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THE WORD

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The Word



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Letters to the editor are welcome and should include the author's full name and parish. Submissions for "Communities in Action" must be approved by the local pastor. Both may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All submissions 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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CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS DEFINES US

EVERYONE SEEMS TO BE TALKING ABOUT IDENTITY THESE DAYS. IT'S NOT JUST ADOLESCENTS WHO ARE ASKING THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION, "WHO AM I?" RATHER, THE QUESTION OF WHAT IT IS TO BE HUMAN IS RAISED IMPLICITLY BY MANY. WHILE PHILOSOPHERS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE ADDRESSED THIS QUESTION OF HUMAN IDENTITY OVER THE YEARS, GOD ANSWERED IT WHEN THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US. HE TOOK ON OUR FLESH SO THAT WE MAY PARTICIPATE IN HIS DIVINITY. CHRIST REVEALED TO US WHO GOD IS AND WHO WE ARE TO BE. WE ARE CALLED CHRISTIANS BECAUSE HE HAS MADE US AS LITTLE CHRISTS BY ACCEPTING US IN BAPTISM AND SHARING HIMSELF IN US. JUST AS CHRIST REVEALS THE FATHER, SO WE ARE TO REVEAL HIM. JUST AS CHRIST IS THE INCARNATION OF GOD, JOINED TO GOD WE SHOW HIM TO THE WORLD.



This means that our God-given identity is realized and revealed in each of us: each in his or her unique way expresses the life of God and shares His grace in the world. By being one with Him, we do His will and reveal Him to the world. We are called Christians because we are in Christ and Christ is in us.

Christ submitted His human will to His divine will. He chose to accept the totality of our human existence, being born vulnerable to the world and in need of others, as we are. He chose to rely on others as we do. Like us, Jesus was tempted by the Devil. Our identity is found in the way we accomplish and realize what God has given in us. As Christians, we are called to resist that which is opposed to God, to put God first and to follow after that which is godly. We must not put our will before God's will. Instead, we are to submit our human will to the will of Him who anoints us to be christs (anointed ones), and has grafted us in baptism to the Word Himself.

The role of the presbyters in the Church offers us an example of how we are to relate to God and the world as Christians. Just as the priest re-presents the bishop in our midst, we Christians re-present Christ in this fallen world. Of course, this takes study of the Word, openness to the Holy Spirit and dedication to God the Father.

The presbyter puts his own politics and opinions aside to serve the Lord, by leading the community on behalf of the metropolitan or bishop who sent him. Because the presbyter represents the metropolitan in the parish, not unlike an ambassador for a country, he promotes the message and agenda of the one he represents. An ambassador cannot have a position contrary to that of his government. Likewise the presbyter cannot make up

his own Christianity; rather, he submits to the revelation of God through his bishops, who are in concert and in constant communication with the teachings of the faith, other bishops, presbyters, theologians, monastics and the faithful. This protects the faithful from falling outside the faith. A presbyter in such communion with the metropolitan and bishops then has credibility when He proclaims the faith of our fathers. He represents his bishop, who is charged with keeping us in the truth, that is, in Him who is Truth.

Like the priest, we faithful must be careful not to be "creative" in the expression of our faith, but work within the Church to study the Scriptures and the teachings. We should also practice the good works and worship that keep us balanced, and allow us to mature in our identity as Orthodox Christians. As christs anointed with the Holy Chrism, we put on Christ and are empowered to share Christ with the world. We are to embody the Word and show the world God the Father by His Holy Spirit, as Christ showed the Father to the world into which He came. This is how we define the event of Christ's birth. This is how Christmas defines us.

We don't need new ideas; we need to encounter the Word of God who took on flesh and lived with us, to encounter and be guided by the Spirit that Christ promised us, that Spirit which the Father sends to us to sanctify His world. We do this as we are joined to Christ and one another. In Christ – who is born in a manger, lives among us, hangs on the cross, rises from the dead, and ascends into heaven – we discover and realize our true identity. Celebrating Christmas defines us.

Bishop JOHN

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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by Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny)
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PLEADING FOR THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE MIDDLE EAST:

The U.S. Visit of His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X of Antioch and All the East

Sub-deacon Peter Samore and Sonia Chala Tower

“The world would assist both Christians and Moslems much better if it spread the culture of dialogue in our East and wiped away the culture of the sword...” Patriarch JOHN X

Although he brought the love of the Orthodox Church of Antioch from the Middle East to the United States, His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X of Antioch and All the East said that he also brought the pain and suffering of the brethren in his native land. From October 21–31, 2017, His Beatitude made several key visits with elected officials and world leaders in Washington, D.C., and New York City to continue pleading for peaceful, diplomatic solutions to end the fruitless, six-and-a-half-year-old war in Syria, the land of the Apostles Paul, Barnabas and Ananias, that has devastated the entire region.

Accompanied by His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, Patriarch JOHN landed in Washington for a weeklong series of meetings and events organized by the Archdiocesan Office of Planning, Policy and Public Affairs. He started his journey by presiding over the divine services at Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Potomac, Maryland. He celebrated the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, assisted by Sayidna JOSEPH, His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER of the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York, and His Grace Bishop IRINEJ of the Eastern American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Joining them were Serbia’s Crown Prince Alexander and Crown Princess Katherine, as well as His Excellency Djerdj Matkovic, Ambassador of Serbia to the U.S., and his wife, Mrs. Vera Matkovic, who welcomed His Beatitude to the United States.

In his homily during the Liturgy, Patriarch JOHN spoke movingly of the dire situation of the persecuted Christians in the Middle East and the constant need to remember the Orthodox brethren there in our prayers. These include his brother, Metropolitan PAUL, and the Syriac Metropolitan JOHN, both from Aleppo, Syria, who vanished without a trace while on a rescue mission on April 22, 2013.

For the next few days, His Beatitude met with decision-makers and elected officials in the State Department, the U. S. House of Representatives, and the Trump Administration. His Beatitude was hosted on Capitol Hill at a breakfast meeting with Congresswoman Anna Eshoo of California and Congressman Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska, who serve as co-chairpersons and founding members of the Caucus on Religious Minorities in the Middle East. This Caucus has been extremely active in advocating for Christians in the Arab world. His Beatitude shared important policy points with them, including the following:

- The Church of Antioch preserves the rich, pluralist, and intricate culture that has existed in Syria for thousands of years, and favors maintaining the territorial integrity of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and all Middle Eastern countries. Christians in Syria do not want to leave, nor do they want to live apart from their Muslim brothers and sisters. Only religious extremism and the “culture of the sword” must be rooted out.
- As committed as the Church of Antioch is to the safety and security of Syria and the Arab world, it is equally committed to the safety and security of the United States, the home and native land for many Antiochian Orthodox Christians. Stabilization of Syria and the continuing existence of Christianity in the region creates an environment in which religious extremism is less likely to be fomented throughout the world.

His Beatitude was also an honored guest of the annual summit of the organization “In Defense of Christians,” or IDC, which seeks to bring worldwide attention to the plight of Christians in the Middle East. Patriarch JOHN was a keynote speaker at the opening event for IDC, a press conference at the National Press Club. He reminded American and international decision-makers that the

Antiochian Patriarchate represents a strong network of Christian churches in Syria and the Middle East – the oldest Christian community in existence – and that this constituency is committed to peace. His Beatitude also urged these leaders to help locate and release captives, including the missing metropolitans.

Patriarch JOHN also stressed to these decision-makers that his church is very active in helping the 2.5 million refugees and 6.5 million persons displaced because of the Syrian war. Half of them are children. The Patriarchate’s Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development (DERD) provides food, temporary shelter, clothing, hygiene kits, and school supplies to half of the affected population. DERD seeks to “offer help to those who are

in dire need, ensuring that efforts are made to provide service to all, to spread the spirit of humanity, justice, tranquility and peace among those affected, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity.”

Also during his time in Washington, His Beatitude met with a number of religious leaders and representatives of policy centers. He spoke at the Hudson Institute, along with Sayidna JOSEPH, on the future of Orthodox Christianity in Syria and the United States. They explained that many Americans do not know about the unbroken Orthodox Christian presence in the Middle East, and how it constantly works to alleviate the sufferings of all peoples there, in spite of constant foreign efforts to undermine the region’s stability. Sayidna JOSEPH remarked that our growing Archdiocese, especially with American converts to the faith, is gradually bearing witness and increasing understanding among our neighbors in hopes of building popular support to end the war.

After their week in Washington, His Beatitude and His Eminence traveled to New York, where Patriarch JOHN celebrated the following Sunday’s Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn. Joining them on October 29 were His Beatitude Metropolitan TIKHON, Primate of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA); and hierarchs of three Antiochian dioceses: Their Graces, Bishop THOMAS of Oakland, Charleston and the Mid-Atlantic; Bishop JOHN of Worcester and New England; and Bishop NICHOLAS of Miami and the Southeast.

Patriarch JOHN focused his homily on that day’s Epistle, the Letter to the Galatians, 2:16–20, in which St. Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me.” His Beatitude said, “This message is clear for each and every one of us, either in our motherland, or here in the Archdiocese of North America. Christ was lifted onto the cross where He died bodily, but being the divine God and Master, He destroyed death and rose from the dead. We are all crucified with Christ, and so we live in Christ. His made His own resurrection our resurrection.”

Regarding the suffering Christians of Syria and the Middle East, Patriarch JOHN said, “Your brothers and sisters in the motherland are unshaken and rooted in those lands. They make sure Christ lives in them, and to become what Christ calls them to be. The same goes for you on these blessed shores.”

Following the Divine Liturgy, the Patriarch, hierarchs, clergy and laity gathered at a special banquet with His Beatitude Bechara Peter Cardinal RAI, the Maronite Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, along with hierarchs, clergy and laity of the Maronite Church.

Patriarch RAI was also a special guest at IDC in Washington, where he pleaded for an end to the Syrian war so that the refugees and displaced could return to the homes they love but left behind.

The Sunday banquet marked the first time these two patriarchs met together in the U.S. Patriarch RAI remarked that God called Patriarch JOHN during a difficult time to carry the cross for all Christians in the Middle East, especially following the kidnapping of his brother and the Syriac Metropolitan. Patriarch JOHN called Patriarch RAI’s friendship and presence during past week a source of great joy, and words were insufficient to show his brotherly love for him. Proceeds raised at the banquet went to support victims in war-torn Syria.

The next day, His Beatitude granted two media interviews. In the first, with Fox News, he thanked the U.S. for fighting terrorism in Syria, but also called for the lifting of sanctions against the Syrian people so they can recover. Then, speaking to Antiochian.org, Patriarch JOHN said that the international community must acknowledge that the war in Syria has nothing to do with sectarian strife. In the same interview, Metropolitan JOSEPH stressed that the sanctions have greatly restricted the amount of aid the Archdiocese could render to Syrians, for fear it could run into trouble with governments worldwide. However, Sayidna JOSEPH pledged to lead a delegation into Syria, when the war ends, to clean up the streets and help that nation rebuild.

Then, Patriarch JOHN, Metropolitan JOSEPH, and the delegation held private meetings at the United Nations with U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley and Secretary-General António Guterres. His Beatitude once again conveyed to these leaders the dire situation and urged them to take leadership to stop the war. He reiterated the desire of Middle Eastern Christians to remain in their homeland, and that the territorial integrity of Syria and surrounding nations be maintained. He stressed the need for continued



humanitarian aid, and stated that all sanctions must be lifted, as they only hurt the Syrian people. On Tuesday night, the Consul General of Lebanon in New York, Mr. Majdi Ramadan, hosted His Beatitude, His Eminence and their delegation for dinner.

Before departing for Mexico City for the enthronement of the new primate of the Antiochian Archdiocese of Mexico, Metropolitan IGNACIO, Patriarch JOHN thanked Metropolitan JOSEPH for his hospitality during this historic trip. His Eminence thanked His Beatitude for being a beacon of faith and steadfast in his love for all peoples of the Middle East.



His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

Pastoral Letter of His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH

Nativity Fast of 2017

*I behold a strange and wonderful mystery: the cave a heaven, the Virgin a cherubic throne, and the manger a noble place in which
bath laid Christ the uncontained God. Let us, therefore, praise and magnify Him.*
Hiermos of the 9th Ode of the First Canon of Christ's Nativity

Beloved Brother Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, and Christ-loving Faithful of our God-protected Archdiocese, I greet you with love and joy as we begin this season of preparation for the Nativity in the Flesh of Our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Today, the Holy Church calls us to prepare for the feast by fasting, prayer, and repentance. The surrounding culture calls us to prepare as well – but by decorating, shopping, and hosting parties. One of the most common questions our clergy receive during this time of year is: Why are we in a period of repentance when the rest of the world is celebrating?

