

THE ^{الكلمة} Word

Volume 58 No. 7

October 2014

المقر البطريركي



The Visit of His Beatitude,
Patriarch JOHN X

&

The Enthronement of His Eminence,
Metropolitan JOSEPH

contents



His Eminence the Most Reverend Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend Bishop ANTOUN

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

Founded in Arabic as Al Kalimat in 1905 by Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny) Founded in English as The WORD in 1957 by Metropolitan ANTONY (Bashir)

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Letters to the editor are welcome and should include the author's full name and parish. Submissions for "Communities in Action" must be approved by the local pastor. Both may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All submissions, in hard copy, on disk or e-mailed, should be double-spaced for editing purposes.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: U.S.A. and Canada, \$20.00 Foreign Countries, \$26.00 Single Copies, \$3.00

The WORD (USPS626-260) is published monthly, except July and August, by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America at 358 Mountain Road, PO Box 5238; periodicals postage paid at Englewood, New Jersey 07631-5238 and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster send address changes to: The WORD, 358 Mountain Road, PO Box 5238, Englewood, NJ 07631-5238 ISSN 0043-7964 www.antiochian.org.

Canada Post Publication Agreement No. 40043404 Return Canada address to: American International Mail, STN A – BOX 697, Windsor ON N9A 6N4, Canada

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editor's letter

Antiochian Unity, the Assembly of Bishops and World Orthodoxy

The Conference on Antiochian Unity held at Balamand University, June 25–29, was a source of great joy and pride for the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America. Our Metropolitan JOSEPH was asked to moderate the wrap-up session, Fr. Michel Najm offered a key paper, and members of our delegation were placed on every workshop of the Conference. In this way, we could dialogue and share with representatives of each of the Antiochian archdioceses throughout the world. It was obvious from the way the conference was structured that the underlying goal was to promote and develop lay and clergy cooperation and leadership at every level of the church. God has blessed His Church with great resources. He has called clergy and lay workers alike to develop skills in every kind of social, medical, educational and ecclesiastical ministry.

While every archdiocese of the Patriarchate has made progress in developing structures for these varied ministries, the North American Archdiocese has been the most deliberate and successful in this area. We were able to share practical experiences to help others reach their goals. We were not there, however, just to give. The American delegation had much to learn about the obstacles and challenges of the other archdioceses as well, and gathered information about global trends that have affected Europe and the Middle East. No doubt, many of these challenges are coming our way, too. In any case, because of global communications, everyone will share the best and the worst of all situations. The collaboration of the Conference on Unity was surely beneficial to all.

Coming from all areas of the globe, Antiochian Orthodox are challenged to understand and articulate what being Antiochian means. The Antiochian jurisdiction is a Church that speaks many languages and encompasses many nationalities and ethnic heritages. This challenges us to think critically and creatively. We want to understand who we are and what is unique about our gifts and heritage. Antiochian Orthodox have always born Christian witness that is incarnational, practical, relevant, and dynamic. Our understanding of God assuming flesh, embracing humanity and sharing every aspect of our lives are what I understand to be

the gift of Antioch. Antioch has championed all that is good about humanity and expressed it in concrete and practical terms.

I have been asked how the Conference on Antiochian Unity fits into the world-wide Orthodox movements for geographical restructuring. While I claim no better opinion than any other observer, it seems to me that many (autocephalous) Churches are struggling to understand their rights and responsibilities regarding the opening of churches in different lands. How best can they meet the needs of their people in new worlds, lands that often are already served by other Orthodox Churches? It is my hope that all Orthodox Christians will work with honesty, charity and integrity when wrestling with the very real issues that confront us today. We are, after all, one Church, and jurisdictions and Mother Churches are not in competition with each other. We belong to the one Body of Christ and we are all answerable to Christ and each other for our efforts.

Concerning the attempts to discern God's will in the structuring of church boundaries, I feel compelled to say that I believe we all must not only approach each other with respect, but we must confess to God and each other those temptations that come from our fallen nature. We Orthodox Christians – bishops, clergy and laity alike – are called to get past our sins and test our motivations and actions. I don't know what is best for the people of God's Church, but what is good for the Church must also be good for her people. I cannot imagine that a church structure that does not meet the needs of the people, that is not good for the Church, is God's will.

We must seek what is pleasing to God. I trust that God will lead us as we attempt to strengthen the Church of Antioch through our unity and cooperation, and as we discern His will for restructuring the Church in our own North American lands, and throughout the world. This structuring will involve all of the Mother Churches, and so it is right for us to pray for them as well as for ourselves.

Bishop JOHN





The Visit of His Beatitude,
Patriarch JOHN X
&
The Enthronement of His Eminence,
Metropolitan JOSEPH

December 5-7, 2014



Patriarchal Visit and Enthronement Schedule of Events

DECEMBER 5-7 AT ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL OF BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

Preparations are underway for the visit of His Beatitude, JOHN X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and the upcoming enthronement of our new Metropolitan JOSEPH. Hierarchs and guests will be with us from all over the world. The following is the public schedule for the weekend.

- Friday, December 5th
- 6:30pm Great Vespers with Artoklasia for the Feast of St. Nicholas
- Saturday, December 6th
- 9:00am Orthros
- 10:00am Divine Liturgy for the Feast of St. Nicholas, Patron Saint of the Mother Cathedral
- 4:30pm Great Vespers and Enthronement of Metropolitan JOSEPH.
- 7:00pm Reception at the Brooklyn Marriott
- 8:00pm Gala Banquet at the Brooklyn Marriott
- Sunday, December 7th
- 9:15am Orthros
- 10:30am Patriarchal Divine Liturgy

Banquet tickets are \$200/person and can be obtained by mailing a check made out to "St. Nicholas Cathedral" to the following address:

St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral
Attn: Banquet Committee
355 State Street
Brooklyn, NY 11217

Please clearly print the names of those attending, as well as a phone number and an email address if possible, so we can acknowledge your reservation. You may also purchase banquet tickets with a Visa or Mastercard on the Cathedral website by choosing the "Donate Now" button on the bottom of the home page. The Cathedral website address is www.stnicholas-cathedral.org. Be sure to note in the memo section the same information above. Deadline for banquet reservations is **November 21, 2014**.

You may also see www.antiochian.org/enthronement for all of the latest information regarding the enthronement, as well as web links to all of the forms.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to email Archpriest Thomas Zain at abounathomas@me.com or call the Cathedral at 718.855.6225 and leave a message in his voicemail.

Finally, to honor Metropolitan JOSEPH on this auspicious occasion, we are preparing a commemorative journal to mark this historic event. Please refer the ad form on the next page if you would like to express your congratulations to our new Metropolitan and welcome our father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X.

We look forward to welcoming you to the "Mother Cathedral" of the archdiocese to witness this historic event and feast day weekend with our Patriarch and our new Metropolitan.



The Enthronement of His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH

DECEMBER 6 AT ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL OF BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

COMMEMORATIVE JOURNAL ORDER FORM

Commemorative Journal Deadline: November 7, 2014

SIZE	AREA INSIDE MARGINS	AMOUNT
<input type="checkbox"/> Gold-Trim Page	7.5" x 10"	\$2,500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Silver-Trim Page	7.5" x 10"	\$1,500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Full White Page	7.5" x 10"	\$750.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Full White Page (Parishes and Missions ONLY)	7.5" x 10"	\$500.00
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Credit Card No: _____ Exp. Date: _____ CVV2 _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please complete the above information and mail, or email using the information listed. If paying by credit card the address must match the billing address on the credit card. You may also register for the Commemorative Journal on-line at

www.antiochian.org/enthronement

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Please Note: No photos, artwork or logos can be accepted. Messages should only express congratulations to Metropolitan JOSEPH and welcome to Patriarch JOHN X.

- ☐ Please design my message using the text below.
- ☐ Please use my camera-ready message provided on a CD or other removable storage device. (Be sure text fits in your selected ad size.)
- ☐ I will e-mail a file (Word document preferred) to arlene@elfainternational.net
- ☐ Anonymous Donor

Write your message here or attach copy
Please verify spelling of names



Hotel Information for Enthronement Weekend and Patriarchal Visit

Greetings to you and your families as we begin a new ecclesiastical year. We wanted to share with you information for your hotel reservations at the Brooklyn Marriott. The rate is \$299 a night, plus tax. The deadline for reservations is November 7, 2014.

To make a reservation go to <https://aws.passkey.com/event/11950815/owner/13490/home>. You can access this address directly via www.antiochian.org in the enthronement section of the website. You can also make a reservation by calling the hotel at 718.246.7000. Rooms are being held under the name of "St. Nicholas Installation." The deadline for room reservations is **November 7, 2014**. Reserved space is filling up fast, however, and they may sell out before that date.

To make reservations at the Brooklyn Marriott, go to <https://aws.passkey.com/event/11950815/owner/13490/home>

The closest airport to St. Nicholas Cathedral and the Brooklyn Marriott is LaGuardia (LGA). Next is JFK. You can also use Newark (EWR) airport, but you will have to cross tunnels and bridges and pay tolls to get to Brooklyn. The Cathedral and the hotel are less than one mile from each other. The rate is available a little before and after the weekend (you can see on the interactive calendar) in case you want to enjoy all that New York has to offer during the Christmas season. The Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center will be lit earlier that week, and the Radio City Christmas Show will be going on during that time.

