Memory Eternal
His Grace, Bishop ANTOUN
1931-2017
The Word

January 2016

Cover: Bishop Antoun

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The Word 3

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 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;

🔹 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 wisdom.

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 churches? They were drawn in by this Christ-like images, I will continue to remember Bishop Antoun as a shepherd, as one who was always there to guide his precious sheep and guard them with his own life.
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 reminded us 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 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 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.

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 rejoiced for all eternity by 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 Lord is near, that His sweet smelling fragrance 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 he who betrayed his friend, who gave himself to his flock with love and joy.

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 this 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.
Christ In Our Midst

For Christ Himself knows no boundaries. Now, in other 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.

THIS REGARD. AS A RESULT, THE DISCIPLES ASKED THE MULTITUDE TO “APPOINT SEVEN MEN TO PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF THE MEMBERS.”


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

A CONVENTION HOMILY

Discerning and Using the Gifts that God Has Given

Fr. Milad Selim


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
Discerning and Using

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

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 said 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 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.” Can we truly 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 Scriptures 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
Christ and His Church are 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. 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 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 director of everything that we do.

Christ and His Church are the test 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.

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 with a... And structure that comes from the depths of our being had arisen... "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 3:24–25).
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 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 woman 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. As his feet, beside the statue is a certain strange plant, which climbs up to the barn 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 bring both Christ and the Church to an end. 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 near in a pre-Conventorian 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 Gan-dhi 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 made whole. Our answer to an increasingly secular and materialistic world is to bring Jesus to them, to show them that “he who believes in me will experience an abundant life!”

Becoming Children of the Father

Fr. Joseph Huneycutt

“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 hear...
becoming children

Accordingly, they ... pass judgments, give way to boastfulness or pride, sometimes get angry (as if this feeling were justified by the righteousness 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

“Our 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. “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 pros- trations 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 sure, 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

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 prob- ably the last thing you want to do right now in the midst of this General Assembly of the Auto- chthonous 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 sec- ular these days, we use it as a negation of religious faith. 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 terri- tory 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 argu- ments and ideas so that they can counter secularism when they encounter it in school, or college, or in the workplace. We edu- cate them with the Church’s view on the hot issues of our day. We give them the armor and weapons they will need to with- stand 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 pro- grams 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 what the Archdiocese formed the new Young Adult Minis- try. “How do we keep our young people in the Church?” – I can’t count how many times I have heard that ques- tion. We fight against the "secular" world and wonder why we’re not winning. We know that God will win

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.

A RENEWING MINISTRY: WE’RE ALL SECULAR NOW

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


Fr. Joseph Humpach St. Joseph, Houston
We’re All Secular.

I took them and felt better. End of story. In the second story, I made them, and they worked. I had barbecue ribs for lunch. My father-in-law liked to suggest that one of our parishioners and my senior colleagues in the priesthood, but I’d never thought about praying about my indigestion. It didn’t occur to me. I knew that antacids were what I needed, and I just didn’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 forty, but I started experiencing acid indigestion. 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 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 transcendental. 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 something few people consciously experience.

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 because we don’t 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 the 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 want to do anything 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.

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 in this world 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 immensity. 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 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.

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 empire 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 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 Stephan Czeckicki
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 am 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 the Middle East at the time:

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. 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.

So let me tell you about this young man: He wasn’t asking to be put on a prayer list. I prayed that God would show him that path, that God would heal his heart immediately: “Please pray for me.” In the second, that young man wanted to reconnect the transcendent to the immanence of his world: “Have you ever thought about doing something different with your life?” In other words, Metropolitan GEORGES (Khos- dr) of Mount Leba- non wrote this about Christianity in the Middle East at the time:

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 told him that I entered the seminary only in my late twenties. 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.

These 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 what do we do ministry 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:

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.

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.

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 aspects of the Offices. The general 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.

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 interces- sion 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 those 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 for truth. It reaches rather toward the sense that we are all a royal priesthood, a holy nation. We all have priestly ministry.

Protestantism encourages people to think about prayer in more abstract terms. One can pray for the conversion of someone, or for an end to a war, or for one’s own health. It is not Protestant for us to take prayer requests and immediately pray with people. This is Orthodox, too. 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.

