

# THE WORD

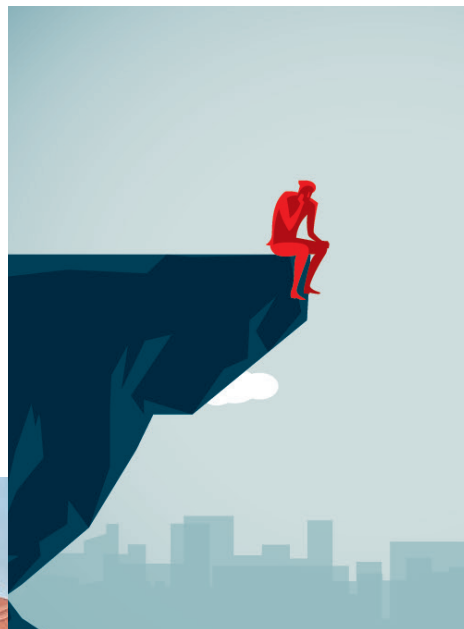
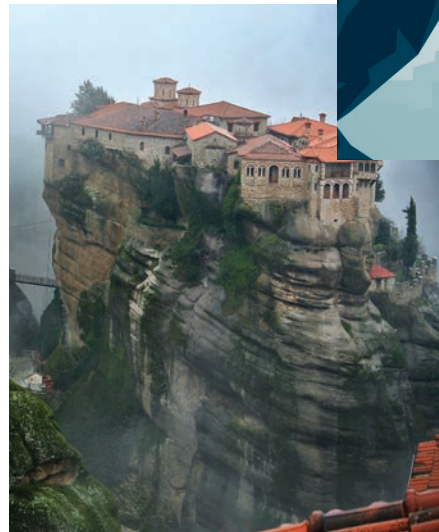
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# THE WORD

## CONTENTS



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COVER: Metropolitan JOSEPH

- 3 EDITORIAL  
by Bishop JOHN
- 5 METROPOLITAN JOSEPH'S  
ADDRESS TO THE CLERGY  
SYMPOSIUM
- 16 A VOCATION FOR UNITY  
by Fr. Peter Kavanaugh
- 18 FROM THESE STONES —  
WHAT WE NEED  
by Fr. Joseph Huneycutt
- 20 SUICIDE AND THE CHURCH  
by Fr. Seraphim Solof
- 24 FROM MY HEART  
by Ambrose Bushelli
- 26 THE DEPARTMENT OF  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
- 30 COMMUNITIES IN ACTION
- 32 ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE
- 33 NEWS

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 e-mailed and provided as a Microsoft Word text or editable PDF. Please do not embed artwork into the word documents. All art work must be high resolution: at least 300dpi.

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# Authentic Christian Priesthood Re-examined

BISHOP JOHN

Metropolitan JOSEPH chose to focus on the nature of the priesthood for this year's Clergy Symposium. He offered a major presentation on the parish priest as administrator and as a family leader. He also assigned each of the bishops topics related to the priesthood, in the hope that the clergy would be rejuvenated in their holy vocations. Over the previous year, the bishops prepared to discuss their topics. You will see how well each did in his presentations. The clergy responded with openness and gratitude. They asked practical questions arising from their experiences as they have served the people of our God-protected Archdiocese on the front lines. We also had elective sessions that dealt with pastoral challenges specific to our time. In all of our discussions and workshops, clergy worked together to explore creative solutions, responding to the current needs of parishes and people. The feedback from the priests and deacons concerning the materials shared by the bishops has been very positive. The bishop's presentations also helped all of the clergy get to know better the bishops that serve in our Archdiocese. Many expressed pride in our Archdiocese, as God has blessed us with solid leadership. All of the keynote presentations are available on Ancient Faith Radio, and many will be printed in this and subsequent issues of *The WORD*. I encourage everyone to listen to these presentations or read the texts, as I believe them to be worthwhile for all.

To introduce this series, I would like to say this: Christ is the first, the archetypal Priest. The Old Testament priests prefigured Christ as they offered sacrifices to cover the sins of the people, led the people as civic leaders, or spoke for God as prophets. Only Christ is God and man, so only Christ joins with God to offer God the Father to us and, as man, us to the Father. Only Christ is the King of

the heavens and earth, who speaks for the Father and brings man forgiveness of sins. Only Christ sends the Holy Spirit to us, to lead us and guide us in Him to the Father. He is the bridge who brings man to God and God to man. As baptized Christians, we enter into Christ to share in His work through all of His ministries. We Orthodox Christians offer ourselves, each other, and the world to God; as Christians, we offer God to the world. We do this by living in holy ways and joining our world to God. We need to embody the Gospel teachings and preach them to the world. We do this preaching mostly through example, and we use words when necessary.

Each of us is given particular gifts. With their gifts of administration, the bishops coordinate the gifts given to each community in orderly and godly ways. Presbyters (priests) follow the lead of their bishops, serving by guiding their parish communities on behalf of the bishops; the deacons serve the people in addressing the practical needs of the parish; and the people serve God, each other, and the world through worship, example and ministry. The priestly gifts of each of us are different, but we all are filled with Christ, the original and fully authentic Priest.

To understand the priesthood of believers, we need to study the priesthoods of Christ and of each other. First, let's study the priesthood of Christ, and then the priesthood of His bishops, presbyters and deacons. Conversely, to understand better the priesthood of the bishops and clergy, we study the priesthood of Christ, as He shares this ministry with all baptized believers. We serve in worship and hospitality, sharing Truth and God's love. God offers his abundant grace to the world through each of us. He is working, and He works in us.

Each of our lives and gifts is unique; each of us is called to express Christ's priesthood in a particular way. Christ is the "administer" or leader, as he taught and guided His apostles and the people, and



The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend  
Bishop BASIL

The Right Reverend  
Bishop THOMAS

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ALEXANDER

The Right Reverend  
Bishop JOHN

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend  
Bishop NICHOLAS

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later sent them out to expand His ministry. Like them, we need to study and learn from the Scriptures, the Fathers, our worship, and our church relationships, in order to express Christ's priesthood and to carry out His mission. You will learn much about this in Metropolitan JOSEPH's presentation, in this issue of *The WORD*. We do well to understand the high calling of priesthood from God, as well as the purity and love of Christ's priesthood to which God calls us. Bishop BASIL offers insights for clergy in this area that are also applicable to the priesthood of believers. Bishop THOMAS shared reflections on the priesthood as fatherhood, which is the primary life-giving relationship with God and His Church. Our Christianity is not experienced in solitude, but in relationships that God blesses and gives us. There is much that will inspire us in this presentation. Bishop ANTHONY spoke about our personhood and integrity as it relates to priesthood. He also addressed our calling in terms of the apostolic succession. These inspiring messages will warm your heart, and show you how to live with Christ in your heart. You will marvel at the words from both the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation, as they address God and your relationships. I, Bishop JOHN, spoke about our lives with God as experienced through the sacraments and God's actions in our lives. Bishop NICHOLAS was asked to speak about the priest as servant. Servanthood in Christ is the only real freedom from sin, this fallen world, and our weaknesses.

I am blessed to belong to this Archdiocese and serve with the Metropolitan, bishops, clergy and people that God has blessed us with. May God bless you as you deepen your understanding of your priesthood in Christ and as you study this series of lectures. May you share in the joys that come from seeing God work "up close," and as you expand your own priestly work in Christ.



# METROPOLITAN JOSEPH'S ADDRESS

TO THE TWENTIETH BIENNIAL CLERGY SYMPOSIUM, ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE, BOLIVAR, PENNSYLVANIA

July 16–20, 2018



WITH GREAT JOY, I GREET ALL OF YOU AND WELCOME YOU TO OUR CLERGY SYMPOSIUM. THIS GATHERING IS IMPORTANT ON MANY LEVELS. MOST SIMPLY, WE CAN SAY WITH THE PSALMIST: "HOW GOOD AND PLEASANT IT IS FOR BRETHREN TO DWELL IN UNITY." IN ADDITION TO OUR FELLOWSHIP, THE SYMPOSIUM AFFORDS US THE BLESSING TO WORSHIP TOGETHER AND LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER. I ASK THAT WE ALL COMMIT OURSELVES TO MAKING THE MOST OF THIS PRECIOUS TIME.

When I met with my brother hierarchs to begin planning for this symposium, we thought it was important that we take time to return to the fundamentals: to discuss the very definition of the priesthood itself. This topic is of such clear importance to the life of our Archdiocese, that I thought it would be the most beneficial for our own hierarchs to share their vision of various aspects of the priesthood. So this year, we do not have a speaker from another jurisdiction, or an eminent theologian from overseas, or a hierarch from another local church. This year, we will hear from the archpastors of this God-protected Archdiocese.

Of course, the topic of the priesthood cannot be fully discussed in one week. Our priesthood is based on the One Priesthood of our Great High Priest, Our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ. We would all agree with the Apostle and Evangelist John, that if we

were to discuss the Priesthood of our Lord, the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

But as Saint John wrote in his Gospel what needed to be written for us to believe, I and my brothers will attempt – with God's mercy – to say what needs to be said this week for us to have a soul-profitting and ministry-enhancing time here. We will have

- Bishop BASIL address the high calling of the priesthood;
- Bishop THOMAS, on the meaning of calling the priest *Father*;
- Bishop ALEXANDER, on the integrity of the priesthood;
- Bishop JOHN, on the sacramental ministry of the priesthood;
- Bishop ANTHONY, on the meaning of apostolic succession; and finally,
- Bishop NICHOLAS, on the priest as a servant.

To round out this very full range of aspects of the



priesthood, I have decided to focus my remarks today on the priest as *administrator*. My address will have two parts. First, I will speak about how the priest administers his parish; and, second, I will address the way the priest administers his home as a husband and father. I have often heard priests, when confronted with mundane tasks of administration, sigh and say something to the effect of “This is not why I went to seminary.” We were attracted to the priesthood by visions of ourselves leading liturgical worship, preaching the Gospel, teaching the Faith, discussing the nuances of Palamite theology, consoling the sorrowing, visiting the sick and imprisoned, restoring the penitent, and healing divisions. We probably did not, however, enjoy envisioning ourselves sitting through lengthy parish

*hood*, tries to justify his running from the priestly ministry to his dear friend, Saint Basil. One of the lengthy justifications is based precisely on the heavy burden of administration – particularly the difficulty of caring for the widows, the sick, and the strangers. Saint John speaks of the need for a “skillful management of property.” He says: “Much forethought, therefore, is needed, that the resources of the Church should be neither overabundant, nor deficient, but that all the supplies which are provided should be quickly distributed among those who require them, and the treasures of the Church stored up in the hearts of those who are under her rule.” He continues to tell Saint Basil of the difficulty of this kind of stewardship and the pitfalls and heartaches that come with the great respon-

the way we look at our administrative tasks in the life of this Archdiocese and our parishes? Can we look at them in a fresh light? I think clergy face a temptation to disregard administrative tasks because they feel they are primarily liturgical celebrants. We sometimes create a false dichotomy in our parish life: the priest is in charge liturgically, and the parish council is in charge of everything else.

#### NEITHER “LITURGICAL ROBOTS” NOR “ECCLESIASTICAL BUREAUCRATS”

I believe that the priest who concerns himself only with liturgical services, and treats the administrative aspects of the parish as somehow beneath him, is actually denying what Saint John Chrysostom called

one member but many.” The Holy Apostle continues to explain that a body has many members with various functions, and no one part may claim it has no need of the others. All the members of Christ’s Body also have gifts and talents to offer, as well as various roles and responsibilities, and these must work together decently and in good order with sacrificial love. The icon presented to us by the *diskos* shows the unity of the Church around Christ; while the neatness and exactitude of the cut bread and the arranged ranks show Her orderliness.

In the life of our Archdiocese as a whole, and our parishes individually, we can take that icon of the *diskos* as a powerful reminder that we and our people have roles and responsibilities in the Church that,



council meetings, haggling over deductions on assessment sheets, filling out sacramental registries, reading balance sheets, planning events, and collecting court documents confirming a civil divorce.

The reason I chose this topic is that for many of you, the primary way in which you may come in contact with me is through some of those administrative matters I just listed. Indeed, I have traveled the length and breadth of this Archdiocese in my initial years as your Metropolitan so as not to be a distant, administrative figure in Englewood, but a true father in Christ. My prayer is to have every correspondence between us come from a place of love and relationship, as a father to his sons. For this reason, I have tried to emulate the words of the Lord describing His ministry: “The Son of Man has no place to lay His head.” Nevertheless, my ministry is one with many administrative tasks. Saint John Chrysostom, in his classic work *On the Priest-*

sibility. So even our Holy Father John Chrysostom desired to shy away from these kinds of matters. I myself would prefer focusing my time more exclusively on liturgizing, teaching, preaching, consoling, confessing, and counseling. We know, however, that we cannot do those ministries if the work of administration is not done, as Saint Paul says, “decently and in order.” The church has monetary needs for its ministries and buildings. We cannot comply with the canons – or demonstrate our compliance – if we do not have paperwork and forms and letters. In order to avoid scandalizing our faithful, we need to have transparent financial reporting.