We also have a small number of rooms set aside at the Marriott Courtyard LaGuardia Airport Hotel for \$99.00 a night, plus tax. This may be an affordable option for those driving to New York, and the parking will cost less. It is about 10 miles and a 15-to-45-minute drive to the Cathedral, depending on traffic. Saturday and Sunday morning should be very light traffic, but there may be heavier traffic in the evenings. Car service is also available from the hotel for a fee for people who

might be sharing the cost of a room and transportation, still making it a more affordable option. To make a reservation at the Marriott Courtyard LaGuardia, please call the hotel directly at 718.446.4800. The room block is under the name "St. Nicholas Cathedral." The deadline for this hotel is November 1, 2014, and the number of rooms is very limited. We were able to secure this great rate thanks to the generosity of the owner who is a parishioner in one of our deanery parishes.

We look forward to welcoming you to this historic event and weekend with our Patriarch and our new Metropolitan.



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YOUR LIFE WITH GOD



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
The V. Rev. Anthony Coniaris
Renowned author, speaker, publisher and pastor emeritus, who will join us via Skype



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Dr. Kyriacos Markides
Professor of Sociology, University of Maine, and author of books on Christian mysticism



CORE COURSES
Dr. Harry Boosalis
Professor of Dogmatic Theology, St. Tikhon's Seminary, author and Mount Athos trip leader



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Presenters

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Mother Christophora • Martha Condra • Elizabeth White



Follow us on Facebook: Orthodox Institute 2014
Registration forms: www.antiochian.org/OI2014
More information: orthodoxinstitute2014@gmail.com



Department of
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
ORTHODOX CHURCH in AMERICA

In Praise of New Martyrs

Fr. John W. Fenton

Life comes from death. Virginity gives birth to Life. Weakness perfects strength. Defeat leads to victory. Wisdom begins with fear. Humility overwhelms pride. Sorrow turns into joy. The dead become immortal.



The Christian faith is filled with many seeming contradictions. Our Lord’s Passion not only teaches but instills and inculcates in us this key truth. Yet it is a truth that we too quickly forget, and which our lives too easily deny. This truth alone is able to sustain us in our darkest hours, when all hope seems lost, when faith seems pointless. This is why we must continually hear, and take to heart, the stories of the saints, especially the martyrs.

Consider Saint Venantius, whom we commemorate today. At the age of 15, because he confessed Christ, Venantius was scourged, imprisoned, tortured with torches, dangled head-down over smoke to suffocate, beaten so that both jaws were broken and he lost all his teeth, thrown into a dungpit and then fed to the lions. All these things he suffered without complaint. During all these afflictions holy Venantius was strengthened by angels. And his quiet patience and longsuffering, his firm constancy and conviction, his meek endurance and lack of complaint – this impressed all who saw and heard, so that these gruesome tortures did not frighten, but rather fortified the faithful and attracted the unknowing. When Venantius was finally beheaded, so were many new Christians who desired the certain hope and the strong faith that he evinced.

And so here is another seeming contradiction. Torture reveals hope. Persecution attracts men not to blood-lust, but to believe, and martyrdom does not weaken resolve or decrease numbers, but rather increases and builds up the church.

This is true not only then, but now. Even now, especially in Syria, new Venantiuses – teenage boys and girls – are boldly testifying to their faith with their own blood. Martyrdom continues, and even now increases. Those

who kill and torture are thinking that they are destroying the Church, but they don’t see the truth that we know. They don’t understand the seeming contradictions that are the bedrock of our faith. So they will not believe that this is our finest hour. So even now in the arid lands of the Middle East, these are the days when the Tree of Christ is being watered with the blood of new martyrs, so that she may grow and flourish and feed our faith.

So another seeming contradiction: the gruesome scenes we hardly hear about should not depress us, or scare us, or cause us to wring our hands. These grisly martyrdoms ought to enliven our faith, and increase our hope, and rejoice our hearts; even as they also concentrate our own minds, so that we more eagerly and more quickly “cast away all uncleanness and abundance of naughtiness.” For how can we continue giving into our ungodly desires and appetites, when we see the passion of these new martyrs? How can we not want all the more to “put to death the deeds of our flesh,” when we hear of the death of these new martyrs? How can we think twice about giving our meager sacrifices, when we see these new martyrs give all that they have and all that they are for the love of Christ.

Spurred on by their merits, let us with increasing “meekness receive the ingrafted word.” For in these new martyrs, that ingrafted Word manifests His grace to us. In them, the Spirit of truth is evident – the Spirit who builds up his Church using such witnesses, and the Truth who reveals Himself so clearly in these seeming contradictions.

What we hear in today’s news, what we see in Saint Venantius – this is not new to us. It is simply the continuation of our Easter joy – the joy where “death and life

“death and life have contended in the combat stupendous,” so that “the Prince of Life who died reigns immortal,” so that we, who are not bloodied nor bear any wounds, nevertheless win the victory.



New Martyrs of Batak, pray to God for us! Glorified on April 4th, 2011 (NS) by His Holiness Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria

have contended in the combat stupendous,” so that “the Prince of Life who died reigns immortal,” so that we, who are not bloodied nor bear any wounds, nevertheless win the victory.

So, as we hear these of these saints, let us not be overwhelmed with sadness. And certainly let us not pity them. Rather, let us remember yet another seeming contradiction: that such sadness ushers in gladness; that those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. For while

this kind of “anger of man worketh not the justice of God,” it certainly does testify to our hope and point to our salvation. Of this we can be supremely confident: that such hatred will be defeated by love. For that is our faith – that Love Himself is at work today, even as He was in His Passion, in ways we cannot always see or understand; to Whom, by the prayers of His holy martyrs, belongs all glory, honor and worship, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The War Within

Richard Zakka

Four years ago one of my sons gave me a book entitled *Mountain of Silence*, about the monks of Mt. Athos in Greece. They start their daily prayers at 4:00 a.m. I am convinced that if it were not for their prayers the world would likely be a far worse place.

According to the Athonite tradition, the Blessed Virgin Mary, accompanied by St. John the Evangelist, was sailing from Joppa to Cyprus to visit Lazarus when the ship was blown off course to then-pagan Athos. The ship was forced to anchor near the port of Klement, close to the present monastery of Iviron. The Virgin walked ashore and, overwhelmed by the wonderful and wild natural beauty of the mountain, she blessed it and asked her Son for it to be her garden. A voice was heard saying, "Let this place be your inheritance and your garden, a paradise and a haven of salvation for those seeking to be saved." From that moment the mountain was consecrated as the Garden of the Mother of God and was out of bounds to all other women.



Monks have been on this site since from at least the fourth century, and possibly since the third century. After the Islamic conquest of Egypt in the seventh century, many Orthodox monks from the Egyptian desert tried to find another calm place. Some of them came

to the Athos peninsula. An ancient document states that monks "built huts of wood with roofs of straw ... and by collecting fruit from the wild trees were providing themselves improvised meals."

This book truly intrigued me. It was especially fascinating to discover that these Orthodox monks were so advanced spiritually. So much so, that they would spend hours meditating and communicating with the Spirit on how to help mankind. A story illustrating this spiritual connection goes like this: A man arrives at the monastery seeking help from the monks for his dying wife, but is terribly disappointed when he is informed that he is too late; that the gates are closing, and he should come back tomorrow. He exclaims, "But there is no more time. I must see someone today!" The monk stares intently into the man's eyes for a moment; then lovingly tells him to go home. His wife is well.

What especially interested me was a chapter on something called *logusmoi* (pronounced, log-is-mee) – the attacks on our thinking that we all confront in our daily lives. Holy Scripture says that we don't war against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers of the air.

For the next three years I researched the subject and found many great Orthodox books on the subject, among them, *Unforeseen Warfare*. What a relief it was to realize that all those horrible thoughts that go through our minds, are not from within us. They are not in our DNA, but are *external* attacks – from the devil and his fallen angels. Once we comprehend that truth, we are able to combat the attacks and strengthen our lives. Having learned this, I was inspired to write a script and make a film of it. The result, with the help of the Holy Spirit, is *The War Within*.

When I finished the script, I sent a copy to Armand Assante, a friend of mine and a well-known Emmy-award-winning television and movie actor. A few days later, he called me to say that he loved it and wanted to know how he could help. "How about playing the lead and doing the voiceover?" He immediately agreed. While most of the people in the film are not actors, I still



needed a professional to play the role of the monk who delivers the message I needed to impart. I was again blessed to secure experienced TV actor John Aniston, who is Greek Orthodox himself, to play the part. In spite of a letter of introduction from our beloved, late Metropolitan PHILIP as a door-opener to film in Athos, the Greek authorities were dragging their feet. Because of time constraints, I was forced to scout similar locations in the States. In the end most of the film was shot in New York and at St. Vladimir's Seminary.

The film was finally completed in February and the reviews were glorious. *The War Within* was conceived as a production to broadcast a profound truth: that Christians, although we are bombarded every day by negative influences aimed at breaking us spiritually, are empowered with the strength to reject those demonic attacks through prayer and the spiritual bond between us and our Creator.

All proceeds from the sale of *The War Within* DVDs will benefit homeless children.



For more information on obtaining copies of *The War Within*, contact Richard Zakka at richardz@warwithin.net, or by calling 917-721-5476.

"IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP"

Fr. Timothy Ferguson



Early this summer we celebrated a wedding that included several family members visiting here from Mosul, Iraq. It was wonderful to welcome them and to celebrate such a joyous occasion together. A week later they had returned home to Mosul. Within days of their return the notorious Islamic terrorist group known as The Islamic State [ISIS or *Da'ish*] overran the area and issued orders that all Christians in Mosul must renounce their faith or be "put to the sword." The Islamists systematically targeted the Christians' homes and businesses, marking them with a red (Arabic letter *noon*, equivalent to the letter N). The stands for *Nasara* (Nazarenes), a pejorative word for Christians used by some Muslims. The region of Mosul once played a

prominent role in Christian history. In the first and second centuries the Assyrians, who are to this day the local indigenous population, were among the first people to embrace Christianity. The early Church thrived in the region and many theologians, Church Fathers and Saints, including St. Mari, St. Ephraim the Syrian and St. Isaac of Nineveh, are associated with this area. Now, there are no Christians left in Mosul.

I inquired about the people we had met and was told that they were forced to close the family business they had operated for nearly 150 years and to abandon their home. They took only a couple of suitcases and personal items and drove out of town. At an ISIS checkpoint, the terrorists confiscated their identity papers, passports, driver's licenses and other personal papers. They handed over their suitcases and other belongings. They were robbed of their jewelry and their car. They were told that all their possessions now belonged to the Islamic State. The family was ordered to walk away from town. They joined a procession of nearly three thousand fellow Christians forced out of Mosul that day. Fortunately they found temporary refuge in a Christian village out of range of the Islamic terrorists and are safe for the time being. The Islamic State terrorists, as we know, are still making advances in the region and the sizable Christian population there remains at risk.

The Islamic State uses the red as a mark of shame; we must make it a symbol of pride, honor and hope. Persecuted Christians should know that we stand in solidarity with them. Our brothers and sisters should not be forced to abandon the land of our faith's birth. Here at St. George we have printed post cards with the symbol to display on the doors of our homes and in the windows of our cars. We have printed t-shirts to express our solidarity with our persecuted co-religionists. These may be small displays of solidarity on our part, given the enormity and tragic nature of these unfolding events, but it does give us the opportunity to make known this story of catastrophe.

As the persecution of Christians in Mosul unfolded, I was baffled that it wasn't receiving greater media attention. I did see an occasional "ticker tape" news item scroll along the bottom of my TV screen, but no in-depth reporting. How could the threat of beheading a population because of their religion go unreported in the 21st century?

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, I was aware of the deliberate targeting of Christians. Through our Church sources and relatives, as well as our own visits to the region, we have firsthand knowledge of churches, monasteries, cemeteries and shrines being desecrated and destroyed by fanatic Islamists seeking the eradication of a Christian presence in the Near East [Mesopotamia and Greater Syria]. We have accounts of bishops, priests and nuns being kidnapped, tortured and executed. We know of crucifixions taking place during Holy Week. Now we see a major city, and indeed a whole region, being de-Christianized. Still, it's not worthy of attention, much less in-depth analysis, by our news media. Why? Commenting on the fate of Christians in Iraq, one European journalist noted that, "We ignore too many things and, even more indefensibly, we pretend not to see many things." Last month in Lebanon a French journalist explained to me that "Christianity is no longer a point of reference when we report a story." I guess he meant that we don't really count. One observer wondered if such silence would prevail if some other religious group were being persecuted. Actually, this question was answered just a few weeks ago when the Islamic State branded a small religious minority as heretics and blasphemers and threatened them with extinction. The Yazidi were forced from their villages in northern Iraq and

marched out into the wilderness to die. Overnight, the world media clamored to their defense and even the U.S. came to their aid with air-drops of food and water. While we pray for these innocent victims of hatred, lamenting their plight, and applaud attempts to rescue them, we wonder where a similar outcry was on behalf of Iraqi Christians who, just weeks prior to this, were faced with the same religious genocide?



In his book, *The Global War on Christians*, the journalist and Boston Globe reporter, John L. Allen Jr., attempts to answer this perplexing question. Drawing from his

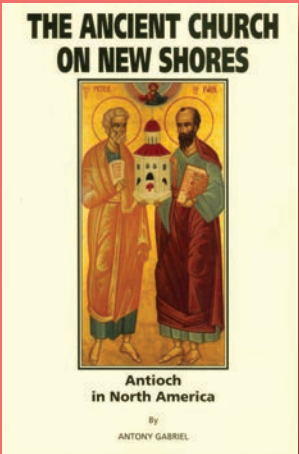
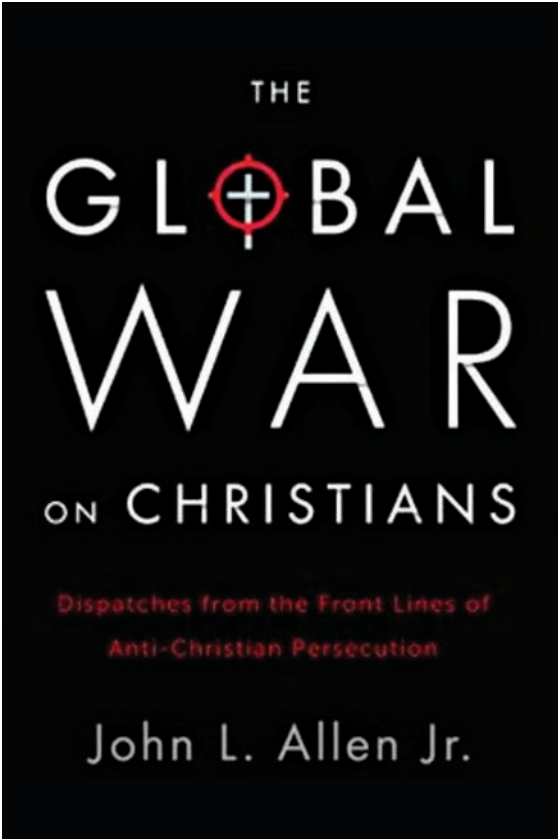
..the persecution of Christians is the, “most dramatic religion story of the early 21st century, yet one that most people in the West have little idea is even happening.... Christians today indisputably form the most persecuted religious body on the planet, and too often its new martyrs suffer in silence.” Mr. Allen warns, “It’s time to wake up.”

decades of experience as an international religious editor and reporter, Mr. Allen states that the persecution of Christians is the “most dramatic religion story of the early 21st century, yet one that most people in the West have little idea is even happening.... Christians

today indisputably form the most persecuted religious body on the planet, and too often its new martyrs suffer in silence.” Mr. Allen warns, “It’s time to wake up.”

His book should be read by anyone interested in the plight of Christians in the wake of the tragic social and political upheaval now sweeping across the Near East. Here at St. George we will

continue to do what we can to make their story known, give them a voice and support them in any way possible. They are our sisters and brothers in the faith. We ask God to protect and defend them and to bless us as we advocate on their behalf.



“The Ancient Church on New Shores: Antioch in North America”

“His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP presents this comprehensive history book of our Antiochian Archdiocese in North America to its readers, stating that the virtues of perseverance, struggle, and determination are the only road to success for the individual human being. Father Antony Gabriel affirms this statement of the Metropolitan with a lucid presentation of our history in simile to the strivings of Saints Peter and Paul, the Founders of the Holy See of Antioch.”

Available at: <http://store.antiochianvillage.org/>
Cost: \$25.00

DAILY DEVOTIONS

NOVEMBER 2014
V. Rev. Fr. George Alberts

1. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27-13:8; MATTHEW 10:1, 5-8
2. GALATIANS 2:16-20; LUKE 16:19-31
3. COLOSSIANS 2:13-20; LUKE 11:29-33
4. COLOSSIANS 2:20-3:3; LUKE 11:34-41
5. COLOSSIANS 3:17-4:1; LUKE 11:42-46 (FAST)
6. COLOSSIANS 4:2-9; LUKE 11:47-12:1
7. COLOSSIANS 4:10-18; LUKE 12:2-12 (FAST)
8. HEBREWS 2:2-10; LUKE 10:16-21
9. EPHESIANS 5:8-19; LUKE 8:41-56
10. 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-5; LUKE 12:13-15, 22-31
11. 1 THESSALONIANS 1:6-10; LUKE 12:42-48
12. 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-8; LUKE 12:48-59 (FAST)
13. HEBREWS 7:26:8:2; JOHN 10:9-16
14. 1 THESSALONIANS 2:14-19; LUKE 13:31-35 (FAST)
15. 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-5; LUKE 9:37-43 (FAST)
16. 1 CORINTHIANS 4:9-16; MATTHEW 9:9-13 (FAST)
17. 1 THESSALONIANS 2:20-3:8; LUKE 14:12-15 (FAST)
18. 1 THESSALONIANS 3:9-13; LUKE 14:25-35 (FAST)
19. 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12; LUKE 15:1-10 (FAST)
20. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-8; LUKE 16:1-9 (FAST)
21. HEBREWS 9:1-7; LUKE 10:38-42; 11:27-28 (FAST)
- ENTRY OF MARY INTO THE TEMPLE
22. 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-6; LUKE 9:57-62 (FAST)
23. EPHESIANS 2:14-22; LUKE 12:16-21 (FAST)
24. EPHESIANS 6:10-17; LUKE 21:12-19 (FAST)
25. 2 THESSALONIANS 1:10-2:2; LUKE 17:26-37 (FAST)
26. 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12; LUKE 18:15-17, 26-30 (FAST)
27. 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-3:5; LUKE 18:31-34 (FAST)
28. 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-18; LUKE 19:12-28 (FAST)
29. GALATIANS 1:3-10; LUKE 10:19-21 (FAST)
30. 1 CORINTHIANS 4:9-16; JOHN 1:35-51 (FAST)

ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

ORDAINED
PERRY, Ambrose (Jeff), to the holy diaconate by His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH on August 17, 2014, at St. George Church, San Diego, California. He is assigned to St. Anthony Church, San Diego.