For a response to that often asked question, let us look to our divine services. During the Nativity Fast, the Church gives us the triumphant First Canon of Christ's Nativity to strengthen us and urge us on in our journey. In the hiermos of the ninth ode, we are stuck by the contrasting images of the cave as a heaven, the Virgin as a cherubic throne, and the manger as a noble place. In the Incarnation of Our Lord, we see all of the *normal* categories of our fallen world turned upside down. His birth reveals power in humility, wealth in poverty, kingship in servitude, and divinity in lowliness.

To fully enter into the mystery of this great act of God, we also must put aside the *normal* of this world. Our society now offers us the fleeting worldly happiness that comes from overindulging at holiday parties and overspending on consumer goods. The Church now offers us the eternal heavenly joy that comes from freeing ourselves from our passions and turning our focus to the love of God and neighbor. In other words, the *normal* way of celebrating according to the world is through satiety, but the true way of celebrating according to the new creation ushered in by Christ's incarnation is through sobriety.

Beloved in Christ, let us strive during this sacred season to truly experience the *new normal* where there is actually *no contrast at all* in a cave truly becoming heaven, a Virgin truly becoming a cherubic throne, and a manger truly becoming noble. This paradoxical experience only comes through our finding joy in repenting, fulfillment in abstaining, and love for God and neighbor through self-emptying.

Praying for all of you to be granted a holy, pure, and grace-filled fast, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

+JOSEPH
Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)

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“I Would Fly Away and Be at Rest”

The Last Public Appearance and Funeral of His Grace Bishop ANTOUN

“Oh, that I had the wings of a dove. I would fly away and be at rest” (Psalm 54:6).

Although the context in which the psalmist wrote was tribulation, it had a different meaning for His Grace Bishop ANTOUN, the longest-serving auxiliary Bishop of the Antiochian Archdiocese. (Bishop ANTOUN left this world on the morning of Monday, October 2, 2017.) For, as Metropolitan JOSEPH remarked in his funeral address, Sayidna ANTOUN did not fly away to leave the rest of us behind, because he never betrayed us. Rather, His Grace took up his new abode at the throne of Almighty God to intercede with Him for us, and reunite the clergy and laity he loved so dearly on the Last Day.

Every bishop of the Archdiocese, along with dozens of clergy and hundreds of faithful, gathered at St. George Cathedral in Coral Gables, Florida – Sayidna ANTOUN's cathedral in the Diocese of Miami and the Southeast – to mourn the loss of a man who served them in so many ways since his arrival in the United States in 1959. Sayidna's sister, Marie, and his nephew, Fadi, who chanted his uncle's funeral services, also came. Hundreds more watched on Facebook Live and added their comments of love as the video streamed. Hours before the funeral on Tuesday, October 10, Metropolitan JOSEPH landed in Miami from Balamand, Lebanon, where he had just finished his meetings as a member of the Holy Synod of Antioch.

Bishop ANTOUN's made his last public appearance at the Archdiocesan Convention (July 23–30). The entire Archdiocesan Convention was dedicated to his eight decades of service to the Orthodox Church “with Love, Humility and Sunshine,” but for health reasons Sayidna missed nearly all of it. He refused to be confined to a hospital bed, however. He appeared at the Convention on Friday, only to be rushed back to the hospital on Saturday afternoon. Yet he was determined to get back



to his people, so that they could exchange their Christian love for each other upon his retirement from active ministry. On Saturday night, July 29, Sayidna ANTOUN arrived to a standing ovation at the grand banquet of the Archdiocesan Convention in Hollywood, Florida. Everyone sang his favorite song: “You Are My Sunshine.” Smiles beamed and tears flowed as he entered the room. He blew kisses to the crowd as he took his seat on the top tier of the dais. Then, he led the next many renditions of his favorite song.

Later, in Bishop ANTOUN fashion, he grabbed the microphone and started to talk. “You know people, I love you. I came especially tonight from the hospital just to see you. I had to fight with the doctors after they rushed me to the hospital in the afternoon. And they asked me, ‘Do you really want to go?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ One of the men there said to me, ‘Are you crazy? How can you leave the hospital?’ I said, ‘I was here for five days before, and nothing happened! Nothing!’ After that, I said I'm good to go and see my people, who are here, and they're waiting for me.”

Sayidna JOSEPH presented Sayidna ANTOUN with the highest award of the Archdiocese: the Gold Order of St. Raphael of Brooklyn. The Convention hosts at St. George Cathedral also presented a painting of Sayidna ANTOUN in his blue vestments, holding the *trikerion* and *dikerion* (the three- and two-branched candlesticks) and blessing the people. Sayidna ANTOUN then sang “You Are My Sunshine” one last time with his people and left. Some grabbed his blessing, realizing it would be their final chance.

At the Funeral for a Bishop in October, Metropolitan JOSEPH remembered how Bishop ANTOUN helped his lifelong friend, Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice-blessed memory and eternal repose, build up the Antiochian

(continued on page 31)

The Ghost of Past Christmas Presents

Fr. Joseph Huneycutt

IT HAD TO BE EITHER HOLIDAY STRESS, MY HABIT OF EATING GARLIC IN THE EVENING – OR A COMBINATION OF BOTH – BUT ONE DECEMBER I HAD A DREAM INVOLVING A GHOST LIKE THOSE IN CHARLES DICKENS’ *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*. THERE I WAS, ALL TUCKED IN BED THE MONDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS, READING *THE ISLAND OF THE DAY BEFORE*, BY UMBERTO ECO, WHEN I COULD NO LONGER KEEP MY EYES OPEN. THERE ARE SIDE BENEFITS TO READING ECO. AS WITH READING VLADIMIR LOSSKY’S *MYSTICAL THEOLOGY OF THE EASTERN CHURCH*, YOU ARE GUARANTEED TO SLEEP! DON’T GET ME WRONG: LOSSKY’S CLASSIC IS ONE OF MY FAVORITES, BUT, AS I TELL EVERYONE, YOU END UP READING IT THREE TIMES BEFORE YOU FINISH IT THE FIRST TIME, BECAUSE EACH NIGHT YOU FORGET YOU ALREADY READ THAT PAGE THE NIGHT BEFORE, JUST BEFORE YOU FELL ASLEEP. ANYWAY, IT WAS 9:30 P.M. WHEN I WAS AWAKENED BY A SHRILL CRY. *OH MY!* I ROUSED MYSELF TO SEE THAT LIGHTS WERE STILL ON IN THE HOUSE. I HASTENED DOWN THE HALL AND AROUND THE CORNER TO SEE MY WIFE AND ELDEST GLUED TO THE SATELLITE FEED ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN, CHEERING ON THE CAROLINA PANTHERS. “SORRY, DAD!”

(Original version published in *We Came, We Saw, We Converted – The Lighter Side of Orthodoxy in America*, Ancient Faith Publishing, 2009; used by permission.)

On the way back to bed, trying to get a jump on returning to sleep by not fully opening my eyes, out of the corner of one eye I spotted the lighted Christmas tree. I also saw our black cat, Lily. Those, dear readers, were my final waking memories as I hit the pillow and fell into a deep, deep sleep: A cat, a Christmas tree, a cat ... a Christmas ... cat Mas ... a Kawa ... a Kawasaki? *Rimmm-nnn—Rimmm-n-n-n-n-n—Rimmm-nnnnnnn!*

He was flying down our hallway, some guy on a Kawasaki motorcycle. *Wha—?* And there he was beside me. I stammered, “Are you the Ghost of Christmas Past?”

“Nope, I’m the Ghost of Past Christmas Presents!” the fellow replied.

“But I never got a motorcycle,” I said. “You must have the wrong guy.”

He checked his list. “Did you get: “Banana seat Schwinn with green metallic paint?” *Yep*. “Elephant leg bell bottoms?” *Absolutely*. “Purple velvet platform shoes?” *Well, yeah*. “Trampoline?” *Unh-huh*. “Truckloads of 45s and record albums?” *You got it!* “Mood ring?” *Umm*. “Several GI Joes?” *I ain’t ashamed*. “Four stereos, six sets of speakers, electric guitar, drum set?” *That would be me*.

“Patient parents?” *Aha! I knew you had the*

wrong guy! “Believe me son, with a list like this, they were!” he said. “Oh, wait! A Baltimore Colts football jacket? The Baltimore ... Colts?” *Look*, I explained, *it was on sale that year at K-Mart; my mom didn’t know any better*. “This can’t be right: Buzz Lightyear? I must have the wrong guy.” *No*, I said, *that’s me. I like Buzz Lightyear*. “I see,” he said. “So, you pretty much always get what you want for Christmas?”

“Wait a minute,” I exclaimed. “Who are you? Look, I’ve read *A Christmas Carol*, I’ve seen movie versions and cartoon versions; you’re supposed to show me the streets of London—or Charlotte, or Houston – on the current Christmas morning. We’re supposed to observe the meager but happy Christmas celebrations of the Cratchit family, or some such, and the sweet nature of their lame son Tiny Tim, with some ominous foreboding of pending tragedy thrown in. Then I’m supposed to see what people really think of me and, somewhere along the line I, a cold-hearted old man, am supposed to have a change of heart, sort of like the Grinch.”

“No,” he replied, “I am not the Ghost of Christmas Present. I am the Ghost of Past Christmas Presents; different story.” He revved the Kawasaki’s engine and said, “Hop on!”

It was a small motorcycle; I’m a big ol’ boy. But, as dreams go, there we were flying down the road, the



wind whipping through my thinning hair, speeding around curves, flying through yellow lights, going off road, and jumping through the air like E.T. on his pedal bike ... and that’s when – *CRASH!*

As I lay on the pavement, which felt a whole lot like my bed, my eyes fluttered in the darkness. You know how it works: It was my bed, but it was the pavement, there was my wife and my cat, but there was also just me and the motorcycle. Back in full-dream mode, I heard a siren in the distance. Suddenly it occurred to me: the motorcycle was a 1976 Kawasaki KE 125.

As they were bundling me up and hoisting me into the ambulance, the back story on the bike flashed vividly before me. I was fifteen years old and my high school was raffling off a Kawasaki. Though we were Baptists, and gambling ranked high on God’s big list of no-no’s, after much begging my mom bought me a ticket, one ticket, for that motorcycle. I was absolutely convinced – beyond a doubt, positive – that I had the winning ticket! I was going to win that bike. It was displayed at every Varsity basketball game in the school’s hallway. It was blue, my favorite color, and somewhere on it was

the number 8, which was my favorite number. I hope you’ll forgive me this silliness, but that bike and I shared a bond. It was love, love at first sight; and, by goodness, come the drawing, just in time for Christmas, it was going to be mine. *All mine, I say! MINE!*

“Who are you talking to?” *Wha—?* It sounded like my wife’s voice, but all I could see was the Ghost of Past Christmas Presents, surrounded by a host of doctors and nurses. I was in the hospital. And that’s where this dream got weird. (Which raises the question: Are there any normal dreams?)

What happened next was: I floated up out of my body, like a spirit myself, and was joined, hovering above the hospital staff, by my guide, the Ghost of Past Christmas Presents. We traveled down a long hallway and entered a room full of tons of stuff. I said, “What is all this?” “It’s all the things that you received as gifts throughout all of your Christmases,” the ghost replied. Some of it I recalled, but many of the things I’d totally forgotten. But the room was too loud, much too noisy, and in my slumber, I stirred. I really wanted to wake up ... so much stuff!



Then the door slammed and we entered another room. In this room, there was nothing but people: joyful people, singing! There were folks in the mountains of North Carolina singing Christmas carols, all dressed in festive array and freezing as they sang, only to be invited into warm and happy homes for a gladsome repast. There was my mom, the prettiest one in the bunch, singing with the choir for our Baptist Church cantata. There were Orthodox Christians, having just celebrated the Nativity Liturgy, kneeling in church with candles and singing old favorites and festal songs before the icon of the Theotokos, Virgin and Child. There was the elderly Arab lady who'd vowed that if her son was healed of cancer she would sing the Christmas Kontakion solo in church on the Feast. Thank God, she did sing:

"We seek happiness in illusory diversions, hoping to forget our mortality." That night, in that dream, with all those dear folks singing the praises of the Incarnate God, I forgot my mortality.

Today the Virgin gives birth to the incomprehensible One, and the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable One; Angels and shepherds glorify Him; the wise men journey with a star; since for our sakes is born the Eternal God, as a little Child.