When we gather for symposia, parish life conferences, retreats, and conventions, we need planning and organization. There is no way around having our priesthood bound up in administrative duties. But, I ask you, my beloved brothers in Christ, can we reframe

the “liturgy after the liturgy,” and thus makes himself merely a “liturgical robot.” Let me explain what I mean by inviting you to think in terms of the *diskos*, after we have completed all of the commemorations. We see the Lamb encompassed by all of the embers that make up the Body of Christ – the Holy Theotokos to its right, the ranks of the saints and angels to its left, and all of the hierarchs and clergy, as well as all of the living and departed, beneath it. There is such a beautiful icon there of the unity and diversity of the Body of Christ.

We see the icon of what Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink of one Spirit. For in fact the body is not

again, must be done decently, in good order, in love. I have heard Father Alexander Schmemman quoted as saying that the vocation of the priest is actually “vocation-less.” What he meant is that the priest is one who offers himself in loving sacrifice to bring out the vocations or callings of his people. We, as priests, are the administrators of the offerings of the members of the Body that they may be done in the harmonious and loving order taught by Saint Paul. We help our people to discover their own sacred vocations in the Church and teach them to offer themselves with love, humility, and self-sacrifice. When you heard the theme of my address, “the Priest as Administrator,” the word *administrator* probably had a negative connotation. When we hear someone talk about “admin” or an “administration,” the images that come to mind are ones of bureaucracies that run without regard for persons – just nameless, faceless entities that blindly enforce



policies with no regard for individual circumstances. I think we can say there is a temptation for clergy to act in this way, and I would describe such a priest as an “ecclesiastical bureaucrat.” In order to avoid these two temptations of being either a “liturgical robot” or an “ecclesiastical bureaucrat,” let us rethink this term *administrator*.

The term *administrator* comes from the Latin word *ministrare* – *to serve, to attend*. In fact, this word has as its root *minister*, and is related to our word *ministry*. In the original Latin and medieval French source words, the idea is in fact one of *stewardship*: the administrator is a servant who is entrusted to manage affairs on behalf of his master. He is a servant bringing order to the service, the ministry, of fellow servants. A priest who is a “holy administrator” is not an “ecclesiastical bureaucrat,” mindlessly enforcing policies and canons, or a “liturgical robot,” merely offering rituals, but a servant who helps his fellow servants in their service, a minister who helps the ministry of his fellow ministers. The Apostle Paul nicely summed up this ideal in his Epistle to the Ephesians, when he writes that Christ: “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” You are there to equip your people for ministry! Ultimately, all that we do and inspire our people to do is for the salvation of souls!

#### THE ADMINISTRATOR AS ONE WHO LOVES

I often hear of “burnout” among our clergy, and I would say that perhaps this comes from an attempt by our priests to “do it all.” If we take seriously the teaching of Saint Paul and the true meaning of the “priest as administrator,” the people of God become engaged as fellow servants in the ministry of the Church. The priest is inspiring, teaching, guiding, and overseeing – not expending his energy as the “one-man show.” I realize this is more easily said than done. Our people have come to expect our clergy to be “supermen.” Our church culture tends to blame the priest first for each and every failure in a parish. Asking for help can often be met by cynicism on the part of our people, or even the question from them, “Isn’t this what we pay you for?”

How do we overcome those objections? Like everything we do in the life of the Church, we must first and foremost build and cultivate loving relationships with our people. We love them. We serve them. We go out of our way to bear witness to the sacrificial love of Christ in their lives. We go with them to

the Cross. In this way, we transcend the “ecclesiastical bureaucrat” and the “liturgical robot,” and become that servant who inspires and orders the work of his fellow servants. We learn about our people so we know where their gifts and talents can be put to use and how they can be excited about being asked to use them. The “priest as administrator” – when he is a holy administrator – is primarily one who is relational, one who loves.

Let me give you a concrete example of what I mean. One of those heavily administrative tasks I mentioned at the outset is the collection of the paperwork necessary to restore a divorced person to the full sacramental life of the Church. During the course of my initial years as your Metropolitan, I began to notice that the petitions from our priests read as though we were charging people two hundred dollars for a letter that contained the legalistic phrase, “I hereby recommend based on thorough examination this person be restored.” When I would ask what kind of “thorough examination” had taken place, I would often be disappointed at the level of pastoral care behind that phrase. These are people who have often suffered terribly. These are people who are considering a second marriage. This process should be an opportunity to love and care for those people, not a bureaucratic set of hoops to jump through! I instructed my staff to send instructions to make sure these petitions showed that there was indeed a personal ministry involved in the process.

I ask you from the depths of my heart: Please be sure to use every administrative opportunity – parish council meetings, budget preparations, restoral petitions, sacraments – to build loving relationships with your people. These seemingly mundane matters can be the very means of bringing them to salvation!

#### NOT A CEO EITHER

Now let me switch the focus and speak of another temptation we face as clergy. We began by speaking of the temptation to be the “liturgical robot” who shies away from administrative tasks because they do not appear to him to be ministry, and the temptation to be an “ecclesiastical bureaucrat” who completes his administrative tasks without love and without using them as an opportunity to build relationships with his people. The other temptation I would like to address is to think of the priesthood as primarily an administrative job, not a spiritual one. We can call this temptation, “The Priest as CEO.” During my decades-long ministry, I have seen priests who consider their work in the parish as one of building not the Body of Christ – or equipping the saints as Saint Paul has taught us –

but growing a worldly organization. This temptation is for the priest to concentrate on finances for the sake of finances, buildings for the sake of buildings, and social activities for the sake of social activities. Often times, these are very popular priests who are good at what the world describes as “leadership.” While they can inspire people to work together and give money, they do not inspire people to true spiritual life. To avoid complaints, they cut down the services or choose not to offer them at all. They do not challenge their people to live the Gospel. Their sermons are meant only to make people feel good about themselves. In order not to offend – or perhaps as some kind of “growth strategy” – they do not uphold the disciplines of the Church. They do not teach their people to “take up their crosses” through prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and moral living. They put more of their time into ecumenical community activities and political activism than in the work of visiting the sick and shut-in. As Christ said about the lavish, white-washed tombs, their parishes may be beautiful outwardly, but inside they are “full of dead men’s bones.” While I have spent a lot of time in my remarks discussing a holy way of being an administrator, I need to say very clearly that *our priests are not businessmen*. Our way of leading our flocks is not through the leadership techniques shown by the modern CEO, but through the kenotic outpouring of love shown by our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. I have said many times, and I say it again today: As the Metropolitan, I have no patience for this model of the “Priest as CEO.” The only church growth I want to see is growth based on the evangelical commandments of the Savior, not the clever strategies of the business world. I do not want spreadsheets showing the number of people in the pews and the number of social activities done, as though we are a country club, but I want to know how we are providing for the salvation of souls as the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church! I must also say that I have seen too much of the lifestyle of the CEO amongst some of our priests. When I was a young seminarian at the Balamand, I learned an important lesson from Patriarch IGNATIUS of Thrice-Blessed Memory: “When a priest lives a lifestyle that is higher than his flock, he cannot be a priest for them. He must suffer with them as they suffer or he is not a true priest.”

#### WHAT IT IS TO BE A SHEPHERD

When I went to Cyprus as a priest, I held those words of my father-in-Christ close to my heart. I was there to care for refugees of a civil war living in a foreign land. There was no salary. There was no benefits

package. There was no 401K retirement plan. I went there to live with them in their suffering. I had been a priest for some time, but it was there amidst those people that I came to understand what it means to be a shepherd, and what it means to be called a father.

Brethren, let me also exhort you with the words of perhaps the greatest parish priest of our Orthodox Church in the Twentieth Century, Saint John of Kronstadt: “How indifferent a priest should be to earthly things, in order that when celebrating such services,



such high and most heavenly sacraments, he may not be ensnared by the enemy, but may always burn with pure love for God and his fellow men, who are lost through sins and are saved by the grace of Christ in the Holy Spirit!” Please do not misunderstand me. I do not want you to turn to the other extreme and try to emulate the life of the monastery as parish priests. Parishes are not monasteries – both have their calling in the life of the Church. I do not want our parish priests dressing as monastics at all times. There is a time and a place for the *jibbee*, and perhaps the *skuffi*, but we need to have balance and discernment. I have tried to avoid making pronouncements on this issue because I want to trust you to use your discernment. Please return my trust with a balanced approach. (And allow me a side note here – Saint John teaches there is no room for the “earthly cares” when celebrating the services. This includes not just extravagant lifestyles, but also not bringing idle chatter behind the Holy Altar. This is time for communion with God, not joking or planning announcements, and so forth.)



IN SUMMARY

Your Graces and Reverend Fathers, as with all things in our Christian lives, we strive for the Royal Path – keeping all things in balance. I want what I am saying and what I am not saying to be clear. The model of “the Priest as Administrator” cannot be any of the following three things we have spoken about:

- 1. We as priests should not be “liturgical robots” who merely fulfill the ritual obligations of offer-



- ing services and treat our parishes like sacrament factories! Of course, we must serve the liturgical rites of the Church with dignity and piety and hearts aflame with love for God and all people, but celebrating the services must not be an excuse to shy away from the necessary work of parish administration.
- 2. In doing the work of administration, we must not be “ecclesiastical bureaucrats” who simply fill out paperwork and keep track of balance sheets. Administration is ministry. We must administer by reaching out to our people in sacrificial love and inspiring them to offer their gifts in service to God “decently and in good order.”
- 3. We must never succumb to the temptation of treating our parishes as businesses and ourselves as “CEO Priests.” This type of priesthood can create some sense of worldly success but does not offer our people a true spiritual life. If there is no true spiritual life, whatever growth happens in a parish is bound to be fleeting, as it is founded upon sand, not upon rock. As in all things, we keep ourselves balanced, and I call on you to be balanced as “Holy Administrators.”
- 4. We serve the liturgical services with love for God and our people.
- 5. We complete our administrative tasks with love for God and our people.
- 6. We sacrifice extravagant living and worldly popularity with love for God and our people.

As we continue our discussions of the priesthood this week, I want us to ask ourselves: How is my life different after my ordination? Of course, we are changed forever by virtue of our ordination. Let me say clearly that we must reflect – we must be icons – of our Great Priest at all times and in all aspects of our lives. Can we take off our priesthood as we take off our collar and *jibbee* and hang them in the closet? Absolutely not! Our lives as priests must be holistic, not compartmentalized.

ADMINISTRATION AND FAMILY

This brings me to my second subject: the priest as a husband and father. I will begin by saying: You must be a “holy administrator” of your family life at home as well as the parish! Again, the word “administration” may not have the sound of intimacy and domestic bliss, but I hope the message I have been trying to convey today shows that administration is relational – it is focused on love!

Let me begin to make this important connection

between holy administration and love with my previous starting point in this address – the Holy Apostle Paul. In his Epistle to Timothy, Saint Paul clearly teaches that one who is being considered for ordination must have his own house in order, and asks, If a man cannot manage his own house, how can he care for the Church? I have seen throughout my ministry the wisdom of Saint Paul. I have seen clergy families that are models of mutual love and support, ones that enhance and beautify the ministry of the priest.

Unfortunately, I have also seen clergy families that are under such duress that the ministry of the priest is diminished or even choked off. I have seen some of my best priests lose their wives because of neglecting them for their ministries, and in turn lose those ministries. I have seen priests lose their children to cynicism and loss of faith because of their absences. All of this is so heartbreaking. We can clearly see Saint Paul’s wisdom that the homes of our clergy must be in order for their ministries to thrive.

I would like – as your father-in-Christ – to affirm the challenges that all of you face. I know that marriage and family life in our contemporary times is difficult, notwithstanding the unique challenges of clergy life. In a culture that emphasizes self-fulfillment over duty, self-will over obedience, worldly happiness over eternal salvation, and sexual license over chastity, it is no wonder half of our society’s marriages end in divorce. When you add to these wider cultural issues the pressures that come with clerical life – the priest being “on call” at all times and working long hours and the family living in the proverbial fishbowl – the struggles can be daunting. The world you inhabit as married clergy is more complicated than in previous generations. While we can affirm the enhanced opportunities our society affords women, the careers of our clergy wives add a set of questions to your ministries our forebears did not have: Who is watching the children or taking them to extracurricular activities when you are ministering to the flock? How much time can your wife give to the parish when she has her own responsibilities outside of the home? When considering a priest for a new assignment, how would a potential move impact the wife’s career? These kinds of questions are very new in the life of our Church, and we are all doing our best to find the right way to keep everything in balance. Also, as fathers, you must work with your wife to determine how to raise your children in an ever more aggressively secular society with the temptations that come with technology and social media. You must protect them from

the cynicism they are taught about religion – even in the face of clergy and laity who sometimes live down to the worst popular stereotypes of religious people. Again, you are trying to parent with the added pressure of everyone watching you as the ones who should always get these things right – no mistakes.