TRANSFERS
UNDERWOOD, Deacon Thomas, to St. George Church in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

RELEASED
BAZ, Archpriest Terence, to the Orthodox Church in America, effective September 1, 2014.

REPOSED
NASR, Angela, of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, fell asleep in Christ June 27, 2014. She was the daughter of the late Fr. Zacharia and Kh. Nasra Nasr; and sister of Kh. Nawall Elias of Jacksonville, Florida; Fr. Constantine Nasr of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Kh. Ellen Antypas of Troy, Michigan; and Fr. Elias Nasr of Syracuse, New York.

Back Up Against the Wall

Fr. Andrew Moore

The longer I live, the more things I find that I just do not know. As we gather this morning, however, I can tell you two things that I absolutely do know. I know the icons are exactly six feet tall, and I

know that it is exactly sixteen feet from Bishop ANTOUN's chair to where I'm standing. How do I know this? I have measured both with this yardstick which was, in ancient times, known as a *kanon* (from which we get our word *canon*). It is a rule, a means of measurement, a test for accuracy, a truth by which we judge the truthfulness of other assertions.

Our conference theme is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

I suppose all of us here would say, "I do love God." That prompted a question in my mind – Does God know that we love Him? Or perhaps another – How will God know whether we love Him?

But how do we know that? In the canon of Holy Scripture, God Himself has given us an answer, a measure, a canon: John 3:16 – God so loved the world – He gave His only begotten Son.

Romans 5:8 – God demonstrates His love – while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. I John 4:9 – Love of God was manifested – He sent His only begotten Son.

We know that God loves us because He did something to show it – the Son died for us, trampling down death by death.

So how does He know that we love Him? Perhaps this brief story will clarify. A casual conversation between two friends escalated into an argument. "You know, I'm seven feet tall." "What? No way!" "My parents always said I would be seven feet tall." "How did they know?" "Well, I was always tallest in my class." "But you're no taller than I." On and on it went. Meanwhile, a young boy standing nearby overheard it all. He quietly stepped over to a wall with a yardstick. Using the stick, he began to mark off each foot, from one to seven. Then he said, "Mister, why don't you just back up against the wall?" You see, the canon reveals the truth!

Christ set the rule, or marked the wall, for that lawyer (and, by extension, to all Christians who want to inherit eternal life): If "you shall love the Lord your God" – (we do, we do) – then, "Love your neighbor as yourself!" That's how I will know that you love Me.

Husbands, do you love God? Then love your wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25). Wives, do you love God? Then submit to your own husband, as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22).

Children, or young people, do you love God? Then honor your father and mother. Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right (Ephesians 6:1–2). Parents, do you love God? Then bring your children up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

Brothers and sisters, it all comes down to this: "When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. And all the nations will be gathered before Him" (Matthew 25:31–32).

A voice thunders, "Do you love Me?" A resounding reply, "Yes, Lord, You know we love You." A deep hush falls upon all – the One steps down from the throne and begins to mark on the wall: "I was hungry and you have Me food. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was a stranger and you took Me in. I was naked and you clothed Me. I was sick and you visited Me. I was in prison and you came to Me. Now, all of you, ... one by one, why don't you just back up against the wall?"

Fr. Andrew Moore is the pastor of St. Stephen's Church. This sermon was offered at the Parish Life Conference of the Diocese of Miami.

I was hungry and you gave Me food.
I was thirsty and you gave Me drink.
I was a stranger and you took Me in.
I was naked and you clothed Me.
I was sick and you visited Me.
I was in prison and you came to Me

“Feed My lambs ... Tend My sheep ... Feed My sheep.”

One well-known morning, after breakfast, Jesus asked St. Peter three times, "Simon, do you love Me?" And each time, Peter replied, "Lord, You know that I love You" (John 21:15–17). Just as we would say.

At this point, our Lord might have said, "Simon, how do I know that you love Me?" (We will come back to that in a moment.)

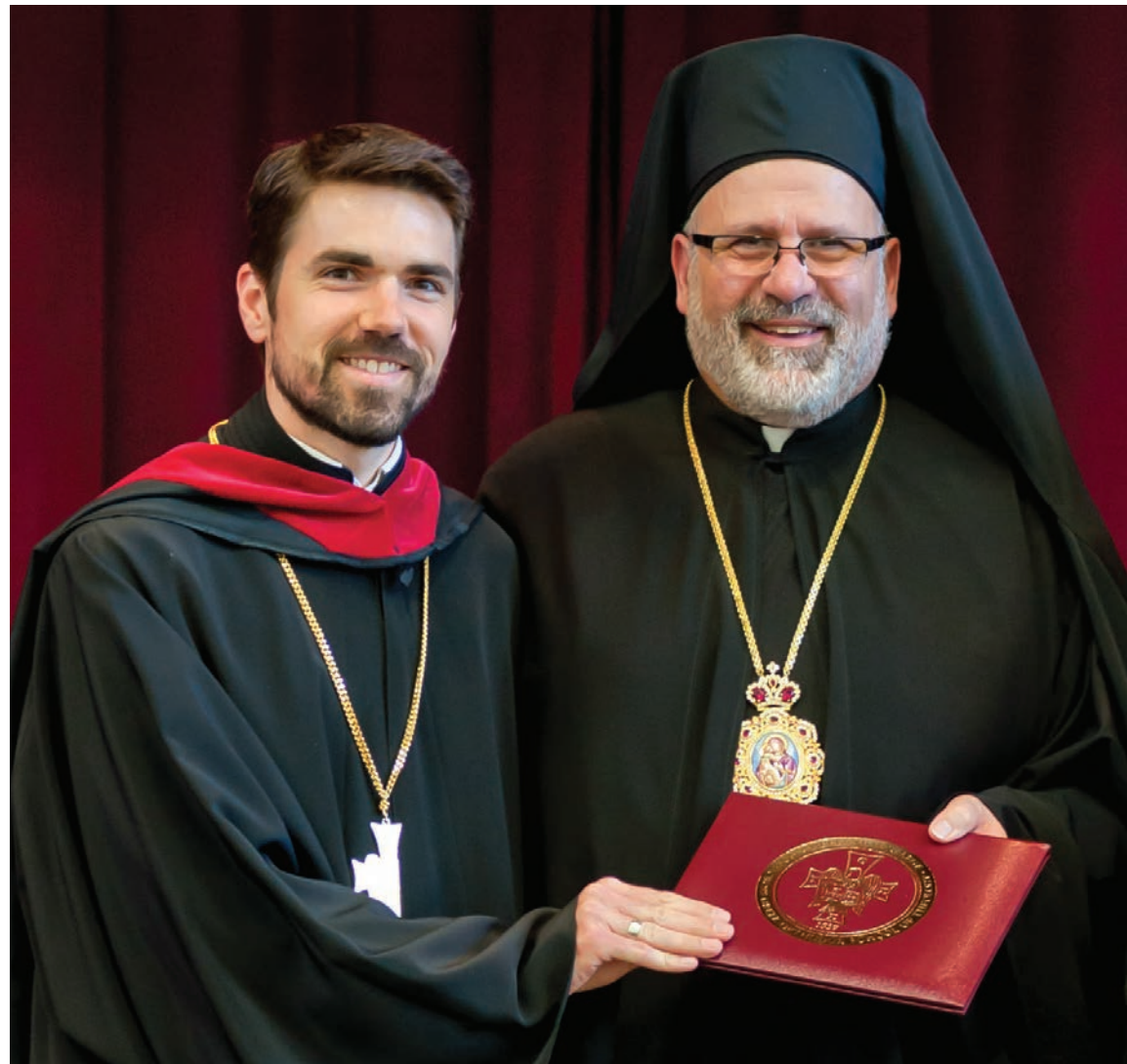
From another perspective, we all believe that God loves us, don't we?

At breakfast that morning, as Simon Peter replied, "Lord, You know that I love You," Jesus marked on the wall for him: "Feed My lambs ... Tend My sheep ... Feed My sheep."

"Simon, do you love me? Why don't you just back up against the wall?" For Simon Peter, and for every bishop and priest from that day until now, this is the measure of our love for God – "Feed My sheep.... Care for My people."

Reflect again on our conference theme: our Lord Jesus





A Purpose Beyond Ourselves

Christopher Kies

THIS YEAR'S VALEDICTORY ADDRESS AT HOLY CROSS SEMINARY

They call it a “Master of Divinity.” That is what we have worked so hard for, right? We have set aside this time of our lives intentionally to pursue a deeper knowledge of God, and to learn how to communicate this knowledge to “the ends of the earth.” We have endured the same impossible schedules, studied under the same professors, attended the same lectures, completed the same assignments, worshipped in the same chapel, and for this we are granted the distinction of being “Masters of Divinity.”

The term “Master,” however, seems to imply that we have somehow “arrived,” that we have gained mastery over our course of study. And in our case, the subject of

our study is God, as revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ, through the power of His Holy Spirit, the God who is “ineffable, beyond comprehension, invisible, beyond understanding, existing forever and always the same.” How can we really gain mastery in knowledge of such a One as this? We cannot, of course, and yet, it is for this very purpose that we are called. How do we dare to aspire to such a lofty purpose?