Then there was one of my favorites, Handel's *Messiah*, with the Hallelujah Chorus being sung by a group of high school students. At that point, I totally forgot whatever ailed me. Handel will do that to you. Blaise Pascal wrote, "We seek happiness in illusory diversions, hoping to forget our mortality." That night, in that dream, with all those dear folks singing the praises of the Incarnate God, I forgot my mortality. Yet, with all weighty respect to the choirs, carolers, Christmas Kontakion, and Handel to boot, the credit should be laid at the feet of virtue. It is rare, this side of paradise, for us to seek that "forgetting of mortality" in virtue. We most certainly seek it in vice – in our greed, materialism, consumerism, and selfish desires. As one priest said, "We sin because we die." Think about it; isn't it because we know the eventuality, but don't know the time, that we rush forward to cram so much into so little? And what does it leave us but full of remorse, empty of charity? On the other hand, there are times when, planned or otherwise, the hoping to forget mortality is wrapped in beauty and appears as a sacrifice pleasing to the Good God. That must be what Handel meant when, upon completion of *Messiah*, he said, "I did see all heaven open before me and the great God

Himself." *Hallelujah!*

"Beeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee," rang the heart monitor. I gasped. "What happened? Did I die?" "No," said the Ghost of Past Christmas Presents. "Look." We were back in the hospital room, hovering over the bed, and there, sadly (oddly), lay a lifeless motorcycle, consigned to the dustbin of things that might have been but, thank God, weren't. And still, the voices of the chanters, singers, and trumpets rang. The hospital bed shrank and became filled with straw; the hospital personnel took on the garb of the shepherds and wise men, and there appeared a host of heavenly angels filling the room.

"Stop it," said my guide. "Stop right there, son. You're fashioning your own dream."

"Why?" I asked. "This is the good part, the best part, the coming of God in the flesh!"

"Not yet," he said. "You're not ready yet; there's more to be done. Besides, it's not my place."

"Oh no," I cried. "Please don't tell me I have to wait for the Ghost of Christmas Future!"

"No," he said, "your dream has ended. But prepare yourself – not so much with gifts, and cards, trinkets, tom-tinkers, and bazookers."

"Kawasakis?" I whispered.

"Right, no Kawasakis," he said. "Prepare yourself for worship; prepare your children for worship. It's not so much, as the popular saying goes, that we should keep *Christ* in Christmas, but we should prepare ourselves to keep the *Mass* in Christmas. For it is our worship of God Incarnate that will reign forever, after all these material things – even the earth itself – have passed away.

"For the day draws nigh," continued my guide. "The Savior, Christ the Lord, is come to save the world. Let us prepare minds, hearts, and souls to sing the praises like the pilgrims, even the shepherds before us who said, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us,' and who returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them."

As I awoke from this nocturnal visitation, even in my groggy state, I understood that there is no greater present than that which was in the past, is now, and shall be forever – which is Christ the Lord.

By anticipation: *Christ is Born! Glorify Him!*

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

RUMINATION:
Are We Creating
Old Testament
Christians?



ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY IS MADE IMMEASURABLY RICH BY VIRTUE OF THE DIVINE ENERGIES OF GOD SO LIBERALLY EFFUSED FOR INFUSION IN HUMANITY. GOD Poured out his spirit into earthen vessels so that we may be redeemed and participate in his redemption of humanity and his creation. This is the will of the Father by the Son and through the Holy Spirit. Despite the boundless kindness of God, allowing for us to know Him, it appears that we, in our wisdom, are settling for creating Old Testament Christians.

It seems we increasingly rely not on those divine energies, nor seek to know God, but we become like the Greeks who sought wisdom, or the Jews who sought signs, and both missed the Truth. Their focus was wrong. They did not start with prayer, which is a relationship with God. They, like Adam and Eve in the Fall, thought they would be like God when they focused on created, shiny, colorful, sensory and physically enticing things, rather than focusing on the Creator and knowing Him. They died a spiritual and thus physical death as a consequence. They lost their spiritual sense and the gift of stewardship. To them, Creation could no longer reveal the spiritual truths in the physical because they lost their spiritual life and prayer. They exchanged the Truth for a lie. Spirituality was lost and exchanged for tilling the earth. Yet even the tilling was supposed to point toward preparing the good soil, but that lesson too was missed, even though into the ground will they be buried.

The Incarnation shows it is impossible and undesirable to separate the spiritual aspects from the physical in humanity. God clearly created both good. He created us in His image and likeness. We are spiritual and physical creatures. While these two aspects of our nature are distinct and that distinction is useful in our

understanding of our restoration to the image and likeness of God, as He so willed, they must be prioritized. The priority must be the spiritual; then will follow an understanding of the physical. Just as separation of soul from body was an unintended and unnatural result of the Fall, so is the separation of the physical from the spiritual in our daily *theosis*. The spiritual must take priority and lead. God breathed the breath of Life into earthen vessels, that we may awaken to the spiritual relationship with God in prayer.

God became flesh that we may be newly enfolded by God, robed with a garment of immortality, to be transfigured and raised imperishable from that which was sown perishable. The process of *theosis* brings the vitality of God and His Incarnation to humanity through direct communion with God, not in His divine essence, but in the deified humanity of Christ. We are joined to Christ in Baptism, that we may know the Persons of the Trinity. Upon knowing Him in prayer, then may we labor in the field to restore the likeness to the image He created in humanity. The soul is saved by His act and will as it receives deified human nature, with the purpose of knowing God, and that all creation may be as He intended. He came to save the soul that He

They, like Adam and Eve in the Fall, thought they would be like God when they focused on created, shiny, colorful, sensory and physically enticing things, rather than focusing on the Creator and knowing Him.

created, not to save lumps of flesh. By prayer and fasting, not by bullocks upon the altar, He casts out the intruder. The Incarnate God came to restore true human nature to our souls; thus the spiritual bestows life to the physical, not vice versa.

No one has seen the Father except the Son, and the Son has made Him known to us. *Theosis* is initiated by the will of God and requires our intentional response. This is continued through active prayer, communion and anamnesis. It is done by God, with our faith in reply, but even this faith is not of our own doing, for we are incapable of having adequate faith to effect *theosis* or perfect union with Christ to know God. Things or forms that are phantasms or shadows do not effect prayer, communion, anamnesis or *theosis*. It is not enough to know of or about God, one must directly know God. This is true and undefiled religion.

To know God is not achieved by focus on the creation, as the Greeks chose to do, nor by following the edicts of God in the Old Testament, as did the Jews, but by knowing God as St. Gregory Palamas, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and all the Saints so eloquently describe. These Fathers described two ways of knowing God: in the *apophatic*, one approaches God by seeing that He is not reducible to any of the ideas or terms that might be used of Him, while in the *kataphatic* one approaches Him by using positive terms of Him. The purpose of both is to lead us in prayer, for such ways identify the ancient bounds which should not be moved and provide guardrails to guide us. Thus we can test all things on the narrow path of prayer.

Having recently commemorated the Seventh Ecumenical Council, shall we fall into the error of mistaking the forms and images of this world for the prototype, and thinking that we should start with manmade images or with knowledge of created things, instead of knowing God? He provides meaning to the physical, not vice versa. We must not be anthropomorphic. Shall we miss entirely the lessons of Scripture and the teachings of the Fathers?

We must focus on prayer that, as God wills, allows us to participate in the work of His divine energies. We must not focus on the forms of this world, as they easily distract us. Images of things can be helpful as windows to Heaven, but only if we look *through* them, not simply *at* them. This was the lesson of the Council and of St. John

of Damascus. By prayer, we see through these windows the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. One must know God before those windows have any utility. One must pray; then the windows have transparency. Otherwise, they are opaque and block the Light.

Too easily these forms and objects become curated objects which we proudly display, thinking highly of our work. All the while we are lacking true prayer and substance, because we have settled for knowing *of* or *about* God, rather than knowing Him. This curated experience is not the desire expressed in the *Song of Songs*, when the virgin inquires, “Have you seen the one I love?”, nor of the Five Virgins, who rightly prepared their oil lamps to await the Bridegroom. Neither focused on the form, but on the substance of union

with the Bridegroom, which starts in contemplation of Him and His Virtues. We must be attracted to God and not the passable, lest we become idolators, or curators and exhibitors. This example of preparation of the soul is repeated countless times in Scripture and Patristic writings, because it is the path to the Way and the Truth and the Light. We ought not think we can carve out a better path. Yet we continue to fall short of the grace (divine energies) of God when we focus on the matter and form of things, rather than the Author and Creator of Life. We must start with prayer to our Lord.

We easily distract people and ourselves from knowing God by focusing on colors of seasons and candles, attire, quality of iconography, drapery, and countless other material things, not recalling that these, like the flower and grass of the field, shall wither, while the Voice of the Lord endures forever. The soul survives these passable things and it must be prepared. These trappings may provide simple signs along the way, but they are only made meaningful if one knows the Law of the Lord, which is the holiness of God, not a set of precepts or material things. Our focus must be on God and His attributes (divine energies) in prayer. We easily study the architecture of the library and forget the purpose and its intended content, and never go in to learn; we become pleased with the architecture and being curators and exhibitors, not disciples in prayer.

If we think, we shall tear down our old barns and build new ones for ourselves, then the warning is clear, for our soul may be required of us that very night. The

The process of *theosis* brings the vitality of God and His Incarnation to humanity through direct communion with God, not in His divine essence, but in the deified humanity of Christ.

old barns sufficed to store food for the hungry, yet the hungry were neglected due to the passions and efforts to create larger and more beautiful barns. New barns meant money not spent on the hungry. Yet we pray a blessing upon our new barns! Suddenly the owner’s soul was lost. Those who were spiritually hungry, whom we were to love, over whom God is constantly watchful, were deprived. Stewardship was lost, as ownership became the norm for the curators and exhibitors. We buy new barns for ourselves and give away the old damaged barn wood, and think this commendable? Do we not see the barn as an icon? If not, then we shall not see anything else as a proper image. Do we fail to see that what is inside the barn is the reason the barn was built? How does building a new barn place our neighbor, in love, before

our self-perceived needs and passions as curators and exhibitors? Shall we publicize those who build such new barns, that their name may be displayed in false glory, so that they suffer severe loss by our negligence, and we be accordingly judged? Shall we ignore the scriptural warnings of rewarding ourselves, and others, in full in this life, that we lose the next? Shall we dress in lavish clothing, while others go naked or in the tatters we give them? Shall we not feed the poor with what is in the barn? Are we not our brother’s keeper? Is not our salvation connected? How did we become more concerned with how we look or how the barns look, and thus became curators and exhibitors of museums, rather than focusing on prayer in humility and becoming godly? Did we miss the lesson, that the Son of Man has no place to rest His head, as He labors with prayer and fasting to harvest the ripe field, while we look to celebrate our barns? Or has the grain in the barn become rotten, the soil left by us as rocky, and the salt lost is saltiness?

The poverty of Lazarus was overlooked by the rich man; the spirituality of the publican was unknown to the Pharisee. The rich man and the Pharisee were preoccupied with physical forms: lavish structures and superior fidelity in pious acts, but they derived no benefit before God. If we do not find Christ in the beggar, then we shall not find Him in the chalice (St. John Chrysostom). Shall we ignore the warning of St. James in how we treat the poor?

Substituting instruction and form for substance is like showing colorful lights to a blind person and

It is not enough to know of or about God, one must directly know God. This is true and undefiled religion.

expecting him to experience and describe light. If we walk in darkness, then how shall we teach of Light? Do we think we walk in light, when in fact we know very little? We know in part and see in part, yet think we guide the blind. We are tone deaf to the Song of Songs, yet we convince ourselves that our words aren’t noise, speaking all the louder even to the deaf, because we forgot to focus on prayer.

A stop sign only makes sense in a society that knows the value of law and respects it. The stop sign becomes unnecessary when all learn to work in harmony with the one Who harmonizes. The signs are shadows of figures. St. Gregory of Nyssa eloquently teaches on this in the *Hexaemeron*, when he brings to our intellect the understanding of the role of created things. St. Gregory

said that Moses wrote the book of Genesis “to lead men enslaved to the senses to the realm of God that transcends sensory experience and to a true knowledge of God.” St. Nikolai Velimorivic, of recent times, reminds us of this in his work on *Signs and Symbols*. St. John of Damascus pointed the way in the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*. The Holy Fathers, writing in the *Philokalia*, emphasize this. Clearly the monastics, martyrs and confessors, in exemplary simplicity and humility, and many deified saints had no access to the things that so many want to use to decorate their temples or selves, as the former prefer to decorate their souls with the resplendent Light of Christ, knowing that Solomon in all his splendor was not arrayed like lesser creatures in their simplicity. What lesson are *we* teaching?