“BE OF GOOD CHEER, FOR I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD”

So, yes, the task at hand can look overwhelming. And, yes, I recognize that life is difficult and complex in our times. We do take hope, however, in the fact that Christ says to us, “Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.” We know and accept that our lives as clergy – and the lives of all Christians – are centered first and foremost on taking up our crosses and following Our Lord. We should not expect our lives as clergy to be without challenges or suffering. The late Father Thomas Hopko often said, “Christ did not suffer on the Cross so we would not have to suffer. He suffered that our suffering may have meaning.” In other words, we take up our crosses, and through our Christian lives our suffering can be transfigured into a means of greater communion with God, with our families, and with our people.

Beloved in Christ, I would like to remind you of the first time you walked around a *tetrapodion* to the hymns “O Holy Martyrs” and “Glory to Thee O Christ Our God” and “O, Isaiah” with your wife. In a way, your marriage was your first ordination. Your





ordination to the ranks of the clergy should not be seen as replacing or overtaking that first one. As you heard on your wedding day in the Epistle to the Ephesians, you were united to your spouse as Christ is united to the Church. As your Metropolitan, I want your people to look at your married life and see precisely that icon of how Christ loves His Church. By loving your wife in that self-sacrificial way unto the Cross, your marriage can be a wonderful and edifying example to your people. We must remember, too, that our people now see the institution of marriage in society being redefined and reimagined in ways completely at odds with teaching of the Church. Your marriages are a witness, a *kerygma*, of the Truth. Even when you experience struggle in your marriages, you can be a greater example to your flock by showing your love and your perseverance. When they see the commitment of you and your wife to continue building a strong relationship during the times when life is hard, you will be preaching the most powerful sermon about marriage and love unto the Cross!

#### WHAT WILL YOUR UNWRITTEN CURRICULUM BE?

In education, there is an important term I want to share – the “unwritten curriculum.” These are the things teachers are teaching in unintentional ways – either through nonverbal communication or priorities that get set or different decisions that get made. I would like to challenge you to think about the ways we teach our people other than in our homilies or in our Christian education programs. Let me ask you two questions. One: What are our clergy teaching their own wives and children about their love for them in how they balance their family lives and ministries? Two: What are they teaching their flocks about the sacrament of marriage in how they balance their family lives and ministries? Of course there is a temptation to take your wife’s love for granted and sacrifice time with her and your children in trying to serve your parish. Perhaps, the parish may be grateful for those sacrifices, but you must ask yourself about what you are teaching in the “unwritten curriculum.” You may be teaching by your example something that is not good for their family lives and may very well destroy your own – namely that work outside the home always comes first. I know that our priests feel called to take up their crosses by concentrating on their parish work, but can this be an excuse to stay away from the crosses that are at home? Perhaps the cross of attending one more parish meeting or doing one more pastoral visit is a lighter cross than working on your marriage or

helping your child with a school project?

My married spiritual sons: there is no greater pain I feel as a bishop than seeing one of our clergy marriages end in divorce. Please do not hear my words about being a “holy administrator” as a call to neglect your wives and children. On the contrary, part of your “holy administration” is often at home caring for your family’s spiritual and emotional needs. Let me ask you these questions: Do you give your wife time and attention? Do you take her out on dates? Do you send her flowers or candy with no other reason than to let her know you are thinking of her? Do you spend time with each of your children? Do you come home and play with them even when you’re tired from a busy day? If not, I give you my archpastoral blessing to do just that. In fact, I place all of you under obedience to do precisely those things! I do not want for you to drop your children off at college and wonder where the time went because you were too busy for them. I do not want for you in that same moment to realize that your wife has become a stranger to you because of your ministering to everyone but her.

#### SEEKING A HOLY BALANCE

Now there is another aspect that I must address to keep a balanced perspective. You must love your wives and children to the Cross; but your ministry is also loving Christ and His Church to the Cross, and your families are also called to take up this Cross. The clergy family has a calling – each and every member of it. They need to understand that your priesthood will call them to sacrifice as well. This joint calling is the reason why we have always made sure to have the wife sign her name to the petition for ordination and will not ordain a man without it! As the Metropolitan, I have found priests who are not fulfilling their sacred duties to their people and use their family life as an excuse in a way that not even a secular employer would accept. Our people want to see and need to see clergy families involved in their lives, and sometimes there is an attitude that the clergy family should be kept separate from the parish – a *khouria*, for example, may say, “This is my husband’s job, not mine.” This is a secular mindset that fails to live up to the high calling of the clergy family.

We are working in this Archdiocese to ensure that all of our clergy are supported financially by their parishes, and we still have much work to do. I try very hard to assign priests in a way that is not disruptive to their families. However, I cannot abide priests who are careerists. I understand that you want what you think is best for your families, but I am heartbroken when I

see priests who use politics and intrigue to “move up the ladder” in their ecclesiastical careers to bigger and wealthier churches. And I am scandalized when I ask a priest to move to a parish, and I am given lame excuses as to why a wife will not do it, or the children will not like it and so on. Do not misunderstand me. Of course, I listen to everyone, and I do not make decisions that I believe will cause a priest’s family unnecessary suffering or hardship. Yet there must be a balance.

I would like to return to the concept of the “unwritten curriculum.” Of course, I do not want my actions as the Metropolitan unintentionally to teach that the Church does not care about our clergy families. At the same time, I do not want unintentionally to teach that the priesthood is a career like any other. If I were simply to search for “good fits,” where our priests all go where they want to go, and our parishes only get the priests they want to accept, what kind of ministry is that? What kind of teaching would that be about our Faith? We do not get to choose our crosses! We do not get to choose the flocks we shepherd! Furthermore, I believe that if our children grow up and see careerism in the Church modeled by their parents, they will ultimately be cynical about their Orthodox faith. If they see parents who are afraid to take up their crosses and sacrifice for the Faith, they, too, will be afraid to do so. If they see that their parents chafe under the light yoke of obedience to Christ, they will chafe under it as well. If, however, they see parents who joyfully take up their crosses, and through love and prayer and hard work, allow God’s grace to transfigure every situation – no matter how difficult from a worldly perspective – they will be moved to live the same way. Their faith will be alive, and they will teach and proclaim by their example a beautiful unwritten curriculum of the Christian life. Ultimately, Beloved in Christ, the answer to the tough questions of our contemporary lives is the same answer Christ has given the Church for its entire two-thousand-year history – “Take up your crosses and follow me.” We live in an age where many want a Christianity without the Cross. I might go so far as to say that I worry less about our society’s aggressive secularism than I do about a flavorless Christian faith that has lost the “saltiness” of its ascetical and moral life.

#### NO BETRAYAL OF THE GOSPEL

In our contemporary society, we see preachers proclaiming a “gospel of prosperity” wherein our Lord suffered the Passion in order to grant us material wealth. We see some teachers who use demonic soph-

istry to explain away the Gospel’s moral precepts. We see Christians treating their spiritual life as though it is a kind of self-help program to feel better about themselves. We see people in the Name of Christ preaching extreme nationalism to the point of xenophobia and racism. Do we think that we as Orthodox are immune to these things? I do not think so. I think some our people have a “gospel of prosperity” mindset, in which they believe that, if they go to Church,



kiss the icons, receive Communion, and get blessing of the priest, God will give them materially blessed lives. We have seen priests, and even hierarchs, question the moral teaching of the Church, using sophistry to warp the teaching of the Fathers. We have faithful who treat our tradition of noetic prayer and stillness as some form of therapeutic meditation. We have parishes whose members consider their parishes to be



**I ask you as our priests to be “holy administrators” of your homes and your parishes. This requires a skillful balance, a holy balance.**



only for “Lebanese,” or “Syrians,” or Palestinians,” or “Americans,” or “Converts,” or any other demographic category that Saint Paul would have severely denounced as a betrayal of the Gospel.

Beloved brothers, the only way to heal these things – as all of our ascetical tradition teaches so profoundly

– is to start with ourselves. We repent. We pray. We fast. We love. We forgive. Then you start at home with your wives and your children. Unite yourselves through the spiritual life of the Church. Pray together. Go to confession. Go on pilgrimage. Find ways to serve together. Carry the cross of your ministry together. Do not

seek suffering, but when it comes, courageously meet it with the help of Christ. When we are faithful, we do not avoid challenges, because Christ grants us the help of His grace to make our challenges salvific. Thus we become more forgiving, more kind, more gentle, and more holy. Our Church and our society need you and your families. We need the evangelical preaching of your lives – clergy families who struggle together and are sanctified together. We need you to show the balance of love and care for your families with the service you offer others and the parish. We need you to preach by your very actions the Incarnate God who suffered for us and shares with us His own divine life. I and my brother hierarchs ask you and your families to preach this kind of sermon through the “unwritten curriculum”: how you live your lives.

#### LIVING ONE LIFE

I am deeply moved by your witness and sacrifices – those of you and your families. I will never stop working to care for all of you. But I need all of us to strike that holy balance and never forget that at the heart of our ministry, our teaching, and our preaching is the Cross of Christ. We minister, teach, and preach most profoundly when we are living it. There is too much compartmentalization in our contemporary lives. In other words, you cannot separate your priesthood from your life as a husband and father. Your family cannot separate itself from being a clerical family. You must live holistically holy lives so that those to whom you minister will feel called to live holistically holy lives. I do not mean that you are forbidden to swim in the ocean with your children or dance with your wife any more than I would require you to wear a *jibbee* and *alousi* to go apple picking with your family. No – this is the false dichotomy that I am speaking about! Everything we say and do, whether we are with our families or our parishioners, whether we are dressed in clerical attire or not, whether we are home or on vacation, we must behave and act in a way that preaches the Gospels and models our priesthood. Your life must be holistically holy!

As I close my remarks today, I ask you as our priests to be “holy administrators” of your homes and your parishes. This requires a skillful balance, a holy balance. You may ask me how to strike this balance in your lives, and there is no speech that I can give that can fully give an answer to each and every circumstance. I would like to rework the adage given to those wishing to represent themselves in court as their own lawyer and say: “The man who has himself as his own spiritual father has a fool for a spiritual son!” If you expect

your people to confess to you and take spiritual direction from you, you need to have a confessor and guide yourself. Let me point out that I am here for you, my brother hierarchs are here for you, and your brother priests are here for you. There is no excuse for a priest not to have a spiritual father of his own to help guide him and his family in finding that holy balance.

Let me conclude by returning to that image of the *diskos*. When you were ordained, the bishop placed the Lamb into your hands and exhorted you to protect it and reminded you that you will be held accountable for it at the dread day of judgment. We could interpret it narrowly as meaning that we should protect the Holy Eucharist from those who are not worthy or not Orthodox. I feel it is much more than that. We are called to protect the entire Body of Christ, to protect our priesthood, to protect our families, and to protect our flocks from all harm, from all false teaching, from all enemies within and without, from all scandal, and from neglect and betrayal.

I ask you to become “holy administrators” by emulating the holy examples of our recent forebears in the Faith, and by asking for their prayers: the missionary zeal of Saint Raphael of Brooklyn, the scholarly and martyric witness of Saint Joseph of Damascus, the meekness and forbearance of Saint Nektarios of Aegina, the charitable and liturgical outreach of Saint John of Kronstadt, the hesychastic prayerfulness of Saint Paisius, and the simple and quiet pastoral love of Saint Nicholas of Athens. We also call to mind the heroic labors of our fathers-in-Christ of thrice-blessed memory: Patriarch Elias IV, Patriarch Ignatius IV, Metropolitan Philip, Archbishop Antony, Archbishop Michael, Bishop Antoun, and Protosyngellos Paul Doyle. May our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ – our Great High Priest – grant us to serve according to their holy examples and to build on the firm foundation they have left us. Beloved brethren in Christ, it is my honor and my joy to address you today and to spend these beautiful and grace-filled days with you. Please know that I share these thoughts out of fatherly love for you. I sincerely look forward to the talks that will be given by my brothers, our esteemed hierarchs, as we continue to flesh out this most important topic of the holy priesthood.

I ask our Almighty God that all of our discussions be guided by the grace of the All-Holy Spirit, and be for the salvation of ourselves, our families, and our flocks. Amen.