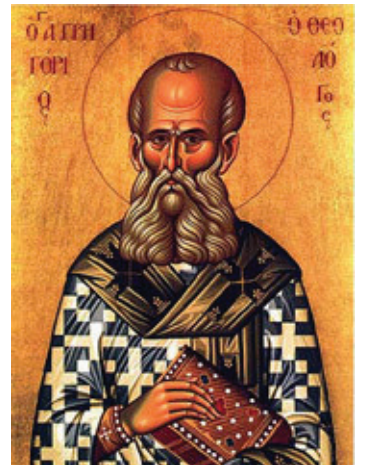
“The true theologian,” says St. Gregory of Nazianzus, “is the one who prays.” This way of prayer is described by the Church Fathers as being in three stages, and helps restore the human person to God. The first stage is practice or praxis; it is carried out on the bodily level and corresponds to the prayer of the lips. We must take

time actually to say the words of the prayers, privately and in public worship. We make full use of our physical bodies in prayer when we make the sign of the cross, bow, or prostrate ourselves, and when we participate in worship through icons, incense, and chanting. On this level of praxis, we also subject ourselves to ascetic practices like fasting and almsgiving.

We must make sufficient time for praxis if we are to progress to the second stage: the prayer of the mind. Often, however, there is a disconnect between the body and the soul – between the prayer of the lips and the prayer of the mind – and it is because of a lack

prayer is either not perfect, or is not prayer at all.²

In this way, prayer becomes “the prayer not of one faculty alone, but of the whole man, soul, spirit, and body”³ This is what the Fathers call pure theology, union with God, the prayer of the heart. This is what every Orthodox Christian, nay, what every human person is called to, because we were created for communion in the beginning. This is how we may be said to be perfect, as Christ is perfect. This is how we



“The glory which Thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and Thou in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me and hast loved them even as Thou hast loved Me.”

of watchfulness. Watchfulness is the guarding of our mind through the awareness of the presence of Christ in each and every moment. It is the means by which we help ourselves, and others, to be fully human. Watchfulness must be applied at the level of praxis if we are to attain the second level of prayer. Further, watchfulness or attentiveness “is the sign of true repentance.” “It is the soul’s restoration, hatred of the world, and return to God It is serenity of intellect ... the subjection of our thoughts, the palace of the mindfulness of God, the stronghold that enables us patiently to accept all that befalls.”¹ If distraction is a turning away of the eye of our soul from Christ, repentance is the means by which we are liberated from the disease of distraction and reunited to God.

Without watchfulness, we cannot progress to the second stage of prayer, the prayer of the mind. This is an interiorization of prayer, an inward movement in which the meaning of the words is apprehended by the mind. But even this does not go far enough: we must go deeper still. St. Theophan the Recluse defines it clearly:

You must pray not only with words but with the mind, and not only with the mind but with the heart, so that the mind understands and sees clearly what is said in words, and the heart feels what the mind is thinking. All these combined together constitute real prayer, and if any of them are absent your

live up to the distinction of being Masters of Divinity.

So to be a Master of Divinity is to be a theologian; and to be a theologian is to pray; and prayer is a movement of repentance by which our soul returns to God through watchfulness, which produces perfect love, and results in union with God. But corresponding to this internal movement in the Master of Divinity, there is also an external movement. Jesus prays to His Father, “As Thou didst send Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world,” and later, “The glory which Thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and Thou in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me and hast loved them even as Thou hast loved Me.” Our union with God is not an individual experience, it is personal, that is, relational. There is a purpose beyond ourselves, and whether we enter into ordained ministry following graduation, or serve as lay ministers, we are being sent into the world to bear witness to the awesome love of God, that the world may be one with Him. You have earned the degree of Master of Divinity; now, live it through your life – the interior life of prayer, and the exterior witness of God’s love. God bless you all as you enter the work of His vineyard.

1. Nikiphoros the Monk, p. 204.
2. St. Theophan the Recluse, in *The Art of Prayer*, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1966, p. 67.
3. Timothy Ware, Introduction to *The Art of Prayer*, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1966, p. 22.

Holding a Mustard Seed

God's will becomes apparent in the circumstances of one's life. In each situation, the true test is whether we are developing a relationship with God, whether what we do draws us into Love. Love empowers the lover to self-sacrifice, turning the will outwards, to follow the greatest commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (NIV, Matt. 22: 37–40). The demons don't want us to pray, as this leads to authenticity in our relationship with God, and to truly loving one another. A Christian, however, must persevere by prayer and choose to love God and others. With a will for God and the consequent Love that empowers, we change for the better, from the inside out. By a miracle, this change of the self, one's soul is saved and around it thousands of others' souls are also saved, as St. Seraphim of Sarov said. This process marks the difference between being a Christian and striving merely to be a "good" person. For anyone can better himself, but change that occurs on the internal level of the soul transforms one's life and one's relationships with others. A Christian's faith grows with the experience of such transformational love.

Seven years before, my husband and I had been told that we had less than a one-percent chance of conception on our own. We had undergone fertility treatment and conceived our first son with what we were told by the doctor was a seven-percent chance. Our second son followed two years later by the same means, and we counted ourselves among the most fertile of infertile people. Both conceptions had been journeys of faith, drawing us closer together. As our boys grew, life challenged us to continue to choose love for one another, our growing family, and ourselves. Thankfully, our children were born and remained healthy.

At this time, six years ago, my husband's parents moved from Russia to America, I was half-way through graduate school, and my husband was commuting an hour to work, and working long hours. Our relationship as husband and wife became attenuated, so to speak. When hockey was introduced to our eldest son, and my husband became the coach to boot, things were even more stretched. Money, time, patience – it seemed that we had almost run out of each. Low spells hit me: I suffered depression, anxiety, and a general sadness. My husband's emotions also dipped down

and anger increased. Sensitive to the pains of our life, he wondered if I would be happier with another, and then for a time accused me of affairs. At our gravest low, he threatened divorce. As he put it, the future did not look happy.

In time, the depth of our distance passed, and things began to appear differently, though as through a haze. We see things from a limited vantage point, and sometimes what we feel can distort our vision even further. On the other hand, sometimes determination can shoot like an arrow straight through the challenges of life, and nothing else but staying together can seem important. Usually, both experiences occur at once, with feelings that ebb and flow: the impossible circumstances of life, with the fire of determination to make all work out for the best. In the matrix of pain and resolve, I found hope in God, and especially His mother, who seemed nearer than ever before.

When my husband's embrace was weak, a strength burned inside of me. I held him with confidence and amazing joy. Joy that sometimes wept but was refined and so true that it surprised me. It was a feeling, but then it was an action: a refusal to leave our cuddle on the couch, a rooted body beside the side-door, wait-



ing for his return from work with fried potatoes on the stove. Something inside of me had been emboldened, it was joy that is known by fearless love, willing to endure pain and suffering for the beloved, and not with sorrow, but with spiritual joy, independent from life's situations. In deep dark patches, a light was powerfully visible to me, and it was strong and overwhelmingly good when I gave myself to it.

Love was a choice. Faith was renewed by staying when situations didn't seem fair, by saying sorry and meaning it, by hoping that the other was better than limited vision allowed me to see in the moment. Faith increased, as love grew and changed me, and by extension my beloved began to feel my love warmer and more true. Once, I was walking back to our mini-van from class at the university. It was dark and the drizzle was cold on my arms. A sudden urge to run to my husband, to the boy with whom I'd made my life one, welled up in me. I ran down a hill, slipping and sliding in mud, and returned home to his calm embrace. Little

things like this have saved us, and these details of life that have had saving grace have come from willing for Love, fighting through the despair (sometimes in simply enduring it), and then, out of the dark, a ray comes.

My body and soul were changing at once. An orthopedic surgeon determined that I had a rare form of yeast infecting my finger, and I began to change my diet from a lot of carbohydrates, veggies and fruits, to more meat and dairy. For over three years, my digestive system was sensitive and my hormones were unbalanced; however, with the dietary change, my body began to feel better. There was much less stomach gurgling after meals and my hormones cycled through in "normal" monthly patterns. I was astonished at this physical change and counted it a miracle. I thought of the many times I'd crossed myself in Liturgy and prayed for healing of soul and body. Somehow, I felt, I was becoming well. At the same time, I began to have an ongoing and subtle desire for another baby. I had completed the first year of a doctoral program, and



was anticipating more focus and less confusion in what was to come. The next semester was perhaps the most intense, and there was a trial of temptation warring within me. There was a clear line that I eventually drew. I would give my husband myself, and what he willed, I would do. Earning a Ph.D. was nothing if I lost my family. I knew the rightfulness of this decision, but struggled to persuade my husband of its reality. He wanted me to complete my studies, and I wanted to prove my love. We were somehow coming together in seeing past ourselves.

Looking back, it seems now that the beginning of good is when life becomes unbearably bad and there seems nothing to do but believe that God is there. I can see now that He had been pulling on my selfish nature, refining my narrowly Western perspective. One evening, the mother of God was close at hand in the silent refuge of my bedroom. I held her icon to my lips, tears mingling into the aging wood, as the passing of time

was palpably bittersweet. I wanted the children to grow, the in-laws to settle, Jim and I to mature. And yet I felt a loss, as time ticked uncontrollably onward, and life and its struggles spiraled into my past. It seemed I was not done giving of myself in a physical way, that I had just begun to understand love somehow, and I wanted to give from this place of increasing faith.

That evening, as I held the icon of the Mother of God, I thought about the Nativity. It was Christmastime. I could feel the light of anticipation present in our small home. I asked the Theotokos to pray to her Son and our God that my womb be opened. The prayer came as breath, escaping my intentions that before had limited this prayer with a conditional statement: if this would be for good. Before, I hadn't been able to beseech the Mother of God, whom I knew would faithfully respond, with full confidence. As I asked her, I knew that we would have a child.