Thus when we distract those we serve or those that seek to know God by leading them to focus on objects, and not prayer and knowing God, then we fail to lead rightly, and our works will be burnt up behind us, even if we survive.

If we project our own path, focusing on form, then we lack discernment for each person, and we have obstructed the work of the Holy Spirit. If we speak words that are directed to ourselves about these forms, as if we think we teach others, then we lack discernment for the needs of others in prayer. If we think ourselves wise, we should at least have read the Scriptures to know the outcome.

If we do not ourselves focus on prayer and knowing God, spending more time focusing on the things we create, the physical over spiritual, then we miss God and

perhaps make others twice worse than ourselves.

The Jews thought that the images they were instructed to craft were all they could do in approaching God, and many became content as the ten who accompanied Joshua and Caleb, to settle for less than the full promise of God. The objects became nothing but objects and obstacles, stumbling stones and rocks of offense. They were not windows because the people did not seek the Lord with their whole heart, mind, soul and strength. They were content to walk about in their fine robes, while the physically and spiritually hungry died. They strained at gnats and swallowed camels. They forgot the fast described by Isaiah, and settled for being curators and exhibitors of things they did not comprehend. They became vainglorious, until that which they had was taken away. Then only did they see their nakedness, because their hearts were far from God, but there was not a Shem or Japheth to be found.

The Sabbath was made for man, not vice versa. The Sabbath was not a physical thing, but a posture of prayer, needful of no thing but a heart and mind and soul facing God.

Let us not err in creating Old Testament Christians, creating those who know *of* and *about* God, but failing to know God. Let us not lead, focusing on *things* rather than direct communion with God in our substantial union with Christ,

where no shadow exists. Let us not put seekers under the law of sin and death and bondage. Let us not lead them to focus on the passable, rather than the impassible.

We preach what we know, and we testify of what we have seen, but what have we seen and Whom do we know? Do we see forms and not substance, so we preach on the shadow formed by the Light that is obstructed by the form, rather than teaching direct experience of Light? Do we spend more time conversing on things that do not lead to salvation? How can that be profitable to the soul as a substitute for speaking to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and of what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and worthy of praise?

If we do not know God, then we must not teach as if we do by building piles of stones over which others will trip and fall. The piling of stones was a shadow and ephemeral sign pointing to Him that was to come as the One, Chief Cornerstone. It is Him we want to know, not the piles of stones along the way. If we are unable to do this, then we must retire to our prayer closet and earnestly seek God, for He tells us to seek and He will

answer. It is easy to speak many words about things and be noisy, as if we know God, but fewer are the necessary words when we teach to know God rather than things. He is the Word. The things will receive meaning when God reveals their purpose by our knowing Him. Adam understood this as he named things according to a spiritual understanding of God’s purpose. The sequence must be to know God first, then to understand all things in His Light, lest we be most pitied.

Perhaps, the Psalmist King David best explains this in Psalm 51: “You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.” In this, does he not mean it starts with the heart’s conversion and knowledge of God within the soul? Then, and only then, do works proceed to be acceptable, and the scaffolding for the City of Peace begin to be reconstructed, and the offerings of works made sacrificially become pleasing to God and of benefit to humanity. Our many labors are in vain if we do not allow God to build and reside in the house of our soul, and instead we only try to rent the soul to Him.

May we not have hearts of stone, but start with hearts of flesh, that the soul may know God; then the eyes and ears will know their true function. If we do not hear the Word of God in the soul, then the ear profits us nothing. Did not Elijah understand this? Our many words reveal their ineffectiveness and the need of the single Word residing in our soul, which is not affected by external adornment and focus on forms.

We must not create men in our own image and likeness. We must not create Old Testament Christians by piling up stones and building hearts of stone or building new barns or focusing on passable forms. We must instead learn the language of prayer, that our souls may be saved, then He will recognize His image and likeness in us.

“Now this is eternal life, *that they may know* You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ ... that all of them may be one, as You, *Father*, are in Me, and I am in You.”

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord have mercy on me a sinner, aid my prayer and reside within and illumine my soul with your divine energies, that I may pray as I ought. Then will my lips be opened and my mouth proclaim Thy praise! Oh may it be so now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

(The author wishes to remain anonymous.)

WISDOM FROM ST. CLEMENT OF ROME

Fr. Daniel Daly



ALTHOUGH THE WORDS “PATERNAL” AND “PATERNALISTIC” HAVE COME TO CONNOTE SOMETHING POLITICALLY UNSAVORY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY, THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IS, IN ONE RESPECT, VERY PATERNALISTIC. ORTHODOXY HOLDS THE MEN WE CALL “THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH” IN HIGHEST REGARD. THE FATHERS ARE A SPECIAL WITNESS TO THE EARLY YEARS OF THE CHURCH. THEY CREATED AND HANDED DOWN THE PRAYERS AND HYMNS OF THE CHURCH. THEIR THEOLOGY REMAINS THE GUIDING THEOLOGY OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH TO THIS PRESENT DAY – THANK GOD! THEY WERE THE GUARDIANS OF THE FAITH “ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS,” OFTEN AT THE EXPENSE OF THEIR OWN BLOOD (JUDE 1:2).

Although the reading of the Fathers might seem to some the business of academics and theologians, the problems that the Fathers faced are still very much with us today. They are far more than historical squabbles. Orthodox Christians who read the Fathers may suspect that they are reading about the problems they find in their own communities.

Today our world is replete with those who reject any kind of established order. Individualism, in varied instances, is the order of the day. Envy and divisiveness can be found in all parts of human society, even the Church. Although the rejection of order has probably always been found in human society, the famous 1960s ushered in a spirit of disorder that has left no segment of our society untouched, including the family.

Dissent and disorder were the problems St. Clement of Rome addressed at the end of the first century. News had come to Rome that church of Corinth was once again being divided by an unholy schism.

Schism was nothing new to the Church in Corinth. St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians writes that “some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another, ‘I follow Apollos’; another, ‘I follow Cephas’; still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided?”

A half-century later, schism had once again arisen in Corinth. This brought about a response which has come down to us as “The Letter of the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth.” The author of the letter is St. Clement of Rome.¹ Clement wrote this pastoral letter pleading with the Corinthians to return to peace. After greeting the Corinthians with “grace and peace” (1:1), Clement confronts the troubled Corinthian Church. He does not mince his words.

Due, dear friends, to the sudden and successive misfortunes and accidents we have encountered, we have, we admit, been rather long in turning our attention to your quarrels. We refer to the abominable

and unholy schism, so alien and foreign to those whom God has chosen, which a few impetuous and headstrong fellows have fanned to such a pitch of insanity that your good name, once so famous and dear to us all, has fallen into the gravest ill repute (1:1).

The cause of the “abominable and unholy schism” was the rejection of the presbyters of the Corinthian Church. The presbyters represented an established order. Was this order something permanent? The rebels in the community obviously did not think so.



Following these critical opening remarks, Clement speaks of the esteem in which the Corinthian Church has been held. After the time of St. Paul, the Corinthian community had apparently returned to a time of peace. Clement praises their faith and their piety. They were a community of “unbounded hospitality.” “You obeyed your rulers and gave your presbyters proper respect” (1:3). “You were humble and without pretensions” (2:1); “All sedition and schism were an abomination to you” (2:6). It was, as he says, a “time of profound and rich peace” (2:1). Corinth seems to have been

an ideal community.

Things did not remain peaceful. Here Clement becomes sarcastic: “My beloved ate and drank and filled out and grew fat and started to kick” (cf. Deut. 32:15). “From this,” he says, “there arose rivalry and envy, strife and sedition, persecution, anarchy, war and captivity” (3:2). This sin of envy, Clement tells the Corinthians, is as old as the sin of Cain, who out of envy murdered his brother Abel. Envy caused Joseph to be sold by his brothers. It caused the revolt against Moses. Surprisingly, Clement speaks of a rivalry and envy, too, within the Roman community, which led to the death of Peter and Paul in Rome.

Clement regards these sins as very serious. “It is right, then, and holy, brothers, that we should obey God rather than follow those arrogant and disorderly fellows who take the lead in stirring up loathsome rivalry. For we shall incur no ordinary harm, but rather great danger if we recklessly give ourselves over to the designs of men who launch out into strife and sedition to alienate us

from what is right” (14:1–20). “But you, we observe, have removed a number of people, despite their good conduct, from a ministry they have fulfilled with honor and integrity. Your contention and rivalry, brothers, thus *touches matters that bear on our salvation*” (45:1; emphasis added). This goes beyond a “family quarrel.”

The remedy for this tragic situation is not unexpected. “We must, then, put a speedy end to this. We must prostrate ourselves before the Master, and beseech him with tears to have mercy on us and be reconciled to us and bring us back to our honorable and holy practice of brotherly love” (48:1). Love and repentance will be the remedy for the sins of Corinth. “Love,” he says, “puts up with everything and is always patient. There is nothing vulgar about love. Love knows nothing of schism and revolt. Love does everything in harmony” (49:5). It is time for repentance. “Let us, then seek pardon for our failings and for whatever we have done through the promptings of the adversary. And those who are the ringleaders of the revolt and dissension ought to reflect on the common nature of our hope” (51:1).

“You who are responsible for the revolt must submit to the presbyters. You must humble your hearts and be disciplined so that you repent. You must learn obedience and be done with your proud boasting and curb your arrogant tongues” (57:1). “Only let Christ’s flock live in harmony with their appointed presbyters” (54:3).

Clement’s advice that is both practical and timeless. “We should attach ourselves to those who are religiously devoted to peace, and not those who wish for it hypocritically” (15:1). “We should attach ourselves to those to whom God’s grace has been given. We should clothe ourselves with concord, being humble, self-controlled, far removed from all gossiping and slandering, and justified by our deeds, not by words” (30:3).

Perhaps unexpectedly, Clement brings this issue within the context of worship, where even today it is often the locus of disagreement. “He [God] ordered sacrifices and services to be performed; and required this to be done, not in a careless and disorderly way, but at the times and seasons He fixed. Where He wants them performed and by whom, He himself fixed by His supreme will The high priest is given his particular

duties: the priests are assigned their special place, while on the Levites particular tasks are imposed. The layman is bound by the layman’s code” (40:2–5). If this was true in the Old Testament, how much more must it be true in the worship of the New Covenant.

Returning to St. Paul, Clement emphasizes the necessity for order, stating that “each of us brothers, ‘in his own rank’ must win God’s approval and have a clear conscience. We must not transgress the rules laid down for our ministry, but perform it reverently” (41:1; cf. 1 Cor. 15:23). If Old Testament worship had its designated times, places and persons, so too must that of the Church. God is quite particular about how He wants to be worshiped. “The apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Christ, was sent from God. Thus Christ is from God and the apostles from Christ. In both instances the orderly procedure depends on God’s will” (42:2). The apostles “preached in country and city, and appointed their first converts, after testing them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of future believers” (42:4). “Is it any wonder that those Christians whom God had entrusted for such a duty should have appointed the officers mentioned?” (43:1).

Clement now touches on the critical issue in Corinth. Were these ministries to be something life-long, or were they appointments that would cease after a short period of time?

Now, our apostles, thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ, knew there was going to be strife over the title of bishop. It was for this reason and because they had been given an accurate knowledge of the future, that they appointed the officers we have mentioned. Furthermore, they later added a codicil to the effect that should these die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry. In light of this, we view it as a breach of justice to remove from their ministry either those who had been appointed by them [i.e., the apostles] or later on with the whole church’s consent, by others of proper standing, and who long enjoying everybody’s approval, have ministered to Christ’s flock faultlessly, humbly, quietly and unassumingly (44:1–3).

“My beloved
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(cf. Deut. 32:15).
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1. *The Letter of the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth* was written in about the year 96 A.D. Although Clement’s name does not appear in the letter, the ancient sources agree that Clement was the undisputed author. Clement must have been very important in the Church of Rome to have authored this letter. Some regard him as the fourth bishop of Rome. The letter was held in such high regard that it was counted among the books of the New Testament in early Egypt and Syria.

The quotations used in this paper are taken from *Early Christian Fathers*, edited by Cyril C. Richardson. A Touchtone Book, published by Simon and Schuster, New York, N.Y., 1996.