+Metropolitan JOSEPH





# A VOCATION FOR UNITY

FR. PETER KAVANAUGH

**H**e was walking by the seashore struggling to make sense of things. For the past several months, St. Augustine had set out to write a book on the Holy Trinity. God is one; God is three. He is one indivisible Unity, and three unique Persons. Every analogy is flawed. Every exercise of reason falls short. He had been to the best schools. He was one of the greatest intellectuals of his time. He was more proficient in philosophy and theology than any of his peers. Looking back, two ecumenical councils declared him among the greatest saints and doctors of Orthodoxy. Scholars even now tip their hats to his genius. Yet, this topic baffled him. How could he begin to explain the Trinity?

If you have ever been up all night working out a problem, you can probably imagine the way he felt. The coffee high had worn out. His head ached. There is nothing like fresh air and an ocean breeze to clear the head, but this morning, it was to no avail. He paced back and forth despairing.

Then Augustine looked up and saw a little child. The boy had dug a hole in the sand and stooped over it, pouring water from a tiny spoon. Next, he walked out to the seashore, scooped up more water and, once more, poured it out in his hole. Back again to the sea and back again with more water. The boy was so earnest that Augustine could not help but ask, “Boy, what are you doing?” The boy looked up, replying, “I’m trying to bring all of the ocean into my hole.” “But that’s impossible,” Augustine said, “the hole isn’t large enough to carry so much water.” The boy responded with a sweet smile, “It is no more impossible than what you are try-

ing to do: to comprehend the mystery of the Trinity with your tiny brain.”

There are few mysteries as baffling as the Holy Trinity. Sometimes I think this mystery is the greatest proof that Christianity is true. Who makes up this kind of thing? If someone were to fabricate a religion, you can be sure they would never come up with the Trinity. They would teach something far simpler. Anyone can grasp the idea of one God, or even many gods. But the Trinity is both one and three. No one would come up with this unless it were revealed to us directly by God Himself. That, in fact, is just what happened. We do not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity because it makes sense to us. We believe the doctrine because the Trinity came to us and told us.

Isaac Newton discovered the principle of gravity because he encountered it. He did not lock himself behind closed doors, apply a little math and physics, and say, “Voilà! gravity exists!” He sat under an apple tree, and when the wind blew an apple fell on his head. The experience came first, the philosophy second. Christianity works the same way. First, God appeared to us. Everything followed from that.

What difference does the doctrine of the Trinity make in my life, though? Does it matter? It matters more than anything you can fathom, but we lose sight of that. A theologian once suggested that Christians, while professing a belief in the Trinity, live as “practical monotheists.” He went so far as to suggest that, for most Christians, if you were to erase the whole confusing doctrine of the Trinity, their lifestyles would go on without any real difference. Do you agree with him?

Can you think of why the Trinity matters? Can

you imagine what difference it makes in your real life – when you are not in your Sunday best, when you wake up in the morning, when you sit down in your car, when you greet a passerby? Recently, we celebrated the Feast of the Holy Trinity. This Orthodox feast is celebrated with great rigor in the Western Rite every year just after Pentecost. It should remind us all to ask these questions. God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: one Essence and three Persons. This truth should influence, guide, and permeate every decision and every action that you make from the minute you wake up, to the minute you fall asleep.

In the beginning, after creating the heavens and the earth, God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” The Church Fathers marveled at this passage. It shows God, in the singular, speaking in the plural. In Kallistos Ware’s words, “The making of the human person is a ‘conciliar’ act, the shared work of all three members of the divine Triad, and the image of God within us is thus a distinctively Trinitarian image.” It was a shared work of all three persons in the Trinity. Humanity did not pop into existence because a lonely God, somewhere far off and bored from being Himself all the time, came up with the idea and snapped His fingers. We were created out of love shared between three Persons. We were created from an overflowing of this love, and that love, that community, that sharing, is at the very core of who we are.

We all say, “God is love,” but we do not always realize how profound that is. God really is love. He is the eternal love shared between three Persons – love so real, so tangible and “thick,” that the Persons are indivisible. They are utterly and inseparably One. That love, that sharing, was stamped on our hearts. What does that mean? It means that you and I are truly, really *ourselves* while loving *others*.

“Now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” “No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in union with us, and his love is made perfect in us” (John 13:34; 1 John 4:12-13). Above everything else, the Gospel commands us to love God and to love each other. This is not because love is cute and fuzzy. It is not because that is nice, and we Christians like being nice. We are called to love because loving is the very definition of life. Everything that is not loving is death.

God is love, and the more you strive to mirror God, the more you become a man fully alive, or a woman fully alive. St. Maximus taught that “love alone ... represents true humanity in the image of the Creator.” Bishop Kallistos Ware declares, “I become truly a per-

son only when I look into your eyes and allow you to look into mine.” There are a hundred or more lessons from the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, but this comes first and foremost. God is three Persons and one Being. Each Person is unique. Each has a separate identity and distinct role. Yet all three are one in perfect harmony and perfect love. So we too, in the act of loving one another, maintain our unique personalities, yet become complete in a solidarity and a union that can only be called divine.

What does that look like? Where does it begin? It begins here, in the parish. Christ gives us a heads-up, and one that every Christian ought to write on his doorpost and repeat like a mantra: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). Love is not a feeling. Love is not an emotion. Love is not being nice, and love is not an option. The love which we are obliged to share together as Christians, as family, is the willingness to die to self daily, and daily to encourage, to help, to serve, and, most of all, to sacrifice for the good of the other.

A while back, I lived in a small community an hour drive from Thessalonica, Greece. If there was one thing that stood out the most to me about the life I encountered, it was this vision of love. They do not go to church to say a couple of private prayers and rush back to their private world. Church is equally about one another as it is about God. Church is an opportunity to break bread with God, as well as to break bread with one’s brothers and sisters. If you do not believe this, read the Bible, read Church history, and visit the communities. This is Orthodoxy. This is Christianity.

A Texan friend once stumbled across an Orthodox community. The Christians left one impression on him, which always makes me smile: “These Orthodox really like to eat together.” That is theologically profound. This is what we do. This is how Jesus Christ describes paradise. This is how the Book of Acts and the Epistles portray the early Christians. That is how Orthodox Christians have walked out their lives in every century and in every culture. This is our obligation now.

We like to eat together. Why? Because we understand what it means that our God is the Holy Trinity. Nothing says it as well as the short collect for unity from the Western Rite Missal:

POUR FORTH upon us, O Lord, the Spirit of thy charity: that as Thou hast fulfilled us with one heavenly bread, so of thy goodness Thou wouldest make us to be of one heart and mind. Through Christ our Lord, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.





# WHAT WE NEED

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



## WE NEED MISSIONS

A query often fielded by the Department of Missions and Evangelism is, “Are we starting new missions?” This is a fair question. Should one wish truly to engage the issue, it might be answered, “I don’t know. Are we?” Forgive me: departments don’t start missions; parishes do. People do. Attuned readers may be thinking: *God does*.

A story is told, without any names and paraphrased, of a bishop who called an abbot to a meeting. The bishop asked, “Fr. Anonymous, how many monasteries have you started?”

“I have started none, Your Grace. God has started seventeen.”

“Well, then, how many more does God wish to start?” replied the bishop.

Think about it. Wrestle with that story a bit before judging its worth. After all, witness the Scriptures and the saints, God works through people.

Yes, new Orthodox communities are being formed. A good percentage of these new missions are Arabic-speaking communities: Orthodox Christians who have found each other in a new place, or newcomers to America having moved to the same place from an old country.

As for American old-timers, to put it tersely, there are few things easier than starting a new mission. This is done by gathering like-minded folks with a desire for salvation in the True Faith. Flip the statement over and one might find there is nothing more difficult than sustaining a mission to full and flourishing parish status.

The struggle is, of course, people. Without people, you can’t have a mission. Without struggles we can’t be saved. Thus, for a mission to prosper, spiritually and temporally, you need a goodly number of sacrificial people to tackle salvific problems.

These mission-minded folks wear no capes; they have no super powers. Still, they are dedicated wholeheartedly to the task of salvation and the fruition of the Church. Some people are naturally mission-minded. These are people willing to make the essential sacrifices that sustain a new community of believers. They also don’t mind worshiping with a mere handful of folks; they may even prefer it! Want to start and/or sustain a mission? Pray God’s blessing; pray that He blesses you with these people.

## WE NEED MONASTERIES

Years ago, during the question-and-answer period at the end of a retreat, someone approached the microphone and lamented at length the lack of monasteries in America. There were nods of agreement and murmurs of acclaim. That is, until a tall man in a cassock, hat, and veil stepped up to the mic and said: “I am a monk. I live in a monastery. But it has not always been so. I had parents who nurtured me in the faith, who taught me to love God, prayer, and the value of sacrifice. I stand before you in agreement. Yes, we need monasteries! But for this to happen, we need monastics ... we need your children.”

The murmurs of acclaim having been calmed by the monk, most folks went back to staring straight ahead or

looking at their fingernails. It’s like the old spin on Isaiah 6:8 – “Here am I, Lord – send someone else!”

In a culture where hyper-productivity and upward mobility are viewed as virtues, a life of manual labor, contemplation, and prayer does not register on our societal radar. Face it: how many of you (parents) pray that your child grows up to be a monastic?

It is a romantic temptation to envision bricks and mortar, icons and rugs, bell towers and byzantine chant, long beards and ascetic wisdom – without the struggle of sacrifice. This beautiful garden of salvation, monasticism, requires more than our desire for the “old country” experience, an exotic place of pilgrimage, or the longing for a quiet place to pray. Indeed, monasticism needs monastics: our sons and daughters.

## WE NEED MOMS

There is more than one method to grow a church. Chief among them is the old-fashioned way: *babies*. Faithful Orthodox married couples should bear more children. After decades of selfish seduction and secular indoctrination, the God-pleasing vocation of motherhood is often seen as a big burden, or a small bonus. Would that we valued family and motherhood enough to fill our temples! Would that we raised our daughters to aspire to the high calling of motherhood.

Moms are needed to bear, nurture, and offer children. Our vocation is not to offer our children to the world; in the post-lapsarian world, this is the default. Rather, our calling is to offer our children to God. As the Royal Martyr Empress Alexandra notes, “No work any man can do for Christ is more important than what he can and should do in his own home. Men have their part – a serious and important part – yet the mother is the real homemaker. It is her sweet life that gives the home its atmosphere. It is through her love that God comes first to her children.”<sup>1</sup>

Loving mothers equip sons and daughters with the implements for spiritual warfare, the virtues. As St. John Chrysostom notes, this training begins in the home:

Let everything take second place to our care of our children, our bringing them up to the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If from the beginning we teach them to love true wisdom, they will have greater wealth and glory than riches can provide. If a child learns a trade, or is highly educated for a lucrative profession, all this is nothing compared to the art of detachment from riches; if you want to make your child rich, teach him this. He is truly rich who does not desire great possessions, or surround himself with wealth, but who requires nothing ....

Don’t think that only monks need to learn the Bible; children about to go out into the world stand in greater need of Scriptural knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

## WE NEED MEN

We need men to shoulder responsibility, follow Christ, raise up families, and shepherd souls. Men are needed as husbands and fathers, pupils and teachers, coaches and mentors. Frankly, we need more men to be ... *men*.

We need men who understand their physical make up is more than a genetic accident. *Maleness* is not the same as being a man. In a day and age when being male is often misunderstood as a handicap, being a man has gotten a bit harder. Thus, we need men shaped by godly mentors, the witness of Scripture, and the saints.

To be a man, males need to study the God-Man Christ, the Scriptures that foretold Him, those that witnessed Him, and those that proclaimed Him. We’re talking here about Christian men; *let us attend*.

## WE NEED ... MORE?

If you have made it thus far, dear reader, you may have thought of another *M* word: *Money*. As any parent will tell you, if you wait until you have enough money to have children, you’ll never have children.