It was a glorious time of Nativity, and a settling joy replenished us. My husband took time to be still. I laughed with the children and savored wrapping small gifts from Village Discount. Once, at Walmart my older son and I passed a billboard with a baby girl. "I want a baby," I told him. He was surprised and told me he didn't think I would want another kid to make me crazy. In sadness, I apologized for my impatience, noting that my distractions had been felt. We bought a small night-light with an image of a girl and the inscription: "Pray the Lord, my soul to keep."

During the day on the Eve of Theophany, I met with my mother and sister at Cracker Barrel for a light meal. I looked my sister in the eyes and told her that I would not be surprised if I had another baby. The day was crisp with light winter, and my mother and sister, and my nephew and son and I walked along a path after lunch. We laughed easily and gave piggy-back rides to the boys. That evening, I took the boys to church with me and felt a glorious resurrection of joy burn within. Getting our coats on with Matushka (our priest's wife), I confided that I felt I might have a child.

A week later, in an unseasonably warm pre-dawn in early January, 2012, I called my sister. It was four a.m. She was awake. The line on the second pregnancy test was clear and pink – it was not a "water-stain" mark, nor was the test's efficacy expired, as a nurse had cautioned me the morning before when the urine test at the doctor's office had been negative. Science proved what faith knew: I was with child. When I told my sister, she said that she hadn't prayed to the mother of God or felt close to her before, but she recently read a devotional passage about the Theotokos ("God-bearer") being with the Christ Child and rushing happily to her cousin, Elizabeth. My sister understood the joy they shared in the holy conception of Christ, marveling at the miracle shared by these two women who loved each other deeply and whose faith in God grew stronger. "I know that Mary loves you so much, Ann, and that she's praying for you," she said. She confirmed the soft joy ablaze in my heart and I swallowed hard.

It has been eighteen months since the birth of Elizabeth Rose. She is the "gift" that my soul accepted her to be when I met with the Theotokos over 27 months ago. The Lord is good and His mercy abounds forever. The demons do not want us to love and know God, to pray and to meet with the Theotokos and the Saints, and with Christ Himself. When we do, the realization

of the truth transforms us and never leaves. Even as time passes, miracles are lasting impressions that God is true. The fear of the Lord engenders wisdom: to believe in God is to love those He entrusts to us. It is also to believe that He prepares us for what He has in store, down the road, for us to do. My husband and I will have another baby in five months, and it seems to me now that God had been refining our love for one another. Had we not stayed together, there would not have been Elizabeth and this baby to come. Life depends on the choice for Love.

In today's culture, family is under attack, but for many the family unit is the life circumstance that can become the occasion for salvation.

Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, and may you live to see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel. (NIV, Psalm 128)

We must pray and develop our relationships with our families on earth and above, because, in so doing, we experience spiritual power that transforms our hearts and saves our souls. Let the mother of God embrace us, she who offers us closeness with her Son through an intuitive love that abounds by faith, even so small as the size of a mustard seed.

Author's name withheld



Unity in Faith, Unity in Service

High above the Mediterranean Sea, 225 Orthodox clergy and laity representing the global Antiochian Orthodox community came together on the Hill of Balamand, Lebanon, in June to answer the call by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, His Beatitude JOHN X, and the Bishops of the Holy Synod, for a conference on Antiochian unity. Among the invited North American group of bishops, priests, church and ministry leaders was Mickey Homsey, Chairman of the Board for International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), the humanitarian arm of the Assembly of Canonical Bishops of the United States of America.

During the four-day gathering, Mr. Homsey and other conference attendees, including fellow IOCC board member, Anne Glynn-Mackoul, were inspired by the earnest messages of peaceful co-existence for the region from His Beatitude, and his vision to “fortify the bonds of unity among them, bonds which began in the baptismal font and assembled them by the one chalice.” The delegates addressed areas of opportunity for strengthening Antiochian unity: interaction among parishes and dioceses; communications; financial and property development; effective presence in society; and social work. Drawing from his years of experience and support for the humanitarian work of IOCC, Mr. Homsey spoke of the importance of social work and its far-reaching impact, not only on those receiving assistance, but on those giving it as well.

“IOCC has forged an enduring partnership of humanitarian service with the Patriarchate of Antioch over many years, and continues to do so as we work side-by-side in Syria to ease the suffering of our brothers and sisters during this difficult time in the country’s history,” Mr. Homsey observed. “Never has the need for Antiochian unity been greater than it is today, and the need to build on this unity through service to all society.”

Working in close partnership with the Patriarchate, IOCC supports one of the largest established networks to deliver life-saving humanitarian relief inside Syria, where more than 10.8 million people are currently in need of assistance, and nearly 7.5 million of whom are internally displaced. Since 2012, IOCC has assisted more than 1.5 million Syrian people, either internally displaced or living as refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Armenia.

“IOCC represents the Orthodox faithful in America by bringing us together to build on the lessons in Matthew 25: feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, and clothe the naked,” Mr. Homsey said. “As the Good Samaritan in the Bible came to the aid of a stranger, IOCC has aided the world’s most vulnerable.”

Antiochian unity was visible at the conclusion of the conference. More than 5,000 Orthodox faithful, as well as Lebanon’s top government and religious leaders, crowded into a massive tent for Divine Liturgy held on Sunday morning at the campus of Balamand University. The Patriarch called on the international community and human rights organizations to break a “shameful and frightening international and local silence” and intensify their efforts to free all who had been abducted in the course of Syria’s war, including the two Bishops, JOHN (Ibrahim) and PAUL (Yazigi).

As moving as the week’s show of unity was to Mr. Homsey, a private audience with His Beatitude, Patriarch JOHN X, remains his most memorable experience. “During the meeting at His Beatitude’s residence, we spoke of many things, but I was most humbled by the profuse gratitude he expressed for IOCC’s humanitarian work in Syria, and his hope of a continued partnership with the organization in helping the thousands of families whose lives have been devastated by Syria’s civil war. With the blessing and support of His Beatitude, and the gifts of the Antiochian Orthodox faithful, IOCC remains committed to helping the Patriarchate meet the extraordinary needs in such catastrophic times.”





The Conference on Antiochian Unity

Violet K. Robbat

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Overlooking the beautiful Mediterranean Sea is the Balamand Abbey, built by Cistercian Monks in 1157 A.D., on the Hill of Balamand in al-Kurah, Lebanon. The monks left the Abbey before the capture of Tripoli and the Crusaders departed.

Three hundred years later, Greek Orthodox monks took over the Abbey, naming it the Balamand Monastery. Initially, ten monks occupied it, but this number increased to twenty-five in a very short period. Their lives were filled with prayer, tending crops, writing and copying manuscripts, as well as hosting visitors. The buildings were built around a square courtyard, representing the four evangelists, which is the center of their monastic life.

From the moment we arrived at the Balamand, our North American delegation, consisting of Fr. Thomas Zain, Vicar General, Fr. Timothy Ferguson, Protosyngeios, Fawaz El-Khoury, Dan Braun, Dan Abraham, Khalil Samara, Jordan Khurzum, Douglas Cramer and myself,

were welcomed and made to feel very much at home. Metropolitans, bishops, priests and delegates from Antiochian archdioceses all over the world convened at this historical conference. They came from Brazil, France, England, Mexico, Syria, Lebanon, Europe, and Saudi Arabia, to name a few, and, of course, North America. We prayed together, ate together, and attended the presentations and workshops together. We were equally blessed to have Archbishop JOSEPH, soon to be Metropolitan JOSEPH, Bishop ALEXANDER, Bishop JOHN and Bishop NICHOLAS with us.

On Wednesday, June 25, 2014, after Vespers, hierarchs, clergy and delegates congregated in the courtyard of the Balamand Monastery and were taken on a guided tour. Two churches, we learned, were built on the monastery grounds. We first visited the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos in the Patriarchal Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand. The Iconostas, which dates back to the end of the 17th Century, is made of a rich

dark walnut. It is here that we attended Vespers and where, on December 11, 2011, Bishop JOHN, Bishop NICHOLAS and Bishop ANTHONY were consecrated, and Bishop JOSEPH was elevated to Archbishop. As we left the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos, our attention was drawn to a section of the sidewalk under the arched covered walkway. Here an area of the sidewalk had in place a large piece of thick glass. As we looked more closely, we saw a skeleton at the bottom of what was a grave. We were informed that the skeleton was found during one of the renovations made over the years. It had been buried in the same position as we saw it. The decision was made to leave the skeleton just as it was found, buried *in-situ* (in its original place). A light bulb had been placed under the glass to make the skeleton more visible. It was evident by the placement of the skeleton that this individual had been very carefully laid to rest. A tooth from the skeleton was sent to Oxford University to determine the age of the individual; it was determined to be from someone who lived in the 11th Century.

We next visited the Church of St. George, where the Iconostas was made of marble. The icons in both churches were written by many iconographers from different countries over the course of many years. There were two important periods when this took place: the first was the end of the 17th Century to the early 18th Century; the second period was the 19th Century.

We then visited the Monk's Hall, known today as the Grand Hall, which was built in the middle of the 13th Century. Here the monks would sleep and be cared for when they were sick. Pilgrims would travel and rest here as well. Each stone-cutter left his unique mark on every stone in the wall, indicating that he was the one who had cut it.

