



The Word

Volume 61 No. 8

November 2017



Memory Eternal
His Grace, Bishop ANTOUN
1931-2017

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The Word



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1931 – 2017

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Archieratical Address of His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH Delivered at

THE FUNERAL OF HIS GRACE BISHOP ANTOUN

Wednesday, October 11, 2017

BELOVED BROTHER HIERARCHS, REVEREND CLERGY, AND CHRIST-LOVING FAITHFUL, I EMBRACE ALL OF YOU WITH PATERNAL LOVE AS WE COME TOGETHER THIS EVENING TO PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED BISHOP ANTOUN TO HIS ETERNAL REST.

I return to you from the meetings of the Holy Synod of Antioch, and I bear with me the fervent prayers and heartfelt condolences of our Father-in-Christ, His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X, as well as my brothers, the venerable Metropolitans of our Holy Patriarchate. We belong to one Antiochian family, and I can relay to you the loss of our beloved Bishop ANTOUN is profoundly felt by all.

I stand before you this morning with great reverence and immeasurable affection for my dear brother and concelebrant, and I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the years I was blessed to call him a friend and a mentor.

I stand before you this morning beholding our Bishop ANTOUN, and I reflect on the image he now presents to us of Our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ:

- ❖ He is vested as a High Priest, as one whose hands offered the Bloodless Sacrifice, and as one who fervently and tearfully offered prayers and supplications for his people;
- ❖ He is crowned as a King, not as one who lorded authority over others, but as one who always led as though he were the servant of all;
- ❖ He holds the Book of the Gospels as a Prophet, as one who expounded with authority the Word of God;
- ❖ And he bears the staff of a Shepherd, as one who was always there to guide his precious sheep and guard



them with his own life.

While His Grace was a wonderful example of all of these Christ-like images, I will most remember Bishop ANTOUN as a *shepherd*. We read in the Gospel of John, that the Good Shepherd loves the sheep: knowing each of them by name, protecting them from thieves and wolves, and providing them with abundant life.

As a good shepherd, His Grace did indeed love all of us – the hierarchs, clergy, and faithful. He offered himself wholeheartedly to us, and we could always count on his steadfastness, his courage, and his selflessness.

He had a particular love for the clergy. He gave many wonderful years to the formation of seminarians and raised up for this Archdiocese a generation of bishops and priests. He knew them by name and loved them. They knew his voice and loved him in return – even if the sound of that distinctive voice was sometimes stern and correcting, they knew his heart was that of a shepherd, guiding and caring for them.

Who can forget the beautiful relationship he had with the children of our church? They were drawn in by this kind and gentle shepherd. His face would beam with joy as he led them in his favorite song – “You Are My Sunshine.” I find it hard not to be moved to tears when I think of the banquet here in Miami, and I can still hear the voices of the young people singing to their beloved

Bishop ANTOUN

Bishop ANTOUN.

In these recent days, I found myself re-reading a beautiful interview Bishop ANTOUN gave to Bishop JOHN for *The WORD* magazine. In reading his account of his long life of service to this Archdiocese, I called to mind the sacrificial love of the Good Shepherd described by Our Lord. His Grace reminisced about his arrival in the United States in 1959 and described the development of his longtime friendship with His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP into a dynamic partnership that transformed our Archdiocese.

With his sacrificial love, he worked side-by-side with His Eminence in building a new headquarters for the Archdiocese, creating the Antiochian Women, Teen SOYO, and the Order of Saint Ignatius, establishing the Antiochian Village, and welcoming the Evangelical Orthodox Church and countless others home into the green pastures of Holy Orthodoxy.

In the interview, His Grace beautifully remarked: “Since my consecration as a bishop, I traveled throughout the Archdiocese. All of my work brought me happiness. The love of my life is this Archdiocese, her people, and especially the clergy.” These are words of a true shepherd who gave himself to his flock with love and joy.

One of my favorite verses of Scripture comes from Psalm 54: “Oh that I had wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.” The context of the psalm is the betrayal of a close friend, one with whom the psalmist walked to the house of God and took sweet counsel, and can be said as a prayer during times of tribulation.

This morning, Sayidna ANTOUN does indeed fly away to be at rest, but not out of a desire to leave us behind. On the contrary, he was our close friend and never betrayed us, nor did we betray him. He is our faithful companion and, far from leaving us orphaned, he will take his rest, while never ceasing to intercede for us at the Throne of the Almighty God. He also now flies away to be rejoined for all eternity to his most faithful friend, His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP. We are assured that they will be forever united in loving prayers for us, their grateful flock.

I stand before you this morning, and I grieve with you the passing of this great man of God; but we grieve – not as ones who have no hope – but as faithful sheep knowing that our shepherds, Sayidna PHILIP and Sayidna ANTOUN, will continue by their prayers to guide us to the abundant life that is found in Christ’s Holy Church.

To the faithful of this Archdiocese, and particularly this diocese of Miami and the Southeast, I offer my paternal love and my solemn oath to live up to the example of this godly shepherd in caring for you, my beloved flock. I have complete confidence in my brother, His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS, that he will do likewise as he takes up the ministry of his venerable predecessor.

To the family and loved ones of our beloved Bishop ANTOUN, I offer – on behalf of my brother hierarchs and the clergy and faithful of this God-protected Archdiocese – heartfelt condolences and all of my love and prayers. We also offer our gratitude for your sharing of him with us, for his sacrifices on our behalf could not have come without your sacrifices as well.

Your Grace Bishop ANTOUN – Your legacy of love will never be forgotten. We shall never lose our gratitude for all of your joy, your sincerity, your self-sacrifice, and, of course, your *sunshine*. As you fly away to take your rest at the right hand of the Most High and to live in the Light that shall never be overtaken by night, remember us, your grateful and loving children, in your holy prayers.

May your memory be eternal, my brother and concelebrant!

+Metropolitan JOSEPH



A CONVENTION HOMILY Christ in Our Midst

Very Rev. John Fenton

YOUR EMINENCE, YOUR GRACES, REVEREND FATHERS, AND BELOVED LAITY: CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST!

I greet you with these words, not just because it is customary. As we stand in the kingdom heaven during this Divine Liturgy, **Christ is in our midst**.

He is in our midst mentally, as we think about, contemplate, and meditate on His saving work and His sacred gifts. He is in our midst emotionally, as our hearts are lifted up on account of His loving-kindness and many mercies, which we certainly do not deserve. **He is in our midst** spiritually, as the Holy Spirit draws us slowly, gently, kindly, into His soothing and invigorating embrace. Most of all, however, **Christ is in our midst** physically. He is really present, standing before us not figuratively but literally, not symbolically but actually, not metaphorically but truly.

How do we know this? Think about the incense. With the help of the servers, the priest uses the censor to produce, emit, and disperse perfumed fragrance, but not any fragrance. Rather, this is the precise fragrance that was used when Christ was buried, the fragrance that emanated from His resurrected body when He stood in the midst of the Apostles. That cologne from His body as He spoke – that is the same scent we get to smell during the Divine Liturgy. It announces to us, as it did to Peter and Thomas, that the resurrected **Christ is in our midst**, bringing not the stench of death but the aroma of life.

How close to us is Christ? Consider what is incensed: the altar (which represents the tomb of Christ); the bishop (who operates in the person of Christ); the Gospel (which contains the words of Christ); the faithful (who are the Body of Christ); and the Eucharist (which is Christ Himself). How close is Christ to us? “He is nearer than we believe.” Like the incense, He permeates and saturates and pervades the church and the liturgy.

That Christ is *that* near, that His sweet smelling mercy permeates all – this is what the woman in today’s Gospel believed. She did not see a miracle-man, a wonder-worker. When she saw Christ, she saw God Himself in her midst. This is the God whose love exceeded her imagination; the Spirit whose embrace strengthened her feeble knees; the Christ Jesus whose mercy radiated from His very body. So her boldness overcame her weakness. So she reached out for what she hoped she could have, and so she was healed. All because she saw **Christ in her midst**.

If you can believe it, we have more than this woman had. We handle more than she touched, for she reached out to touch the hem of Christ’s garment, while we open our mouths to receive God’s body and blood. She hoped for healing by reaching; we taste the Great Physician, who heals us, body and soul, as He courses through our

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop BASIL

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS

The Right Reverend
Bishop ALEXANDER

The Right Reverend
Bishop JOHN

The Right Reverend
Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend
Bishop NICHOLAS

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veins, and knits His flesh to our flesh. So we have Christ, truly in our midst: striving with us, working out our salvation within us.

This is what Saint Parasceva believed. As she aided the poor, she saw **Christ in her midst**. As she brushed aside the denunciations of the Jews, she saw **Christ in her midst**. And as she was horribly tortured and healed, and tortured and healed – she saw **Christ in her midst**, and so proclaimed to the prince who was torturing her: “O prince, it is not your gods who have healed me, but my Christ, the True God.” This godly woman knew not just *about* Jesus, but truly *knew* Jesus Himself. She knew that **He was in her midst**, and within her own being. That is what gave her the strength and resolve to shake off worse things than we know.

Christ in our midst: that is what truly makes this house a house of prayer. For if Christ is not here, it may be a quiet place, a meditative place, a religious place. But *if* Christ is not in our midst, then this is not yet a true house of prayer.

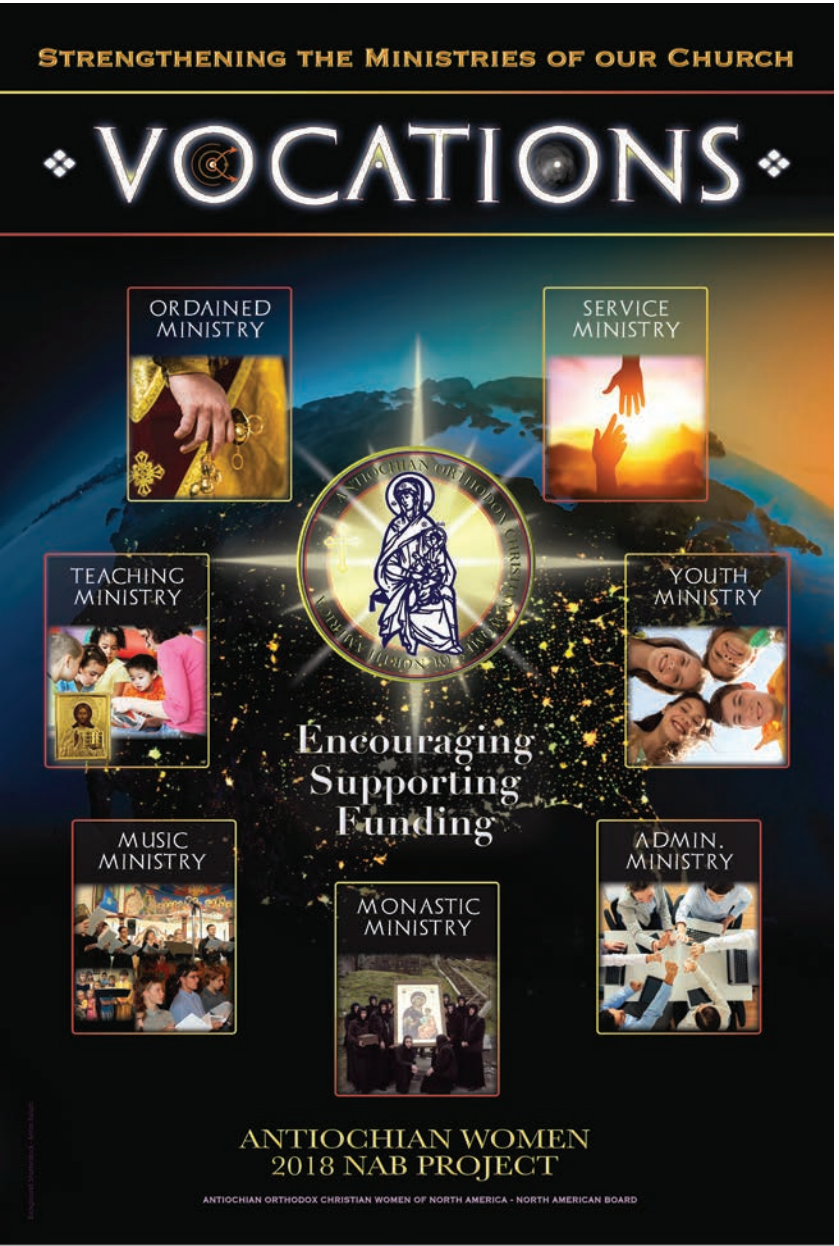
Yet Christ is truly amongst us: embracing and surrounding us, ready to place His sacrificed and risen body in our decaying yet illuminated bodies. Because of Him, we are in heaven now. Because of Him, our worse fears fade away. Because of Him, this room, our temples, our own bodies, are transformed into true houses of prayer.

This is good for all nations, not just those who deign to come to us, but also those who bump into us and those whom we earnestly seek. This is good for all cultures, not just those who embrace our way of life, but even those who wish to worship the true Lord Jesus, using apostolic and inspired liturgies of other times and places.

