifs is to enable the images to convey their messages better. It is my hope that this article will bring about an increase in such understanding, so that the sacred art speaks as it should. For readers wishing to pursue the subject more deeply, I recommend perusal of this article’s main information sources, listed below.

People sometimes ask, “Why doesn’t the Western Rite use the Orthodox Calendar like everyone else?” The simple answer is, “There is no such thing as ‘The Orthodox Calendar’ which everyone else might use.” The Church calendar which tells us when to celebrate the great feasts and saints’ days is actually a collection of regional and jurisdictional calendars which differ widely from place to place and from one jurisdiction to another. This, of course, is as true of the Western Church as of the Eastern Church. At no time was there ever a universal calendar that told the entire Church when and what to celebrate. Like everything else in the Church, the calendar developed regionally and represented the custom of the regional Church. As things began to be standardized before and after the year 1,000, the calendars of the regional Churches began to take on the characteristics of the great Churches, such as Rome, Constantinople or Alexandria. Nevertheless, a single, standardized, universal calendar never developed. In the West, the different rites and the different monastic organizations each maintained its own calendar. Local variations according to regions were also tolerated. In the East, the local autonomous Churches each maintained their own calendars, right up to the present day. While it might be understood that the Greeks and the Russians have differences in their calendars, it might be less well known that the calendars of the Roman Church and the Serb Church are not the same as the Bulgarian Church or the Georgian Church. All the Churches differ in which saints and holy days to celebrate, as well as on which day to celebrate them.

I am not speaking of the difference between the so-called “old” and “new” calendars. For those Churches which maintain the traditional or “old” calendar, the dates themselves are 13 days behind those of the revised or “new” calendar. So both celebrate Christmas on December 25, but they disagree on when the De-

cember 25 actually falls. No one celebrates Christmas on January 7. Some Churches understand that particular day to be December 25, while others understand it to be the 7th of January, but it is the same date. Those who understand it to be December 25 are celebrating Christmas, while those who understand it to be January 7 are celebrating St. John the Baptist. This is not the difference of which I am speaking.