All is from God. And God has all the money. A believing community learns over and over, if they are faithful, just how faithful God is. Missions aren’t built on money. Missions, parishes, monasteries, and families are built on faith – that is, on the prayers and labors of faithful people. As His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH has stated: “How can we radiate the joy of salvation when we constantly worry needlessly? Obedience, chastity, poverty ... where is the shame of these in the eyes of God? Yes, the world calls these shames, and tempts us with earthly pleasures. Yet, we know that even with financial security, fame and power, a man can be perfectly miserable. Happiness is found within us, when we genuinely trust in God’s providence.”<sup>3</sup>

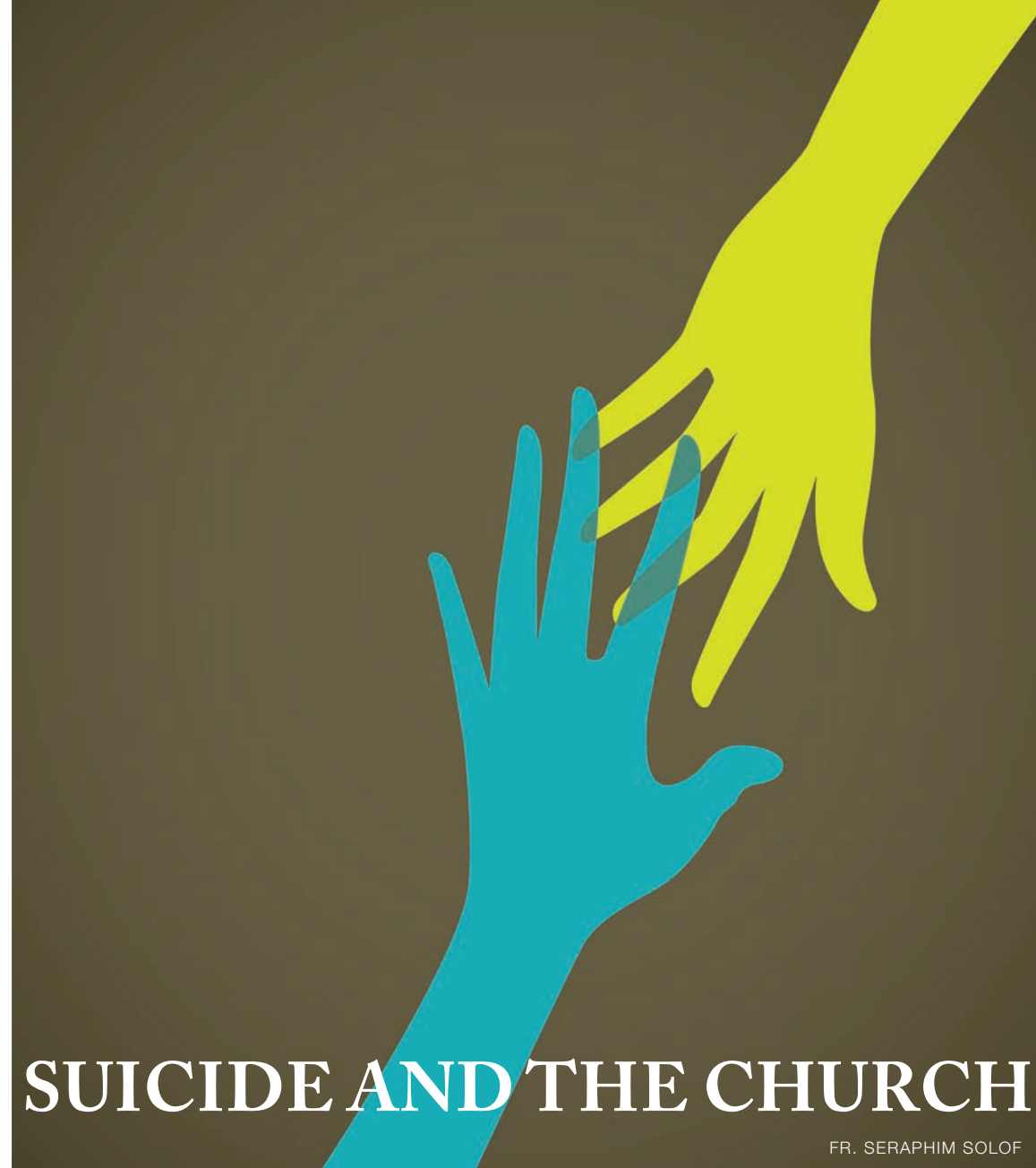
Alas, *we have a shortage of priests*. What this means is that we have a shortage of men offering themselves, unworthy as all are, to serve Christ’s Church in the ordained ministry. Without the priesthood, we have no Church. Without men, we have no mothers. Without mothers, we have no sons and daughters (and monks and nuns). And without people (and problems), there is no salvation.

“Are we starting new missions?” Dear me, it seems that if we concern ourselves with these fundamental missions (men, moms, monastics, and mission-minds), God will provide the increase.

### (Endnotes)

1. *Orthodox Word*, January - February 1993.
2. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians*, Homily 21.
3. *Thought for the Day* – antiochian.org, 7/21/18.





Not long ago, two celebrities took their own lives: Kate Spade on June 5, and Anthony Bourdain just three days later. In the wake of Mrs. Spade's death, *Time* magazine published a short article in their June 18 issue on how prevalent – and even contagious – suicide has become. Reporter Jamie Ducharme wrote

us about what has already touched us personally: the tragic loss of a friend or family member by his or her own hand.

Two things struck me about the news stories and eulogies which quickly followed in the wake of these two deaths. First, so many of the pieces seemed carefully to avoid any mention of how shocking and how very tragic it was that Mrs. Spade and Mr. Bourdain had ended their own lives. They focused, instead, on

that, according to federal data, “suicide rates have increased steadily across nearly every demographic over the past two decades, rising by 28% from 1999 to 2016. Almost 45,000 Americans died by suicide in ’16, making it the 10th most common cause of death that year....”<sup>1</sup> Many of us don’t need *Time* magazine to tell

their many gifts and talents, and their sure-to-be enduring legacies. Perhaps out of respect for their loved ones left behind, or our own tender sensibilities, the stories about them were carefully sanitized. And second, in dwelling almost exclusively on the beautiful and apparently enviable externals of their lives – the

talent, fame and fortune they had each possessed in such abundance – they made little mention of what must have been going on in their private lives and in their minds to drive them to such a drastic and irreversible act.

As I am about to lay out the Orthodox perspective on suicide, please know that my intention is not to make anyone who is *already suffering* – either because they have perhaps considered taking their own life, or because they lost a loved one in this way – feel even worse, more hopeless, or more judged. The point I want to make is that the Church does not look at suicide the same way the world does, and it’s important to understand how our perspective is different, and why.

As Orthodox Christians, we regard death as “the last enemy” (1 Corinthians 15:26); there can be no sanitizing of death, no getting around its bitterness. As we chant in the funeral service, “I weep and I wail when I think upon death, and behold our beauty, fashioned after the image of God, lying in the tomb disfigured, dishonored, bereft of form ....”<sup>2</sup> To take one’s own life is not simply a grave sin, but perhaps the *one* sin after which there remains no possibility of repentance.<sup>3</sup> Suicide was a key difference between Judas’s betrayal of Jesus and St. Peter’s denial. Peter could repent, and did.

And as we see in Judas’s death, suicide is ultimately a rejection of God and His ever-present love for us. Dr. Kerry Wilkins, a board-certified child and adolescent psychiatrist in my parish, wrote to me, “If we are unable to appreciate that loving God with all our heart and soul and mind must first start by loving ourselves – because we were made in the very image of God – then the sin is not that we disobeyed God’s law, but rather that we were completely unable to recognize that God is in us, and killing ourselves is wholeheartedly rejecting God fundamentally ....”<sup>4</sup>

Fr. John Breck, who taught Ethics when I was in seminary, wrote in *The Sacred Gift of Life* that suicide “refers to the taking of one’s life through a free exercise of will. It implies an intentional and voluntary act of self-destruction, free from both external and internal constraints.”<sup>5</sup> Our Archdiocese’s Clergy Guide tells us that “suicide is considered rebellion against God and is equated with murder, and so one who commits suicide may not receive an Orthodox funeral service.”<sup>6</sup> The

Church has made exceptions, however, in certain situations. The Clergy Guide notes that “the Holy Canons specifically are merciful to those who suffer from mental illness or some sort of addiction,” and directs that “the Bishop should be consulted on all cases concerning suicide.”<sup>7</sup>

The “internal constraints” on free will that Fr. John refers to, the forces that could drive someone to take his or her own life – such as mental illness or addiction, in the words of the Clergy Guide – have both medical and spiritual components, and those so afflicted are in need of both medical and spiritual care to keep them from progressing to the point of self-harm, or in the worst instances, self-destruction. It is absolutely vital, of course, to seek treatment for any mental health or addiction issues at the earliest possible opportunity. The same holds true on the spiritual side: active participation in the life of the Church community and a relationship with your priest are critical to achieving and maintaining spiritual health.

This is so because the Church provides three essential things: a loving community, a caring father, and perhaps most important of all, the truth about ourselves and our situation.

#### THE CHURCH IS A LOVING COMMUNITY

St. Paul sets forth the proper behavior of Christians in the community of the Church: “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to

**“If we are unable to appreciate that loving God with all our heart and soul and mind must first start by loving ourselves – because we were made in the very image of God – then the sin is not that we disobeyed God’s law, but rather that we were completely unable to recognize that God is in us, and killing ourselves is wholeheartedly rejecting God fundamentally ....”<sup>4</sup>**

hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:10–15).

We “bless and do not curse” one another; neither do we judge one another: “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (St. Matthew 7:1–2). The Church provides – or should provide – the safe place of unconditional acceptance and love that we all need. The Church, and not Planet Fitness, is the true judgement-free zone.

**As Orthodox Christians, we regard death as “the last enemy” (1 Corinthians 15:26); there can be no sanitizing of death, no getting around its bitterness.**



And the last line is key, representing one possible antidote to the pervasive experience of loneliness and emptiness that may be the great affliction of our age, however many “friends” we have on social media: in the Church, we are called to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). St. Paul declares to the fractious Christians in Corinth that “if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Corinthians 12:26 ESV).

OUR PRIEST IS A CARING FATHER

In the second instance, no one in the Church community weeps with those who weep, bears the burdens of his parishioners, and even suffers together with them, more than their priest. St. Paul writes, on behalf of every pastor, “Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?” (2 Corinthians 11:29). Even what he writes about Jesus, the one High Priest, can be applied to every pastor whose calling it is to make Christ present to his congregation, not as His stand-in – Christ is not absent! – but as His eyes and ears, His voice and even His hands. To borrow from the Epistle to the Hebrews for our purposes: the priest “is like his parishioners in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful priest in the service of God .... For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:17–18).

Sharing your burdens with a trusted priest, formally in the sacrament of confession and informally, in regular conversations, is another way to bring some needed light into the darkness we can all feel from time to time, some more often and more deeply than others. This is not even to mention the powerful benefits of the regular reception of Holy Communion.

THE CHURCH TELLS US THE TRUTH

Beyond all the good things brought to us by an active participation in the life of the Church community and a close relationship with your priest, there is another benefit that I think goes straight to the heart of the problem. It has to do with the way we make sense of ourselves and the situations in which we can find ourselves. It concerns the stories (or “narratives”) we tell ourselves to interpret and explain the facts of our lives.

Let’s think again about the two celebrities. Most of us, looking at their lives from the outside, would probably think, “How happy I would be if I had that much money, that much fame,” an so on. Columnist Belinda

Luscombe wrote that,

Bourdain’s June 8 suicide, coupled with that of fashion designer Kate Spade, was a one-two punch to our belief that there are some people who are living the perfect life. That each of them chose to end an existence that, to outsiders, seemed idyllic and enviable is a mystery to most of us – especially because these were not teenagers or lost 20-somethings, but two people who might reasonably be expected to have reached some sort of self-knowledge, or to have made peace with their demons. So many spectators of Bourdain’s and Spade’s lives saw in them reflections of the lives they would have liked to have lived.<sup>8</sup>

Their decisions to end their own lives baffle us – they go far beyond our ability to understand, or perhaps even our power to sympathize. We ask ourselves how they could do such a hurtful thing to their families and friends, why they would choose to cause them (and us) so much pain.

It appears, however, that this is not the way many people who have attempted suicide think about it. By their own accounts, they love their families and friends very much and somehow, incredibly, feel themselves to be *so* broken that the world – and specifically, their families and friends – would be better off without them.

One survivor said, “In the mind of the person thinking about the act, it is the complete opposite of a selfish decision. In that moment, we truly feel the world would be a better place without us.”<sup>9</sup> Another admitted, “Of course, it’s probably to end your pain and suffering, too, but mostly from experience I’d say it’s driven by a skewed perception of protecting the people you love around you from this all-consuming disease.”<sup>10</sup> According to a 2014 study of 31 people who had attempted suicide carried out by the mental health charity Sane Australia and the University of New England, “people overwhelmingly attempted suicide because they believed they were a burden, and that their family and friends would be better off without them.”<sup>11</sup>

This is a dark narrative indeed, that anyone would look at their own personal situation, consider the well-being of their family and friends, and conclude that ending their own lives would be the best thing for all involved. It’s dark, it’s insidious, and it’s a demon-inspired lie. How can the Church help? By “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

However awful our circumstances, into whatever

depth of sin we may have fallen, the Church has something powerful to say to us as we work to make sense of ourselves and the situations we find ourselves in. The Church’s message is twofold and complementary: that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (see Genesis 1:26–27) and thus has intrinsic value – value that sin can in no way diminish – and that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15).

On the first point: to participate in the life of the Church, both sacramentally and communally, is to re-establish and renew the communion between us and God, and between “ourselves and each other,” in the words of the Liturgy, a communion that was and is broken through sin. When St. Paul speaks of the “members” of the Church (see above), he is describing the interdependent members of a living organism. He is not talking about the independent members of an institutional organization. Participation in the life of the Church heals us by restoring in us the image of God which is darkened through sin. As Jesus said to Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (St. Luke 19:9–10).