For Christ Himself knows no boundaries. Now, in *these* times, He has gathered together all peoples, all nations, all things in heaven and in earth, to Himself. And so, for this reason, His house of prayer also knows no boundaries. For with Christ among us, time loses its place and nothing else matters. All that matters is what we have: **Christ in our midst!**

To whom, by the prayers all the saints, and especially Saint Parasceva whom we commemorate this day, belongs all glory, honor, and worship: now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Very Rev. John Fenton,
Pastor of St. Michael Church, Wittier, California



Christ
is in our
midst

A CONVENTION HOMILY

Discerning and Using the Gifts that God Has Given

Fr. Milad Selim

IN TODAY’S EPISTLE READING (ACTS 6:1–7), WE HEARD HOW THE HELLENISTIC JEWS COMPLAINED TO THE DISCIPLES THAT THEIR WIDOWS WERE BEING NEGLECTED IN THE DAILY MINISTRATION. THIS WAS NOT DELIBERATE NEGLECT BY THE DISCIPLES; RATHER, THE PRESSURE OF MINISTRY AND THE TASK OF SPREADING THE GOSPEL HAD MADE THEM INEFFECTIVE IN THIS REGARD. AS A RESULT, THE DISCIPLES ASKED THE MULTITUDE TO “APPOINT SEVEN MEN OF HONEST REPORT, FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WISDOM.”

This issue with which the disciples dealt reminds me of our ministry as parish priests. The pressure and constant demands of our blessed ministry are constant. We are called to minister to the sick, perform sacraments, respond to emergencies, bless homes, attend meetings, prepare sermons, hold Bible studies, fundraise, increase stewardship, council families, organize events – the list could go on and on. I can’t help but compare this pressure to the waves of the ocean we see here in front of our hotel. They are constant. At times, they seem easy to bear; at other times, so violent that they knock us down. This level of demand, if not managed carefully, can lead us to become ineffective in some aspects of ministry. As a way to deal with it effectively, we are called to emulate the example and wisdom of the holy disciples by calling upon faithful parishioners, who are full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit, to serve in different capacities, preparing them to be faithful and obedient disciples of Christ and His Church.

The theme of the convention is “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” This theme reminds us as parish priests that we ought to do everything we can to ensure that His house, the Church, is in fact a house of prayer that continues to grow in every aspect. This requires us to discern carefully the talents, wisdom and gifts of our parishioners and use them. If we don’t, then we will most certainly struggle with the waves, which promise to be constant always. We will have a difficult time bracing ourselves against them, but because, as we heard this entire week, we are the icon of Christ in our parishes, we are called to follow his example of ministry.

This means that we are called to be among our people in our parishes – supporting them, serving them, inspiring them, forgiving them, uplifting them and being patient with them. Thus we would be doing all the things that Christ did for those to whom He ministered. By doing so, we will not only be uplifted ourselves, but we will also lift up those whom we serve.

His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH often says that “by serving others, we sanctify ourselves.” If I may take it a step farther, Your Eminence, I would say that, by not serving one another, we deprive ourselves and others of true and authentic sanctity. His Grace Bishop JOHN



teaches me and other clergy of our Diocese to be willing to follow the example of Christ, who washed the feet of His Disciples. He did not Lord it over them. He served them and even died on the Cross for them. His Grace Bishop ANTHONY mentioned to a small group of priests yesterday something profound. He said, “As parish

priests, we are not called to burn out, but to burn up.” Again, Your Grace, if I may take it a step further, one can say that we are called to be like incense, pure, holy and fragrant offered to God on behalf of our people. These images can only become possible in our ministry if we

ly believe in and often share with my parishioners. The success of a parish priest depends on his ability to realize and utilize the talents of



follow the example of Jesus and commit ourselves to be “with” our people, not watching or directing from the sideline, but like a quarterback who is in the huddle with his team – supporting, guiding and uplifting them at all times. This is how we can ensure that the Church continues to grow and that it continues to be a house of prayer for all nations.

Looking out from here, I see many of the laity listening to this sermon, perhaps more in number than clergy, which is great! I hope you were listening carefully, because everything I said also applies to you. You have been baptized with the same water and the same Holy Spirit, and therefore, you, too, are called to serve one another in order to be sanctified. You, too, are called to wash one another’s feet and not lord it over anyone. You, too, are called to burn up, becoming holy and pure for the sake of the other. So offer your God-given gifts to the Church to ensure Her continued growth and sanctity.

Finally, I would like to end with something I firm-

his people. Then and only then, can he truly be effective in his ministry and be able to meet the demands of our blessed ministry.

Fr. Milad Selim,
Dean of St. George Cathedral, Worcester, Massachusetts

A CONVENTION HOMILY

Endurance

Gospel: Luke 21:12–19

Very Rev. Philip Rogers

CHRISTIANITY IS HARD! WE DON’T LIKE TO HEAR THAT, BUT IT IS GOOD TO BE REMINDED OF IT EVERY NOW AND THEN. THIS MORNING’S GOSPEL GIVES US A STRONG REMINDER OF THAT DIFFICULT TRUTH. IN PARTICULAR, THE LAST VERSE OF THE GOSPEL MAKES A VERY HARD STATEMENT. CHRIST SAYS, “BY YOUR *ENDURANCE* YOU WILL GAIN YOUR LIVES.”

For one, don’t like to hear that word *endurance*. I really don’t have any endurance. I ran on the cross-country team one year in high school because I just didn’t have the endurance to make it for all four years. Endurance implies a struggle. Endurance implies having to challenge ourselves, and that is something that I do not enjoy doing.

On top of this challenge from the Gospel this morning, we have the challenge from Christ that we are given in the theme of the convention: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” When our Lord says these words, quoting from the prophet Isaiah, he says them in the midst of turning over the tables of the money-changers in the temple. He tells the people in the temple that they have made His Father’s house a “den of thieves.” They were regularly in the temple. They *appeared* to be doing what they were supposed to be doing, but instead of being commended for following the letter of the law, they were told that they had turned the temple into a “den of thieves” instead of a house of prayer, as the temple was intended. The challenge for us today is asking ourselves whether or not we are doing the same. We might think that we should be commended for our attendance at Church. We are, after all, attending a Church convention, but we need to truly ask ourselves, are we treating the Church like a “house of prayer for all nations” or a “den of thieves”?

The challenge of the Gospel and the challenge of the theme of the convention are connected. In order for us to *endure* and gain our lives as the Gospel challenges us, we must truly reflect on how we approach Christ and His Church. Are we experiencing the Church as a “house of prayer” or as a “den of thieves”? How do we know the difference?

Consider this quotation from St. Theophan the Recluse: “Prayer is the test of everything. Prayer is the

source of everything. Prayer is the driving force of everything. Prayer is the director of everything. If prayer is right, everything is right.” I believe that these words from St. Theophan provide a wonderful test for us in this challenge to endure and the challenge to ensure that we are truly treating the Church as a house of prayer.

If the Church is the house of prayer, then I think that it would be fair to replace the word *prayer* in St. Theophan’s statement with *Christ and His Church*. Then we can clearly understand how we are able to endure and how we can know if we are using the Church properly. “Christ and His Church is the test of everything. Christ and His Church is the source of everything. Christ and His Church is the driving force of everything and the director of everything.” We can then go through each statement and ask ourselves, if we are living up to what St. Theophan says.

Christ and His Church is the test of everything. Is that true? Are we testing all of our actions, all of our thoughts, all of our words against the teaching of Christ and His Church? So much of the time our culture tells us that if we don’t agree with the Church, then the Church should change. This is false! It is not Christ who changes. The Scripture says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.” Instead, it is we who have to change. If our actions, if our words, if our thoughts, when tested against the moral and dogmatic teachings of the Church are wrong, then it is our responsibility to change. Christ and His

St. Theophan the Recluse:
“Prayer is the test of everything.
Prayer is the source of
everything. Prayer is the driving
force of everything. Prayer is the
director of everything. If prayer
is right, everything is right.”

Church is the test of everything. If we test ourselves this way, we will endure; we will be using the Church as the house of prayer.

Christ and His Church are the source of everything. So much of the time, I like to think that it is I who have all of the talent, that everything that I accomplish is because of my strength. It is because of me that anything good happens. This is the way that leads to both pride and delusion, on the one hand, and fatigue and burn-out, on the other.

Instead of the strength coming from me, in reality, it is Christ and His Church that is the real source of everything. We pray in the Divine Liturgy, “all good things come from above.” In order to combat an improper understanding of our own strength, we should live a life of thanksgiving, giving thanks to God in recognition of Him as the real source of all

things. In order to endure, in order to be sure that the Church is a house of prayer, we have got to live our lives recognizing Christ and His Church as the source of everything, and give thanks to God at all times.

Christ and His Church are the driving force of everything and the director of everything. Do we make our decisions with the Church in mind? Every single thing that we do should be done with the Church in mind. When we are deciding what to watch, what to wear, what to eat, what to listen to, what to do, we should be thinking about Christ and His Church. The cycles of fasting and feasting that we go through each year are meant to help us to keep Christ and His Church at the forefront of our minds each and every day, each and every moment of our lives. In order to endure, in order to ensure that we are using the Church as a house of prayer, Christ and His Church must not be a peripheral Sunday-only or convention-only thought on our minds. In order to endure, in order to use the Church as the house of prayer, Christ and His Church should be the driving force and the director of everything that we do.

Christ and His Church are the test of everything. Christ and His Church are the source of everything. Christ and His Church are the driving force and the director of everything! All of that might sound overwhelming. The blessing that we have in the Church, and

the reminder that we have in coming together at this convention, are that we don’t go through this by ourselves. In order to endure, in order to ensure that we are using the Church as the house of prayer, and not as a den of thieves, we need each other. We need the community of our local Church where we are encouraged by those that are around us to take up our cross and follow Christ. We need our local Church so that we can be fed by the Mysteries and strengthened by the divine services. We also need the larger community of believers in the Orthodox Church around the world, watching their example, learning from their experiences, so that we can endure faithfully and therefore gain our lives!

As St. Theophan concludes and as the Gospel reminded us this morning, if Christ and His Church is everything in our lives, then everything will be right and we will be able to endure and gain our lives.

Christianity is hard. It is hard because this world is hard and life can be hard. But in Christ, we find the way to endure. In Christ we find the way to really gain our lives. May we each pray truly to make Christ and His Church the test of everything, the source of everything, the driving force and director of everything. And, when we do, may we all endure and may we all gain our lives united to Christ and united to one another!

Very Rev. Philip Rogers,
Pastor of St. John Church, Memphis, Tennessee



A CONVENTION HOMILY

Making Real His Presence As The House of Prayer

Very Rev. Thomas Galloway



IT WAS A HOT AND HUMID DAY. JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES HAD JUST GOTTEN OUT OF THE BOAT, AND ALREADY A CROWD HAD GATHERED. THIS IS THE SETTING OF TODAY’S GOSPEL (MARK 5:24–34). JESUS WAS JUST ABOUT TO SPEAK WHEN JAIRUS, A PROMINENT LEADER OF THE SYNAGOGUE, CAME TO JESUS AND ASKED HIM TO HURRY, BEGGING HIM REPEATEDLY TO COME TO HIS HOUSE TO LAY HIS HANDS ON HIS DAUGHTER SO THAT SHE MIGHT BE HEALED. JESUS FOLLOWS HIM AND THE CROWD PRESSES AROUND HIM IN EXCITEMENT AT THE TURN OF EVENTS.

Jesus stops and asks, “Who touched me?” Bewildered, His disciples wonder: the crowd presses in around us, and you ask, “Who touched me?” A woman, who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years, humbly comes before him. She said, “If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well.” She now falls down before Him, and Jesus says, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease.”

The hemorrhaging of blood would have made the woman unclean by Old Testament standards (the “purity code” in Leviticus 15:25–30), yet she was healed without hesitation. A new understanding of purity was in the making!

Our Conference theme is “My House shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mk 11:1). The context of this verse is the “cleansing the temple,” in which Jesus declared that those who misused God’s House were making it “a den of thieves.”

True purity comes from the humble heart, as this woman had, not from an external legal code. The static law written on stone was dead. A new living commandment that comes from the depths of our being had arrived. Our Epistle today from Galatians amplifies and refines this vision:

1. The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:23–24).
2. An intimate relationship with God is called for to be referred to as children of God (verse 26).
3. We are transformed – “as many of you that have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (verse 27).
4. Race, ethnicity, nationality, slave or free, male or female – *no longer matter*, for all are equal in dignity, and created in the image and likeness of God (verse 28).
5. We are now the heirs to the eternal Kingdom of God. Now, being in Christ’s eternal presence, we can participate, taste, and experience Christ; our call is to be always in His presence, for time is always *now* (Galatians 3:29–4:1).