Clement was a contemporary of the Apostles. He would have known the mind of the Apostles regarding the continuity of ministry in the Church. Not only the intentions of the Apostles, but even the mind of Christ was involved in the continuity of church leadership.

As Clement warned,

We shall be guilty of no small sin if we reject from the episcopate men who have offered the sacrifices with innocence and holiness. Happy, indeed, are those presbyters who have already passed on, and ended a life of fruitfulness with their task complete. For they need not fear that anyone would remove them from their secure positions. But you, we observe, have removed a number of people, despite their good conduct, from a ministry they have fulfilled with honor and integrity. Your contention and rivalry, brothers, thus touches on matters that bear on our salvation (45:1).



Clement puts forward the importance of the unity and harmony of the Church in two ways. First he uses the example of military life, and secondly the more familiar Pauline image of the human body. In military life, “we must march under ... irreproachable orders. Let us note with what discipline, readiness, and obedience those who serve under our generals carry out orders. Not everybody is a general, colonel, captain, sergeant, and so on. But ‘each in his own rank’ (1 Cor. 15:23) carries out the orders of the emperor and generals. The great cannot exist without the small; neither can the small exist without the great” (37:3).

Clement then returns to the image of the body used by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. “Take our body, for instance. The head cannot get along without the feet. Nor, similarly, can the feet get along without the head. The tiniest parts of the body are essential to it. And are valuable to the total body. Yes, they all act in concord and are united in a single obedience to preserve the whole body. Following this out, we must preserve our Christian body too in its entirety” (37:5–38:1). If the body is at war with its members, the life of the body is in jeopardy. So, too, with the Church.

Humans, both individually and as communities of every age struggle with the same vices and strive after the same virtues. It is not difficult for Orthodox Christians

of the 21st Century to find themselves and their communities in Clement’s Letter to the Corinthians. Envy and divisiveness can plague our communities in every generation of the Church. Memories of fights and squabbles are often remembered by children and grandchildren.

Schisms can destroy parishes. Unfortunately, many parishes trace their beginning to a schism within their mother church. Schisms not only destroy parishes, they also destroy the faith of individual Christians. Men and women affected by parish divisions often leave the parish. Some never return to church. While we may say, “That’s their problem,” being the cause of their alienation is something very serious. It may well affect their eternal salvation. This alone should cause us to refrain from schisms and cliques that endanger the unity of the parish.

What does St. Clement teach us today? Without question, his remarks about schisms are timeless. Today’s parishes are as vulnerable to quarrels and schisms as the community in ancient Corinth. A community in conflict will not grow. The peace and harmony of a loving community will be recognized very quickly by visitors. Parishioners will welcome newcomers. Those who visit other Orthodox parishes will remember how they were treated, and they will talk about it, saying either, “How warm was that church!” or, “No one even talked to me.” I hope I do not sound “paternalistic,” but as a priest I have noticed that women are very sensitive to what is happening in a community. They seem to “pick up the vibes” that are completely lost on us men. They may be aware of the first signs of division in a parish. Clement’s advice is sound. Let us be people of love and charity. Let us practice forgiveness. Let us not be envious of the gift of other people in our church. If there are divisions in the community, spend your time with those who are peaceful and nonjudgmental. The advice of Clement is as old as the Psalms: “Behold how good and how beautiful for the brethren to dwell as one” (Psalm 133:1). What St. Clement says to the Corinthians should be a cause of vigilance in today’s parishes. His views have not lost their relevance in nineteen centuries.

Finally we should be grateful to Clement for his defense of the hierarchical Church. These ministries have kept the Church true to the Holy Tradition passed down by the Fathers. Guiding the Church down through the ages, they have kept us true to the faith of the Fathers.

Fr. Daniel Daly
Fr. Daniel is a retired Antiochian Orthodox priest living in Austin, Texas.

SHARING THE FAITH



BELOVED BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

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

Many of us have said at one time or another, “I wish the Christmas spirit would last all year long.” What is this spirit we long for? Perhaps, in part, it is the experience of time together, preparing and celebrating, the making of a beautiful home, and the happiness of giving. While these make for a wonderful holiday, I believe the “Christmas spirit” taps into something deeper. I would contend it is the peace of the season – from the good feelings as we greet each other, to the singing of joyful carols. The “spirit of Christmas” is so “other-worldly” because it carries a hidden hope – for exactly that: another world, entirely good. We look for a world without sickness, sorrow or sadness, an eternal world of love, and peace and joy. This world is what Christ promised when he spoke of the “regeneration”: “a new heavens and a new earth,” the Kingdom come – to come when He returns. He preached repeatedly about the Kingdom of God. He was born in Bethlehem to establish this Kingdom. The Kingdom is what Christmas, the Nativity, is all about.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Carole A. Buleza, Director



VOLUNTEER STAFF SPOTLIGHT VASILIKI OLDZIEY

Diocesan Coordinator for the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

Vasiliki (Billie) holds a B.A. in Humanities and Dance from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, and a certificate in the Laban/Bartenieff System of Movement Analysis, Laban/Bartenieff Institute, NYC. She teaches Art, Greek, and Icon Studies at Christ the Savior Academy, an Orthodox Christian Classical School in Wichita, Kansas. Previously she taught dance/mime/movement classes for children in the Central Texas region. For 22 years, Vasiliki was either the Church School Director or a teacher at St. Elias Orthodox Church in Austin. In 1995, with the V. Rev. James Kenna, she helped to establish and served as Editor of the quarterly publication, The Children’s Magazine for

Orthodox Christian Children. For the past 20 years, she has been studying iconography and writing icons for private prayer and portable icons for churches. Vasiliki has been involved in the Creative Festivals in various roles, and serves as a co-chair of the DOWAMA Sacred Arts Committee. She has led workshops for church school teachers and adult Christian education. Most importantly, Vasiliki is the (proud) mom of Nicholas Oldziey, writer, web designer, and chanter at St. George Cathedral, Wichita.

DEPARTMENTAL NOTES

AODCE SOCIAL NETWORKING MINISTRY

To nurture the children God has placed in our care!



Greetings! For *Parents* this fall we featured quotes from *Parenting Toward the Kingdom*, by Dr. Philip Mamalakis (Ancient Faith, 2016). If you missed our posts on Facebook, they can be found on our WordPress blog page. Here is a sample (with emphasis added): “One of the most powerful messages we can communicate to our children is that we are glad that we get to be their parents – and the best time to teach that is **when they make a mistake or misbehave**. We communicate that love and respect as we respond by naming their struggle, keeping limits firm, and giving consequences. Help everyone in the home recognize that we are all on the same journey, each of us struggles with different things along the way, and we’re glad we get to struggle with them” (p. 107).

For *Teachers* this fall, the topic was the liturgical year and related traditions. The posts follow the arrangement of the book *The Year of Grace of the Lord* by a Monk of the Eastern Church (SVS Press, 1980). Again, the corresponding WordPress blog has all the entries. Please also see our Pinterest page for ideas to follow the liturgical year!

Kristina Wenger, Staff Assistant for Social Network Ministry



At Facebook.com

Orthodoxchristianparenting Orthodoxchristiansundaychurchschoolteachers Orthodoxchristianchurchschooldirectors



At WordPress.com

Orthodoxchristianparenting Orthodoxchristianchurchschoolteachers



www.pinterest.com/aodce



At *Orthodox Baby Homecoming*, we are presently featuring the insightful words of the late Dr. John Boojamra, from his work, *Foundations for Christian Education* (SVS Press, 1989). Dr. Boojamra, the long-time director of the Department of Christian Education, researched the needs of infants and children considering developmental psychology and Orthodox faith.

Orthodox Christian Church School Directors

Development of the church school director e-mail listserv continues to strengthen communication between the Department of Christian Education and directors throughout the Archdiocese. (Join by e-mailing your name and parish to aodce.csdirectors@gmail.com). “The Mustard Seed” is in the process of being converted into a blog resource for small church schools – more to come soon! On the Orthodox Christian Church School Director’s Facebook page, we will review and discuss *Removing Barriers – A Step-by-Step Guide to Making Your Parish More Disability-Friendly* by Faithtree Ministries. Those who wish to know more about resources for special needs persons should visit this website dedicated to providing Orthodox Christian Disability Resources: <https://armsopenwide.wordpress.com/>. A second place to visit is the Facebook group: “Orthodox Christian Disability and Special Needs Support.”

Anna-Sarah Farha, aodce.csdirectors@gmail.com

RESOURCE REVIEWS

A few brief notes: There are many, many, good Orthodox resources on the YouTube website. I thought it was impossible to download these for use in Church School. It isn’t! Search “How to download videos” and make use of these resources. Also, a good curriculum that has been created and used for decades at Holy Cross Church in Linthicum, Maryland, and in other parishes, is now completely online. Search “orthodoxsundayschool.org.”

“Becoming Truly Human.” Do you ever struggle to answer, “What is your Church about?” The “Becoming Truly Human” program offers those outside the Church (as well as the faithful) a comfortable, inviting and gentle introduction to the fullness of our human lives, as offered within Orthodox Christianity. The program features a professional video and small-group activities. It is excellent for adult education and fellowship-building. More information can be found at www.becomingtrulyhuman.org.

“The Orthodox Faith” Study Materials. Many people have asked for study guides for the four “rainbow” books written by Fr. Thomas Hopko. The request has been

fulfilled and the materials and the texts are available for download on the site listed below. The guides are found at the end of each book under “Resources.” Find them at <https://dce.oca.org>.

CREATIVE FESTIVALS 2018



“They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

If you haven’t already begun working on the Creative

Festivals, now is the perfect time to start! You can begin the New Year by integrating the theme into your weekly lessons and utilizing the Creative Festival Cross Reference we provide which lists lessons related to the theme: <http://antiochian.org/festivals/cf/cross-reference-2018>

We also provide many ideas for using the theme throughout the year: <http://www.antiochian.org/festivals/cf/using-the-theme-2018>

The Archdiocese recommends setting aside at least two Sundays in February for students to work on their entries during Sunday Church School. The Creative Festivals enhance the students’ understanding of Scripture and allow them to delve into a topic in greater depth. Let’s enable our students to be creative for Christ and glorify Him with their talents!

Rosemary Shumski,

Departmental Assistant for the Creative Festivals

EVENT UPDATES

The Department of Christian Education has had a busy 2017 training season. Eight churches hosted training sessions throughout the United States and Canada, and included parishes from other areas.

St. Paul Orthodox Church, Brier, Washington, hosted a Teacher Training II workshop on September 9 with Departmental Associates Sandy Mitchell and Anne Beach. Twelve elementary teachers and eight middle school/high school teachers profited from the one-day workshop.

St. Elias Cathedral, Ottawa, Ontario, also hosted a Teacher Training II workshop on Saturday, September 23. Diocesan Coordinators Fr. Christopher Rigden-Briscall and Robert Snyder had 16 elementary teachers and 12 middle school/high school teachers in attendance. Fr. Christopher, the Diocesan Coordinator for Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York, also hosted a training at his home parish, **Christ the Saviour, in Waterloo, Ontario**, for five of his new teachers.

St. Mary’s, Palos Heights, Illinois, heard from Robert

Snyder, from the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest, who presented his workshop, “Teaching Christian Fellowship with Cooperative Teaching Techniques,” August 12, to 22 participants. **St. James Orthodox Mission, Loveland, Ohio**, hosted Robert to train seven of its new teachers on August 19. On June 23, **St. George Orthodox Church in Cicero, Illinois**, hosted Robert as a trainer for 32 participants. Robert plans to be at **St. George Church in Grand Blanc, Michigan**, this spring.

St. Elijah Orthodox Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, hosted Vasiliki Oldziey, Diocesan Coordinator for Wichita and Mid-America on August 26 for a workshop entitled “Postcards from Heaven.” This workshop gave 15 teachers guidance in using icons in the classroom.

St. Elias Orthodox Church in Arvada, Colorado, hosted Fr. James and Khouria Gigi Shadid, Departmental Associate, September 29–30, with Fr. James providing an “Ask Abouna” session on Friday and a retreat on Saturday. Kh. Gigi presenting an adult education session entitled, “Christian Education: Engaging Our Youth.”

The Diocese of Charleston is in the processes of planning a Teacher Training II to be hosted by **St. George, Little Falls, New Jersey**; the tentative date is Saturday, November 18. Please contact Leslie Atherholt at aodce.events@gmail.com or 717-747-5221 for information on Training Sessions/Events.

FAMILY RESOLUTIONS: NEW YEAR NEW YOU?