Whatever brokenness and sinfulness we experience in our own lives, if we take the Church at its word, we are not shocked to find that we’re broken – in fact, we see ourselves as the most broken of all, the “chief among sinners.” We also recognize the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to save us, and can *rejoice* in it. The world – and our families and friends – will not be better off without us. Christ came in into the world and into our lives *willingly*, knowing us *intimately* in all of our darkness and pain, knowing the cost and yet loving us *completely*, “to the end” (St. John 13:1). He came into this world to be with us, to feed us with His broken body and spilled blood. He came to extend to us by grace, as a freely-given gift, the same relationship of love and communion that He enjoys by nature with His God and Father, who, through Him, becomes ours as well.

What the Church offers us, beyond the care of the parish community and the ministrations of our priest, is the truth about ourselves and our situation: that we are truly known and deeply loved by God Himself, and that our situation is therefore not hopeless, but rather full of hope.

CONCLUSION

When someone we know is suffering from any sort of “internal constraints” on their free will that might

lead them to harm themselves, because of mental illness or addiction or for any other reason, both medical and spiritual care are required. More specifically, if you or someone you know may be contemplating suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. Then call your priest and tell him what’s going on and seek his counsel on how he, and the Church community, and our Orthodox Christian faith can help shine a light in your darkness. We are all called to bear each other’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ, who came into the world for the very purpose of saving each of us.

*(I am deeply indebted to Bishop JOHN and to Dr. Kerry Wilkins for their wisdom and counsel in conversations on this topic. All scriptural citations are from the New King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.)*

Fr. Seraphim Solof  
Assistant Priest, St. George Cathedral, Worcester, Massachusetts

1. Jaime Ducharme, “A Disturbing Trend on the Rise,” *Time*, June 18, 2018, p. 10.  
2. *The Funeral Service Book According to the Use of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*, compiled by Rev. Fr. John G. Winfrey (Englewood: Antakya Press, 2001), p. 34.  
3. It is a basic and universal tenet of Orthodox spirituality that once we die, the opportunity for repentance has passed. St. Isaac the Syrian writes, “Let the sight of a dead man be a teacher for you concerning your departure from hence .... Take hold of your life before your light grows dark and you seek help and do not find it. This life has been given to you for repentance; do not waste it in vain pursuits” (*The Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian* [Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2011], p. 513).  
4. Dr. Kerry Wilkins, e-mail message to the author, July 14, 2018.  
5. John Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), p. 265.  
6. *Clergy Guide* (Englewood, The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, 2011), p. 40. This sounds harsh, to be sure, but Bishop John shared with me in a conversation on June 16, 2018 that – hard as it may be to accept – this is, in fact, an act of mercy. We, in the Church, are judged on the basis of all we have been taught and all we have been given, which is *everything*. Those who are separated from the Church will experience, therefore – from this perspective – a less strict judgment than we will. (See St. Luke 12:48.) And for this reason, out of compassion, those who take their own lives are regarded as having been separated from the Church and buried without the traditional services. As I say, this may be hard for many to accept.  
7. *Clergy Guide*, pp. 40–41.  
8. Belinda Luscombe, “Things are never what they seem,” *Time*, June 25, 2018, p. 16.  
9. “41 Secrets of Suicide Attempt Survivors,” *The Mighty*, accessed July 9, 2018, <https://themighty.com/2016/09/what-its-like-to-try-to-kill-yourself/>.  
10. “This Is What Suicide Survivors Want You to Know,” Healthline, accessed July 9, 2018, <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/what-suicide-survivors-want-you-to-know>.  
11. “Suicide survival stories must be told, says Australian mental health chief,” *The Guardian*, accessed July 9, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/24/suicide-survival-stories-must-be-told-says-australian-mental-health-chief>.



Ambrose Bushelli, 13,  
from St. Philip Church,  
Souderton, PA



EIGHT YEARS AGO ON HOLY THURSDAY TWO LITTLE BOYS IN MY FAMILY WERE PIOUSLY PLAYING WITH A HAND CENSER IN THE WOODS. ON THEIR WAY INTO THE HOUSE, THEY CARELESSLY TOSSED OUT THE LIVE CHARCOAL. A FIRE WAS SMOLDERING IN OUR BACKYARD WHILE WE PREPARED FOR LITURGY THAT AFTERNOON.

I will finish the story in a moment, after I explain a metaphorical wildfire raging throughout the western world. It scorches tradition, leaves morality in ashes, and destroys. The fire is the anti-Christian worldview which takes our church's young people away from the heavenly life of the apostles and leads them to the eternal fires of *hell*.

Is it possible for us young Orthodox Christians to stand in the fiery furnace and not be scorched by sin? *Yes! We can do it, but we need you!*

Let me briefly explain the situation, give some examples of success, and tell you how you can help. Our world has long been unruly, but now we have lost control. Social media tricks you into putting yourself before others, and your “needs” before God’s commandments. It makes us ignore the good things people do for us and just think about the negative. It makes us think “what can I do for *me*?” The standard to which

we are held does not help us get closer to God. This devilish message drowns out the gentle voice of Jesus Christ. Because of this, the majority of Christian youth leave the Church after high school.

As loud as the lies are, it is still possible for a young person to continue steadfastly in the apostolic life in Christ. We have many inspirations in the Scriptures, the saints, and those who surround us. For example, if we read the Scriptures daily, as we ought, we are reminded to treat others as God has treated us.

Hebrews 13:15 says “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” Similarly, 1 John 3: 17 states, “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” The Holy Bible is full of inspiring reminders for us to lead holy lives. We can also learn from the saints. Saint Mary of Egypt was

once very enslaved by pleasure, wealth, and luxury. Then God helped her. She went on to become a great saint. Saint Moses the Black was the leader of a terrible gang. While raiding a monastery he was moved by the monks’ serenity in the face of death. He learned the gospel of peace, spent the rest of his life in prayerful repentance, and went on to be a martyr. Saint Raphael of Brooklyn started 37 churches before passing away on February 27, 1915. I have been blessed these past summers to attend the Antiochian Village camp, where I get to live near the grave of Saint Raphael for a little while. There are many other saints to whom we should look for example and intercession.

Not everyone we look up to, however, has to have a halo around his or her head. I’m thinking of the camp counselors I’ve had over the years. These college students are inspiring: inspiring in sacrifice; inspiring in service, and inspiring *us* to sacrifice and service. They take a break from their careers to help us taste the sweetness of our apostolic faith. Most of them have been campers, know how wonderful Antiochian Village is, and realize how much they have been helped by it. They, in turn, want to give us the same blessing they received. All these people, these saints, martyrs, bishops, and counselors, not to mention our priests, our parents, and all who serve us, prove that we can do it, even in our crazy culture. It is still possible to live in Christ. But how?

That isn’t very clear is it? We beg you to invest your time, talent, and treasure wisely: not merely in our education and careers, but in our spiritual development; not in luxury and convenience, but evangelism and alms-giving; not in vacations and entertainment, but in pilgrimages and retreats; not in staring into our screens, but in sharing God’s love by prayer and discussion with us; not in the latest technology, but in the ultimate things; not merely in the institution of the Church, but in the instruction of God’s children.

As I conclude my appeal to you, let me bring you back to the Holy Thursday fire. The situation was bad, a little taste of hell, since we had ignored our parents’ teaching. A fire started. The wind whipped up the flames. The flames spread from the brush to the trees. The fire grew rapidly. Our home, our neighborhood, and even our lives were in danger from a childish game. My father, however, called 911 while trying to put out the fire with the only water on hand, from a teapot. As the flames consumed more and more of our forest, five fire engines roared into our driveway. Volunteer heroes rushed up and turned the potential tragedy into a family story.

But what about this fire consuming our culture, our church, and our children? Is it too late? I’m calling 911 now. *Will you answer?*

*We need you!*

*All those people whom I mentioned are great people, but they were helped directly from God, or indirectly through God’s people. How can you help us? First, we need you to be examples of loving and steadfast life, like the apostles.*

*We need you to defend Orthodox doctrine, when our culture confuses right and wrong.*

*We need you to prioritize Orthodox fellowship, everyone working together with love and humility, in community.*

*We need you to pray without ceasing, without hurry, and without distraction.*

*We need you to continue the Orthodox breaking of bread, showing that the altar table is the most important table in our lives.*



# SHARING THE FAITH



**“This then, is our task: to educate ourselves and our children in godliness.”**  
—St. John Chrysostom

BELOVED BROTHERS  
AND SISTERS,

A blessed autumn to all in our lovely Archdiocese! As always, thanks are in order for the work done over the summer and before, to make our Creative Arts Festivals successful! A big thank you to all who coached children for their participation in the Creative Festivals, and to those who judged their entries. An extra-big thank-you to those who served as Chairs and Coordinators, for your efforts in finding and preparing the judges, for the setting up at your PLC venues, and for awarding the children.

**What’s New and What’s Coming?** I am so pleased to offer sets of the *“Great Feasts: The Life of Christ”* at four levels for our classes. A separate article will describe this program, which has as its objective imparting a basic knowledge of the life of our Lord. It is on our website. Being readied for posting is “My Orthodox Church.” It is a middle-school program of nine questions about Orthodox Christianity that are frequently asked by visitors. The materials used for researching the answers are the Orthodox Study Bible and pamphlets from Ancient Faith Publishing that are available at most parishes.

In conjunction with the launching of *“Great Feasts: The Life of Christ,”* we have a guest writer, Fr. Steven Kostoff of the OCA. His essay, “Sanctifying Time through the Feasts of the Church,” found on the last of the Christian Education pages, discusses how commemorating the Great Feasts helps us “sanctify time,” or “redeem the time.” The phrase “redeem the time” is from Ephesians 5:15–16: *“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”* Since we think first of humanity needing to be redeemed, not time, the concept is difficult to understand, but worthy of the effort. Fr. Steven’s insights are pointed, challenging, and what we Orthodox need to hear.

A new Church Year has just begun. Let’s take seriously all the Great Feasts, the life story of our Lord and Savior.

**Carole A. Buleja**, Director

## DEPARTMENTAL NOTES

### Knowing Your Faith

*Teachers + Parents (Working Together) = Children Knowing the Faith.*

I have “mandated” that churches using the OCEC texts also implement this program. Our children need to know their faith. Parents bear the responsibility for educating their children, and thankfully we have teachers to assist in the effort. Let’s have children who are confident in their knowledge of God and salvation! Find the program at [Antiochian.org/christianeducation](http://Antiochian.org/christianeducation) > “Curriculum.”



### AODCE SOCIAL NETWORKING MINISTRY To nurture the children God has placed in our care!

#### At Facebook.com

Orthodoxchristianparenting  
Orthodoxchristiansundaychurchschoolteachers  
Orthodoxchristianchurchschoolteachers



#### At WordPress (.wordpress.com)

Orthodoxchristianparenting  
Orthodoxchristianchurchschoolteachers



#### [www.pinterest.com/aodce](http://www.pinterest.com/aodce)



**Greetings!** For the Fall both Teachers and Parents (on the WordPress site and on Facebook) will find the topic of Sacraments/Mysteries explored, with particular interest in regaining appreciation for Holy Communion.

**Kristina Wenger**, Staff Assistant for Social Network Ministry

**The Orthodox Baby Homecoming** blog will explore more of the developmental needs of infants and toddlers as they relate to faith formation. The book that will be used is *Foundations of Christian Education*, by Dr. John Boojamra, former Director of the Department of Christian Education.

**Maria Himes**



### CHURCH SCHOOL DIRECTORS

It has come to our attention that there are three Orthodox Christmas plays, available as free downloads: “Prophecies Announcing Christ,” “Daniel and the Three Holy Youths,” and “Christmas Eve” (in



Greece). For more information, visit: [www.orthodoxwitness.org/orthodox-christmas-plays](http://www.orthodoxwitness.org/orthodox-christmas-plays).

For the Mustard Seed and the CSD Facebook page this fall, my writing will be complementing our Department’s new program, *“Great Feasts: The Life of Jesus.”* As we hope to make the Christian story the foundation for the lives of our students, I will research the topic of how stories impact our children, and what makes a “foundational” story. If you are a Church School Director, please contact me so I can place your name on our list-serv. [aodce.csdirectors@gmail.com](mailto:aodce.csdirectors@gmail.com).