I am speaking of the fact that St. Photine, the Samaritan Woman, is celebrated by the Greek Church on February 26, while the Russians celebrate her on March 20 (whenever they understand that date actually to fall). St. James the Bishop of Catania is celebrated by the Russians on March 21, while the Greeks celebrate St. Joseph the Hymnographer on April 3, while the Russians celebrate him on the 4th. St. Katherine is celebrated on November 24 by the Russians, but on November 5 by the Greeks. The Russians celebrate St. Sabbas I of Serbia on January 12, while the Serbians celebrate him on the 14th. The great feast of the Virgin on October 1 was dropped by the Greek Church after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, but maintained by the Russians and others. In 1952 the Synod of the Church of Greece revived it with all new service texts, to be celebrated on October 28 in conjunction with their Ohi Day commemorations. There are all sorts of reasons why these feasts are celebrated on different days by different churches. Some of these histories are very interesting, but not germane to the
All of this has its parallels in the historical West. Italy, France, Germany, and later England all developed their own liturgical calendars. The monastic orders: the Benedictines, the Dominicans, the Augustinians, and so on, all maintained their own liturgical calendars. Rome certainly exercised a heavy influence on all of them, but they kept their own peculiarities as well. We do not have to spend any time at all looking into these particular differences, because in 1869 the Holy Synod of the Russian Church instructed us and charged us to adopt and maintain the Benedictine forms of worship, including the Benedictine liturgical calendar. In 1882 the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate concurred with the decree of the Russian Church. Therefore we must be careful not to look into Sarum or Liege or Milan or Bangor or even Rome for uses, but rather into the various books and traditions of our own church. We are committed to the liturgical tradition of both the Eastern and Western Rites. In forming our Orthodox Western Rite in all of its aspects and details, having come to understand this, next it is important to understand how this is applied within the Church. In the past, the different jurisdictions have understood and respected these differences. In Europe, when certain Russian groups were taken under the pastoral care of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, they continued to celebrate the various feasts and saint's days according to their traditional Russian calendar, rather than adopting the Russian groups were taken under the pastoral care of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. They keep in every way the traditions and customs of their own ecclesiastical history and identity, without adopting any at all of the traditions and customs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Romanian Episcopate in union with the OCA always published its own ecclesiastical calendar for the use of its own parishes with no influence from the OCA itself, which follows a Russian-style calendar. It might also be pointed out that these Romanian parishes maintained their own Romanian identity with all of their own particular customs and traditions, without assimilating to the Russian style of the OCA. This is of importance to our Western Rite within the Antiochian Archdiocese. Because we have our own peculiar historical customs, uses, and traditions, including our own calendar, we should expect to keep all of these intact while living within the larger Antiochian Archdiocese. Not only is there no need at all for us to adopt one or another version of the Greek Byzantine calendar for the celebration of the feasts of the Church, there is absolutely no precedent to do so. The various Russians, Ukrainians, and Carpatho-Russians living within the Ecumenical Patriarchate have never felt any need to adopt any Constantinopolitan customs in order to “fit in” with the Greek parishes under the same jurisdiction. They have always felt perfectly comfortable being themselves, and in fact, have made some effort to keep their historical cultural identities strong rather than assimilating in any way with the Greek majority around them. Our Western Rite parishes and faithful should feel just as free to maintain our own particular traditions comfortably within the Antiochian Archdiocese, and should also be making real efforts to keep our particular identity strong and not assimilate to the Byzantine majority around us. When we allow ourselves to be tempted to adopt or imitate customs which might make us more similar in practice to our Byzantine brethren, we are weakening our presence and witness as Western Orthodox in this Western world in which we live and minister. We also weaken our identity as a particularly Western expression of historical Orthodoxy. Our Western calendar, with its ancient progression of feasts and commemorations, is an important force which has helped shape our piety and form our relationship with God. It presents a liturgical year which was formed in conjunction with the shape of our liturgical worship. The conformity of the feasts and commemorations with the seasons of the liturgical year and the traditional scriptural readings of the lectionary all come together to form a harmonious whole. This whole is the matrix or environment in which we encounter the Living God as He manifests Himself to us humans here in this world in which we live. This magnificent and monumental force which is the traditional Western liturgical year has hugely influenced the development of the Western civilization of which we are a part. Modernity in its various forms has sought to empty our culture and our civilization of the Divine content around which it was historically formed. When we allow this traditional force to fill our lives with the presence of God, we find that His presence transforms and sanctifies us in conformity with the Kingdom of God. This transformation is so much more natural and organic when we are living the Western Tradition which fits so naturally and organically into the Western culture and civilization which it caused to come into being and formed in the first place. There is a distinct and definite tendency for Byzantine Orthodox in this country to separate and differentiate themselves from the surrounding culture in order to be fully and completely “Orthodox.” For us, however, when we live out our Orthodox spirituality in and through the traditional Western forms, we recall the surrounding culture to its own formative content and original intent. St. Benedict, St. Gregory and St. Martin of Tours, St. Germans of Auxerre, St. Patrick of Ireland, St. Boniface of Germany – all are said to have created Western culture and civilization out of the tribal chaos which was paganism. This is our culture and civilization. Through their prayers and with their help we must re-claim this culture and civilization for the Most Holy Trinity for whom, in whom and by whom it was originally created. Our Western Liturgical Calendar is one very important part of that mission.

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Can Grumpy Be Saved?

One of my earliest memories sprang from my kindergarten days at Little Red School House. Being five is pretty much the bomb: the world is new, make-believe it rules, and innocence is, too. When our class did scenes from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, I was given the role of Sleepy. I wanted the role of Grumpy — everyone did — because it seemed more fun. I mean, how exciting is Sleepy? (Alas, as we grow older, sleepy comes more naturally, as does grumpy.)

While discussing the Mystery of Confession with young kids, I have mentioned how our sins — thus, our confessions — are age-specific. For instance, when children make their first confession, I’ll frequently name some common age-specific sins to help jog the nervous nubbins recall: thinking bad thoughts, disobeying parents, taking something from someone, saying a bad word, forgetting to pray, and so on. The kids are often amazed, wondering how I know! I am no clairvoyant, though I have been seven something from someone, saying a bad word, forgetting

When the little ones were asked what sins might perhaps plague those in their seventeens and eighteens — they seemed clairvoyant, answering: anger. Why? Because, they said, they don’t do the things they used to: they fear disability and death. They also mentioned regret; perhaps their life had not gone as they’d hoped. Such fears are ever-present, regardless of age, but may be magnified as our days grow shorter.