Lastly, we were shown the Restoration Room, where ancient books and manuscripts are restored. The painstaking process needed to preserve these historical documents was described to us. The oldest manuscripts date as far back as the 13th Century and were written in both Arabic and Syriac. The majority are manuscripts from the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries.

After visiting the Restoration Room, we picked up our registration badges (which we had to wear at all times) and received copies of the reports being presented at the conference (in English and Arabic). Next we attended an Acquaintance Dinner at the St. John

of Damascus Institute of Theology. Towards the end of the dinner, Patriarch JOHN X came to our table, sat down for a few minutes and welcomed us. Bishop ALEXANDER introduced each of us to His Eminence.

On Thursday, June 26th, we entered the Zakhem Auditorium, located at the University of Balamand, for the official opening of the Antiochian Unity Conference. It began with a prayer and an introduction to the conference. Headphones (which were made available to us throughout the conference) were very helpful, as everything presented in Arabic was translated into English. First, each Eastern Patriarch spoke in turn and addressed the assembly, speaking on the theme of Christian unity amongst the faiths and thanking Patriarch JOHN X for inviting him. Then, Patriarch JOHN X warmly welcomed everyone. His Beatitude spoke of the goal of achieving Universal Christian Unity and how both clergy and laity must work together in the church to achieve this. In welcoming the Eastern Patriarchs, he invited them to join us at this historical conference. As Patriarch JOHN finished speaking, the choir of the St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology began their beautiful chanting.

The University of Balamand was founded by Patriarch IGNATIUS IV of thrice-blessed memory in 1988. The University's buildings are very modern and have state-of-the-art technology. Most of the classes are taught in English, with the exception of the branch of the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA), located in Beirut, in which classes are taught in French.

The primary work of the conference was the presentation of five papers of interest, and five related "Sessions." The papers were presented during Thursday afternoon and Friday morning, June 27th, in the following order: Pastoral Interaction, Financial and Wakf Property Development (concerning property owned by a church), Social Work, Effective Presence in Society, and Communication.

On Friday afternoon and part of Saturday morning, June 28th, all of the delegates reported to their assigned committees. I was assigned to and attended the Social Work Committee.

Upon completion of the "First Committee Session," on Friday afternoon, the delegation from North America was blessed to have a private meeting at 6:00 p.m. with His Beatitude at his residence, concerning the

election of our new Metropolitan. We found Patriarch JOHN X to be most gracious, and a warm, loving and caring individual. Our meeting with him was one that we will never forget, knowing that he really cared for us and our wellbeing here in North America.

Our “Second Committee Session” took place on Saturday morning. The more I heard from the priests and delegates on the floor, the more I knew how blessed and fortunate we all are here in North America to have what we have.

Overall, the feeling was that the presence of Social Work begins with Pastoral Care, beginning with the priest, then the deacon, parish councils, and the laity, all working together. The purpose is to reach out and make available education, health and social work services for people with disabilities, and to have relief programs for those in need and those affected by war.

A General Session followed the “Second Committee Session” to present the work of the committees. On Saturday afternoon, a session on the Conference’s Final Statement, moderated by Archbishop JOSEPH, and with His Beatitude’s blessings, was held in the Grand Hall of the Monastery.

Many other events took place over Thursday, Friday and Saturday. We had pictures taken with His Beatitude, first with all of the Hierarchs, clergy and delegates on the steps outside the Zakhem Building and then, by delegation, inside the Zakhem Auditorium. We attended the Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony for the University of Balamand Medical Center, the dedication of the Zeenni Technology Center for Engineering and Industrial Research, and the Inauguration of the new Patriarchal Offices Building.

The highlight of the Conference was the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy in celebration of the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, which was held outside in a huge athletic stadium. The name given the stadium was “The Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba) Cultural and Athletic Complex.” Prior to the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, Patriarch JOHN X dedicated the largest mosaic in the world! On a wall located at the far end of the stadium, it depicts an arm and hand outstretched to a dove with an olive branch. Just before the Divine Liturgy began, we were handed a copy of Patriarch JOHN X’s Homily printed in English. Vested in white and gold, all the Antiochian metropolitans, bishops and a few priests participated

in the Liturgy. The Divine Liturgy, all in Arabic, was absolutely breath-taking. The deep, rich voices of the choir of the St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology filled the stadium. At the end of the Great Entrance, as each held the Eucharist, every metropolitan, archbishop and bishop in turn faced Patriarch JOHN X, and commemorated him. The entire Liturgy went seamlessly and left us all in awe!

Patriarch JOHN X began his Homily by stating that the heart of the Church of Antioch was “beating with love and joy” with the presence together of all the Antiochian churches throughout the world. He referred to Antioch as a shell, that, despite its small size and its hidden history, holds inside “its most precious treasure: the faith in Jesus Christ.” He further stated that “the Church of Antioch is built with love.” His Beatitude referred to the Antiochian Orthodox Church as a vineyard that spreads its branches as far away as North and South America, Australia and Europe, and acknowledged their “strong, supporting arm to the Mother Church.” He also recognized our “brother and sisters who converted to the Orthodox Church through our Antiochian Church” and said that they are always prayed for. He asked that we pray for God to bring peace to the world, and to bring stability to Lebanon, which still does not have a president, and to Syria. The latter has always respected all religions, and there Christians and Muslims have lived side by side in peace. He further asked us to pray for peace in Iraq, Egypt, Palestine and the entire world. His Beatitude also referred to the abductions of “the two bishops PAUL and JOHN and other priests.” As he did so, their pictures were shown on jumbotrons that had been placed to the sides, so that those attending could view better the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

At one point during his homily, he asked us to pray for those who had intended to come to the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, but who were delayed in buses at the Syrian/Lebanese border.

In closing, Patriarch JOHN X sent his warmest greetings to all throughout the world. He thanked the soldiers who were there to protect us so that this conference could take place, everyone at the Balamand Monastery, the University, and the St. John of Damascus School of Theology, for all that they did to help make this conference a success, and to the mass media who streamed the Divine Liturgy all over the world to those unable to attend.

I feel so blessed to have had this opportunity to attend this historic conference and to represent this blessed Archdiocese on behalf of the Antiochian Women. The last time a conference such as this was held was in 1993. When we met privately with His Beatitude, he told us that he would like to have many more conferences like this in the near future, such as one for youth, one for women, and so forth.

I hope that each of you will have the opportunity to travel to the Balamand, to appreciate its history and

culture, and to have the wonderful experience that I and my fellow delegates have had. To attend Vespers in the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos in the Patriarchal Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand, and to walk in the courtyard, which is the center of monastic life, is an experience that I will never forget.

Violet K. Robbat, President
Antiochian Women North American Board

Silent Holocaust: The Persecution of Christians In the Middle East

“The scorched earth is their bed and the cold winds are their blankets.”

On September 5th, 2014, at 7 p.m., the Orthodox Clergy Association of Houston and Southeast Texas gathered for a special town hall meeting at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, in Houston, Texas to discuss “The Silent Holocaust: The Persecution of Christians in the Middle East, and What We Can Do About It.” All the members of the Orthodox, Coptic and Syriac Christian communities in the area participated. Approximately 300 persons, including 16 priests, and one running politician, James Cargas, were in attendance. The jurisdictions represented by local clergy were: the Greek Archdiocese, the Antiochian Archdiocese, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, the Orthodox Church in America, the Serbian Diocese of Midwestern America, as well as clergy of the local Coptic and Syriac Dioceses.

Alas, no sitting politicians and no media outlets attended, despite many invitations. Houston’s ABC Channel 13, located directly across the street from St. George’s, was not represented.

Among the four speakers was Hieromonk Bashar (al-Shamany) of the Syriac Orthodox Church, originally from Mosul, who spoke about the current situation in the Middle East. Fr. Bashar’s family are currently among the thousands of scattered refugees. He gave a moving presentation in Arabic, saying of the

scattered refugees: “The scorched earth is their bed and the cold winds are their blankets.”

Following the speakers was a question-and-answer period, at which time several citizens asked questions and offered their points of view.

To address the question, “What we can do about it?” the following actions were suggested: pray more deeply for those who are suffering; increase awareness by simply discussing the matter of the persecutions across the Middle East; give donations to the IOCC; and communicate with our local politicians and others, in writing or by phone.

After the question-and-answer period, a large collection was taken. These monies will be sent to the International Orthodox Christian Charities for the relief of the suffering refugees dispersed throughout the Middle East.

At the conclusion of the town hall, all of the Orthodox clergy offered up the Trisagion Prayers for those who have died under horrendous persecution.

We thank God that many came to the event and pray that this will be only the first of many future meetings.



Hieromonk Bashar (al-Shamany)

All Things Are Possible Through Christ

Your Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, Your Graces, Reverend Clergy, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.

I sat down one Saturday afternoon with the intention of writing this oration. I like to think of myself as a good writer. I write for the school paper and have covered sports for the last three years. But for some reason, I had a hard time preparing for this oration. Unlike a football story, where the game had already taken place, this oration does not write itself, it takes a lot of thought.

I sat at my computer for a good hour with nothing but the blank screen. The writer’s block was beginning to eat me alive.

If it’s this hard to write a speech about loving God with my whole being, it must be close to impossible to actually live it out. I was worried, because achieving this teaching from our Lord is a vital part of our path to salvation.

I needed a break and my grandpa had stopped by for a visit. Let me tell you a little about my grandpa. He and I have a great relationship and he is very special to me. About a month before I was trying to write this speech, I wanted to spend some quality time with him on a typical day.

I went over early that spring morning and wanted to see the world through his eyes. I wanted to know what it would feel like to be my grandpa.