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.” We 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 who would rule over them, living by His commands. 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 to have a king so they could be “like all the nations.”
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 descends 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 of 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 different 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 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 members 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.

Black is authority. It is an establishment of a people. It is a negation of nationhood which puts all other groups—into nations, into kingdoms, into our houses, into our families. It is beauty emerging from 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 world.

Thursday, July 27, 2017—11:00 AM
1. 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 IOSEPH, 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 ANTHON for health reasons, and of His Grace Bishop AL-SHANDER. He introduced Their Grace Bishops BASIL, Bishop THOMAS, Bishop JOHN and Bishop NICHOLAS.

IV. Appointment of Convention Officers

V. Introduction of the Members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees
Fr. Zain acknowledged the officers of the Archdiocesan Archdiocese, Mr. Fawaz El-Khodary, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Dr. John D. Dallak, Secretary of the Board of Trustees, Ms. Salim Albaqouli, CFO and Treasurer of the Archdiocese, V. Rev. Fr. Michael Elias, Secretary of the Archdiocese, V. Rev. Fr. Timothy Fergus son, Protosyngellos, and Rev. Archdeacon Emile Paul Sayegh, Esq., Chancellor.

Fr. Zain introduced the members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees who were present: Ms. Salim Albaqouli, Dr. John D. Dallak, Mr. George Darany, Mr. Roger J. David, Ms. Darlene Haddad, Mr. Elias Shaheen, Mr. Douglas J. Skaff, Dr. George K. Hebeka, Mr. Khalil E. Kardous, Ms. Darlene Haddad, Mr. Gregory H. Laham, Dr. George M. Madanat, Mr. Jamal Malone, Dr. Nicholas J. Massoud, Jr., Mr. William D. Morrison, Mrs. Kelli Kozari Noggle, Mr. Majed J. Neshweiat, Ms. Mary Winstanley-O’Connor, Ms. Danette M. O’Regan, Ms. Mansour O. Rayan, Mr. Philip N. Saliba, Mr. Elias Shaheen, Mr. Douglas J. Skaff, Dr. George Thomas, Mr. Rami Younes, Mr. Dimmit C. Zaidan, and Honorary Members Mr. Ralph Abercia, and Dr. Sam H. Kouri.

VI. Minutes of the 52nd Archdiocese Convention, Boston, MA, July 2015
Rev. Fr. Gesu Davina 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
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 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 receivables, especially from parishes which are in arrears.

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

Discussion on the motion:

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

Fr. Nicholas Dadihal 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 the current system is 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.

The motion passed.

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

1. Investments - $33,650,113.37, mainly in restricted assets including the Archdiocese Headquarters, the Antiochian Village, the diocesan diocesan treasurers, the Convict 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.

2. Metropolitan JOSEPH 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 and donations.

3. 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, Merrick, NY, should be listed as $15,174, not $75,174.

The motion passed.

The Archdiocese received notice that the property. After a full hearing the Village was already paying the maximum stipend for the Retired Clergy Housing allowance in September.
member of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees and an expert tax attor-
ey, is assisting on these quests. The Heritage and Learning Center has now surrendered the liquor li-
cense 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, Eq., pointed out that there is no charge for li-
quor, its use is permissible.

Mrs. Elaine Saliba asked if there were a liability exposure to the trust-
ers or employees. The Chancellor re-
sponded that there was no coverage for employees, but there is an offi-
cers-and-directors liability policy.

Dr. Isador Varoures asked about the establishment of monasteries. Metropolitan JOSEPH responded that he would speak to that question tomorrow in his address.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:15 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 decisions, just an informal process of successsion.

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

Fr. Michael Nassar introduced the “Becoming Truly Huma-n” 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.