Now, for the rest of the story, concerning the women with the issue of blood; our Church Father Eusebius, writing in the fourth century testifies:

Since I have mentioned this city I do not think it proper to omit an account which is worthy of record for posterity. For they say that the woman with an issue of blood, who, as we learn from the sacred Gospel, received from our Savior deliverance from her affliction, came from this place, and that her house is shown in the city, and that remarkable memorials of the kindness of the Savior to her remain there. For there stands upon an elevated stone, by the gates of her house, a brazen image of a woman kneeling, with her hands stretched out, as if she were praying. Opposite this is another upright image of a man, made of the same material, clothed decently in a double cloak, and extending his hand toward the woman. At his feet, beside the statue is a certain strange plant, which climbs up to the hem of the brazen cloak, and

is a remedy for all kinds of diseases. They say that this statue is an image of Jesus. It has remained to our day, so that we ourselves also saw it when we were staying in the city. Nor is it strange that those of the Gentiles . . . of old, were benefited by our Savior,

This statue, a testament that stood for centuries, was destroyed by the Julian the Apostate, the fourth-century Emperor who tried to erase both the Church and Christ.

A recent survey states that a third of the younger generation (those in their early 30’s and younger, the so-called “hipster generation”) not only do not attend Church, not only have a negative view of Church, but are openly hostile to the Church. Another commentator, looking at the spiritual state of Europe, stated that “Europe is now nearly in a pre-Constantine time.”

How can we, as the Church, overcome or reverse this? I have found that when you speak to those outside of the Church, it is not Jesus the Christ that they oppose. Rather, it is the witness of the “nominal” or casual “believer,” who is an unbeliever in heart in “church clothes,” that turns them off. To this point, examine the figure of Gandhi who read, studied, and was profoundly influenced by the teaching of Jesus, particularly the Sermon on the Mount. He was once asked why he was not a Christian. His response was deafening: “Because I have met them!”

How different it is when we meet someone who is a “true” believer in heart, mind, and soul. We sense that Christ now lives in them so much that we can feel the presence, they are those, as we say in Kentucky, “who can walk the talk.”

How can we turn unbelieving hearts around? Be the real Christian we are called to be! Jairus’s daughter was healed and restored to life. Our woman in the story was healed and made whole. Our answer to an increasingly faithless and hostile world is the purity and the authenticity of our message, from those who have “put on Christ” and made His real and undeniable presence real in their midst.

In closing, I would like to share a story that has been used many times in sermons, but which makes a lasting point. During World War II, some American soldiers sought refuge in a bombed-out church. They found a statue of Christ with the hands blown off. A sign hung on the statue left by earlier soldiers who had passed by. It read, “He has no hands but ours.” It is up to us to with our hands make His presence known and His house of prayer pure and welcoming for all nations.

Very Rev. Thomas Galloway,
Pastor of St. Andrew Church, Lexington, Kentucky

A CONVENTION HOMILY

Becoming Children of the Father

Fr. Joseph Huneycutt

Just as I stand before you today, he stood before the gathered faithful. He had decided to preach at the end of the service, and all eyes were on him. Slowly, methodically, as if he was alone in the church, he began to remove his vestments, carefully folding them on a table by the lectern. Then, vested in only his cassock, without a word – and to the shock of his congregation – he walked out of the church building.

By the time he related that story to me, he’d had over forty years in the ministry – this episode happening about midway, after serving for twenty years. He said people immediately began to talk: assuming there was some scandal, some wrongdoing, someone . . . something.

Curious, I said, “Well, what was the reason?”

He said, “I had forgotten what I was about. I forgot my calling; I forgot my priesthood. I was doing the services, counseling others, visiting the sick and shut-ins – but I blamed my parishioners for my ills. Mainly, I forgot to pray.”

I forgot to pray. Sounds kind of childish, but it’s not. Such behavior is very adult-ish. I remember once, years ago, the children in our little mission parish had been particularly – what shall I say? – rambunctious, unruly, loud.

Finally, after a few weeks of holding my tongue, during the announcements at the end of the service, I said: “Parents, please! I need your help! I mean, my goodness, it’s hard to pray with all the noise of the children. Please! This must stop.” I went

on to inform them that later that day I was going to a monastery for a week’s stay and confession. A few weeks after my return, while reverencing the cross, a woman said: “Father, I’ve noticed the children have been a lot better in church since you went to confession.”

Metropolitan Philaret of New York was once asked: “Vladika, the children are so disruptive in church – how can we pray with all this noise?” To which he replied, “When you pray, you will not hear the children.”

“My House shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17).

“What is the greatest danger facing our young people today in the Church?” This question was asked of me, recently, by another priest. Without hesitation, I said: “Internet addiction, gadgets, smartphones; whether gaming, naughty pictures, or social media – our young people are addicted. This, I believe is the greatest danger for our youth in America. I hear it again and again; it is a real problem.” He listened. He nodded. Then he said: “You are correct. That is a problem, but our people don’t pray. This is the greatest danger. Without prayer, who can be saved?”

Without prayer, who can be saved?

“My House shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” This statement, our theme for this year’s convention, comes from our Lord, in Mark’s Gospel, Chapter Eleven, wherein we see Jesus enter the temple and drive out all the children. Right? He drove out all the children? Of course not! Driving out the children would be absurd! Rather, those driven out from the Temple were grown men who had forgotten to pray – who had forgotten the Lord – who had forgotten that the Lord’s House is a House of Prayer.

St. Theophan the Recluse writes:

People concern themselves with Christian upbringing but leave it incomplete. They neglect the most essential and most difficult side of the Christian life, and dwell on what is easiest, the visible and external.

This . . . produces people who observe . . . all the formal and outward rules for devout conduct, but who pay little or no attention to the inward movements of the heart and to true improvement of the inner spiritual life. They are strangers to mortal sins, but they do not heed

“When you pray, you will not hear the children.”



the play of thoughts in the heart.

Accordingly, they ... pass judgments, give way to boastfulness or pride, sometimes get angry (as if this feeling were justified by the rightness of their cause), are sometimes distracted by beauty and pleasure, sometimes offend others in fits of irritation, are sometimes too lazy to pray, or lose themselves in useless thoughts while at prayer.

They are not upset about doing these things, but regard them as without significance. They have been to church, or prayed at home ... and carried out their usual business, and so they are quite content and at peace. But they have little concern for what is happening in the heart. In the meantime, it [the heart] may be forging evil, thereby taking away the whole value of their correct and pious life.”¹

“My House shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” A few weeks ago, in the Parish Hall after Liturgy – after the blessing of the food for fellowship – I almost missed her, one of our parishioners. It’s easy to do, in the midst of adults clamoring around a table, but there she was, not yet three feet tall, holding out a piece of paper. As I walked past, her dad said: “She drew you a picture!” I looked down to be met by big, bright eyes, innocent face. She said, “It’s you – it’s you and me ... and an angel ... and Jesus!” Every parent has viewed this style of art; probably every priest has received something similar. There, on the white paper, were three stick figures drawn in red crayon; one was obviously a little girl, two red stick figures stood either side of her: the angel and Jesus. How did I know? Because there was a fourth

figure, off to the side, sort of elevated (perhaps an invisible *solea*), this one was drawn in black crayon, even had a little beard and tiny pony tail. I can’t recall what I saw in the Liturgy that day – but I pray God help my heart to see what this girl saw.

“My House shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Folks, it’s the Father’s House and we, thanks to His Child, are called to be His children. Would that I could pray like a child. Be humble like a child. Trust like a child. Is there anything more touching, innocent, and moving as children joyfully lighting candles, struggling to kiss the icons and, most of the time, happily receiving Communion? There’s nothing cuter than toddler prostrations or the zeal these kids have for holy bread!

These, however, are but outward signs. It is their heart that is most admirable, their loving trust of God, his flock – even their priest – their purity and innocence, and their non-judgmental disposition. The same Lord who said, “Did you not know that I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49), also said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:13). He also said, “Verily I say to you, except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

This, brothers and sisters, is the reason we pray: So that we may be saved – becoming, truly, children of the Father, by adoption through His Son, in the Grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Fr Joseph Huneycutt
St. Joseph, Houston

A RENEWING MINISTRY: WE’RE ALL SECULAR NOW

The first of two addresses to the 2017 Antiochian Archdiocese Convention General Assembly

Very Rev. Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick

I STAND BEFORE YOU TODAY AS A SECULAR MAN. I AM A SECULAR ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN. I AM A SECULAR ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PRIEST. I CAN’T LEAVE IT THERE, THOUGH. I AM SECULAR, BUT YOU ARE SECULAR, TOO. IN FACT, WE ARE ALL SECULAR NOW.

Yet surely we are all Christians here, all believers, all followers of Christ! Surely we are not godless atheists and unbelievers, the immoral and the heathen!

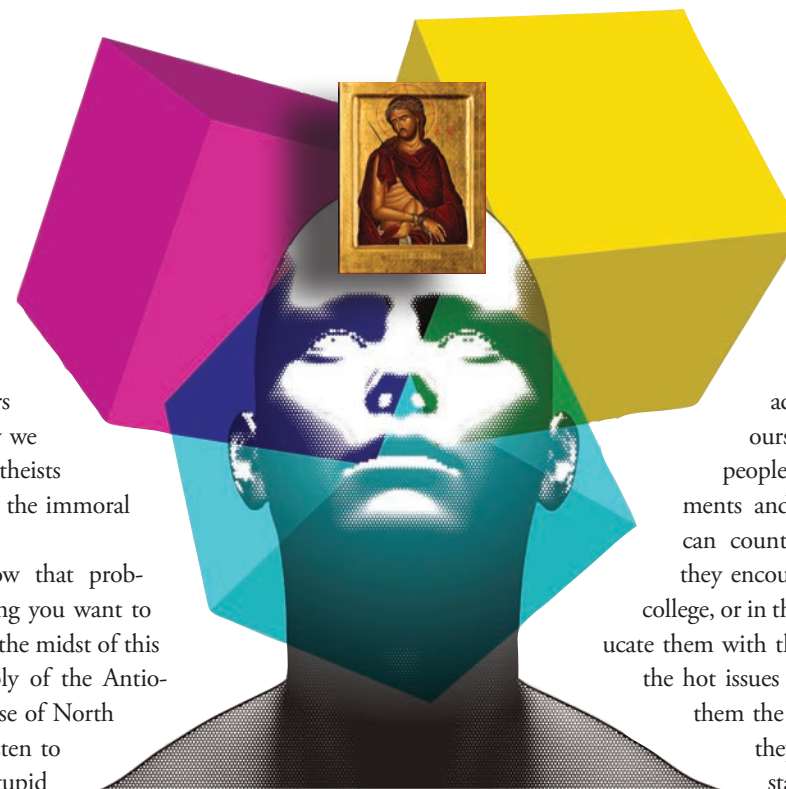
Now, I know that probably the last thing you want to do right now in the midst of this General Assembly of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America is to listen to a priest say stupid things about himself and others, but stick with me, and I’ll explain. To understand why I’m standing here and, as you might assume, insulting myself and all of you with untruths, we have to ask ourselves what it means to be secular. Generally, when we use the term *secular* these days, we use it as a negation of *Christian* or *religious*. *Secular* is what you are when you are not religious, when you do not believe in God. *Secular* is what human beings are when you subtract religious faith.

So we fight back against this encroaching secular darkness, shining the light of truth and reclaiming territory that we have lost. Our ministries are mostly aimed in

this direction, too, especially ministries for our youth and young adults. We try to arm ourselves and our young people with the right arguments and ideas so that they can counter secularism when they encounter it in school, or college, or in the workplace. We educate them with the Church’s view on the hot issues of our day. We give them the armor and weapons they will need to withstand the world’s onslaught, and maybe even to win some pieces

of it back.

Yet we often find ourselves wondering why this isn’t working. Why is it that all these conferences and programs and carefully thought-out methods don’t seem to be stopping the retreating tide of young people leaving our churches? We clearly know we have a problem. This is why the Archdiocese formed the new Young Adult Ministry. “How do we keep our young people in the Church?” – I can’t count how many times I have heard that question. We fight against the “secular” world and wonder why we’re not winning. We know that God will win



(Endnotes)
1. Igumen Chariton, *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997), pp. 164–65.

someday, of course, but why do we often feel so powerless in this battle?

You probably haven't heard how priests talk to each other when they're by themselves? Eventually, at some point, they will all say things like this: "I just don't know what to do. People just don't come like they used to. People don't volunteer like they used to. People aren't giving. I hold classes, and not that many people come. Even my 'good' church members are at liturgy only a couple of times a month. My people hold all kinds of beliefs that are contrary to the Church's teachings. I teach and teach, but it doesn't get through to them."

I do not claim to know all the answers, nor am I as experienced and wise as many of you, our venerable hierarchs and my senior colleagues in the priesthood, but I'd like to suggest that one of our problems may be how we conceive of the world we're in, and how our ministries are focused.

To begin answering that question, I want to paint you two story-pictures. The first one goes like this: The other day, I had barbecue ribs for lunch. My father-in-law made them, and they were amazing. For dinner, I had a supreme pizza. It was also really good. Well, I'm over 40 now, so I started experiencing acid indigestion. So I went to the CVS and bought antacids. I took some antacids, and I felt better.

Here's the second story: If you are a priest, I want you to imagine that you have just gotten a sick call from someone and are headed to the hospital to anoint your parishioner with holy unction and to pray for him and with his family. If you are a layman, I want you to imagine that you are the one in the hospital or that it is a member of your family, and you've checked into the hospital, been seen by a doctor, and given the priest a call.