**Anna-Sarah Farha**

### CREATIVE FESTIVALS 2019

#### Antiochian Village: Past, Present and Future

**“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”**



This year’s theme was selected by Metropolitan JOSEPH in order to focus on that great treasure our Archdiocese is blessed to possess: Antiochian Village. His Eminence wrote the following:

**‘There, ‘He was transfigured before them’ (Mark 9:2). Since 1978, the Antiochian Village has been the Mount Tabor of our Archdiocese. It has been our home to gather to encounter our transfigured Lord; to be ourselves transfigured. As much as we can bear our Lord’s glory, we can bring His glory to the world. The Antiochian Village is where our bishops, clergy, adults and children gather to study, worship, fellowship and rejuvenate our faith. We have invested much of ourselves in this place where we meet and are fed by God.**

Philippians 4:13 was selected because this verse appears on the arch to Antiochian Village Camp. A great many of us, adults as well as children have passed under that arch, but how much thought have we given to the meaning of the phrase? Does it mean that every plan I make, with prayer, will be successful? The Creative Festivals lessons for the children will explore the quote with help from verse 11 of the same chapter, “I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.”

Through the lesson plans and other resources provided by the Department of Christian Education, the students will learn to consider their plans and God’s plans, and also the importance of coming together for worship, witness and fellowship as members of God’s family at the “spiritual oasis” that is the Antiochian Village.

**Rosemary Shumski**, Departmental Asst. for the Creative Festivals

### DEPARTMENT TRAINING AND EVENT UPDATES

Coordinators for the Department of Christian Education recently attended the Parish Life Conferences throughout the Archdiocese. Each coordinator networked with parishioners and priests to offer the training services of the Department for teachers or church school directors. Our trainers can also present to Adult Education sessions on theological topics. If you are interested in attending any of these sessions, contact your coordinator or the Department for more information. All are welcome!



To get up-to-date information on all of these opportunities, watch our website <http://www1.antiochian.org/christian-education> or like our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/AODCE>, or contact Leslie Atherholt at [aodce.events@gmail.com](mailto:aodce.events@gmail.com) or 717-747-5221.

#### Eastern Dioceses

**St. Nicholas, Bridgeport, CT**, will host a Teacher Training II workshop for their teachers. Tentative date is Saturday, Sept. 26. Other parishes and jurisdictions are welcome to attend. **St. George, Little Falls, NJ**, will host a custom program for novice and advanced teachers for all the Orthodox Churches in the area. This training is tentatively scheduled for October 6. **Holy Cross, Linthicum, MD**, will host a Teacher Training II workshop, tentatively scheduled for October 20.

#### Diocese of Wichita

**St. George, Houston, TX, and St. Elijah, OKC**, are planning training sessions for the middle or end of August. Subject is to be determined. **Kh. Gigi Shadid** will be hosting a training session for the East Texas Deanery at a time to be determined this fall. **St. Elias, Arvada, CO**, is also planning a teacher training in the fall. Additionally, **St. Nicholas, Shreveport, LA**, is planning a teacher-training with an adult education component.

#### Diocese of Ottawa

Training sessions and presentations are in the planning stages for Montreal and Halifax/Prince Edward Island for this fall. Host parishes and topics are yet to be determined. The annual training at **St. Elias Cathedral, Ottawa**, will also take place this fall. **St. Mary’s, Mississauga**, and **St. George, Richmond Hill**, are also exploring the possibility of a fall training session.

If you are interested in attending any of these training sessions, or would like to host one at your parish, please contact the Department at [aodce.events@gmail.com](mailto:aodce.events@gmail.com) or 717-747-5221.

**Leslie Atherholt**, Staff Assistant for Special Projects and Website



"GREAT FEASTS: THE LIFE OF OUR LORD"  
*Available at [antiochian.org/christianeducation](http://antiochian.org/christianeducation)*

When I've asked teachers about their thoughts regarding texts, many respond that they should follow the Church, or liturgical, year. In other words, they should follow the Great Feasts and the four fasting periods. While this isn't always possible, having a set of icons of the Great Feasts for teachers to use is now possible.

It took some time. My desire was to provide five different sets. As it turned out, the churches that have a set on their iconostasis failed to take photos before they were placed. Many other churches do not have them on their iconostasis, but rely on portable sets from a few well-known publishers, not likely to give permission for their images to be posted for download by our teachers. Hence, only recently have I been able to secure the few sets I needed, with one more possibly still to be offered.

**Why Teach the Great Feasts?**

Taken together, these comprise the life of our Lord. The children need to know more than His teachings and miracles: they need to know His life story in order to *know and love Him*. Moreover, His story must become the foundation for their lives, the foundation upon which they build their character and their own life story. This is particularly critical today, when the current thinking is that "overarching," or "foundational stories" are to be discarded in favor of individuals finding meaning in life from bits and pieces of various religions, philosophies, or even fantasies created by their own imaginations. Let's not be naïve and think our children won't be tempted by this thinking that speaks to them of freedom, uniqueness, and self-interest, but ultimately leads to delusion, isolation and alienation.

We are not meant to exist in isolation. Foundational stories connect families, and peoples. The Christian foundational story is real, historical, and life-giving. At its center is the life of a man, the Son of God, who lived 2,000 years ago, and lives still. While they are still young, we need to focus on our children knowing that story.

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**The Program.** *The Kindergarten and Grade 1* pages are line-art icons with the name of the feast, its icon description/story, and the important persons colored in. The

*Grade 2–3* pages are the same, with a set of just the line-art for the children to color according to the icons posted. The *Grade 4–5* icons are by the hand of Robin Armstrong from St. John the Evangelist parish in Eagle River, Alaska. They also show the story of the feast. The *MS/HS* icons are from St. Elijah parish from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, by the hand of Antoine Salounias. They have the *apolytikion (troparion)* for the feast. Activity or worksheet pages are included with each set.

**Teachers, please post the Feast Day icon pages around your classroom, or if you don't have a room, keep them in a notebook** so you can show the students the icon as the feast approaches. If you post them, find a way to note that the Feast Day is approaching by placing a colored clothes peg, or a removable sticker, or arrow on the page. The repetition of this practice each year will lead to knowledge of the icons and the feasts. We pray that this knowledge will give the students a framework for understanding the Christian story, and the basis for making His life the foundation for their own.

**Parents, the Great Feasts began with the devotion of pilgrims to the Holy Land**, who wanted to find and worship at the sites that were important in Christ's life. Our motivation to attend services is also devotion to Christ, and to the lives of our children.

Furthermore, each feast day reminds us of *how the story ends*. Christ has promised to come back at the end of time! Our story, our travails fade when we consider the Kingdom to come. Each feast day gives us a "time-out" to remember the joy that awaits. "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Without His life, our lives would end at the grave. With His story — His life — we look forward to the life of the Kingdom and being with the Lord forever.

SANCTIFYING TIME THROUGH THE  
FEASTS OF THE CHURCH

By Fr. Steven Kostoff

We recently celebrated one of the Twelve Great Feast Days of the Church's liturgical year: the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple. The festal cycle of the Church sanctifies time. By this we mean that the tedious flow of time is imbued with sacred content as we celebrate the events of the past now made present through liturgical worship. Notice how often we hear the word "today" in the hymns of this feast: "Today let us, the faithful dance for joy...." "Today the living Temple of the holy glory of Christ our God, she who alone among women is pure and blessed...." "Today the Theotokos, the Temple that is to hold God, is led into the temple of the Lord...."

Again, we do not merely commemorate the past, but we make the past present. We actualize the event being

celebrated so that we are also participating in it. We, "today," rejoice as we greet the Mother of God as she enters the temple "in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all." Can all – or any – of this possibly change the "tone" of how we live this day? Is it at all possible that an awareness of this joyous feast can bring some illumination or sense of divine grace into the seemingly unchanging flow of daily life? Are we able to envision our lives as belonging to a greater whole: the life of the Church that is moving toward the final revelation of God's Kingdom in all of its fullness? Do such questions even make any sense as we are scrambling to just get through the day intact and in one piece, hopefully avoiding any serious mishaps or calamities? If not, can we at least acknowledge that "something" essential is missing from our lives?

I believe that there are a few things that we could do on a practical level that will bring the life of the Church, and its particular rhythms, into our domestic lives. As we know, each particular feast has a main hymn called the *troparion*. This *troparion* captures the over-all meaning and theological content of the feast in a somewhat poetic fashion. As the years go by, and as we celebrate the feasts annually, you may notice that you have memorized these troparia, or at least recognize them when they are sung in church. For the Great Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos Into the Temple, the festal troparion is the following:

*Today is the prelude of the good will of God, of the preaching of the salvation of mankind.*

*The Virgin appears in the temple of God, in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all.*

*Let us rejoice and sing to her: Rejoice, O Fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation!*

The celebration of a Great Feast of the Church is never a one-day affair. There is the "after-feast" and then, finally, the "leave-taking" of the feast. So this particular feast extended from November 21 until November 25. A good practice, therefore, would be to include the *troparion* of the feasts in our daily prayers until their leave-takings. That can be very effective when parents pray together with their children before bedtime, as an example. Perhaps even more importantly within a family meal setting, it would be appropriate to sing or simply say or chant the *troparion* together before sitting down to share that meal together. The *troparion* would replace the usual prayer that we use, presumably the Lord's Prayer. All of this can be especially effective with children as it will introduce them to the rhythm of Church life and its commemoration of the great events in the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary.

Do you have any Orthodox literature in the home that would narrate and then perhaps explain the events and meaning of the Great Feast Days? Reading this together as a family can also be very effective. A short Church

School session need not be the only time that our children are introduced to the life of the Church. The home, as we recall, has been called a "little Church" by none other than Saint John Chrysostom.

Orthodox Christianity is meant to be a way of life, as expressed by Father Pavel Florensky in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*: "The Orthodox taste, the Orthodox temper, is felt but is not subject to arithmetical calculation. Orthodoxy is shown, not proved. That is why there is only one way to understand Orthodoxy: through direct experience.... To become Orthodox, it is necessary to immerse oneself all at once into the very element of Orthodoxy, to begin living in an Orthodox way. There is no other way."

*Fr. Steven Kostoff is Rector of Christ Our Savior – Holy Spirit parish, Cincinnati, and an adjunct faculty member at Xavier College. His essays can be found at [oca.org/reflections](http://oca.org/reflections) > "Reflections in Christ"*

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# COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

## GOLF OUTING, FOOD TRUCK FESTIVAL RAISE FUNDS FOR ST. ANTHONY, BERGENFIELD

Each year for almost 20 years, Don Di Novi, a very active parishioner of St. Anthony, Bergenfield, New Jersey, would chair an annual golf outing to raise funds for the parish and for St. Anthony kids to go to the Antiochian Village Camp. It was Don's passionate desire that no child be left out of this wonderful camping experience. Don's untimely and tragic death in December 2016 left the St. Anthony community devastated, but determined to keep the children camping every summer.

A committee was formed to take Don's place, and the newly named Don DiNovi Memorial Golf Outing was created. The 2017 inaugural outing was an outstanding success, and the 2018 outing held this past June at White Beeches Golf and Country Club in Haworth, New Jersey, was just as successful. The committee has decided that a generous portion of the funds raised will go directly for camping, to augment the generous contribution from The Order of St. Ignatius, and partially for the children's transportation to camp and back by

charter bus. This annual golf outing has proved to be a wonderful fundraiser not only for the campers but for the parish as well. This year \$4,000 was donated to the camping program.

To keep Don's legacy alive and current and maintain camaraderie among parishioners, the parish sponsors Bergen Street Fest, an annual food-truck festival. This year it will be held on armory grounds near St. Anthony Church, September 15th and 16th. Last year over 7,000 members of the local community shared in this fun-filled, family weekend. Many families from the surrounding towns were so happy to have a local festival in their own backyard.

This year 15 food trucks are expected to participate. The choice of foods is eclectic, ranging from a French-fry truck, to Middle Eastern, to Italian meatballs, to Mexican tacos, to Maine lobster, and more! The parish sells desserts and drinks, and there is a special beer garden featuring draft beers from local breweries. This is a big hit!

There is also a marketplace where juried vendors sell their products, from Lularoe clothing to handmade jewelry, candles, crafts, woodcarvings and many other

products. Pets are welcomed and there are blessings of the animals throughout the two days. The kids have "bouncy houses," face-painting and all kinds of craft projects to have fun with. Proceeds from this exciting and enjoyable event will benefit not only St. Anthony parish, but the Antiochian Village Camp.

These two fundraisers have not only generated wonderful donations for St. Anthony, but have created an excitement within the parish to continue to "do good and throw it into the sea."<sup>1</sup>

1. This Arabic proverb means, "Do good, and forget about it," i.e., don't seek credit.

## HOLY NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS MISSION IN SEATTLE GROWING "LITTLE BY LITTLE"

Over the Pentecost weekend, Fr. John Finley of the Department of Missions and Evangelism was sent by Metropolitan JOSEPH to visit our newly formed Mission Chapel in Seattle, Washington. Having served their first liturgy in early September last year, and in honor of the Saidnaya Monastery in Syria, Metropolitan JOSEPH gave them the name: Holy Nativity of the Theotokos. On Pentecost Sunday they were presented with an *antimins* as well as a bottle of the Holy Chrism.