Mrs. Kelly Nagle Houshy, 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 archdi-
cesan website to register for the program. A portion of pur-
chases 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 Archdi-
 

cocese Convention

The address of the Metropolitan appeared in the Novem-
ber 2017 issue of THE WORD magazine.
Metropolitan JOSEPH, as His Grace Bis-
op NICHOLAS will succeed the retiring Rt. Rev. ANTONV

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. Archdea-
com 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, Flah, 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 Pastors, Very Rev. Fr. Fouad Safa and the Convention Chairperson, Andrea Abu-Akl, together with her Executive Officers, Salma Zaccou, Lama Eljih and Nasser Souli, 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 Con-
vention, securing an outstanding venue and providing wonder-
ful hospitality for our every need, family fellowship and spiritual growth.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this 53rd Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Holly-
wood, Florida, from July 24-30, 2017, in unanimity and by acclamation extends to the Host Pastor and the entire Conven-
tion 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 LOVED 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 Ortho-
dox 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 ab-
ductions, physical torture and to death; and

WHEREAS, on April 22, 2013, following 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 Mid-
dle East and in the entire North America, including the Antiochian

Orthodox 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 forcible abduction until the present time, our plea 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 through-out the world, including those of His Beatitude, Patriarch JOHN X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East; His Holiness Pope FRANCIS, His Beatitude, Patriarch KIRELL, 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 (SCOCHA); 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 the Church; and

WHEREAS it has been more than four (4) years since the forcible 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 Holly-
wood, Florida, from July 24-30, 2017, in unanimity and by acclamation commits its love, loyalty and support to our Mother Church, that we beseech Almighty God to protect our beloved Father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X, and to the entire See of the Great Church of An-
tioch; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly expresses to His Be-
atitude our unconditional love, loyalty, approval and support 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; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this 53rd Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Holly-
wood, Florida, from July 24-30, 2017, through the clergy and laity of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, calls upon our United States and Cana-
dian governments and the international community to de-
termine the whereabouts of Metropolitan PAUL and Arch-
bishop 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 the whereabouts of these two hierarchs and to effec-
uate their immediate release from captivity and safe return;

AND, BE IT FURTHER RES-
OLVED that a true copy of this Resolution, under cover letter from His Eminence, Metropolitan JO-
SEPH, be delivered to the office of the President of the United States of America, to the office of the Prime Min-
ister 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, hav-
ing met in General Assembly at the 53rd Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America Con-
vention on this 28th day of July, 2017 in Hollywood, Florida; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly extends its warm-
est and heartfelt greetings to our Father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X, and to the entire See of the Great Church of An-
tioch; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly expresses to His Be-
atitude our unconditional love, loyalty, approval and support 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; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this 53rd Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Holly-
wood, Florida, from July 24-30, 2017, in unanimity and by acclamation commits its love, loyalty and support 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; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this 53rd Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Holly-
wood, Florida, from July 24-30, 2017, through the clergy and laity of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, calls upon our United States and Cana-
dian governments and the international community to de-
termine the whereabouts of Metropolitan PAUL and Arch-
bishop 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 the whereabouts of these two hierarchs and to effec-
uate their immediate release from captivity and safe return;
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocesan Convention here in Hollywood, Florida.

AND WHEREAS Antoun Yousifhouri, was born in Dama- scus, Syria, on January 17, 1931, on the feast day of his patron saint, Anthony the Great.

AND WHEREAS, after completing his primary educa- tion in 1945 at the Orthodox School in Meidan, 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 ordina- tion 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 Our- thodox 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 im- migrated 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 es- ternal degree of Master of Divinity.

AND WHEREAS, on May 29, 1960, Deacon Antoun was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Metropolitan ANT- OUN (Bandaly), Patriarchial Vicar and Metropolitan ANTONIOS (Chedraoui);

AND WHEREAS, on January 9, 1983, the beloved Fr. Antoun was consecrated in a solemn ceremony to the Holy Episcopacy at St Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York, by Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba), Archbishop MI- CHAEL of Toledo, Archbishop ELIA (Saliba), of the Patriar- chal Monastery of Saint George, Bishop PAUL (Banadji), Pa- triarchal Vicar and Metropolitan ANTONIOS (Chedraoui);

AND WHEREAS, following his consecration to the Holy Episcopacy, His Grace Bishop ANTOUN unequivocal- ly served the Archdiocese (the Metropolis), with a great com- mitment, love, discipline, loyalty, humility and perseverance; and

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

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate of the Antioch- ian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, to- gether with the General Assembly of this 53rd Archdiocese Convention, made both a video and oral update on preparations for the 2019 Archdiocese Convention.