In the first story, in which I bought some antacids, I didn't think once about praying about my indigestion. It didn't occur to me. I knew that antacids were what I needed. I took them and felt better. End of story. In the second story, a priest is called to pray, but notice where he arrives. The parishioner is already at the hospital. The priest was not the first call. Prayer was not the first call.

Now, we can feel bad about both these scenarios and say, "Yes, we have to remember to pray." We can even say, "Medicine is fine and doesn't contradict prayer." And those things are both right. But it turns out that most of the time, we just don't reach for the transcendent. Why? Because we don't have a real sense that there's anything beyond this world, even when we *believe* that there is.

So what is secularism? Have we all been overtaken by the forces of secularism? Are Christians who take antacids

and don't even shoot a quick "Lord, have mercy" up into the sky just conquered territory in the great culture war between belief and unbelief, between faith and secularism?

To understand our cultural moment, I'd like to present a three-part way of thinking about what it means to be secular. This schema comes from the philosopher Charles Taylor in his book *A Secular Age* and is summarized and popularized by another philosopher, James K. A. Smith, in his *How (Not) to Be Secular*. In what Taylor calls the "Secular 1" period, there was a distinction between the sacred and the profane, but not an opposition. So we clergy have *sacred* vocations, while the laity have *profane* ones, which doesn't mean what they do is obscene, just that it is "outside the temple" (the literal meaning of *profane*).

There is a kind of demarcation of space and spheres here, but there's also a lot of overlap, and the transcendent is around every corner and within everything. Spirits live inside trees, demons make people crazy, and the first person you call when you're sick is the priest. If you said that you didn't believe in any God, people would just find that totally implausible. This is roughly what we think of as the medieval world.

In the "Secular 2" period, we encounter secularism as we tend to think and speak of it now. Humanity is finding out more about the natural world, so the "God of the gaps" rules over smaller and smaller gaps. We don't need divine things to explain every mystery any more. Certain spheres like politics, law and science are generally agreed to be non-religious spheres. This is a "story of subtraction," in which faith gets subtracted and exclusive humanism is on the rise, but not quite ascendant. This is the "culture war," a war between opposing sides, and one side's loss is another side's gain. Superstition is dying and science is winning. This is the world following the Enlightenment, and it is the world of popular discourse about religion, philosophy and society. When Christians think about ministry in the world, this is the world in which they think.

Taylor argues that we are no longer in the "Secular 2" world, but now inhabit "Secular 3." In the Secular 3 period, the immanent is all that most people ever see or sense – life is about what our senses tell us. The so-called "God-shaped hole" in the human heart is something few people consciously experience. They have whole realms of meaning and significance constructed without reference to the transcendent.

With the retreat of the transcendent from the world of meaning, however, there is now a vacuum. We try to fill that vacuum with self-expression, with the pursuit of our true, authentic selves. Exclusive humanism is now

completely plausible, and religious faith is increasingly implausible. Christians have to *try* to believe now. We believe the same *things* that our fathers in the faith did, but we don't believe in the same *way*. Both believers and unbelievers, however, are subject to the cross-pressure of both faith and doubt, of both transcendence and immanence. We believers are haunted by doubt, but unbelievers also find themselves haunted by faith.

I'm talking today ostensibly about ministry with youth and young adults and their families, but I believe

have to see where we really are at this moment and begin to think in ways that will address the real longings and real on-the-ground experiences of those living in our era. So we're all secular now, but that's okay. That doesn't mean we can't also be Christians.

So what do we do with all this? That's what I'm going to be talking about tomorrow. I hope you'll be back.

Very Rev. Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick

In the Secular 3 period, the immanent is all that most people ever see or sense – life is about what our senses tell us. The so-called "God-shaped hole" in the human heart is something few people consciously experience.

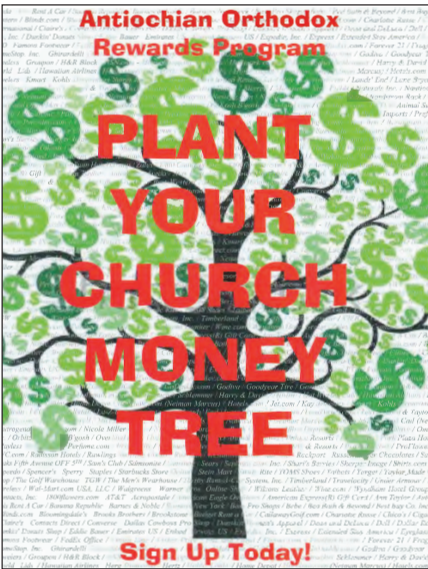
that we cannot understand how to do ministry successfully if we do not understand the world in which we are all now living. It is not that Millennials and younger people are all secular, and everyone past a certain age is not. We are all secular now. We are all subject to experiencing this world primarily in terms of what our senses can experience. We all tend to take the antacid first or call the doctor first and then *maybe* call the priest.

We can curse the darkness and decide that this is just terrible and we don't know what to do about it. I will admit that I have done that many times. I just don't know how to get through to people who don't want to be gotten through to, and I sometimes write them off after trying so many times that I'm just tired of it.

What if this biggest obstacle that Christianity has faced, however, is actually one of its biggest opportunities? What if our "Secular 3" age of cross-pressure is not just the defeat of the glorious Christian empires of the "Secular 1" period, but is actually more reminiscent of the world into which the Apostles first ventured with the Gospel?

In the First Century, exclusive humanism wasn't plausible, but there was certainly cross-pressure between various belief systems right in first-century Palestine in which the disciples of Jesus first preached. You had polytheistic paganism from the Greeks and Romans, monotheistic pagan philosophy from the Greeks, Jewish monotheism with its one Lord and God, and now One of the Trinity, God-in-the-flesh, walking among them right there on earth. Talk about a confusion of faiths and ideas, a complicated religious landscape!

If we as priests and as lay ministers want to minister effectively to our young people and even to ourselves, we



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A RENEWING MINISTRY: AN OLD MINISTRY FOR A NEW WORLD

The second of two addresses to the 2017 Antiochian Archdiocese Convention General Assembly

Very Rev. Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick

YESTERDAY I ACCUSED MYSELF AND ALL OF YOU OF BEING SECULAR, AND I EXPLAINED WHAT I MEANT BY THAT. WE NOW LIVE IN A “SECULAR 3” PERIOD, IN WHICH DAILY LIFE IS BASICALLY ABOUT WHAT WE CAN SEE AND FEEL WITH OUR SENSES. IN OUR AGE, IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE IN THE TRANSCENDENT, UNBELIEF IS PLAUSIBLE, AND WE ARE ALL SUBJECT TO THE CROSS-PRESSURE OF BOTH FAITH AND DOUBT. WE WHO BELIEVE, BELIEVE THE SAME THINGS THAT OUR FATHERS IN THE FAITH DID, BUT WE BELIEVE THEM IN A DIFFERENT WAY. PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER MUCH LOOKING FOR “ANSWERS,” BUT TO FIND THEIR AUTHENTIC, TRUE SELVES. THAT HAS SOME BIG IMPLICATIONS FOR HOW WE DO MINISTRY.

Today I would like to speak of how we do ministry within this context, a ministry that touches directly on questions of ministering to youth and young adults, but really to all of us. I’m going to begin with two stories from a wedding I conducted just a couple of weekends ago, in which I had encounters with two young men.

After finishing Vespers after the wedding, I went to the reception. It was beautiful, of course, and joyful. I spoke with the couple’s parents especially, but to other family and friends as well. Then it happened that one of the groom’s cousins approached me as I stood on the periphery. I had never met him before that day. He lived in another state. He wasn’t an Orthodox Christian. He told me how he had recently become divorced, how he didn’t know what to do with that relationship, how he didn’t know where his life was going. He then said this to me: “Father, I have really lost my path. Would you please pray for me?” He wasn’t asking to be put on a prayer list. I could tell that he meant *right then*. So I did. I prayed that God would show him that path, that God would heal his broken heart and bring him back to Himself.

A little bit later in the evening, a 17-year-old boy approached me, the cousin of the bride. He said this to me: “Have you ever thought about doing something different with your life?” I was struck at how different this question was from the one that I think all clergy get, which is: “When did you know you wanted to be a priest?” It wasn’t that, but “Have you ever thought about doing something different with your life?” In other words, would I stop being a priest and pursue my authentic, true self somewhere else? Or perhaps, is it possible that I’m not really certain

about all this, that I *don’t* really know that I want to be a priest? Can it be that, though I stood there, all in black and sporting a shiny cross, that I am human and haunted by doubt?

I told him that I actually did have something else I did with my life once, that I was a stagehand for ten years, that I entered the seminary only in my late twenties. I said that I knew this is what I wanted to do, that it made a lot of sense to me. I didn’t say that God had “called” me. While I believe in that idea, I didn’t think it would make sense to mention that in that conversation.

Those two brief chats at that wedding reception illustrated for me the problems of doing ministry in a “Secular 3” world. In the first encounter, that young man wanted to reconnect the transcendent to the immanence of his world immediately: “Please pray for me.” In the second, the young man didn’t want answers but was asking about a personal path: “Have you ever thought about doing something different with your life?”

Most of our ministry is aimed at a “Secular 2” world that no longer exists. When we have problems, we think about doing conferences and teaching things, at making handouts, at giving the “Orthodox view” on hot subjects. In other words, we are still aimed at trying to prepare people for the culture wars, for the battle between faith and unbelief, between Christianity and secularism. We are looking for solutions, programs and fixes. *That* kind of secularity is gone, however. We are all secular now. So how do we do ministry now?

I’ve been exploring that question for several years. I happened upon something that has helped me to

understand our problem in terms of the way people connect with Church life. This comes from our own Antiochian tradition. In 1964, when the Orthodox Youth Movement was still fairly young and asking big questions, Metropolitan GEORGES (Khoury) of Mount Lebanon wrote this about Christianity in the Middle East at the time:

Popular piety, like the piety of other Mediterranean Christians, is profoundly ritualistic. Service books and diverse manuals of devotion put the allegorical and spiritual meaning of the Liturgy into relief, but the psychology of the ordinary Christian remains dominated by the sensual and aesthetic aspect of the Offices. The great majority of the faithful do not penetrate in any way into the spiritual significance of the rite. They often bring with them authentic private piety, but a sense of the liturgical community and of the bond between the individual person and the praying assembly is rarely consciously experienced by the majority of the faithful (*A Sign of God: Orthodoxy 1964: A Pan-Orthodox Symposium*, pp. 266-67).

In other words, Metropolitan GEORGES is saying that, while people may be sincere in their approach to church life, their connection with what is actually being prayed and their connection with those around them as they pray is almost non-existent. They do not penetrate into the spiritual significance of the rite, nor do they usually have a conscious sense of being not just individual believers engaged in prayer, but truly being *the Church* in a way that binds them together.

I believe that we can all observe this same approach



to church life in our own time and in our own place. This, I believe, is at least part of the reason why so many young people and others are finding it easy not to be connected to our parishes. They were not taught how to bring the transcendent truly home for themselves in a world in which almost everything they experience is just immanent, just the regular physical experience of everyday life. They were also not taught how to be bound together by prayer. This is the powerlessness of common religious practice in a “Secular 3” world.

So what do we do? From the little I

have learned about the Orthodox Youth Movement, part of what they did early on was to connect in a personal and direct way with the prayer of the Church. So they would read psalms and other Scripture to each other and pray the Jesus Prayer together. They would also practice intercession for each other together and separately. In other words, they wouldn’t merely teach that people should engage in Scripture-reading, prayer, and so forth, but they would actually do it with each other.

I must admit that when that young man approached me at that wedding reception and asked me to pray for him, my first thought was to put him on a prayer list! That was my first thought, but then my second thought was, “No. Pray for him and with him right now, right here at the periphery of this party.” This kind of spontaneous intercessory prayer is not in any way opposed to our traditions of liturgical prayer. We see it in the Bible, and we see it in saints’ lives, even recent ones. St. Silouan the Athonite, for instance, would spend hours praying for people, and we find it hard to take one minute. It is so much easier to act in an institutional way.

It is not Protestant for us to take prayer requests and immediately pray with people. This is Orthodox, too. There is nothing un-Orthodox about reading the Bible together out loud. It is this direct, personal contact with the fiery elements of our faith that people hunger for. Church services and classes and all these things are good, but they are not a point of entry for most people today. They need to have a sense that the transcendent God is



reaching right now into their lives, into their own quests to find who they authentically and truly are, and He is connecting with them. He cares about them. He is not only their teacher but their Father. I think we often merely pay lip-service to the Fatherhood of God.

We often say that it is good to practice silence and fasting, but how often do we do that with each other? How often do we demonstrate what that looks like? When will our sense of community fasting rise above the level of observing which foods are prohibited at coffee hour and which foods we tell people not to eat on their own? Are we fasting and praying *for* anything? It happens all the time in the Bible and in Church history. Can't we

do that now, too? Is fasting merely “good for you,” or is it aimed at any purpose? I propose we at least have the sense that we are fasting *for* someone else, that our ascetical efforts are aimed at the object of our prayers *for* someone.