One of my favorite children’s books, The Grouchy Ladybug by Eric Carle, tells the story of a grumpy and shorter. The grouchy ladybug. “No, they’re mine, all mine,” screamed the grouchy ladybug. “Or do you want to fight me for them?” If you insist,’ answered the friendly ladybug sweetly. “Or do you want to fight me for them?”

One of my seminary professors used to say, “My age is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (1 Corinthians 12:9). Of course, Grumpy can be saved! But not by you. Only love saves. The script that we are to follow, should we have a role, is to love others the way that Christ loves.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. This is my commandment to you: love one another as I have loved you.

As actors are perfected in rehearsals, our growth in Christ directs us toward a better way: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Of course, Grumpy can be saved! But not by us. Only love saves. The script that we are to follow, should we have a role, is to love others the way that Christ loves.

Our kindergarten play was a simple one. If memory serves, we “dwarfs” just marched around in a circle, acting our roles, while Heigh Ho played on the turntable. Since six of the characters’ roles are defined by their names (Grumpy, Happy, Sleepy, Dopey, Bashful, Sneezy), the script was easy to follow. (Doc, so named because of the spec on his nose, was the philosopher.) Our roles were given to us; the goal was to stay in character. This we youngsters did with relish.

As we mature in the movie of life, we are not only the actor, but the scriptwriter. Although genetics has a hand in our character, as does circumstance, ultimately we fashion our own script — we’ve got the face we’ve earned. Note, this saying should be applied to ourselves, and not to others. None of us knows the full sum of a man — what has fashioned him or her. If we write in our role as Judge, we have no God-pleasing role in another’s salvation, or our own. The good news is that you don’t have to follow your script. As our first parents discovered, following our own script leads to a bad exit, stage left! We must struggle against our fallen nature toward what God created in Paradise, this, dear brothers and sisters, is the salvation against our fallen nature toward that which God created in Paradise. This we, brothers and sisters, is the biblical script. When it comes to acting, we would do well to practice the advice of Fr. Seraphim Rose.

If you wish to be an Orthodox Christian you must begin now, from this very day and hour and minute, to love God and your fellow men. This means: not to act in an arbitrary way with people, not just saying the first thing that enters your head, not picking fights or quarrels with people over anything, big or small, being constantly ready to ask forgiveness of them (and to ask it more than you think is necessary), to have compassion for them and fervently pray for them. Our role is not to fix others, but to love them. Lord knows it’s mighty impossible to fix ourselves. “Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). Although she knows their shortcomings, sins, and weaknesses, what good mother does not love her children? Those who love see the good, overlook the bad. When we love, even though we struggle, love wins.

Granted, in our weakness, oftentimes it may be best to avoid the grumpy. This side of Paradise, people want those around them to feel how they feel. Passions, like viruses, can be contagious. St. Isaac the Syrian wrote a prescription: “Conquer men by your gentle kindness, and make zealous men wonder at your goodness. Put the love of justice to shame by your compassion. With the all fed be afflicted in mind. Love all men but keep distant from all men.”

As actors are perfected in rehearsals, our growth in Christ directs us toward a better way: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Of course, Grumpy can be saved! But not by you. Only love saves. The script that we are to follow, should we have a role, is to love others the way that Christ loves.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. This by all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34–35). A saying, attributed to many, warrants mention: “Be kind to everyone you meet, for each carries a heavy burden.” Other lines come to mind, and I paraphrase: 1. Take nothing personally; and 2. If we knew everything about a man, we would not judge. The Apostle Paul writes: “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3). Would that we could rehearse these lines each day — no matter our role — whether we’re eight or eighty.

It’s been over fifty years since my debut as Sleepy. Although I didn’t get the role I hoped for, I’ve rehearsed, reminisced, and perfected it many times. With God all things are possible, even salvation! Still, given what’s been said above, what I know now — and for the sake of all the other dwarfs, bugs, and children — it’s best not to be Grumpy.
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We often hear statistics about youth falling away from the Church during their college years; it has become cliché, given how often it is stated in speeches like this. Like many of you, I have heard it for years. As youth of the Church enter college, a significant, yet uncertain portion will drift away from the faith, and ultimately leave it. We typically hear this in the abstract, it is an issue that concerns us vaguely, but something we don’t deal with daily. If you will indulge me, I would like to confess something, something I have never been open about. In the past year, I came very close to becoming one of those drifting individuals. Contrary to the popular assumption, no atheist professor indoctrinated me into a “church of skepticism,” nor did I simply wake up one day and feel that my faith had evaporated suddenly. It began as a nagging feeling in the back of my mind... a dissonance that I initially ignored, but one that grew and grew to an overwhelming chasm. I no longer knew who I was, or what I believed. And I no longer believed what I knew. I took a step back to examine the root of my doubts. I realized that they stemmed from a lack of harmony in my life around me. As I looked around, what I saw seemed incongruent with our core belief.