We are grateful to George Tsongranis for permission to reprint this valuable article.

The beginning of January, the first month of the civil calendar, is a traditional time in our society when countless people take something of an inventory of their lives, resolving to implement changes in the hope of bringing about the desired effect. Most of us are probably familiar with some of the more popular New Year’s resolutions – such as exercising more, eating more healthily, quitting smoking, putting money matters in order, taking up a hobby, and traveling more. While the scope of this article won’t cover the statistical evidence of the success/failures of these endeavors, there is something encouraging about the optimism that inspires them.

In this spirit, what might an Orthodox Christian household resolve in order to grow in their faith? The Orthodox Christian home should reflect an image that is compatible with what it encounters within the walls of the church. The more the life of the Church is communicated outside of the church building’s walls, the more natural it will come across to your family. If our children find Orthodox Christian practices in the home strange, it might be due to

our having made Sunday worship an infrequent, isolated event, one compartmentalized from the rest of our lives. Regular liturgical participation in the parish and consistent faith practices at home are not disparate elements. Both are necessary for genuine spiritual advancement.

Recognizing how busy a family can be with work and school schedules, we present here a few possible resolutions. As you begin, keep your goals modest. Lead by example and be patient with the children in your care. Consult with your parish priest or spiritual father for further guidance.

Prioritizing Sunday as the Anchor of Your Family’s Week

The Divine Liturgy is the primary worship service in the life of the Orthodox Church. It is where the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior are offered for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Simply put, attending the Divine Liturgy as a family should be a priority. The Lord’s Day isn’t merely the day we go to church; it is the primary day we *become* the Church – the people of God.

Praying Together

The parents of a family should model prayer for their children, reflecting its indispensability in the lives of Christians. Mornings, evenings, and meals are great times to start. Prayers needn’t be excessively long; they should, however, be focused, frequent and consistent. If you don’t have a home iconostasis, take some time to create one. Iconography in the home communicates your family’s identity as Orthodox Christians. Family prayer will also foster personal prayer, as each member matures in faith.

Studying the Bible

Related to prayer is studying the Bible, which teaches, strengthens, and shapes Orthodox Christians. Expert biblical knowledge is not necessary, just a firm commitment to grow closer to God through familiarization with Holy Scripture. Try to find time during the week where the family can gather to preview the coming Sunday’s epistle and gospel readings. When you encounter challenging portions that require explanation, talk to your priest for further guidance.

Talking About God and His Church at Home

Having conversations about God and His Church at home help to make religious matters tangible in our lives. Meal times at the family table provide valuable opportunities for spiritual conversations. Parents can pose questions such as, “What can we thank God for today?” “Can we remember to pray for your friend’s sick grandmother?” “Why do you think we kiss our icons?” These topics can stimulate edifying discussions, beneficial to adults and youth alike.

Active Participation in Your Parish

If your family isn't involved in the ministries of your local parish, consider ones that are appropriate. Young people can enroll in church school and youth programs. Boys may have an interest to be altar servers. Likewise, adults can look into Bible studies, women's groups, and men's groups. Service on parish council, church school staff, and as a youth adviser might be options, as well. Make your parish an extension of your family household. Build Orthodox Christian community and get to know others.

Fasting as a Family

A still life photograph on a dark blue, textured background. On the left, a bowl filled with a colorful salad of tomatoes, cucumbers, and leafy greens is partially visible, with two slices of rustic bread resting on its rim. A blue and white striped cloth is draped over the top left corner. In the center, a small green plant with three leaves sits above a small pile of light-colored seeds. In the foreground, a silver fork and spoon are crossed. The lighting is soft, creating subtle highlights on the food and cutlery.



Practicing Generosity as a Family

Assess your family's finances and determine if you're offering a fair amount of stewardship to your parish and other worthy efforts. Ministries and parish facilities require funding. Remember, too, that charity goes well beyond financial donations. Seek opportunities to volunteer time and talent for people and causes in need. Generosity takes many shapes and sizes, but is all blessed when done for the glory of God. The earlier children learn to be cheerful givers, the better!

Participating in Other Services and Sacraments

Look for opportunities to attend services outside of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, as your family schedule permits: Vespers for feast days, or Holy Unction, for example. When invited to a baptism or marriage, be there to pray for and with those persons. While the Sacrament of Confession is not a family activity, encourage participation in it for those of appropriate age. Confession allows us to examine our consciences and openly confess our sins so they are forgiven. Talk to your priest for further guidance.

Practice Forgiveness

Family dynamics are complex! Personalities can clash, living spaces can get crowded, and, along the way,

feelings can be hurt. It's so important for family members to ask for forgiveness when an offense is committed. A significant part of our Orthodox Christian journey is acknowledging our shortcomings and admitting when we're at fault. There is no better place to practice forgiveness than within your home. Again, parents should especially model this as a loving example for their children.

Take Advantage of Technology as a Family

Set goarch.org or antiochian.org as your Internet browser's homepage. In a short time, you'll find Scripture readings, commemorated saints, and feasts for that day. These sites are excellent resources for learning more about various aspects of our Orthodox Christian faith. The "Daily Readings" app (goarch.org) also delivers the aforementioned daily content to your smartphone or tablet for convenient access. Don't forget to check out family.goarch.org to find resources specifically tailored for the distinct phases of family life.

These suggestions are offered as tools to lead our families to Christ and His Holy Church. Anything worthwhile is usually achieved with persistence, and how worthy is the task of cultivating our relationship with God! As we nurture our spiritual development we are nurturing our relationship as a family, supporting one another in faith, hope and love!

George Tsongranis works as a Special Project Coordinator for the Center for Family Care of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. He holds his Master of Divinity degree from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

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Antiochian Seminarians Finish Another Year of the House of Studies

Behold now, what is so good or so joyous as for brethren to dwell together in unity?

– Psalm 132:1

To fulfill these words of the psalmist and to nurture the future pastors of the Archdiocese, His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH blessed another year of the Antiochian House of Studies to take place August 21–26. With His Eminence’s prayers and blessing, nineteen of us Antiochian seminarians made our way from our respective seminaries for a week of study and prayer, surrounded by the beauty of the Antiochian Village. To begin our time together, we gathered outside around St. Raphael’s grave and joined the birds in praise of this great saint that walked our soil. Fr. Nicholas Belcher also led us in Trisagion prayers for His Eminence Metropolitan PHILLIP of thrice-blessed memory.

Standing in front of two men who had such an impact on this country and our Archdiocese set the tone for a week full of study and prayer. Our work revolved around the topic of pastoral ministry. Every morning, we began with prayer, greeting one another in the chapel of Ss. Peter and Paul, and commending one another to God. Our first lectures were given by His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS of Miami, who instructed us on parish ministry and the image of the priesthood that we should all work to embody. A priest with a well-balanced spiritual life, with both love for God and his flock, is what changes the lives of others and leads to healthy pastoral ministry. His Grace took questions from all the seminarians and gave over his time to addressing our needs and concerns about being pastors in parishes, and the way in which we should minister the sacraments to our people.

In our next session, Fr. Nicholas Belcher provided us with three images of the priesthood, based upon the person of Jesus Christ. We explored the characteristics of Christ as the High Priest (Hebrews 4:14), the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53), and the Good Shepherd (John 10:11–18). These titles, given to Jesus Christ, share characteristics of love, mercy, authority, sacrifice, missionary

zeal, and so forth. In exploring these different aspects of the priesthood, Fr. Nicholas painted a picture of pastoral life that starts first and foremost with Christ. This session pushed us to embody the life of Christ, so that we might fully minister to His Holy Church.

In returning from an afternoon break and reflection, Fr. Nicholas presented us with lives of three modern, saintly priests. In the description of St. Joseph of Damascus, we were told of great learning and scholarship, immense preaching, and martyrdom as a true shepherd. In his discussion of St. John of Kronstadt, we gained insight into a saintly pastor who worked miracles, and who was a great liturgist and an exceptional administrator. Through the life of St. Nicholas Planas, we were presented with a pastor who exemplified humility and prayer for his people, and who, though uneducated, brought many of his people to the church. The common thread that ran through these men's lives was not any personal characteristics as priests, but that they pointed others to Christ. For this reason, we discussed the importance of serving in our own capacity and to the best of our ability to lead people to Christ.



The closing day at the village began with all seminarian clergy concelebrating the feast of St. Cosmas Aitolas with Fr. Nicholas. The hymns sung to this saint solidified what we had learned about priests throughout the week. St. Cosmas embodied all aspects of a good and true shepherd. He led a spiritual revolution and spearheaded spiritual solutions with great fervor and prayer, leading many back to Christ. It was fitting that our last day began with such a beautiful concelebration, offering up prayers to one of the greatest priestly saints of the church. Our sessions that day began with tackling difficult pastoral issues within the church and the lives of the people. Fr. Nicholas led us through different ways in which we could minister more effectively to our communities and build our parishes into centers of transfiguration and salvation.

In concluding the week, we met once again under a canopy of trees, singing to St. Raphael, so that his prayers would continue with us in our ministry. The seminarians venerated the relics of the beloved saint and concluded a beautiful time of learning and bonding. Our week was full of great insight, spiritual treasures, and enjoyment of one another. The House of Studies is an invaluable part of our seminarian experience and we cannot express the gratitude we have for it.

We would like to express our great gratitude to His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH for inspiring and blessing such a fruitful week. It was incredibly transforming and what we learned will be applicable to our lives as future pastors. We also extend our thanks to Bishop NICHOLAS of Miami for all his care for us seminarians throughout our time with him, and for his teaching us through love and example. In addition, we are

very appreciative to Fr. Nicholas Belcher for cultivating an environment of both learning and prayer.

2018 PLC Schedule

Diocese of Worcester

Hosted by: Diocese Ministry Council, held at St. John of Damascus Church, Dedham, MA
June 9 & June 23–24, 2018

Diocese of Miami

Hosted by: St. Mary Church, West Palm Beach, FL
June 13–16, 2018

Diocese of Wichita

Hosted by: Holy Trinity Church, Santa Fe, NM
June 13–16, 2018

Diocese of Toledo

Hosted by: St. Elias Church, Sylvania, OH
June 20–24, 2018

Dioceses of New York and Washington D.C. & Oakland, Charleston and Mid-Atlantic

Hosted by St. Philip (Souderton, PA); St. George (Upper Darby, PA) & Holy Ascession (West Chester, PA) Churches; held at Antiochian Village
June 27–July 1, 2018

Diocese of Ottawa

Hosted by: St. Anthony (St. Antonios) Church, Halifax, NS
June 28–July 1, 2018

Diocese of Los Angeles/Eagle River

Hosted by St. George Church, Portland, OR
July 4–8, 2018

Clergy Symposium

Antiochian Village July 16–20

2019 Archdiocese Convention

54th Bi-annual Archdiocese Convention
St. Nicholas Church, Grand Rapids, MI
July 21–28, 2019

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THE WHAT AND WHY BEHIND THE ORDER OF SAINT IGNATIUS

Fr. John J. David

THE WORDS THAT GUIDE US

“Let no man’s place, or dignity, or riches, puff him up; and let no man’s low condition or poverty abase him. For the chief points are faith towards God, hope towards Christ, the enjoyment of those good things for which we look, and love towards God and our neighbor.” These words of St. Ignatius himself are the inspiration behind our members continued support of the Order’s ministry. These are the words that serve as the governing principle in the hearts of the members of the Order’s Governing Council. These are the words that are truly behind the “what” and the “why” of The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch since its inception over 40 years ago. They reveal what is held in the hearts and minds of our members and leadership.

The words of His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, of thrice-blessed memory, are an inspiration that go beyond simply explaining what the Order does. His words call us to understand the lessons within the ministry itself: “The Order is teaching us how to share, the Order is teaching us how to give, the Order is teaching us how to sacrifice, and how to reach out to Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. This is the miracle of The Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch.” The annual or one-time gift of those committed to supporting the Order’s ministry is an unconditional gift. The gifts of its members are not designated according to their desires, but rather according to the needs within the Archdiocese, as well as to programs and projects beyond our Antiochian

community. Your annual or one-time gift, as a part of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, is unconditional.

The sentiments of the past are also solidified in the words of His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH at each induction ceremony. His Eminence observes that “this commitment goes beyond the Sunday morning photo opportunity.” “It is not a commitment for a few days or weeks or even a year. It is a lifetime commitment, a commitment that people, families, parishes and organizations depend on, to sustain the ministries of this God-protected Antiochian Archdiocese and beyond.” Metropolitan Joseph’s message reminds all of us that no matter how long or difficult a journey we endure, God’s work is never-ending. There is no finish line, and all of us need to continue to carry our share of the burden.