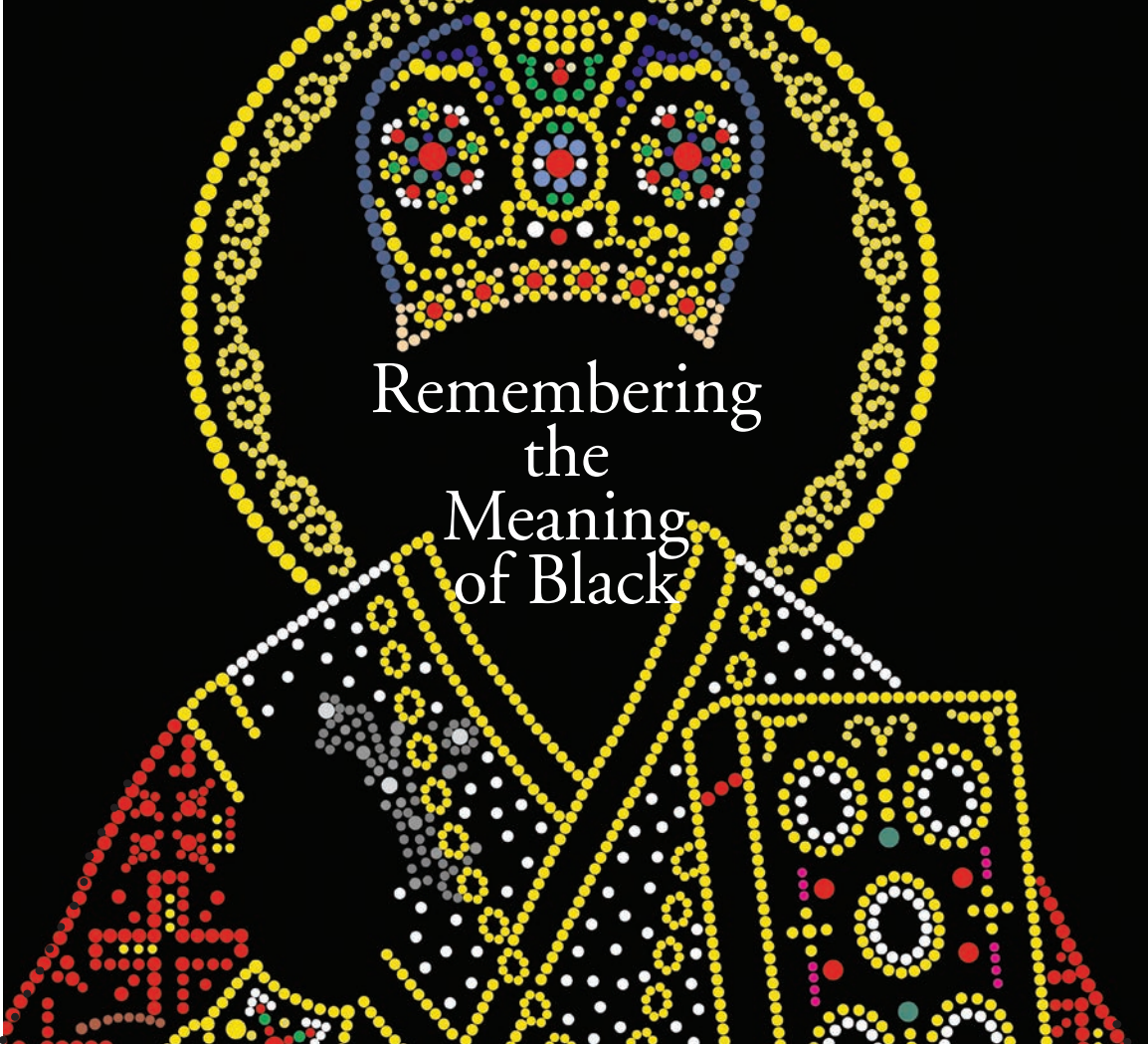
Finally, let me suggest that when we think of ministry, especially ministry involving our youth and young adults, that we think not so much about ministering *to* them as *with* them. This applies to all of us, really, not just younger folks. This goes beyond “finding them something to do” or “giving them a job” (though those ideas are on the right track). It reaches rather toward the sense that we are all a royal priesthood, a holy nation. We all have priestly ministry.

This past Great Lent, I preached a ten-part sermon series connecting with each Sunday's themes, but also revolving around the general theme of the priesthood, especially the royal priesthood of the people of God. Probably at no other time in my pastorate did I receive such a strongly engaged response from my people. These direct and personal approaches to ministry are not opposed to what we might think of as our more institutional traditions of liturgical prayer and so forth. Indeed, what they actually do is to vivify our practice of those traditions, to breathe new life into them and help us to penetrate to their true spiritual significance and to bond more deeply with each other as a praying assembly. And they can be done both in parish ministry and within the family itself.

So these are just some thoughts that I have been thinking. I am not an expert, and I have no expertise. I also am not very good yet at applying these ideas myself. I have, however, learned a lot of these things from two friends whose names I want to mention – Steven Christoforou and Christian Gonzalez of the Youth and Young Adult Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, who incidentally are both parishioners in Antiochian parishes. You may know one of their best ministry tools already, a video series called “Be the Bee.”

Why “Be the Bee” works, and why all these ideas *can* work in our “Secular 3” world is that they are aimed specifically at bringing the transcendent into the daily life of people who are reaching for transcendence but don't know how to bring it down to themselves. They are also aimed at helping us to interpret our lives in the light of Holy Scripture and the rest of Holy Orthodox Tradition. And that, I believe, is at least part of the answer to our most vexing ministry questions.

Very Rev. Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick



THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S CONVENTION IS TAKEN FROM MARK 11:17: “MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS.” MEDITATING UPON THIS THEME CONTINUED TO LEAD ME BACK TO THE SERMON I OFFERED ON PALM SUNDAY WHEN, AMONG OTHER THINGS, WE COMMEMORATE OUR LORD'S CALLING OF ALL NATIONS AS HE TRIUMPHANTLY ENTERED THE CITY OF JERUSALEM. I RECALL, TOO, THAT, JUST AS WE WERE SURROUNDED BY THE LITURGICAL COLOR BLACK DURING HOLY WEEK, SO THIS WEEK WE WILL VIEW A SEA OF BLACK ROBES IN THE CHAPEL, AS OUR CLERGY STAND AMONG THE FAITHFUL DRESSED IN THEIR BLACK CASSOCKS AND JIBBEES.

Scripture begins in Genesis with God creating and interacting with *all* humanity. That is to say, God's love and concern was always for all human beings. Only later in Genesis does the biblical narrative focus on the story of Israel as the concrete expression of that love. Even then we hear accounts of God showing His concern and love for the nations.

Despite God's command for us to spread out over the entire earth, we humans decided to congregate in cities and eventually formed nations. Instead of seeing each individual as a person made in the image of God, we viewed people in categories – as “us versus them.” Even so, God did not forsake us, choosing to work through the people of Israel, who were to be a light to

the nations. Israel, however, did not want this unique task. We read in 1 Samuel 8 that they desired instead to have a king so they could be “like all the nations.” Before this, of course, God did not give them a king, because there was no need for an earthly ruler if they would let God rule over them, living by His commands.

The prophet Samuel prayed to God about Israel's request for a king – and here is what God told Samuel to relay to the people: “This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own ... to make his weapons of war And he will take the best of your fields ... and give them to his servants And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen

for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day.” Scripture continues: “Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel,” and the Lord said to him, “Heed their voice, and make them a king.”

To make a long story short: Israel receives a king and devolves into even greater sin. Yet, despite their disobedience, God still desires for them to be restored. He sends His holy prophets to convict the people of their sin and to lead them to repentance. Going even further, God promises to send a Messiah, whom we confess to be Jesus Christ; one who would be the Suffering Servant mentioned by the holy prophet Isaiah; one who would redeem Israel, but also all peoples and nations – reconciling them both to God the Father and to one another. In essence, the Messiah’s task was to put us – all humanity – back on the right path, returning us to the time before there was a king, before there were nations and wars and people viewed themselves as “us versus them.” Then we will live in that Jerusalem from above, which is free, as St Paul said in this morning’s epistle.

I bring up this background – and most especially the establishment of Israel’s kings – to provide context for what I have to say. As you know, the Church engages all our senses, including our sight. It is thus no accident that we clergy customarily dress in black. Most of us probably view the black we wear as a symbol of death, and in particular the death of our selfish desires – and that is certainly accurate. There is something else, however, I hope we ponder when we see each other in our black clerical robes.

Specifically, I wish to share an extended quote, sent to me by an Orthodox professor who studies political philosophies. The quotation comes from an anarchist – not as we would use the term pejoratively, but from a principled, considerate anarchist, who believes that humans should live according to basic morality. If we did so, he believes, there would be no need for rulers over us, dividing us up and sending us off to fight their wars. It seems, then, that there is significant common ground between this philosopher and the biblical understanding of kingship as presented in 1 Samuel 8.

The anarchist flag is black, we are told.

Why is our flag black? Black is a shade of negation. The black flag [represents] the negation of all flags. It is a negation of nationhood which puts the human race against itself and denies the unity of all humankind. Black is a mood of outrage at all the hideous crimes against humanity perpetrated in the name of allegiance to one state or another. It

is anger and outrage at the insult to human intelligence implied in the pretenses, hypocrisies, and cheap chicaneries of governments.

Black is also a color of mourning; the black flag which cancels out the nation also mourns its victims, the countless millions murdered in wars, external and internal, to the greater glory and stability of some bloody state. It mourns for those whose labor is robbed [through taxation] to pay for the slaughter and oppression of other human beings. It mourns not only the death of the body but the crippling of the spirit.

But black is also beautiful. It is a color by which all others are clarified and defined. New life always evolves in darkness. The seed hidden in the earth, the secret growth of the embryo in the womb: these the blackness surrounds and protects. So black is negation, is outrage, is mourning, is beauty, is hope, is the fostering and sheltering of new forms of human life and relationship on and with this earth.

I share this quote about the anarchist flag being black for us to consider when we see our own clergy wearing black; to help us understand that black is more than symbolic of death, or death to our own will, cutting even deeper to the core of why Christ died and what He accomplished through that life-giving death. Furthermore, I hope we contemplate this reasoning in light of our Convention theme. Imagine, when a parishioner or inquirer asks us why we wear black clothing, answering as the anarchist did, but substituting our black cassock or black shirt and suit for the flag.

Brothers and sisters, as we gather at this holy Convention, we remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Each day, as we put on our black robes to attend the divine services and conduct the business of our Archdiocese, let us remember why we wear black. Namely, our Lord sacrificed Himself to reconcile all people to God, to allow people from all nations to participate in His Holy Supper as equals – namely, as sinners redeemed by Him. When we see each other wearing black, let us remember no longer to see ourselves as people divided into arbitrary groups – into nations, or political or social classes – but as one people who come with thanksgiving to God’s Holy Table, confessing: “One is holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.”

Fr. Aaron Warwick,
Pastor of St. Mary Church, Wichita, Kansas

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION

*Convened
at the
Diplomat Beach
Resort Hotel
Hollywood
Florida*



Thursday, July 27,
2017 – 11:00 AM

I. Opening Prayer

His Eminence the Most Rev. Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate, opened the General Assembly with the Trisagion Prayers and the Troparion of Holy Pentecost.

II. Roll Call and Quorum

Upon the call of Metropolitan JOSEPH, Rev. Archdeacon Emile Sayegh, Chancellor, declared the existence of a quorum and the qualification to conduct the business of the Archdiocese.

III. Introduction of North American Hierarchs

His Eminence noted the absence of His Grace Bishop ANTOUN for health reasons, and of His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER. He introduced Their Graces Bishop BASIL, Bishop THOMAS, Bishop JOHN and Bishop NICHOLAS.

IV. Appointment of Convention Officers

Metropolitan JOSEPH asked Archpriest Thomas Zain, Vicar General, to announce the appointment of the Sergeants-at-Arms of the convention: Rev. Fr. Milad Selim, V. Rev. Fr. Samer Youssef, Very Rev. Fr. Josiah Trenham, and Rev. Fr. Calinic Berger.

V. Introduction of the Members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees

Fr. Zain acknowledged the officers of the Antiochian Archdiocese, Mr. Fawaz El-Khoury, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Dr. John D. Dalack, Secretary of the



Board of Trustees, Mr. Salim Abboud, CFO and Treasurer of the Archdiocese, V. Rev. Fr. Michael Elias, Secretary of the Archdiocese, V. Rev. Fr. Timothy Ferguson, Protosyngellos, and Rev. Archdeacon Emile Paul Sayegh, Esq., Chancellor.

Fr. Zain introduced the members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees who were present: Mr. Salim Abboud, Mr. Daniel J. Abraham, Mr. Edward F.