We live in what might be described as a disquieting time. Our world is increasingly divided by pain and anger and hatred. We are confronted with pressure to succumb to these feelings, and, with troubling frequency, many of us do. Many of us make concessions to the popular notion that our life requires the adoption of an “us-versus-them” philosophy, a belief that there is some terrible “Other” whose presence is an affront to our very existence. The only way to survive is to entirely sequester ourselves from this “Other” in frightened isolation. This tendency is hardly novel; we see it throughout human history. We are taught by the Church that we are, as stated in Matthew 25:35-36, to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, take in the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the imprisoned. It is distressing, then, to see this “us-versus-them” mentality, so contrary to these teachings of compassion espoused by the Church, continue to find footing among members of her Body. As I came to see this in the world around me, I realized that I, likewise, had fallen prey to this division. As I underwent my crisis of faith, I withdrew from my community. I built walls isolating myself from others, even as I condemned that same action. It became apparent that I, as much as anyone else, was in need of the reminder that is brought to us in Christ’s cleansing of the temple. We are called to be a united community, to put aside the divisive nature of the world and become “a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17).

We are taught by the world, both implicitly and explicitly, that we are, by nature, irreducibly different from those with whom we do not share common heritage, ideology or ancestry. When followed through, this line of thinking leads to an understanding that humanity must exist in uncompromising opposition. The thought becomes, “Those who are not among us and similar to us must therefore be our enemy.” The fundamental flaw here is the failure to recognize that we, as human beings, share the heritage of creation by God, patterned in His image and likeness, as we read in Genesis 1:26, in which the Creator says, “Let us make man, in your image, according to our likeness.” This heritage, however, does not come to us by the nature of our creation alone. St. Basil the Great reminds us in his first homily on the human condition that, while we are inherently granted God’s image by our creation, it is only “[by] free choice [that] we are conformed to that which is according to the likeness of God. . . . We bring it about by our activity!” We are confronted with a choice: either we answer the call to fulfill God’s likeness, or we do not. If we choose to answer this call, we must then discern how. Turning our attention again to St. Basil, he teaches us that fulfilling this call, the very intent of our creation, comes “through kindness, through endurance of evil, through compassion, through love for one another and love for brethren.” Our fulfillment is dependent upon a unity that is largely absent from the world around us. As I experienced in my own crisis of faith, this is often absent from our own worldview, as well. How, then, can we amend our ways, and fulfill the mission of our creation?

In his essay “Unity of the Church – Unity for Mankind,” former Dean of St. Vladimir’s Seminary Fr. John Meyendorf states that the clearest path to unity is through Christ. As Meyendorf states, it is through Christ’s willing offering of Himself that “the divisions and contradictions of the fallen world are transfigured and overcome.” Each week, we are blessed with the opportunity to partake in His willing sacrifice through the Holy Eucharist, offered always “on behalf of all and for all.” This is a reminder that Christ, as He was crucified, died not only for the sake of those who believed in Him and followed Him, but also for those who did not. It is through partaking in the Eucharist, then, that we are united with our brethren, a union that is necessary for our fulfillment of God’s likeness. Is unity simply brought about by allowing the body and blood of Christ to pass our lips? Certainly not. As German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, we must resist a notion of “cheap grace,” that is to say, a theology of passive salvation. Indeed, to quote St. Maximus the Confessor, “a theology without action is a theology of the Devil.”