Presently, they are meeting in the St. John Maximovich Chapel at St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Seattle. This small chapel is the room where St. John reposed in 1966. This is a great blessing to the newly formed community in Christ,

believing that the intercessions of St. John on their behalf serve as a spiritual incubator, filled with the warmth of the Holy Spirit, to help them grow and mature as a holy church.

We wish to thank the V. Rev. Alexei Kotar, Dean of St. Nicholas Cathedral for his love and generosity toward our committed core families. They are working to gather into their true spiritual home our brothers and sisters in Christ of Arabic descent who have been dispersed in the Seattle area. At the same time, they are also committed to embracing all those who seek to find the truth of the Orthodox Faith in the communion of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

They are served by the Rev. Anastasios Majdalani, Pastor. His wife, Kh. Nissrine, is their lead chanter. They presently have 20 families and have received inquiries from many other families of Arabic descent from all over the state of Washington. They are growing little by little and are contributing to a special fund designated to securing their own location in the Renton, Washington, area.

They have already incorporated with the State of Washington, received an Employer Identification Number (E.I.N.) from the Internal Revenue Service, and opened a bank account in the name of the church. Fr. Anastasios has appointed a provisional council which meets regularly and is properly accounting for all offerings and donations.

Please pray for the success of their efforts, that the grace of the Holy Spirit may come upon them. If you know any families who may wish to join them in this noble effort, please refer them to <http://ww1.antiochian.org/parish/116780>.



## 2018 Clergy Wives Weekend

OCTOBER 19-21<sup>ST</sup>, 2018, AT ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE

### REGISTRATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/state/zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee, including meals: \$ 50.00

Rooms at Camp: \$ 25 per night \$ 50.00

We have some rooms in the (heated) Volunteer Cabins available to us at camp, which have double rooms, with bedding provided, as well as the new regular cabins that sleep 4 on each side of the double cabins.

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer cabin, rooming with: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Need roommate  
\_\_\_\_\_ Prefer a single, if possible  
\_\_\_\_\_ Regular cabin, rooming with (up to 8 in a double cabin): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Need roommates

TOTAL ( if staying at Camp) \$ 100.00

**OR reserve a room at the Conference Center by calling 724-238-3677, ext 300.  
(Make payment directly to the Conference Center.)**

**Reserve early! Be advised that rooms at the  
Conference Center are limited this weekend!**

There are 2 king bedrooms and 6 triple rooms available – but they won't last.

Rates: 2 King Bed Rooms available at \$ 90 per night; 2 nights = \$180  
6 Triple Bed Rooms at \$ 33 per night; 2 nights = \$66 (Please advise for roommates.)

Weekend Registration, if staying at the Conference Center \$ 50.00

Day Rate for Saturday only: \$ 40.00

Please make checks for registration and camp reservations payable to "Clergy Wives."  
Return the registration form and payment to

Laila Ellias  
8005 Ridge Boulevard  
Brooklyn, NY 11209

**Call 917-670-5495 if you have questions!**





## ORDINATIONS

ANDREWS, Sub-deacon Demetrios (James), to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN on June 17, 2018, at St. Columba Church, Lafayette, Colorado. He is attached to that parish.

BARKER, Sub-deacon Michael, to the holy diaconate by Bishop THOMAS on July 15, 2018, at St. Ignatius Church, Florida, New York. Deacon Michael is completing his studies at St. Tikhon's Seminary.

BIBEAU, Deacon David, to the holy priesthood by Bishop ANTHONY on June 24, 2018, during the Midwest Diocesan Parish Life Conference in Toledo, Ohio. Fr. David is attached to St. Andrew Church, Lexington, Kentucky.

CLARK, Sub-deacon Joseph, to the holy diaconate by Bishop THOMAS at St. Mary Church, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. He is serving at the parish while completing seminary studies.

COX, Peter, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH and Bishop JOHN on August 10, 2018, at St. Peter Church, Fort Worth, Texas, during the Western Rite Conference.

Frangipani, Joseph, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on July 8, 2018, at the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West Parish Life Conference. He is assigned to Prophet Elijah Church, Ellensburg, Washington.

HASLELL, Symeon, to the diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on July 8, 2018, at the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West Parish Life Conference. He is returning to seminary.

JOHNSON, Martin, to the holy diaconate by Bishop THOMAS on August 5, 2018, at St. Elias Church, New Castle, Pennsylvania. He is assigned to St. Anthony Church in Butler, Pennsylvania.

MOKHIBER, Sub-deacon Todd, to the holy diaconate at St. George Church, Niagara Falls, New York. He is attached to the Saints Peter and Paul Chapel at the Antiochian Village.

Nettleton, Nicholas (Jeffery), to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on July 8, 2018, at the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West Parish Life Conference. He is assigned to St. Timothy Church, Lompoc, California.

PHILLIPS, Dom and Hierodeacon Theodore, to the holy priesthood by Metropolitan JOSEPH and Bishop JOHN on August 8, 2018, at St. Peter Church, Fort Worth, Texas, during the Western Rite Conference.

ROSELAND, Ephraim, to the holy diaconate by Bishop BASIL on Sunday, August 12, 2018, at the Church of St. Basil the Great, Kansas City, Kansas. He is assigned to that parish.

SIFUENTES, Sub-deacon Miguel, to the holy

diaconate by Bishop BASIL on June 16, 2018, at Holy Trinity Church, Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is assigned to St. George Church, El Paso, Texas.

## REPOSED

KENNA, Khouriya Anne, fell asleep in the Lord on Friday, June 15, 2018.

ALLEN, Kevin, fell asleep in the Lord on Friday, June 15, 2018. Kevin, a vibrant and active Antiochian parishioner at St. Barnabas Orthodox Church in Costa Mesa, California, was the host of Ancient Faith Today With Kevin Allen, Ancient Faith Radio's flagship national program. Kevin also served on the Board of Ancient Faith.

## ASSIGNMENTS

BAZ, Priest Charles, to St. John the Baptist Church, Levittown, New York, effective August 1, 2018.

BURNETT, Priest Joshua, to Holy Cross Church, Linthicum, Maryland.

DANEVICIUS, Priest Isaac, to St. George Church, Altoona, Pennsylvania, effective August 1, 2018.

EID, Priest Christopher, to Virgin Mary Church, Yonkers, New York, effective August 1, 2018.

GEREIGE, Archpriest Joseph, to Forty Holy Martyrs Church, Sugar Land, Texas, effective August 1, 2018.

HOULI, Archpriest Amin, to the Church of the Annunciation, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, effective August 1, 2018.

KARAM, Archpriest Gabriel, to St. George Church, Vicksburg, Mississippi, effective August 1, 2018.

MAMEY, Deacon Nicholas, to St. Mark Church, Irvine, California, effective June 1, 2018.

SAHADY, Archpriest Mark, to serve as assistant pastor, St. George Church, Cicero, Illinois, effective June 1, 2018.

TOUMI, Priest Luke, to serve as assistant pastor, Saints Peter and Paul Church, Potomac, Maryland, effective July 1, 2018.

## APPOINTED

*The WORD* Magazine Editorial Board:

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Fr. Andrew Damick

Kh. Erin Kimmet

Fr. Michel Najm, PhD

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# NEWS

## ANTIOCHIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES JOINS PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

By the grace of God, the Antiochian House of Studies (AHOS) now enters a new stage in its development, joining the company of many of the greatest centers of theological learning in North America. On June 20, 2018, a Certificate of Associate Membership in the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and Canada was bestowed upon AHOS at the ATS Centennial Biennial Meeting in Denver, Colorado. This is the first step in a five-year process toward full membership.

"It is our intention to contribute to the theological landscape of this great continent by bearing witness to the biblical and patristic ethos of the Orthodox Church," noted Dr. Christopher Veniamin, Professor of Patristic Theology and Dogmatics, Dean, and Chief Administrative Officer of AHOS. "As valuable members of AHOS and the Archdiocese, we humbly urge each of you to help spread the word of this momentous event in the history of the House of Studies, the Antiochian Archdiocese, and indeed of the Orthodox Church in North America and beyond."

AHOS is a long-standing institution of higher theological learning, offering Master's and Ph.D. programs in Orthodox Studies. The Ph.D. program is the first of its kind to be established within an English-speaking framework in North America. The 270 member schools of ATS will likely come to accredit and recognize these degrees to the benefit of students pursuing post-graduate studies.

Fully accredited Orthodox members of ATS include Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary.

## WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES EXPRESSES CONCERN FOR CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The World Council of Churches Central Committee, during its meeting June 15–21, issued a statement reiterating its grave concern regarding the alarming and rapidly deteriorating situation of Christians in the Middle East. The Central Committee called for the release of two Syrian archbishops who were kid-

napped near Aleppo, Syria. The two religious leaders, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop YOHANNA Ibrahim and Greek Orthodox Archbishop PAUL Yazigi, were kidnapped by gunmen in April 2013 when they were on their way back from the Turkish border to their city of Aleppo. "The Central Committee recalls with heavy hearts the abduction five years ago of the archbishops of Aleppo, Youhanna Ibrahim and Paul Yazigi," reads the statement. "We continue to pray for their safe return to their churches, their communities and their families, as a sign of hope for all the Christians of Syria and the region."

The statement also affirms that "a new social pact is needed throughout the Middle East region – a common narrative that is developed and shared by all communities of the countries of the region based on an inclusive understanding of citizenship and human rights, constitutionally guaranteed, and under which all churches and faith communities, with their diverse ethnic, religious and cultural identities, can live and prosper in the love and grace given to all by God."

## CONNECT COLLEGIANS TO THE CHURCH IN "THE FIRST FORTY DAYS" – ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

The Very Rev. Anthony Yazge, Chair of the Department of Young Adult Ministry for the Antiochian Archdiocese, reminds youth directors, students, and parents that Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) has once again launched its annual "First Forty Days" campaign. The effort gets underway each spring, as parishes and youth departments coordinate with OCF to link incoming collegians to OCF chapters and local parishes during their first forty days at college. Studies show that most students form the relationships and habits that last the entirety of their college career within the first six weeks of their time on campus.

With the blessing and encouragement of His Grace Bishop GREGORY of Nyssa (ACROD), the episcopal liaison for OCF to the Assembly of Bishops, OCF is encouraging all parishes to participate in the First Forty Days campaign. By submitting student contact information directly to OCF, parents and parishes can be assured that their students will be contacted by local OCF leaders within the first forty days of the academic year.



Parents, parishes, and youth program coordinators can submit student contact information for their graduating high school seniors at the campaign webpage. All student information submitted by July 15, 2018, will be distributed appropriately in advance of the fall semester. E-mail [firstfortydays@ocf.net](mailto:firstfortydays@ocf.net) with any questions regarding this important initiative.

ARCHDIOCESE INSURANCE PROGRAM  
GENERATES BONUS

Michael (Mickey) Herzak and his two sons, Mike Jr. and Dan, of Insurance Systems Group, Inc., recently presented a check in the amount of \$26,964 to His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH as part of the “Rewards” portion of the Antiochian Archdiocese Group Affiliation Program (“GAP Rewards”). This benefit is earned as a result of a special loss-control benefit within the Group Program, which rewards consistent effort to reduce insurance claims and thereby enhance Group profitability.

This is the first time a loss-control bonus has been earned.

“The Antiochian Archdiocese Group Program has consistently grown year after year and now includes more than 50 parishes in over 25 states,” said Mickey. “Although we had a few setbacks in the initial years of the Program due to major weather events like tornadoes and hailstorms, the last 3 years have been extremely positive.”

This voluntary program, offered exclusively through Insurance Systems Group, Inc., with GuideOne Insurance Company, was established in 2010 to provide Antiochian Orthodox churches and institutions coverage and program benefits not found anywhere else in the industry. One of those benefits is the *GAP Rewards*. “This bonus is earned when participating parishes work together to reduce risk and limit claims,” said Mike Jr. “It is a testament to the efforts on the parish level.”

The GAP also includes coverage enhancements that provide 25 percent more property coverage subject to a \$1,000,000 maximum at no additional charge, unique coverage for iconography, Sexual Misconduct Liability, Directors and Officers (trustees) Liability, Religious Expressions Liability, and more.

“This check really just helps to validate the program and confirm what we always promote: there is *power in numbers*,” said Dan.

GuideOne Insurance of West Des Moines, Iowa, is the one of the largest writers of insurance for churches and related institutions in the country. Insurance Systems Group, Inc. is a premier broker of property and casualty insurance to Orthodox churches of all jurisdic-

tions in the U.S. The Herzaks are unique in that they are Orthodox Christians who understand both the distinctive attributes of Orthodox churches and the coverage ramifications of insurance.

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