Assile, Mr. Richard J. Ayoob, Mr. James G. Bach, Dr. Anthony S. Bashir, Dr. David G. Bojrab, Mr. Dan Braun, Dr. Isa Canavati, Dr. John D. Dalack, Mr. George G. Darany, Mr. Roger J. David, Ms. Darlene Haddad, Dr. Elias K. Hebeke, Mr. Khalil E. Kardous, Mr. Gregory H. Laham, Dr. George M. Madanat, Mr. Jamil Malone, Dr. Nicholas J. Massad, Jr., Mr. William D. Morrison, Mrs. Kelli Kouri Neagle, Mr. Majed J. Nesheiwat, Ms. Mary Winstanley-O'Connor, Ms. Dianne M. O'Regan, Mr. Mansour O. Rayan, Mr. Philip N. Saliba, Mr. Elias Shaheen, Mr. Douglas J. Skaff, Dr. George Thomas, Mr. Rami Younes, Mr. Dimitri C. Zeidan, and Honorary Members Mr. Ralph Abercia, and Dr. Sam H. Kouri.

VI. Minutes of the 52nd Archdiocese Convention, Boston, MA, July 2015

Mr. George Darany moved to accept the Minutes of the 52nd Archdiocese Convention held in Boston, MA, in July 2015. Dr. Antony Bashir seconded the motion, and the



motion passed.

VII. Fr. Zain introduced the first presentation by Archpriest Andrew Damick, pastor of St. Paul Church, Emmaus, PA, which he submitted to *The WORD* magazine for publication.

VIII. Report of the Department of Finance

A. Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2017

Mr. Salim Abboud, CFO and Treasurer, honored the service of his predecessor, Mr. Robert H. Laham, and he presented the Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2017, which had previously been distributed to all the parishes. He stressed the need for transparency in the financial management of the Antiochian Archdiocese. He began his presentation with an introduction of the committees and personnel involved in the workings of the Department of Finance. He also highlighted the Department's attempt to collect outstanding receipts, especially from parishes which are in arrears.

Fr. John Finley moved to accept the report. Fr. Nicholas Dahdal seconded the motion.

Discussion on the motion:

Mr. George Darany thanked Mr. Abboud for the clarity and thoroughness of the report.

Fr. Nicholas Dahdal suggested assessing the parishes based on the parish's expenses rather than its receipts. Mr. Abboud responded that the current system has been in place for a few years and that it is currently under review, including this idea.

Fr. David Hovik requested a complete list of disbursements from the Food for Hungry People program. Mr. Abboud responded that there is a list and that he will publish it in the future.

Fr. Steven Howell asked why there was no budgeted amount for the Orthodox Institute on the West Coast. Mr. Abboud responded by directing attention to Page 6 and Item T of the Financial Report which shows an expenditure even though there had not been a budget line item.

Mr. Michael Homsey requested a disclosure of archdiocesan assets and the portfolio of investments. He also asked why there was no disbursement for International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) this year. Mr. Abboud responded that the afternoon's presentation would address his first question and that the Order of St. Ignatius would respond to his second question during its report.

The motion passed and the report was approved.

The General Assembly adjourned at 12:35 PM for lunch.

The General Assembly reconvened at 1:40 PM. The Jordan Tourism Board, one of the convention sponsors, present-

ed a film on tourism opportunities in Jordan.

B. Proposed Budget for Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019

Mr. Abboud, CFO and Treasurer, presented the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019. He explained the budgeting process and highlighted the new reporting format.

Fr. John Teebagy moved to approve the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019. Rev. Deacon Christian Manasseh seconded the motion.

Discussion on the Motion:

Fr. George Kevorkian asked why there was no budget amount for the Orthodox Institute. Metropolitan JOSEPH responded that the Institute is still new and currently has no budget. There are not yet students in residence, but the Institute is seeking donations and operating from those donations.

Mr. Homsey noted the disparity among dioceses for secretarial support. Mr. Abboud responded that some dioceses do not use their full budgets. The amount in the Diocese of Los Angeles is higher because it includes receipts received from the previous two years.

Metropolitan JOSEPH stressed that IOCC will continue to receive the same support it always has.

Mr. Abboud corrected several printing errors. Page 7, Note A, should refer to page 17.

Note B should refer to page 32. On page 12, St. George Church, Norwood, MA, should read \$15,174, not \$75,174.

The motion passed.

C. Mr. Abboud presented the first Executive Summary of the Archdiocese Balance Sheet via overhead projection which included:

Cash and Cash Equivalents - \$5,008,720.50;

Accounts Receivable - \$639,780.78 as of June 30, 2017;

Investments - \$33,650,113.37, mainly in restricted funds, which Dr. Hebeke will document during his presentation; and

Fixed Assets including the Archdiocese Headquarters, the Antiochian Village, the diocesan chanceries, the Convent of St. Thekla, the Orthodox Institute, a Florida property, a New Jersey apartment, and automobiles. There are no appraisals of these items, but there is an insured value of \$33,895,317.56.

Mr. Abboud noted that the total of \$73,193,932.21 for all categories is really insufficient for an institution of our size and stature. The Archdiocese needs to build endowment funds in order to be able to support archdiocesan activities for 3-5 years.

D. Dr. Elias Hebeke, Chair of Investment Committee, presented an Investment Report. He identified committee

members Metropolitan JOSEPH, Mr. Fawaz El-Khoury, Dr. Elias Hebeke, Ms. Mary Winstanley-O'Connor, Mr. William Morrison, Mr. Roger David, and Mr. Salim Abboud.

In a general overview Dr. Hebeke described the consolidation of more than 100 accounts which had previously existed in order to reduce management fees from 0.94 basis points to 0.88 basis points. He also reported that the committee had performed a risk analysis for each account in order to confirm that each account takes an appropriate level of risk for its return. He further stated that the Investment Committee developed an Investment Policy Statement (IPS) for the Archdiocese. It was presented to and approved by the Finance Committee. This policy applies to all investment accounts under the supervision of the Archdiocese. There will be a monthly report to the committee members, and the Committee will undertake a quarterly Portfolio Review. He concluded his report with a Portfolio Analysis and Performance Summary.

Mr. Homsey moved to accept the report. Fr. Timothy Badlig seconded the motion.

Discussion on the motion:

Fr. Michael Laffoon asked about the restricted accounts and what stocks are in their portfolios. Mr. Abboud Salim responded that he would provide top ten holdings.

Dr. Hebeke added that most of the restricted funds are actually endowments, and many of the funds are invested to produce income for scholarships and donations. There is also a significant amount from Life Memberships in the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch.

Fr. Laffoon requested that the next convention receive a full report on all endowment funds and how they are both invested and expended.

Fr. Zain added that the investment policies seek to avoid certain vehicles based on moral considerations. Fr. Michael Ellias had set that precedent with the clergy retirement accounts, and that principle has transferred to the wider archdiocese. Such restrictions are listed in the IPS.

Fr. Michael Nasser requested help for the parishes in handling investments. Dr. Hebeke offered to help as much as possible.

Fr. Michael Shanbour suggested that the Antiochian Archdiocese promote a missions endowment as a priority.

Fr. Nabil Hanna commented that the Archdiocese use caution in establishing more endowments so as not to restrict accessibility of funds for general operations.

Dr. Hebeke said he had been asked why Merrill Lynch was the only firm employed by the Archdiocese. He said that Merrill acts only as an advisor, but the actual investments are in a diversified number of providers.

The motion passed.

E. Planned Giving Committee - Mary Winstanley-O'Connor introduced the members of the new Planned Giving Committee: Metropolitan JOSEPH, Mr. Fawaz El-Khoury, herself, Dr. Elias Hebeke, and Mr. Salim Abboud.

Mrs. Winstanley-O'Connor provided a concise description and statement of purpose of this newly established committee. She indicated that the establishment of by-laws was in process.

Mr. Abboud concluded this agenda item with an announcement that an external firm would conduct an audit of all accounts and of the internal controls of the Archdiocese in September.

Metropolitan JOSEPH announced his goal of increasing the maximum stipend for the Retired Clergy Housing allowance from \$800 to \$1000.

IX. Questions and Comments on Reports from Archdiocesan Departments and Organizations

Metropolitan JOSEPH invited questions from the floor concerning the reports of the Archdiocesan Departments and Organizations which had been disseminated prior to the Archdiocese Convention.

Mrs. Mary Ann Skaff asked about the newly established levels of membership in the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Mr. Roger David announced the establishment of a new junior level which will be available to young adults until age 27. He also discussed the new Metropolitan level of \$30K to which current life members can upgrade for \$10K. There are also arrangements for current knights, dames, and commanders to upgrade their status.

Metropolitan JOSEPH asked the Chancellor, Archdeacon Emile Sayegh, to explain the situation at the Antiochian Village with regard to taxes. The Archdeacon explained that Fairfield Township and the local school district are attempting to assess real estate taxes on all property at the Antiochian Village including the camp, Heritage and Learning Center, the museum, and all real estate. The Archdiocese has retained local counsel and has entered into negotiations with the tax authorities. The Township had seen the Village's marketing materials and noted the existence of a liquor license. Efforts to settle the dispute were fruitless, and the result was a liability of \$180,000/year. The Village was already paying about \$6000/year on the homes on the property. After a full hearing the Archdiocese received notice that that the camp would be tax-exempt, but Fairfield Township is appealing that determination. The status of the lodging rooms and banquet hall is still being decided. Another observer from the tax authorities visited a few weeks ago during the Sacred Music Institute. Mr. Richard Ayoub, a





member of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees and an expert tax attorney, is assisting on these questions. The Heritage and Learning Center has now surrendered the liquor license and has removed all marketing for weddings and other events from its website, but it will fulfill all of its current commitments.

Mr. George Elias, Esq., pointed out that if there is no charge for liquor, its use is permissible.

Mrs. Elaine Saliba asked if there were a liability exposure to the trustees or employees. The Chancellor responded that there was no coverage for employees, but there is an officers-and-directors liability policy.

Fr. Iskander Younes asked about the establishment of monasteries. Metropolitan JOSEPH responded that he would speak to that question tomorrow in his address.

The Assembly adjourned at 3:15 PM following a prayer by Bishop ANTHONY.

Friday, July 28, 2017, 11:00 AM
Metropolitan JOSEPH opened the session with prayer at 11:00 AM.

Mr. Jamil Malone addressed the General Assembly on behalf of the newly formed Young Adult Ministry. The next young professional conference will take place August 2018 in Denver, CO. Retreats are happening in several places. Mr. Malone stressed that the Young Adult Ministry is a ministry and a fellowship, not a formal organization. There is no constitution, and there are no elections, just an informal process of succession.

Fr. John Finley congratulated the Young Adults and asked what has happened to the responsibilities and funds of previous the SOYO and Fellowship of St. John the Divine. Fr. Zain responded that those responsibilities and funds are now handled by diocesan ministry councils.

Fr. Michael Nasser spoke about the “Becoming Truly Human” program as an outreach program to non-Orthodox. A full-length film is in development and could be a tool for Young Adult Ministry to use.

Ms. Kelly Neagle Khoury, Dallas, TX, outlined the Antiochian Rewards Program, a fundraising platform for parishes and the Clergy Retirement Fund. There is no cost or fee to use the platform. Participants can sign up on the archdiocesan website to register for the program. A portion of purchases from participating retailers goes to the shopper’s parish or to the Retired Clergy Housing Allowance Fund. These rebates apply to gift cards and shopping in participating stores.

X. Address of Metropolitan JOSEPH to the 53rd Archdiocese Convention

The address of the Metropolitan appeared in the November 2017 issue of *The WORD* magazine.

Metropolitan JOSEPH announced that His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS will succeed the retiring Rt. Rev. ANTOUN as Bishop of the Diocese of Miami and the Southeast.

The General Assembly adjourned for lunch at 12:30 PM and reconvened at 1:45 PM.

XI. Presentation of Proposed Resolutions – Rev. Archdeacon Emile Sayegh, Chancellor and Chairman of the Department of Legal Affairs

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION TO THE HOST PARISH

WHEREAS St. George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral of Coral Gables, Florida, has graciously hosted the 53rd Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocesan Convention at the renowned Diplomat Hotel in Hollywood Florida, from July 23-30, 2017;

AND WHEREAS the Pastor, Very Rev. Fr. Fouad Saba and the Convention Chairperson, Andrea Abu-Akel, together with her Executive Officers, Salma Zacur, Lama Elhaj and Nasser Soufia and the entire Convention Committee, the Parish Council and all the faithful have worked tirelessly for years and spared no efforts to assure the success of this Convention, securing an outstanding venue and providing wonderful hospitality for our every need, family fellowship and spiritual growth;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this 53rd Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Hollywood, Florida, from July 24-30, 2017, in unanimity and by acclamation extends to the Host Pastor and the entire Convention Committee, its heartfelt thanks and appreciation for an outstanding and extraordinary convention.