THE WHAT AND WHY – WHAT THE ORDER FUNDS AND WHY IT’S IMPORTANT

Your gift to The Order is *an act of faith rooted in love and compassion*. All the way back to our earliest years as children, we are taught to share with others, especially those less fortunate. When we share, we give up what we believe to be control of our lives, and put our faith in God that He will provide for our needs in abundance. Through your financial commitment you are allowing God to work through you for the benefit of others. Your gift to the Order is an expression of love and compassion for countless lives and most importantly ... it is an act of faith.

Faith

The Order of St. Ignatius Supports College Conference SOYO Leadership Training Camping Scholarship Program

... you help build the foundation and provide the essential tools of knowledge, relationships and memories that help our children remain steadfast in their Orthodox faith

Your gift is also a sacrifice that is immeasurable in its capacity to touch others. To sacrifice for another is to love. Deciding to “do without” for the benefit of someone you don’t know is the beginning of true sacrifice. Your sacrifice helps a struggling family send their children to camp, enabling them to experience God’s world, if only for one or two weeks, through the Order’s support of the Camping Scholarship Program. It provides reassurance to a new parish that it can meet its monthly financial obligations and continue its ministry, through



the Order’s financial contribution to the Archdiocese Department of Missions and Evangelism. As a member of the Order you *may consider your sacrifice to be small, but it is infinite in its effects*, as it touches the lives of countless people. The ripple from your annual or one-time gift touches the lives of so many that you may never meet, or wouldn’t have been able

to reach alone. An annual gift of \$500 amounts to less than the cost of your daily cup of coffee. It is merely a small drop of water in a vast ocean of need. The ripple from your gift, however, never ends. It expands to enrich the lives of our youth by strengthening their hearts and minds as future leaders of Orthodoxy through the Order’s support of Teen SOYO, SOYO Leadership Training and College Conference. It multiplies to help care for our retired clergy and their families, as well as our devoted seminarians, with the funding of the Retired Clergy Housing Fund and Married Seminarian Assistance, respectively. The table below only reflects a partial list of the departments, organizations and projects that the Order supports and has supported over the years. Since its inception, the Order has been responsible for contributing over \$32 million dollars to various needs within and beyond the Archdiocese. It has contributed \$1.8 million dollars for camp scholarships alone. The Order disburses almost \$400,000 annually to organizations and projects dedicated to the youth of our Antiochian Archdiocese. The Order expresses our sincere gratitude to our clergy with \$270,000 designated to the Retired Clergy Housing Fund.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES (A PARTIAL LIST)

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

THE ORDER IS NOT A CLUB

The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch goes well beyond each member’s financial gift. It goes well beyond

the red ribbon that holds the cross we wear. It is not a group providing special treatment to its members, like a country club. In fact, in order to maximize each dollar toward the Order’s various departments and projects, the members of the Governing Council volunteer their time to help guide the Order in its work. In addition, they do not receive reimbursement of their expenses associated with travel, lodging or any incidental costs associated with the Order’s work. The Order is not something its members or volunteers join in order to receive something in return. It is a responsibility. It is a dedication to our faith, our Archdiocese, our parishes, our fellow parishioners, our clergy and to those in need, here and around the world.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The numbers in the table, on merely an annual basis, may seem impressive, but they’re just numbers. The real story is in the *Why*. The real story is in the lives touched, and those who benefit from the Order’s ministry. So how can you become a part of the Order’s ministry?

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ORDER

Become a member of the Order yourself, or give a gift to someone you love and sponsor them as a member of the Order. There are a number of annual or one-time pledging opportunities for everyone. Pledge programs are as follows:

- Junior Level: Annual gift of \$300/year (Age 18 through 26), converts to \$500/year at age 27
- Knight & Dame Level: Annual gift of \$500/year, \$9.61/week, \$1.36/day
- Knight & Dame Commander Level: \$1,000/year, \$19.20/week, \$2.73/day
- Life Level: \$15,000 lump sum gift or pay \$5,000 over 3 consecutive years
- Metropolitan Level: \$30,000 lump sum gift or pay \$10,000 over 3 consecutive years

There are also opportunities to upgrade to different levels:

LIFE-LEVEL UPGRADE

The Order of St. Ignatius Loyalty Program: Any Knight/Dame who has been a member for 15 years or longer (active/good standing member), or any Commander who has been a member for more than 10 years (active member or in good standing), can upgrade to the Life Level for \$10,000, paid in a lump sum or over a consecutive two-year period.

METROPOLITAN UPGRADE

The Order of St. Ignatius Loyalty Program: Any Knight/Dame who has been a member for more than 15 years (active member or in good standing), or any Commander who has been a member for more than 10 years (active member or in good standing), can upgrade to the Metropolitan Level for \$20,000, paid in a lump sum or over a consecutive three-year period. Life members who have fulfilled their initial Life member gift may upgrade to the Metropolitan level for \$10,000, paid in a lump sum or over a three-year period.

Life and Metropolitan gifts are invested in an endowment and only the earnings are spent each year, making it a gift that will be productive in perpetuity.

The addition of new gifting levels and upgrade opportunities is in direct response to our determination one-and-a-half years ago. The average age of Order membership is 64, and it is projected from an actuarial study conducted by the Governing Council that the revenue of the Order could drop by 30% in 10 years on account of the passing of its older members. This could have a significant impact on the Archdiocese, given that almost one-third of the annual Archdiocese revenue comes from the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. It is a concern we are addressing as a Governing Council. We are making all efforts to mitigate the potential reduction in revenue. We are working to build the endowment with the new Metropolitan level, along with the upgrade opportunities to the Life and Metropolitan levels. We are also reaching out to young adults with the Junior Level, to help them continue the commitment that was established by their parents and grandparents over the past 40 years.

So, as you contemplate your support of the Order over the years, encourage your family and friends to become a part of The Order, or to consider becoming a part of The Order’s ministry for the first time. We leave you where we started: Hold in your heart and mind the delicate, meaningful and loving words of St. Ignatius. Let his words be your guide in your actions and decisions, and begin or continue your support of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch.

Let no man’s place, or dignity, or riches, puff him up; and let no man’s low condition or poverty abase him. For the chief points are faith towards God, hope towards Christ, the enjoyment of those good things for which we look, and love towards God and our neighbor.

Roger J. David
North American Board Chairman
The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch

ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

ORDINATIONS

REALE, Jeffrey (James), to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH and Bishop ANTHONY on September 10, 2015, at St. George Church, Akron, Ohio. He is assigned to the parish.

SHUMACK, Sub-deacon John, to the holy diaconate by Bishop BASIL on Sunday, October 15, 2017 at of Holy Trinity Church, Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is assigned to the parish.

SOLOF, Archdeacon Seraphim, to the holy priesthood by Bishop JOHN on October 22, 2017 at St. George Cathedral, Worcester, Massachusetts. He is assigned as assistant pastor of the Cathedral.

ELEVATIONS

AL-ASSAF, Father Youhanna, was elevated to the rank and dignity of Archpriest by Metropolitan JOSEPH and Bishop ANTHONY on September 10, 2017, at St. George Church, Akron, Ohio.

LeMASTERS, Priest Philip, was elevated to the rank and dignity of Archpriest by Bishop BASIL on Sunday, October 8, 2017, at St. Luke Church, Abilene, Texas.

LEST WE FORGET: HONOR WALL

Fr. Antony Gabriel is collecting the names and histories of all the clergy who have served our Archdiocese from the earliest days until now. Metropolitan JOSEPH has asked Dimitri Zeidan to work with Fr. Antony to preserve and display the materials collected appropriately. It is Fr. Antony's hope that the collected materials will help tell our story, which is our history. This will allow generations in the future to benefit from the experience of those who came before them, and to help them better understand their spiritual lineage in Christ through His Church. See Fr. Antony's book for examples of the kind of stories that make up our history. These stories make us laugh and cry. They offer insights and information that will allow us to serve our Lord better.

Contact Fr. Antony Gabriel at economosantony@gmail.com, by phone at 520.529.5873, or by mail, and send materials to his home, at 6202 N Via Tres Patos, Tucson AZ 85750.

MESSAGE OF METROPOLITAN JOSEPH TO OUR DEACONS

Needless to say, I expect all of you to know what your diaconate means. It is a holy office, it is a holy *diakonia*. You have to do your service with fear of God, love, faith, obedience, faithfulness, prayerfulness, honesty, and without preconditions or complaints, but rather with joy. *Your ministry is no less than my ministry.*

Let me share with you this piece of history: St. Athanasius the Great was a deacon, like you. He defended the faith when he attended the first Ecumenical Council. He was the center and star of that

Council. The Holy Spirit spoke through him. He inspired all the holy fathers. No one could disregard his office as a deacon. On the other hand, the bishop does not kiss the deacon's hand. Yet when the bishop looks at the icon of the Proto-martyr, Archdeacon Stephen, the bishop himself, the patriarch himself, bows and kisses the Archdeacon Stephen's hand. Why am I telling you these two pieces of history? I do so because the people and everyone will honor your office with respect because of your obedience to the teaching and to Almighty God. Therefore, the more you are the icon of our Lord and holiness comes out in your actions, in your behavior, in your words, in your relationships at home and everywhere, the more you will earn respect and honor from everyone.

I remember the days of my diaconate in Greece in the 1970s. You cannot imagine how much joy and peace, how many good memories I have, and I do not exaggerate when I say that I still feel like I myself am a deacon, because the grace is the same, but the title and the function are different.

From this you can understand that your office is not just to intone the *Ektenias*, but to touch people's lives, bring them to holiness, encourage them, transfigure them, and remind them of their salvation. This is the way I see that your ministry has to be. This is what I meant by saying that your ministry is no less than my ministry.

A deacon can teach, a deacon can preach, a deacon can be a leader, a deacon can be a defender of the faith, a deacon can be a writer, a deacon can be a prophet, a deacon can be a Saint, a deacon can be a cause for people to change their style of life, and a deacon can be an inspiration to his family and to others. So I urge all of you to be holy deacons, above every selfishness, above every grudge, and above every bad desire and all passion.

If someone, honestly and sincerely, feels that God is calling him to the holy priesthood, he has to rejoice and obey with thanksgiving, but if someone does not have the charisma to be called to the holy priesthood, then there is nothing wrong if he remains a deacon for the rest of his life. This is so because, as I mentioned above, the diaconate is a holy rank, just like the episcopacy and the priesthood.

Finally, you know how much I love you and I care to see you holding this holy diaconate seriously, sincerely, faithfully, devoutly, prayerfully, joyfully, gloriously, victoriously, in order to get the reward from God, which is no less than the heavenly Kingdom itself.

THE MESSAGE OF METROPOLITAN JOSEPH ON THE ELEVATION OF CLERGY TO ARCHPRIESTHOOD AS EXAMPLES FOR OTHER CLERGY

I would like to start by thanking each one of you for the hard work you do, the effort you expend, and the sacrifices you endure every day. I have no doubt that all of us are trying to follow the words of the Apostle Paul: *"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice*

of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased" (Hebrews 13:15–16).

I witness this phrase in action every time I visit one of our beloved communities. Recently, I have been receiving inquiries to elevate priests to archpriest and deacons to protodeacons. The practice has been to elevate a priest to the rank of archpriest after ten years of service.

I pondered and prayed about this process for the last couple of months. I would like to remind you that, in order to be eligible to the dignity of the Archpriest rank, some criteria have to be met. The priest has to show wisdom in discerning right and wrong. The same must be true of his humility. He has to see himself as the servant for others, and strive to put the needs of others before his own. This is to be accompanied with passion, perseverance, and vision for the future of the parish. We thank God that all our priests strive for these qualities. They believe in what they are doing and they strive to inspire others. The priest is the one who sees opportunities to grow the parish spiritually. He anticipates small concerns before they become problems. He thinks strategically and spiritually with the eyes of the *nous* to conquer all the attacks of the devil trying to deceive the believers. In addition, the priest is to be an effective communicator, encouraging others to voice their opinion, but also voicing his opinion in a respectful, loving and caring manner. Such qualities need a lifetime to acquire. Ten years of service is not really the measure to be elevated to archpriest.

We will look first to the outstanding growth of the parish, the involvement of the pastor in outreach programs, the shut-ins ministry, the elderly ministry, prison ministry, the contribution to establishing missions, building a new church, reviving the Sunday school, being active in the Young Adult ministry, and, of course, the priest's relationship with his surroundings, bishop and family.