Saint Luke wrote in Chapter 10; Verse 27, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.*” Whenever I thought about that verse, however, I would always think to myself, “All of these together are impossible to do in the world today, but if I can do one or two, I should be fine.” On that day, however, I watched my grandpa truly live out the whole teaching, and not just parts of it. I will never forget that.

For about five years now, my grandpa has been the treasurer of a small church downtown. This church serves many homeless and disabled people in our city. I looked through a picture album my grandma made of him and the church community. I saw him playing soccer with inner city kids, putting a smile on their faces. I saw him visiting people in jail that were once a part of the church, and he was reading them Scripture. I saw him laughing and enjoying the company of many homeless people that he invited into his home. I was watching my grandpa live out another teaching for salvation given to us by the Lord, in Matthew 25 (“For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me”). After looking at the album, I knew that my grandpa cared about people with all his heart, soul, and strength, at his church.

Then he threw a broom in the trunk and we took off and ran some errands.

He said that we had to go to the library. I thought, “Okay. This is a normal task. Just go to the library, grab some books, and then head back home.” It turned out that he was there to meet a 17-year-old immigrant from Mexico. We found a study room and he sat there for an hour and a half, tutoring him in English and math. I was surprised that at the end of the lesson, the only payment was a “thank you” from the student, and my grandpa’s only response was a “same time next week?” Our errands continued.

We left the library and stopped at a paved bike trail that ran by the river. He went to the trunk and got out that big broom. He said, “Let’s go for a walk.”

We went walking down the trail and the entire time he was sweeping leaves, twigs, and other debris off the path. We walked for probably a good half mile before I asked him why he was doing this. He said because he wanted to make it safe for biking. The debris was not towering and I am sure that if you were biking that trail you wouldn’t have too much trouble with it. What surprised me, however, was that he wasn’t sweeping

because he was going to bike there later on; he was sweeping for the safety of people he didn’t know and would probably never meet.

We learn in the Gospel about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) that our neighbor is not just the man across the street, but everyone we meet or could meet. My grandpa loved his neighbor so much that he didn’t even have to know them to care for them.

I was starting to see how this teaching of loving the Lord could be lived out. He loves his neighbor by working with those in need; He loves the Lord with all his strength by sweeping a path for his neighbor. He loves the Lord with all his soul by using his knowledge to teach his neighbor. He loves the Lord with all his heart by visiting his friends and former parishioners in jail. He was living this teaching, this teaching that I thought was impossible to do in this world today. He was living it out fully.

Next we went to go and grab some lunch at a burger joint. I asked my grandpa about what he wanted his legacy to be. I asked, “In 100 years, when they hear your name, what do you want them to say?”

He thought for a moment and took a sip of his coffee. He looked up at me teary-eyed and said, “That he cared about other people. I don’t like to look at myself and what I have done, but rather look at others and see what their needs are. We are only on this earth for a few years and if others need help, how can I help them? How can I make their life better? Because it’s not about me.”

I sat in that worn-down booth, looking at my grandpa, full of so much love that I thought he could be a saint someday.

I realized he loved the Lord his God with his whole being by loving his neighbor. He did so with every ounce of his heart, soul, and strength. St. Silouan of Athos said, “Do an experiment on yourself: one day ask God for love towards your brother, and another day – live without love. You will see the difference.”

What I witnessed on that day, and will never forget, is that you need to love the Lord your God, by loving his image in our neighbor.

What struck me the most, however, was that what I thought would take me a lifetime, and be nearly impossible, grandpa had done by three in the afternoon.



It is hard to love the Lord your God with all our heart, soul, and strength. But I truly believe that my grandpa figured out the best way to do it. Getting to heaven was never his motivation. He simply lived his life and performed everyday tasks, but he saw his neighbors around him. He really saw them for who they are: children of God. He truly loves the Lord and that means he cares for everyone he runs into.

St. John Chrysostom teaches: “The bee is more honored than other animals. Not just because she labors, but because she labors for others.”

So as my grandpa left shortly after stopping in to check on me and my family the Saturday I was attempting to write this oration, I went back to my computer and wrote. I recalled that day I spent with him.

I’m so grateful for my grandpa. I’m grateful for the example he has given me, because I am sure that this is not the only time in my life that I will struggle to love God with my whole being as he taught us to do. But it is OK to struggle.

God places someone special in each of our lives. They may not be obvious to us right away, but we need them. They might be at our schools, or at church or Teen SOYO, or they might just walk into your room to check on you when you are trying to write a tough speech. Learn from the special people God places in your life, and with the wisdom you gain, Lord willing, pass it on to your grandchildren and godchildren who are a part of a younger generation of Christians. They will face the same struggles along their path to salvation. They will hear this verse and think that it’s impossible to do in the world today. Be the special person in their life and remind them of Philippians 4:13: “All things are possible through Christ who strengthens me.”

Sixteen-year-old Gresham Olson is the 2014 Judges Choice. He is from St. Nicholas Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and from the Diocese of Toledo.





Parish Life Conference at Antiochian Village

We thank the over five hundred faithful from the Eastern Dioceses of New York and Washington, D.C. and Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic, who participated in our historic 2014 Parish Life Conference. It was our privilege to host the Conference at the Antiochian Village in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. What a testament to the vision of Metropolitan PHILIP, who founded the Village to foster fellowship and spiritual growth in our Orthodox faith! The grace of the Holy Spirit emanated throughout the Conference as we focused on the theme of loving God and neighbor.



Additional Parish Life Conference pictures can be found on our website at <http://www.saintgeorgeorthodox.org/category/events/plc-2104> by clicking on each PLC post.

As the Conference was held at the Antiochian Village, we had the opportunity to pray at the gravesites of St. Raphael and Metropolitan PHILIP. Father Anthony Yazge, the Village host priest and Camp Director, guided us on an uplifting tour of the St. Raphael and St. Thekla shrines, and led us in a Supplication Service to St. Raphael.

We were able to enjoy another one of Metropolitan PHILIP's fulfilled visions – The Antiochian Heritage Museum – and the fascinating exhibits currently on display. The Eternal Spring exhibit, displaying some of the art created by Leila Chokheli during the Communist occupation, perfectly complemented the presentation given by one of our keynote speakers, Leila's son and world-renowned artist, Niko Chocheli. Niko had received many of these works of art from his mother, along with poetry and prayers, after he moved to the United States. We were also blessed to have

Mother Justina and Sister Kathrina from our Convent of St. Thekla in Glenville, Pennsylvania, enlighten us with their presentation.

The dedicated Village staff offered us a plethora of entertaining activities unique to the venue, including horseback riding, the challenge course, archery, geocaching, swimming, the Flight 93 Memorial Tour, and golf at Champion Lakes. They lit up a huge bonfire for us one evening, complete with scrumptious s'mores, and 4th of July fireworks, as we all enjoyed the fellowship of the night.

The children were delightfully entertained and spiritually engaged at the Children's Workshop while their parents attended the Conference. They also cooperated with the Teen SOYO on a service project to beautify the gazebo behind the Conference Center. The teens painted the gazebo and prepared the grounds

around it for the children's garden. The children planted ground cover, and decorated the gazebo garden with the beautiful mosaic stones that they had enjoyed creating in the workshop.

The teens also made "power packs," which they delivered to Saturday's Kitchen in Johnstown as a service project to the local community. In between all the organized activities of the Parish Life Conference, they enjoyed the freedom to play pick-up games of their favorite sports on the Village grounds. There was terrific participation in the Conference by our teens, with 125 registered!



What a treat to resurrect the choir concert of past Parish Life Conferences. We enjoyed the music of each of the participating choirs, and especially the grand finale in which all the choirs joined together to fill the room and our hearts with lovely hymns.

The banquet and hufli are always a favorite Conference event. We danced the night away to the entertaining music of David Hakim and his band. We enjoyed other treasured activities, such as creative art projects, oratorical presentations, Bible bowl, teen talent show, and vendor displays.

On behalf of Father Meletios Zafaran and St. George, New Kensington, we say thank you again to the Village staff for their gracious hospitality, and to everyone who participated in the Parish Life Conference 2014. It truly was a testament to our Metropolitan's vision, bringing his love of Orthodoxy full circle.





HISTORY OF THE ORDER OF ST. IGNATIUS

In January 1975, Metropolitan PHILIP of blessed memory saw the need to study the possibilities of a new organization that would challenge the laity of the Archdiocese to a new dimension of service.

A small committee was organized under the chairmanship of Albert Joseph and was composed of Ernest Saykaly, Robert Andrews, Robert Laham, Theodore Mackoul, Archpriest Paul Schneirla and Archpriest Antony Gabriel. During the Archdiocese Convention held in Louisville, Kentucky, in July 1975, a preliminary report was filed at the General Assembly. The Metropolitan accepted the findings of the report and by the Archdiocese Convention held in 1976 in San Francisco, California, the provisional chairman, Albert Joseph, was installed and the first inductions to The Order took place.

It was during the Patriarch's historic trip that the newest Archdiocesan organization was called into being and was given his apostolic blessings. The first officers and chaplain were formally installed and many new members were inducted at the Washington Archdiocesan conclave in 1977. Ever since his Beatitude, Patriarch ELIAS IV, of thrice blessed memory, and our beloved primate, Metropolitan PHILIP of blessed memory, formally blessed and inaugurated The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, an unprecedented number of lay persons were awakened to their global Archdiocesan responsibilities and scores of earnest women and men have come forward to join The Order.

CONTINUE THE VISION

For more information
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