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO EFFECTUATE THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE AND SAFE RETURN OF OUR BELOVED METROPOLITAN PAUL AND ARCHBISHOP YOHANNA

WHEREAS the hierarchs, clergy and faithful of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America have met in General Assembly at the 53rd Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocesan Convention on this 28th day of July, 2017, in Hollywood, Florida; and

WHEREAS people of all faith traditions in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan and the entire Middle East are being subjected to violations of their human rights, to abductions, physical torture and to death; and

WHEREAS, on April 22, 2013, while returning from one of their many humanitarian missions, two faithful and well-beloved Syrian Archbishops: Metropolitan PAUL (Yazi-

gi), the Antiochian Orthodox Metropolitan Archbishop of Aleppo and younger brother of our Father in Christ, JOHN X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and Archbishop Mar Gregorious YOHANNA (Ibrahim), leader of the Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo, were forcefully taken and abducted by unknown extremists; and

WHEREAS the entire Christian community in the Middle East and here in North America, including the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, have implored the United States government and the international community for assistance in toward the immediate release and safe return of these beloved Archbishops; and

WHEREAS, since their cruel and forceful abduction until the present time, our pleas to the United States government and the international community have gone unheeded; and

WHEREAS the fate of these hierarchs remains unknown despite the continuous pleas for their immediate release and safe return by Christian leaders and organizations throughout the world, including those of His Beatitude, Patriarch JOHN X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East; His Holiness Pope FRANCIS, His Beatitude, Patriarch KIRILL, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOCH), and Christian Churches Together in the United States, (CCT-USA), all consisting of 43 denominations and organizations in America; and

WHEREAS our beloved Archbishops are very much loved and are important members of their respective Archdioceses, ministering to many thousands of their faithful holding respected positions on the Holy Synod of Antioch and the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch; and

WHEREAS our governments in North America: the United States and Canada and the governments of the international community hold human dignity and the value of human life and rights to the highest degree; and

WHEREAS it has been more than four (4) years since the forceful abduction of Metropolitan PAUL and Archbishop YOHANNA, and the time has come to put an end to this tragic and unthinkable situation;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this 53rd Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Hollywood, Florida, from July 23-30, 2017, through the clergy and laity of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, calls upon our United States and Canadian governments and the international community to determine the whereabouts of Metropolitan PAUL and Archbishop YOHANNA; we demand that all action be taken for their immediate release from captivity and safe return. We call upon President, Donald J. Trump and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to exercise their political leadership in urging the heads of state of other foreign governments to demand to know the whereabouts of these two hierarchs and to effectuate their immediate release from captivity and safe return;

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a true copy of this Resolution, under cover letter from His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, be delivered to the office of the President of the United States of America; to the office of the Prime Minister of Canada, to the office of the Secretary of State, to the office of the Speaker of the House and to the office of the Senate Majority Leader, as soon as practicable.

RESOLUTION PLEDGING OUR SUPPORT AND LOVE TO OUR MOTHER CHURCH OF ANTIOCH

WHEREAS the hierarchs, clergy Board of Trustees, and faithful under the leadership of our beloved Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, having met in General Assembly at the 53rd Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America Convention on this 28th day of July, 2017 in Hollywood, Florida; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly extends its warmest and heartfelt greetings to our Father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X, and to the entire See of the Great Church of Antioch; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly expresses to His Beatitude our unconditional love, loyalty, support and commitment to our Mother Church; that we beseech Almighty God to protect our beloved Father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X, and to bring an everlasting peace and joy to the people of Syria and the entire Middle East;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESEOLVED that this 53rd Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Hollywood, Florida, from July 24-30, 2017, in unanimity and by acclamation commits its love, loyalty and support to our Mother Church of the Great See of Antioch and offers its fervent prayers to Almighty God to bring an everlasting peace to the people of Syria and for many more years of good health and prosperity to our Father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X.

RESOLUTION HONORING WITH LOVE AND APPRECIATION BISHOP ANTOUN (Khoury)

WHEREAS the hierarchs, clergy and faithful of this God-protected Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America have met as the General Assembly at the 53rd





Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocesan Convention here in Hollywood, Florida;

AND WHEREAS Antoun Yssa Khouri, was born in Damascus, Syria, on January 17, 1931, on the feast day of his patron saint, Anthony the Great;

AND WHEREAS, after completing his primary education in 1945 at the Orthodox School in Meedan, Syria, he enrolled at the tender age of 14 years, at the Minor Seminary at Balamand, Lebanon, where he met his life-long friend, Philip Saliba, and, after completing advanced studies, he graduated with a degree in Theology from the Balamand Theological Seminary;

AND WHEREAS, on October 28, 1951, after his ordination to the Holy Diaconate, in Damascus, Syria, by His Beatitude Patriarch ALEXANDER III, he was assigned to serve at the Patriarchal Cathedral;



AND WHEREAS, during his tenure at the Patriarchal Cathedral, he pursued undergraduate studies at Assiyat Orthodox College, and, having completed his studies in 1957, was assigned to serve the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese in Sao Paulo, Brazil;

AND WHEREAS, in 1959, then Deacon Antoun immigrated to the United States to begin graduate studies in theology at St. Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, New York, where he graduated with the esteemed degree of Master of Divinity;

AND WHEREAS, on May 29, 1960, Deacon Antoun was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Metropolitan ANTONY Bashir (of thrice-blessed memory);

AND WHEREAS, Fr. Antoun served his pastoral duties first at St. George Church in Philadelphia, PA, and thereafter at St. George Church in Toronto, Canada;

AND WHEREAS, on August 3, 1969, having been deemed worthy, Father Antoun, was elevated to the dignity of Archimandrite by the laying on of hands of Metropolitan PHILIP (of thrice-blessed memory), who gladly accepted his new assignment as administrative assistant to the Metro-

politan at the Archdiocese Headquarters, at which time His Eminence had announced to the Archdiocese there was a new “sheriff” in town;

AND WHEREAS, feeling the desire to pastor the faithful, Archimandrite Antoun humbly requested he be reassigned to serve a parish, and was assigned to Saint George Church in Allentown, PA, followed by a new assignment as the pastor of Saint Nicholas Cathedral, (the Mother Cathedral of the Archdiocese) in Brooklyn, New York;

AND WHEREAS, on November 4, 1982, having been nominated by the General Assembly of our Archdiocese, the Holy Synod of Antioch, elected Fr. Antoun as auxiliary Bishop and as Titular Bishop of Selekia, Syria;

AND WHEREAS, on January 9, 1983, the beloved Fr. Antoun was consecrated in a solemn ceremony to the Holy Episcopacy at Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, New



York, by Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba), Archbishop MICHAEL of Toledo, Archbishop ELIA (Saliba), of the Patriarchal Monastery of Saint George, Bishop PAUL (Bandaly), Patriarchal Vicar and Metropolitan ANTONIOS (Chedraoui);

AND WHEREAS, following his consecration to the Holy Episcopacy, His Grace Bishop ANTOUN unequivocally served this Archdiocese, consistently and with great commitment, love, discipline, loyalty, humility and perseverance;

AND WHEREAS, following his many years of service to this God-protected Archdiocese, His Grace Bishop ANTOUN, leaving his indelible “footprints in the sands of time,” is justly deserving of our admiration and deep gratitude and affection;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, together with the General Assembly of this 53rd Archdiocese Convention in Hollywood, Florida, this 28th day of July, 2017, bestows upon His Grace Bishop ANTOUN, with unanimity and by acclamation, its undivided honor, love and respect; this General Assembly also offer its supplications to Al-

mighty God that He grant, Bishop ANTOUN, many more happy and healthy years to come, as we all shout “Well done thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

The General Assembly received all four resolutions by acclamation.

XII. Fr. Zain introduced the second presentation by Archpriest Andrew Damick which he submitted to *The WORD Magazine* for publication.

XIII. Old Business

There was no Old Business.

XIV. New Business

A. Report on the 2019 Archdiocese Convention – Grand Rapids, MI

Fr. Michael Nasser, pastor of St. Nicholas Church, Grand Rapids, MI, Mr. Alan Abraham and Mrs. Kathy Abraham, Co-Chairs of the Convention, made both a video and oral update on preparations for the 2019 Archdiocese Convention. Room rates will be \$149 per night with free parking and free wi-fi.

B. Report on Bids for the 2021 Archdiocese Convention – Mr. Raed Sweiss and Ms. Carole Jazzar, Department of Convention Planning

Mr. Stephen Esper, Ms. Stephanie Elhaj, Ms. Rula Khoury, and a representative of the Pittsburgh Convention Bureau presented the bid of St. George Cathedral, Pittsburgh, PA, to host the 2021 Archdiocese Convention, July 18-25, 2021, at a rate of \$149 per night at the Wyndham Grand Hotel. The General Assembly accepted the bid by acclamation.

C. Report of the Nominating Committee for the Board of Trustees – His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS, Chair

Fr. Joseph Purpura moved that the Secretary cast one unanimous ballot for the slate of nominees from the Nominating Committee:

- Mr. Philip Saliba (St. Nicholas Cathedral, Brooklyn, NY)
- Dr. Elias Hebekka (St. Paul Church, Naples, FL)
- Mr. Gregory Laham (St. George Church, West Roxbury, MA)
- Mr. William Morrison (Holy Transfiguration Church, Wrenville, IL)
- Mr. Khalil Kardous (All Saints Church, Raleigh, NC)
- Mr. Nicholas Massad (St. George Church, Houston, TX)
- Dr. George Madanat (St. James Church, Anaheim, CA)
- Mr. Elias Shaheen (St. George Church, Houston, TX)
- Mr. Majed Nashawat (St. James Church, Poughkeepsie, NY)
- Mrs. Rebecca Swayri Pagani (St. Paul Church, Lynwood, WA)



The motion passed by acclamation.

Metropolitan’s Board of Trustees Appointments

D. Metropolitan JOSEPH recognized the dedicated service of the members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees who are leaving the Board: Mr. James Bach, Dr. Anthony Bashir, Mr. George Darany, Mrs. Elaine Heider, Dr. Raymond Rishwain, and the departed Sandra Murr Love.

His Eminence announced that Mr. Darany, Dr. Bashir, and Dr. Rishwain would be Honorary Members of the Board of Trustees.

His Eminence appointed Rev. Deacon Christian Manasseh, Mr. Michael Homsey, Mr. Alan Rossi, Ms. Karen Kinan, and Mr. Salim Abboud to full terms on the Board of Trustees, and Ms. Carol Laham to complete the remaining two years of the term of Dr. Raymond Rishwain.

XV. Adjournment and Closing Prayer

Mr. Ralph Abercia moved to adjourn. Ms. Kelli Khoury seconded the motion. The motion passed, and His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS closed the General Assembly with prayer at 3:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
V. Rev. Fr.
Michael Ellias,
Secretary, Antiochian
Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North



“FROM THESE STONES”

An excerpt from the forthcoming reissue of One Flew Over the Onion Dome (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press).

Fr. Joseph Huneycutt

The fact that we live in a culture that is still familiar with Jesus Christ should not prevent us from humbly and boldly imparting the fundamentals of the Faith, repeatedly, even to the faithful Christians around us. The fundamentals, the basics, mere Christianity – this is what our society thirsts for, this living water. The popular social knowledge of our Lord has become something other than truth. Jesus is made out to be a mere buddy or pal who is there in our times of trouble, like an insurance company. We who share in the fullness of the Faith are *bound* to share this treasure with those around us.

There is much work to be done if we are to introduce true Christianity into this wayward society. Yet if we're too full of zeal to convert our neighbor, chances are we've neglected God in the process. Christ said that we are to love God and love our neighbor. Some have interpreted this to mean, “Convert your neighbor and God will love you.” We must begin with God's love, and love of God. Before we do anything else, we must love God above all. Salvation is the Good News of God's love that has consumed our very being. This consummation is the beginning of salvation. We must bring our will into accord with God's to be a Christian and bear Christ to the world. The Theotokos is our model for this fundamental step.

We fail sometimes because we fear we lack the right answers. We also fear rejection. No one likes to be rejected. Yet, Christ's disciples should expect to be rejected and even hated:

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you (John 15:18–19, 20b).

When we run from rejection, hatred, scorn and de-

risation, we are no different from the disciples that fled the scene when it included crucifixion. Yet they changed. They were converted. Unlike the disciples at the time, we have the benefit of knowing the rest of the story: *the Resurrection*. What else could have happened to change these scared and hurting men into the great evangelists and martyrs of the Faith? They experienced the Resurrection. This, the greatest Revelation of God, changed them. They converted. Death no longer held sway – not only over their bodies, but over their fears. They began to die to themselves to live a greater life in Christ.

We, too, must convert – be willing to die for the Faith – before we can evangelize. Now you might say, “Gee, that sounds a bit extreme.” I agree with you, but the Faith is not something that we make up. The Faith is not something that necessarily soothes us. The Faith is a precious gift from God that requires *all* of us: mind, body, and soul. We may have to die many “little deaths” before the big one that terminates our earthly sojourn. For now, Christ calls us out of the world. He consumes us, and sends us back, with fear of God and full of the Holy Spirit, to bring in the harvest. We must die for Him to live in us. We must allow our pride to die, our greed to die, our wants to die, our wills to die, our dreams to die, our feelings to die. *We must die*. Death is the first step in evangelism.