The General Assembly received all four resolutions by ac- clamation.

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 Nomi- nating Committee:

Mr. Philip Saliba (St. Nicholas Cathedral, Brooklyn, NY)
Dr. Elias Hebeke (St. Paul Church, Naplex, FL)
Mr. Gregory Laham (St. George Church, West Roxbury, MA)
Mr. William Morrison (Holy Transfiguration Church, Warrensville, IL)
Mr. Khalil Kardous (All Saints Church, Raleigh, NC)
Mr. Nicholas Masad (St. George Church, Houston, TX)
Dr. George Madanat (St. James Church, Anaheim, CA)
Mr. Elias Stalzer (St. George Church, Houston, TX)
Mr. Majed Nashed (St. James Church, Poughkeepsie, NY)
Mrs. Rebecca Sweyri (St. Paul Church, Lyn- wood, WA)

The motion passed by acclamation.

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

XII. Fr. Zain introduced the second presentation by Arch- priest Andrew Damick which he submitted to The WORLD Magazine for publication.

XIII. Old Business

There was no Old Business.

XIV. New Business


Fr. Michael Naser, 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.

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

WHEREAS, on January 9, 1983, the beloved Fr. Antoun was consecrated in a solemn ceremony to the Holy Episcopacy at St Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York, by Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba), Archbishop MI- CHAEL of Toledo, Archbishop ELIA (Saliba), of the Patriar- chal Monastery of Saint George, Bishop PAUL (Banadji), Pa- triarchal Vicar and Metropolitan ANTONIOS (Chedraoui);

AND WHEREAS, feeling the desire to pastor the faith- ful, Archimandrite Antoun humbly requested he be reas- signed 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 Cathed- ral 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 Selefkia, Syria;

AND WHEREAS, on January 9, 1983, the beloved Fr. Antoun was consecrated in a solemn ceremony to the Holy Episcopacy at St Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York, by Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba), Archbishop MI- CHAEL of Toledo, Archbishop ELIA (Saliba), of the Patriar- chal Monastery of Saint George, Bishop PAUL (Banadji), Pa- triarchal Vicar and Metropolitan ANTONIOS (Chedraoui);

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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 too fall 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. 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 requires of us:

- 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 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 or not going. We need to spend time just plain standing: Standing in the presence of God in prayer. This presence is Christ's incarnation, 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 present to 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. 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's future, past, pride, sloth, worry.

This moment that God offers us is not an individual right. It involves personal relationships. It begins 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, 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 programs, 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 Christian- ity. 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, seeming- ly 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.

Orthodoxy is not merely a matter of beliefs; it is a way of living. The process of salvation is to be more like our Lord said it was. We are to become Christ. More fruit is borne when instruction and catechism are nowhere and available always, but we are not. Our busy lives usually serve up schedules where we know neither if we're coming or not going. We need to spend time just plain standing: Standing in the presence of God in prayer. This presence is Christ's incarnation, involving the Sacraments of the Church. It also entails time alone, or with family, in our icon corners.

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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. So much, 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.
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 Humeckuti
Vice-Chairman of the Department of Missions and Evangelism

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 predominantly white churches; black people go to predominantly 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.
Whose House

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. In the minds of our minds, however, we may have questions about whether 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 for business purposes, could also be seeking some encouragement. Those parishioners who like to stop by for business purposes, could also be seeking some encouragement. Those parishioners who like to stop by for business purposes, could also be seeking some encouragement. Those parishioners who like to stop by for business purposes, could also be seeking some encouragement. Those parishioners who like to stop by ...

“ACQUIRE THE SPIRIT OF PEACE AND THOUSANDS AROUND YOU WILL BE SAVED.”

As a family, you can:
- Go to church
- Eat together
- Sit around a fire
- Play games

Contact Chris Shadid at chris@avcamp.org or 724-238-9565 (ext: 505) for any questions
Understanding **what** your gifts fund through The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch is important but the better question is **why** we do it. Be a part of the **why**.

### What

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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**