We must remember that the sacrament of the Eucharist does not end with the reception of Holy Communion during liturgy. Rather, the Eucharist is fulfilled in mission and in action. The Eucharist is fulfilled by following the archetype set by Christ in His crucifixion, in becoming living icons of Christ, and dying to ourselves and each other, not solely for our benefit, but not merely for those with whom we find ourselves allied, but rather for all people. This mission is impossible to fulfill when we continue to divide ourselves from others. The Holy Eucharist, offered for all people, cannot be fulfilled while there still exists discord among us, and there can be no unity when there are walls between us. Our mission is not a simple one; it is not one that could come easily to us. Rather, it will be a constant struggle against the world, against our own doubts, and against walls, created both by those seeking to divide and those who create for ourselves. It is what must be done for our sake and for others. We must turn away from petty divisions, walls that humanity falsely builds among itself. We must see each other and act in the manner of compassion and service that is inherent in our creation. We must become, we are called to become, one in Christ. It is in this manner that we will fulfill our calling to be in the likeness of God. May our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ give us the strength and compassion needed to do this.
BISHOP ANTHONY VISITS BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY

On Friday, February 2, 2018, the priest and faithful of Holy Apostles Orthodox Mission in Bowling Green, Kentucky, were happy to welcome their Bishop and father in Christ, ANTHONY, for a pastoral visit. Everyone was so thrilled to see him again here in “Bowling Green, rolling green,” as he called it.

Our visit with Sayidna began on Friday night, when he attended a dinner at a local seafood restaurant with our priest, Fr. Jason Blais, Fr. Jason’s wife, Khousa Emily, and members of our hard-working Parish Council, and their spouses. For one of our Parish Council members, it was her first time meeting the Bishop. She and the other Parish Council members enjoyed a nice time of fellowship with him.

On Saturday morning, after his arrival, Sayidna spent several hours meeting with parishioners, our Antiochian Women, and the Parish Council. The St. Paul community then gathered for a prayerful Great Vespers service and closed the day with a very enjoyable dinner together.

On the Sunday of the Last Judgement, after hearing the sobering hymnography at Orthros, His Grace presided over the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. The faithful throughout the community packed St. Paul Church, while the concelebrating six priests filled the altar area. At the conclusion of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, four of our own faithful were inducted as new members to the Orde of St. Ignatius.

This grace-filled visitation from our local Bishop was beautifully sealed with the “Welcome Brunch” that followed, which 125 parishioners and guests attended. After congratulating the St. Paul community for their accomplishments, His Grace pierced the souls in attendance, and lit hearts aflame, with his practical message: “I expect Fr. Paul, as your new priest, not only to comfort the afflicted, but also to ‘afflict the comfortable’ – it is time to take it up a notch. Our purpose is to know God, which can only be done through a spiritual life.” Sayidna continued to unveil a beautiful and encouraging vision for the diocese, while assuring our community of his fatherly love, care, and support.

The faithful of St. Paul Church in Naples are indescribably grateful and blessed to be under the love and care of His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS. Eis pola eiti despota! 
So often, many of us want to find our divine vocation in life. Many people think that means becoming a clergyman or a monk or nun. Although these are definitely divine callings (to use the modern vernacular), any vocation can become divine if we use it to glorify God in that occupation whether it is as a teacher, an entrepreneur, a stay at home mom or a professional athlete (just to name a few). There are also those vocations that specifically are part of parish life – Sunday school teacher, parish council member, ministry team leader, etc.

Have you ever considered a life in ministry using your specific God-given gifts? We have ministries that abound in the Orthodox world that need people to offer their gifts and talents whether it is a specific ministry of our Archdiocese or another one such as IOCC, OCMC, OCF and many others. A wonderful place to discover these opportunities is OrthodoxJobs.com.

At present, the Antiochian Village is looking for a maintenance person who can share his or her talents for the glory of God and His Church by being part of a team of people that provides for the maintenance, repair and upkeep of the Village property. Consider joining the Village family if you have experience in HVAC, carpentry, plumbing and electrical maintenance and repair. For more information, contact Fr Anthony Yazge (franthony@avcamp.org).

V. Rev. Anthony G. Yazge
Camp Director
Antiochian Village Camp & Conference Center

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11:30 AM Luncheons for Antiochian Women, Teens and Conferees
1:00 PM Keynote Address by Michelle Moujaes of Faithtree Ministries, Followed by Discussion
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Diocese of Worcester
Hosted by Diocesan 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 12–16, 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 Stoudt, PA; St. George Upper Darby, PA & Holy Ascension (West Chester, PA) Churches; at Antiochian Village
June 27–July 1, 2018

Diocese of Ottawa
Hosted by St. Anthony/St. Antonios Church, Halifax, NS
June 28–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
44th Biennial Archdiocesan Convention
St. Nicholas Church, Grand Rapids, MI
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Holy Trinity Orthodox Church
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June 13-16, 2018

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- Saint Ignatius of Antioch

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