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(I WOULD FLY AWAY continued from page 9)

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

Fr. Fouad Saba, Dean of the cathedral, said that everyone considered Bishop ANTOUN to be “the people’s bishop.” “He was always that person who would be the first to give, and the person to whom we always looked up.”

Following each funeral service (a second one, the general service with the Prayer of Absolution, was held Wednesday, October 11), attendees gave fond recollections. Bishop ANTOUN’s friends from their days at St. Vladimir Seminary in New York – Fr. Antony Gabriel and Fr. Joseph Shaheen – recalled Sayidna’s selflessness and considered him their protector and guide in the priesthood.

His Grace Bishop THOMAS of the Diocese of Oakland, Charleston and the Mid-Atlantic considered him a mentor in the episcopacy. Sayidna THOMAS admitted that he would impersonate Sayidna ANTOUN over the phone to fool some of the priests, but said Sayidna ANTOUN gave him permission to continue doing that. Like other speakers, Bishop THOMAS thanked Fr. Elia Shalhoub for being a wonderful caregiver for Bishop ANTOUN in the last years of his life.

Following funeral services in Coral Gables, Sayidna ANTOUN’s body was flown to Pennsylvania for burial at the Antiochian Village. Hundreds more clergy and laity greeted him there and laid him to rest next to his lifelong friend, Sayidna PHILIP. Both men had traveled millions of miles in their lifetimes to lead and serve the people of God.

Perhaps some of Bishop ANTOUN’s last public remarks at the Convention will best establish his legacy in the Antiochian Archdiocese and the Holy Orthodox Church. “Do not forget me! Bishop ANTOUN is here! And you know what? You cannot imagine this moment tonight. By seeing you here, just to see your faces, you are my sunshine! Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all that you gave to me. I worked for the Church and for you people. And I love you from the bottom of my heart!”

Sub-deacon Peter Samore

A Most Unexpected Blessing

A SAINT CONSOLES A GRIEVING MOTHER

Lindsey Schip Weber
Louisville, Kentucky

We were not planning to attend the Midwest Parish Life Conference in 2014. My husband and I had attended several conferences in prior years and my husband had participated in the Adult Bible Bowl. That year two ladies wanted to represent our parish in the Bible Bowl and he was glad to see others participate. But at the last moment, they were not able to attend, so our priest asked my husband and another lady to step in to represent our parish.

During the conference, we visited the room where books and other wares were sold. We purchased several items, and then noticed icons for sale in the far corner of the room. The iconographer, Brian Matthew Whirlledge, showed us a copy of an icon he had painted for a local hospital's chapel, titled "Christ the Healer." We purchased it and turned to leave when suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, another icon caught my attention. The icon was an original of St. Ephraim, the Great Martyr and Wonderworker of Nea Makri in Greece. We had been asking for the intercessions of this saint for Joseph, our son, even before we lost him tragically at the age of twenty-six.

Joseph was troubled from a very early age with issues stemming from sensory integration dysfunction, and he and the rest of our family suffered much over many years because of his difficulties. When he was in his mid-twenties, a dear parishioner from our church brought us oil from the vigil lamp that hangs over the saint's remains in the Annunciation of the Theotokos Monastery at Nea Makri. St. Ephraim is known for his aid to struggling youths, and sometimes shows his presence by leaving a beautiful fragrance. One day I noticed such a scent after I had been praying for Joseph in his bedroom. Some months later, in the same room, he would take his life.



Even in that dread hour, we soon learned, our fellow parishioner was praying for Joseph at the same time before an icon of St. Ephraim at a monastery in another state. Later on, the abbess of a different monastery, Mother Gabriella of Holy Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction, Michigan, would encourage us to keep asking St. Ephraim to pray for our son.

Understandably, it was a consideration to purchase this original icon of the saint. Brian, the

iconographer, had visited the monastery at Nea Makri with a friend from Greece. He decided to paint the icon after this visit out of love for the saint, even though he did not have a home in mind for the icon. We felt we were why he had painted it. On account of St. Ephraim's intercessions and encouragement to us, we decided to do what we had never done before and spend the extra money for the original icon. We explained to him why the saint was special to us and then he shared something very special. When he was at the monastery in Greece, he had thought how wonderful it would be to have just a splinter from the tree on which the saint was nailed and martyred following eight months of torture. His friend asked for this from the nun who was there. She gave them three triangular pouches, which encased shards from the tree and bits of fabric that had been laid on the saint's bones. Brian had a pouch and the friend had a pouch, but the reason for the third pouch was unknown. Now that he had heard our story, he told us, he would mail the third pouch to us. My immediate response was to be skeptical and judgmental. "Sure," I thought to myself, "he'll never mail it."

To my surprise, about six days later, the relics arrived at our home. The Lord had been merciful to me despite my sinful attitude towards the iconographer. I was in awe at the prospect of having relics from a martyr in our

home. What a treasure! At the time, I knew churches and monasteries had relics, but I was not aware of individuals having them in their homes. For the time being we placed them on our mantel behind our icon of the saint. We really were not sure how we should house them or care for them.

The next summer we visited the monks at the Skete of St. John the Theologian. The fathers helped us pick out a small, brass reliquary, and gave me some ideas about how to choose a box and how to prepare it to receive the reliquary. I neglected to do this for several months. Finally, I got everything ready, transferred the relics from the pouch into the reliquary, and put them into their own box. At some point, in November or December, 2015, we began to notice a lovely fragrance emanating from the relics. I made sure my hands were clean and changed the cotton in which the reliquary sat. The fragrance continued. By the mercy of God, it still continues.

On the relics we place written prayer requests and ask St. Ephraim to intercede for them. When we do so, the scent often grows stronger, with the relics emitting a variety of fragrances, as though from God's heavenly garden.

Nothing can replace the loss of our son. We love and pray for Joseph and so does St. Ephraim. We struggle, but we are encouraged. We take hope in God's mercy and in the interventions and intercessions of His Great Martyr and Wonderworker, St. Ephraim the Newly-Revealed of Nea Makri. Holy Father Ephraim, pray for us.

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TIMEOUT FOR FAMILY

Nayla Daly, St. George, Boston, Massachusetts

Trailing down the winding, tree-lined dirt road on a Friday evening this past fall, my family was fast approaching New England’s first Family Camp. Our car was full with four kids, sleeping bags, suitcases, games, and a lot of noise! We were going to the beautiful St. Methodios Faith and Heritage Center in New Hampshire for a Family Camp, sponsored by the Missions Council of the Diocese of Worcester and New England, with the blessing of His Grace Bishop JOHN. We followed a schedule that modeled the Antiochian Village, where religious discussions, Church and camp life happened for three days.

In the car, my kids were singing camp songs, learned at the Antiochian Village the previous summer, and getting ready for new memories. My husband and I were just as excited to disconnect from our phones, enjoy friends and take a day or two to connect as Orthodox Christians. More talk, and less sleep, proved to be worth the exhausting ride back home.

After settling into our rooms at the Retreat House on Friday evening, an intimate group of parents gathered in an open forum with His Grace Bishop JOHN, while the younger children headed to bed and the older ones played in the game room. With guided conversation, we dove into tough questions and issues that plague us as we raise our kids, tend to our marriages, and live a fast-paced life in which work and other obligations jostle for priority.

In the morning, feeling a little more knowledgeable, but less rested, we woke up to a kaleidoscope of autumn

foliage resting against a serene lake – how glorious and peaceful! It was 9 a.m., time for church. Singing the morning prayers at Matins in the camp’s St. George Chapel felt holy, in company with my children and the children of old and new friends. The feeling of a moment of peace and simple happiness with the familiarity of these hymns was what I wanted to take home with me. After Matins, we had more dynamic conversation, this time with our keynote speaker, Michelle Moujaes, Founder and Executive Director of Faithtree Resources. The kids went for a session of “Ask Abouna” with Father Nicholas Belcher, and other activities led by AV staff alumni from our Diocese. The benefit of these sessions of learning, while we were engaged and felt free to speak our minds, was cleansing and brought focus to who we are as Orthodox Christians.

After lunch we went on to afternoon activities. Many of us went fishing for the first time and enjoyed the surrounding beauty while canoeing on the lake. It was a record-breaking 76 degrees! That evening, we gathered again in the church for Great Vespers, followed by a fun night of games and activities at “Carnival Night.” The highlight of the evening was a game of Human Hungry Hungry Hippos that campers and parents all enjoyed. The weekend culminated with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning.

Family Camp is a weekend to spend as a family away from the hectic pace of everyday life. It is a weekend to relax in nature and to grow in our faith in Christ as a family. The weekend forced us to pause from the everyday noise of our lives. It let us reflect upon who we are as individuals and as a family, while still having lots of fun. Family Camp at the Antiochian Village is now in its fifteenth year, and has become a very popular program. Over 50 families attended this past Memorial Day Weekend. Because the Village is near capacity, and also because of the distance to the Village, Bishop JOHN and the Diocese Mission Council saw the need to bring Family Camp closer to home for New England families. We thank them for their vision and leadership, and look forward to next year’s Diocese Family Camp, tentatively scheduled for Columbus Day Weekend, October 5–8, 2018. Please visit www.antiochian.org/familycampne for more pictures and info from this year’s camp and tentative info for 2018.



Photo Credit: Photo Courtesy of Erick Straghalis



CLERGY SYNAXIS

The Clergy Brotherhood of the Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic met in Synaxis under the patronage and prayers of St. Joseph of Damascus, October 16–19, at Antiochian Village. We experienced once again the warm hospitality and service of the Village under the excellent direction of Amy Stiffler and her staff, and the exquisite cuisine at the hand of Tim Johnston and his crew.

Prayer, fellowship, education and periods of quiet reflection make it a precious time for the brethren with our beloved Bishop THOMAS. This year our speaker was Fr. Joshua Makoul, who led us in four sessions on the theme of the Healing of the Soul, employing his expertise in the modern application of the insights of the desert fathers to our lives. We were encouraged to dig deep to uncover often unconscious or unresolved issues and experiences in our lives and those of our parishioners which can affect our relationships and perceptions – sometimes “shadowboxing with our past through our relationships in the present” (Tian Dayton). His deep reflection on these issues and ability to relate them in accessible terms were clearly manifest and greatly appreciated. We were given tools to deepen our spiritual

life through vigilance and a willingness to explore our own past and perceptions. Thus equipped, we may more effectively pastor the members of the royal priesthood over which we have been given responsibility.

The services of Orthros, Vespers, Compline and the Liturgies in both Western and Eastern traditions fed our souls with prayer, worship and excellent homilies. As is traditional at our Synaxis, we held a Supplication service to St. Raphael and had Trisagion prayers for our leaders of thrice-blessed memory, Metropolitan PHILIP and the recently departed Bishop ANTOUN at their resting places at the Camp. Our joy was mingled with sorrow as we received the news of the repose of our brother, the Archpriest George Rados, whom we remembered at each service. May all their memories be eternal!

We were given a preview of the next Parish Life Conference for our Diocese, which will take place at the Village next summer under the sponsorship of St. Philip’s, Souderton; St. George, Darby; and Holy Ascension, Chester. The directors will be Frs. Noah Bushelli, Joel Gillam and Daniel Meyer. It promises to be a rich experience for all at our “home away from home,” the Antiochian Village.



How You Can Support the Ministry of The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch

Let no man's place, or dignity, or riches, puff him up; and let no man's low condition or poverty abase him. For the chief points are faith towards God, hope towards Christ, the enjoyment of those good things for which we look, and love towards God and our neighbor.

- Saint Ignatius of Antioch

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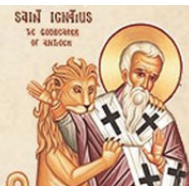
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- Metropolitan Upgrade**

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***Life Upgrade:** The Order of St. Ignatius Loyalty Program: Any Knight/Dame, who has been a member for more than 15 years (active/good Standing members); or any Commander, who has been a member for more than 10 years (active/good Standing members) can upgrade to Life Member for \$10,000 paid in a lump sum or over a 2 year period.

****Metropolitan Upgrade:** The Order of St. Ignatius Loyalty Program: Any Knight/Dame, who has been a member for more than 15 years (active/good Standing members); or any Commander, who has been a member for more than 10 years (active/good Standing members) can upgrade to Metropolitan Member for \$20,000 paid in a lump sum or over a 3 year period. Life members who have fulfilled their initial Life member gift may upgrade to the Metropolitan level for \$10,000 paid in a lump sum or over a 2 year period.

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