Like St. John the Forerunner, we must say of Christ, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). In taking up our cross daily, we crucify our sinful selves, only to be raised up to glory, and thereby become co-workers with God for the salvation of the world. This is the promise. This is the mission. Evangelism begins with death. We are not to slay our brother for the sake of the Gospel. Rather, we must be slain. This is the way of Evangelism.

In conjunction with the first step is the second:

Prayer. We must spend time with God. Sure, God is everywhere and available always, but we are not. Our busy lives usually serve up schedules where we know neither if we're coming nor going. We need to spend time just plain standing: Standing in the presence of God in prayer. This presence with God is Incarnational, involving the Sacraments of the Church. It also entails time alone, or with family, in our icon corners.

The next step in evangelism is *social*. We must be around other people to bring them the Good News. This being in contact with people happens every day in ordinary ways. The day's fleeting moments are often unrecognized as evangelism's finest hour. Back when I was just starting out as a missionary priest, an experienced priest told me: “Pray God sends you people. Pray you recognize the people God sends you.” Living this principle is difficult. Oftentimes one can feel the responsibility for converting everyone who smiles toward Orthodoxy. We get our hopes up when a new face darkens the church door. Too many times we allow ourselves to count unhatched chickens. This can lead to mental and emotional exhaustion.

We must be present with God and present with others. The operative word here is *present*. If we're not living in the present, we're not residing in God. We reject what the French mystic, Jean Pierre de Caussade, called *the sacrament of the present moment*.¹ This “sacrament” is offered by God with each moment. Yet most of the time, we reside not in that moment, but in the past or future – the land of worry, doubt, fear, and concern. This is not to say that most of us have never tasted this precious sacrament of God's grace. We have. This joy, however, is often quickly discarded, only to be replaced by *our* will: future, past, pride, sloth, worry.

This *moment* that God offers us is not an individual right. It involves personal relationships. It begs us to be the “God-bearer” to the world around us. It begs us to recognize Christ in others. Living in the present necessitates love and forgiveness. For there is no other way for us to reside in the will of God than to be living, loving, and forgiving in the present moment. We evangelize by

- dying to self;
- being present with God; and
- being present with others.

If we do these things, we fulfill the commandments of Christ to love God and our neighbor. This sounds simple. It is simple. God is simple. For fallen humans, it is terribly hard. It is much easier to spout doctrine, judge our neighbors, be puffed up with pride – and hide.

Orthodox evangelism is not a matter of endless pro-

grams, workshops, revivals, audio and video tapes, and so forth. Like training wheels, these can be helpful, but they are not the best means. Christ said there is one thing needful. This one thing needful, the inner peace – Christ – leads us to act.

One thing we must not forget: Orthodoxy is Christianity. It is tempting for us, even pastors, to fall into the trap of believing that Orthodoxy is an “add-on” to whatever other form of Christianity was previously practiced. This is false. I used to view all followers of Christ outside of the Church as, in a sense, catechumens; no longer. More fruit is borne when instruction and catechism start from scratch, teaching Orthodoxy. You cannot add Orthodoxy to Christianity. Rather, it is Christianity. We shouldn't beat others over the head with this fact, but we should never shy away from it.

We should remember, too, that Orthodox Christianity is the Church. All other manifestations of “church” have subtracted from the Church. Having grown up in the Baptist tradition, I heard the Epistles anew, seemingly for the first time, when I became Orthodox. St. Paul was writing to the Church. Here I was, now a member of that same Body, the Church, hearing his writings in a whole new light. No longer did I have to struggle to hear the writings of St. Paul speaking to me personally. From time to time that may be the case, yet the Epistles were and are to the Church. It is a “we” thing that we take personally; it's hard to explain to an outsider, but like all families, clarity comes within the confines of membership. There's no other way to experience marriage and family without participating in it.

Not utilizing the whole of the canon of catechism and the Scriptures in teaching seekers about the Faith is a mistake. It is incorrect to view all outsiders as catechumens. Converts need to re-examine, on their own terms, previously held beliefs and assumptions about Christ, the Church, and salvation. For the Orthodox to assume that those coming to Her from other Christian backgrounds need merely to add icons, incense, and liturgical worship is an erroneous assumption. It is best to just start from scratch. *Scratch*, in this case, is that Faith which has been preserved and handed down from generation to generation in the Church. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

1. Jean-Pierre De Caussade, *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*, first published in France as *L'Abandon a la Providence divine* (Desclee de Brouwer, 1966).

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside by fables.

But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Timothy 4:1–5).

God forbid that we Orthodox un-shoulder the burden that God has placed on us. Rejection of our calling equals rejection of the Kingdom. We have a calling to share this precious Faith with the world for its salvation.

This salvation was purchased by the Blood of the Lamb. This Faith has sprung from the blood of the martyrs and the prayers of the saints. Against this Faith, this Church, the gates of Hell shall not prevail. We are the people of God; the time is now. Let us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Let us struggle to die to self and to be found in the presence of God and others.

The final step in evangelism is trust. In dying to self, being present with God and others, we trust. We trust that through our imperfect and unworthy efforts, God will bless the increase and the Holy Spirit will lead others into the Church.


Fr. Joseph Huneycutt
Vice-Chairman of the Department of Missions and Evangelism



WHOSE HOUSE ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Fr. Anthony Baba

I recently learned that the most racially segregated hour in America is at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. In almost every church in America, on Sunday mornings at 10:00, every cultural group flocks together. White people go to predominately white churches; black people go to predominately black churches, Hispanic people go to Hispanic speaking churches, and the list goes on. It’s a pretty interesting fact, but what’s even more interesting than that is that the second most racially segregated hour is during coffee hour in just about every Orthodox Church. At coffee hour, the birds of a feather flock together. There is the “convert table,” where folks sit and discuss how they learned about the Orthodox Faith, or what recipes they use for fasting meals. There are also the “Arab table” and the “Greek table,” who sit in separate sections; discussions vary from week to week. Then, of course, there is the “tabouleh” table that’s just a mix of everyone else who doesn’t really fit into any specific category.



Children’s Relief Fund

www.childrenreliefund.org
email: childrensreliefund@gmail.com

“Whoever receives one little child like this in my name receives me.” (Matthew 18:5)

November 2017

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

I greet you once again on behalf of all children of the **Children’s Relief Fund**, past and present, and hope that you receive this letter in their gratitude and appreciation for the love and concern you have shown them in our Lord’s name and we pray for your continued health and prosperity.

This letter brings to you our “2017 Christmas Appeal” for the **Children’s Relief Fund**. The purpose of this program within the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church of North America is to provide partial scholarship funds for the needy children in Lebanon, Palestine and the children of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

The wars in the Middle East have been devastating and have left many families in need of financial support to meet the needs of educating their children.

Since its inception in 1983, the **Children’s Relief Fund**, through your generosity, has provided students close to \$3.5 millions in partial educational scholarships to several thousand needy elementary and high school children. These children remain thankful that someone out there cares for their welfare. In 2016, you supported 339 students (262 in Lebanon including 28 children of Syrian refugees and 77 in Palestine).

The need to continue and increase our support is now more challenging as more and more children are in need of financial assistance. As of now, we have some 77 applications of children waiting to be sponsored.

Once again, I appeal to your remarkable generosity in helping our charitable effort towards the needy children in Lebanon, Palestine and the Syrian children in Lebanon. Your past performance has brought much joy to so many young suffering innocents. *100% of your donation goes directly to your sponsored child and no money is used for administrative services.*

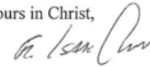
The Children’s Relief Fund offers you an opportunity to donate your money to include us within your scope of your charitable giving. Your assistance will improve the lives of these children and give them a chance for a better future.

For those of you who are already sponsoring a child, we offer our most profound thanks and gratitude, please continue your support. New sponsors are encouraged to open a window of concern and join this humanitarian effort to lift the burden off these children.

In anticipation of your kind and generous response, we thank you in advance for your support and pray that you enjoy this Holy Season with health, happiness and prosperity. Your generous gift will help in educating a child.


As always, I remain

Yours in Christ,



Fr. Isaac Crow
National Director

Mailing Address: PO Box 60692, Potomac, MD 20859
10620 River Road, Potomac, MD 20859 • (301) 765-3400
ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA



When we hear the theme of our convention, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations,” we tend to think of it in very general terms: basically, our churches should be for everyone. It’s a no-brainer. We wouldn’t tell people they can’t come to our church because of how they look or how they dress. We don’t refuse people when they walk in our doors. In the back of our minds, however, we may have questions about who a certain person is, and perhaps what their motives are. The wheels in our minds begin to turn and even judge the people who walk in, especially if you work in the Church and “they” come to the office during the week. Homeless people come and ask for money. Mothers come who need diapers for their babies. Solicitors come in because they want our business. Parishioners come in because they may want or need to talk.

They’re all coming to a house of prayer because they want to see it. They want to experience it. So we, who work in the church, whether you’re a clergymen or laymen, are called to be a reflection of what it means to be a house of prayer. People want to see and experience in each us that our personal temple is a house of prayer. If we don’t have this spirit of peace, then our interaction with those from every nation who come to us will not be the house of prayer they are unconsciously seeking in their hearts and minds. The homeless who ask for money are also seeking compassion. Mothers who need diapers are seeking comfort and relief. Solicitors, though they’re coming for business purposes, could also be seeking some encouragement. Those parishioners who like to stop by ... God knows what they need, but if we offer them our love, they will leave with their spirits filled.

Many of the priests we know and love in our Archdiocese are good priests because they were taught by good priests. Not only that: some of them come from a line of priests; perhaps their fathers or grandfathers served as priests. My father wasn’t a priest, but I can tell you, strangely enough, that I learned how to be a priest be-

cause of his example as a grocer. He and my mother owned and operated a neighborhood convenience store that I worked in for twenty years of my life. I learned how to be a priest from my father because in order to make a living, he had to serve all nations, in a sense – people from different walks of life. They were rich and poor, young and old, and everything in between. He treated people with respect. He served them with love and care. When customers died, he and my mother would attend their funerals. They were invited to baptisms and birthday parties.

If a customer who lost his job couldn’t afford to buy groceries, my parents would provide his family with basic necessities. If a single mother needed her unruly child to be disciplined, my father would lecture him as any father would, and even reward him if he made good grades in school. He was a father-figure to the entire neighborhood, and he became this way because he and my mother, by their loving example, made their place of business feel more like a house of prayer. It was a business, yes, but it was a place where unchurched people could receive the mercy and love the Church freely gives to us. So I, as their son, learned that a house of prayer must begin with me. Every interaction I have with whoever it may be, must come from a place of

peace, Christ Himself – Who is the Prince of Peace.

So whether a person is black or white or any color in between, or whether a person sits at the Greek table or the convert table at coffee hour, the common denominator in every person I encounter is me, and how I respond. We must ask ourselves, “Does the temple of my body, my own house of prayer, reflect who Christ is?” St. Seraphim says, “Acquire the spirit of peace and thousands around you will be saved.” May God grant us His Spirit of peace so that we might save ourselves and the thousands around us.

Fr. Anthony Baba
St. Anthony the Great Orthodox Church, Spring, Texas

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PEACE AND
THOUSANDS
AROUND YOU WILL
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What

Clergy	\$304,117
Retired Clergy Housing Allowance	\$270,000
Married Seminarian Assistance	\$11,250
Clergy Symposium & Convention Assistance	\$22,867
Archdiocese Youth	\$397,913
Summer Camp Scholarships	\$190,000
Youth Ministry	\$120,000
SOYO Special Olympics	\$8,000
SOYO Leadership & Youth Worker Training	\$25,392
Christian Education	\$39,996
College Conference	\$14,525
Archdiocese Development & Growth	\$329,988
Missions & Evangelism	\$129,996
Planning & Future Development	\$75,000
Parish Development / Mission Grants	\$24,996
Internet Ministry	\$99,996
Other Grants	\$329,988
Project Mexico	\$10,000
Christ the Savior School	\$15,000
Treehouse, FOCUS, Prison Ministries	\$15,000
Order Administrative	\$153,921
Materials & Wages	\$153,921

Figures represent part of the actual expenses for Fiscal Year 2017

Why

So our children can pray, sing, laugh and even cry with one another as they grow stronger in their Orthodox Faith and closer to our Lord ... *together*.
- Summer Camp Scholarships

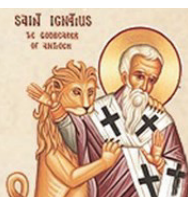
To help build the foundation and provide the essential tools of knowledge, relationships and memories that help our children remain steadfast in their Orthodox faith.
- SOYO Leadership & Youth Worker Training & Youth Ministry

To make sure orphaned children feel loved and safe, and promise them that everything is going to be alright and that they are not alone.
- Project Mexico

To provide guidance, reassurance and compassion, to unwed mothers who choose life rather than abortion.
- Treehouse Ministries

To help give comfort and financial assurance to our retired clergy and their families. But even more, express our gratitude to our spiritual leader and friend who's been with us during all of our times of joy and sorrow.
Retired Clergy Housing Allowance

To help plant the seeds of Orthodoxy throughout North America revealing the "True Faith" and ensuring the Church's growth for generations
- Department of Missions & Evangelism



ORDER OF ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH
ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE