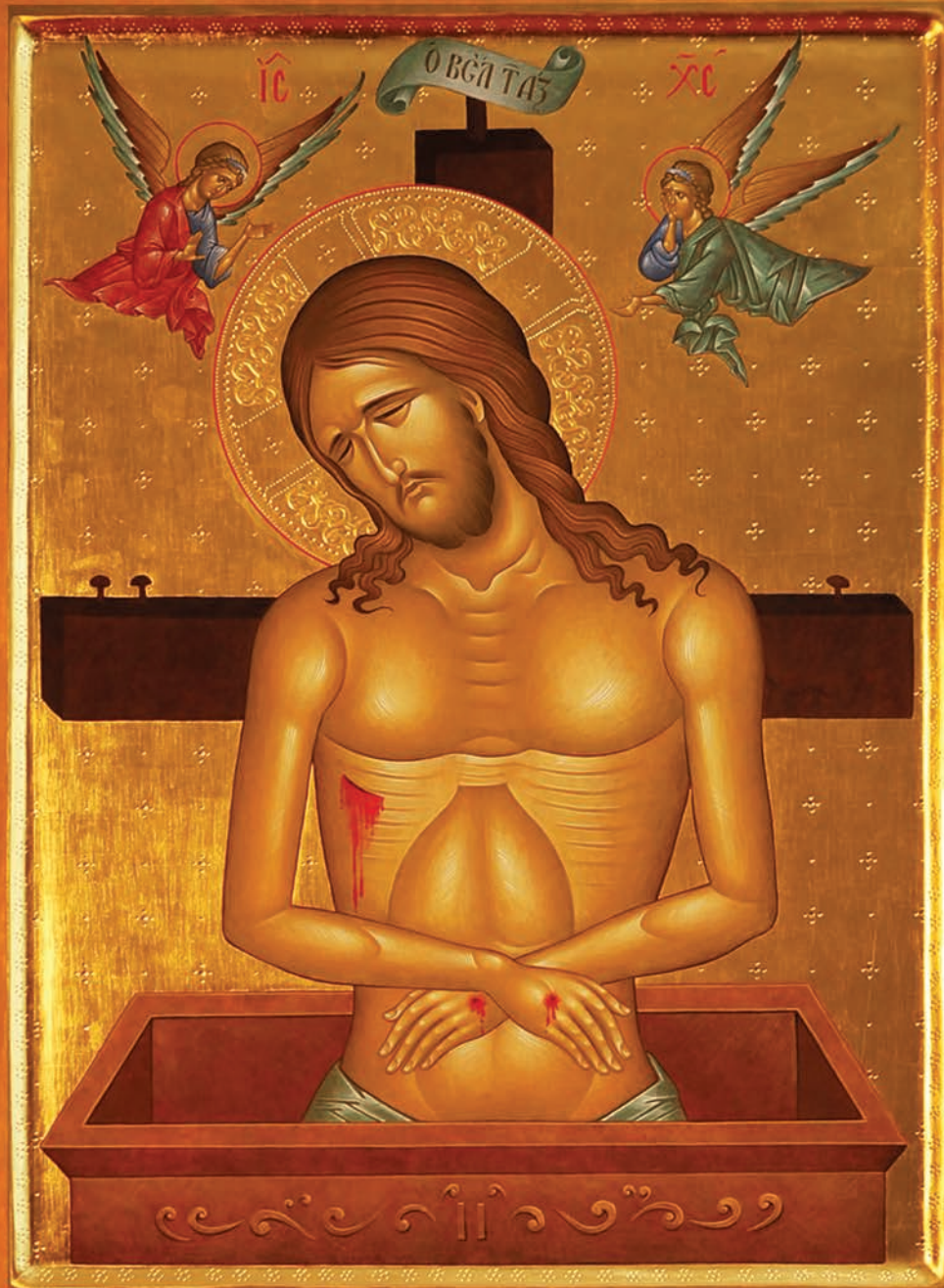


THE WORD

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EXTREME HUMILITY

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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Getting Past Anger and Negative Emotions This Lent

BISHOP JOHN

I was quite moved by Fr. Ted Pulcini's presentations to the clergy of the West Coast about anger (available at Antiochian.org under the news story of the Western Dioceses Clergy Retreat). I don't know anyone who wouldn't benefit from these audio recordings, and I recommend them highly. Fr. Ted not only explored the issue of anger from spiritual, psychological, theological, patristic and scriptural perspectives, but he offered wise and common-sense suggestions, so that we might not be stuck in this menacing emotion. Anger is not new in our day, of course, but it does seem to permeate our lives. Christ has the answer to our "stuckness" in his example of living and in His teachings, both directly recorded in Scripture and in the experience and writings of the saints.

Lent and Holy Week offer us an opportunity to deliberately examine our attitudes and habits, and reorient them to a way more reflective of the image of God in us. God wastes no time being unsettled or petty. He simply loves, as is His nature and His way. For all who avail themselves of it, this love heals, reconciles, unites, and brings joy. Sitting

still and accepting God's love sounds too simple to be true. How could this elude us our whole lives? What can we do to share this secret? How can we make it real in our lives?

Fr. Ted and other thinkers in this area seem all to agree that recognizing the complexities and circumstances of ourselves and those around us is the place to begin. When I understand my brother's history, fears, pains and struggles, I can find compassion and freedom. Honestly assessing my own struggles should allow me to be equally respectful and forgiving of myself. After all, God already knows of all of my experiences and shortcomings. The next step is to remember what God has done for us in allowing His Son to take on flesh and restore us to Himself. Allowing God's love to fill in the gaps of our inadequacies, and to heal and grow, is the only reasonable response to God. He loves us out of His nature. Responding to His love frees us from whatever is less important, or entirely unimportant. It frees us to be as is our nature – like God.

Our Metropolitan JOSEPH reminds us that reorienting our fallen ways requires self-discipline and an ascetic way of life. Lent is certainly the way the Church teaches us how to free ourselves from

sin through righteous living, fasting, prayer, and alms-giving. These tools are available to us all the time.

In Fr. Ted's lectures, he helps us recognize how we have projected onto God our human emotions and limitations. While man is in the image of God, and knowing God can teach us much about man, man in his fallen state – fearful, anxious, habitually angry, and slothful – does not offer an adequate understanding of God. God is beyond all such emotions, and as St. John says in his epistle, God is love. The difficulty is getting past our own limitations to allow God in, or perhaps better said, the challenge is to respond openly to God who comes to us. We keep God at a distance because of our fears, and our projections of human inadequacies or limitations onto Him.

Fr. Ted deals with other negative states, such as depression, similarly. It is a good idea to get support as we seek to reorient ourselves. We want to see how God works in our lives and cares for us, even when our feelings seem to tie us down. Church leaders and parish programs are a great source of benefit and healing. Work with your clergy in sponsoring lectures, retreats and fellowships to work through emotions and experience God in your parish community. Confession is usually a good place to start. Fr. Ted's ways of dealing with anger in many cases can be transferred to these other obstacles. There are also good, God-loving therapists around who can help too. Your priest and fellow parishioners may help you identify such helpers.

The way of Christianity is the practice of love. We are to love our families, as well as those around us. We are to love ourselves, as well as those who hate us and misunderstand us. We love ourselves and each other by being right with God and following Him. Following Him means that we love His way. He loves as the Good Shepherd. He loves as the Father of the prodigal. He loves as the Groom of the Church. He loves as the generous landowner who pays more than the workers deserve. He loves those who mocked, spit upon and crucified Him. He shows us how to love.

I hope that this has been for you a good Lent so far. I pray that we can use the following days of Lent and Holy Week to rid ourselves of negative emotions, and allow the love of God to carry us to His Resurrection, and ultimately to our own in Him.

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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His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

"Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

(1 Corinthians 9:26-27)

Reverend Clergy, Beloved Brothers in Christ:

Greetings and blessings to you and your families in the Name of Our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ!

We stand at the threshold of the Great Fast. The Holy Church calls us to begin the contest by forgiving one another from our whole hearts, and I begin this letter to you by asking your forgiveness for any offense of mine – in word or deed, in knowledge or ignorance. Know that I offer my love and forgiveness to all of you and pray fervently that God will forgive all of us in this age and in the age to come.

The Apostle Paul wrote about the spiritual life in terms of athletic training, disciplining his body and bringing it under subjection in order to do those things he himself was preaching to others. We as clergy, similarly, must forgive if we preach forgiveness. We must fast if we teach fasting. We must give alms if we ask alms. We ourselves must enter fully into the spirit of the Great Fast if we wish our people to do so as well – lest we ourselves be disqualified from the contest.

As the clergy, however, we have the temptation to busy ourselves with all of the many things that need to be done – serving additional services, finishing house blessings, changing altar linens, practicing chanting, checking rubrics, buying items for Holy Week, negotiating with the chanters and choir over who sings what, and so on – and forget to attend to our own spiritual lives. We may find that, although we may be keeping the dietary rules of the fast, we can find little to no time to attend to forgiving those who hurt us, showing love to those around us, confessing our sins to our spiritual fathers, offering heartfelt prayer to God, and finding time to read for our own spiritual nourishment.

So I do not offer the words of St. Paul to encourage greater acts of self-mortification for our clergy. Actually, I see the temptation for us to discipline our bodies through fasting and busyness while not allowing the time of the Fast to renew us spiritually. Our bodies may be subject, but our hearts and souls remain asleep.

Beloved brothers, we know that this is difficult. The enemy of our salvation fights us every step of the way. Our moods and the moods of our families and people become more subject to stress and sharpness. The schedule is grueling, while our bodies are weakened. Our only way forward is to look ahead to the Cross of Our Lord. We must call to mind that His meekness revealed divine power, His suffering ended in victory, and His death became life. When we meekly accept the hardships of this time of year, we receive Christ's divine power. When we take up our crosses, we are granted Christ's victory. When we die to ourselves, Christ gives us His Life.

Know that I love and care for all of you. As a loving father, I ask you to embrace not only the disciplines of the fast, but the renewal Our Lord is offering us. Let no one of us be caught preaching to others while becoming ourselves disqualified. Let this truly be our spiritual springtime.

With fervent prayers that God will grant to all of us to complete the time of the Fast and be made worthy to worship His Saving Passion and glorify His Third-day Resurrection, 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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"FROM THESE STONES"

DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

Ten Things You Can Do to Grow or Revitalize Your Parish

Fr. Michael Lillie

OFTEN IN OUR PARISH COMMUNITIES WE SPEND A LOT OF TIME AND ENERGY THINKING ABOUT HOW WE CAN EITHER GROW OR REVITALIZE OUR PARISH. THESE THOUGHTS OFTEN TURN OUTWARD, TO THE GREATER COMMUNITY, AND WE PONDER HOW WE CAN REACH THEM TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS. IN THESE DISCUSSIONS, HOWEVER, WE OFTEN MISS THE SIMPLER, TRADITIONAL, YET EFFECTIVE WAYS WE CAN STRENGTHEN OUR PARISHES INWARDLY, WAYS THAT WOULD ALSO PROMOTE GROWTH AND, OR, REVITALIZATION. HERE ARE TEN SUGGESTIONS.



1 TAKE YOUR FAMILY TO CHURCH

Many who grew up in a parish or who have been members of a parish for a long time know that people fall away. This is probably the case in most of our families. For whatever reason, people stop coming to church. The first thing we can do to help revitalize our parishes is to make sure our lapsed family or friends know that they're welcome to return; perhaps we can offer them a ride to Church. There are many things that compete for our time, sadly, even on Sunday. It is imperative that our children know that the worship of the Lord is the sole obligation

for Sunday. With very few exceptions, we should not bless them to miss church for other activities, such as sports events, entertainment, or overnight stays with friends. If children do not know that worship is a priority when they are young, we cannot be surprised if it is not a priority for them when they are older.

2 PRAY

Never underestimate the power of prayer. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). Pray for the growth of your parish. Pray at home during your morning and evening prayers, and ask your priest if he can add petitions to the liturgy or serve a *Paraklesis* (prayer of supplication) for this intention. We can do nothing without God's help, so let us not forget His divine assistance here.

3 ATTEND EVENING SERVICES

The Orthodox Church has a cycle of services leading up to the Divine Liturgy. This includes Vespers and Matins. These services should not be viewed as optional, but as a necessary preparation for the reception of Holy Communion. If you want to see

your parish grow, then attend these services. Parishes that are active and alive will see many parishioners at evening services because they are grace-filled and conducive to prayer. Also, if a visitor were to come to these services and find an empty church, he would not likely return.

4 HAVE A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE AND CHILDBEARING

The Orthodox Church assumes that marriages will be between an Orthodox man and an Orthodox woman, yet we often make concessions if one of the partners is of another Christian creed. This pastoral approach, though well-intended, has occasionally led some to leave the Church because of the lack of faithful support and sharing in familiar traditions together. Further, many married couples decide to wait too long to have children, or limit the number *they* want. With few exceptions, we should be open to having children when we get married. Keep your parish strong and growing by reminding singles that it is best to marry within the Orthodox faith, and that marriage means receiving the blessing of children as and when God sees fit.

5 BEAUTY

Beauty is a window through which we can encounter God. It can be a powerful tool for evangelization and a means of grace. Recognizing this, we should make our churches as beautiful as possible. Through this beauty, many may be drawn into the parish. This beautification includes adorning our church with traditional décor, developing beautiful music, and serving the Divine Liturgy prayerfully, conscious of Him whom we worship. The Russian Primary Chronicles tell us that it was the beauty of the Agia Sophia church and service that converted the Russian peoples to Orthodoxy: "We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty."

6 OPEN DOORS

This sub-title has a double meaning. First, our parishes should be open to whoever shows up at our doors by offering hospitality and making them



This article was slightly edited by the Department of Missions & Evangelism to reflect Antiochian practice. The original article can be found at <https://nativityof-christ.net/10-things-you-can-do-to-grow-or-revitalize-your-parish/> Used with permission.

comfortable (without drawing too much attention to them). Second, the parish needs to keep the doors open more often: more feast days and more weekday services must be served and attended. A church closed six days out of seven does nothing for parish growth.

7 FREQUENT CONFESSION AND COMMUNION

A parish that is serious about growing must first have members who are serious about their salvation. Confession deepens personal faith, but it takes faithful energy to go to confession regularly. Ignoring our sins and avoiding confession leads us to drift into the worldly and sensual ways of life assumed in mass media, into the broken ways of the world, and to losing the joy of a strong life of faith. Therefore, parishes that do not promote frequent confession



and communion will not see the fruit worthy of repentance. Revitalizing a parish starts with revitalizing our own souls. We cannot give what we do not have. If we wish to offer others in the community the peace of Christ, then we must first acquire this peace through frequent confession and communion.

8 PIETY

Traditional pious practices in our churches must be preserved. Our society is rather casual in its approach to life in general. We must not allow this attitude to enter our Orthodox Christian piety and behavior. Pious practices such as priest blessings,

the veneration of icons, modest dress, standing for services, and so forth, seem strange to many in our modern world, but it is this piety that separates us outwardly from secular culture and other Christian faith groups, and reminds us of who we are. Keep and promote pious practices and be as “Orthodox” as possible, without falling into pharisaism. Younger people surprisingly gravitate to these practices. They want authenticity and need examples to follow.

9 LEARN YOUR FAITH

We must never stop learning the substance of our faith. When we stop learning we become lukewarm and complacent. The Lord warned the Laodiceans that, “because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:16). The more we are learning about our faith, the more we can speak to people who inquire about Orthodoxy. If we are learning little, how can we speak to potential visitors intelligently? Thus, we must work on our journey to Christian maturity, making available opportunities for catechesis, formation and regular Christian fellowship, and attending them.

10 STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is the way in which disciples of Jesus choose to live their lives. They recognize that everything they have is a gift from God, and they strive to use those gifts to honor and serve Him, to help other people, and to make the world a better place. The most obvious way of doing this is to make offerings to the Church, which the parish can use for beautification and outreach. We should all give weekly, proportionate to what God has given us (1 Corinthians 16:2), and we should not do this reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). If the church membership is not willing to provide the financial means to keep it operating, then why look for others outside the church to do so?

These ten things can have a dramatic effect on parish growth or revitalization, yet the success of a parish is not to be judged by the number of people in the church, but by the depths of the spiritual lives they live.

Fr. Michael is the pastor of Nativity of Christ Orthodox Church, Youngstown, Ohio.

The Flag of Our Lord’s Eternal Kingdom

Rev. Jason Falcone, Th.M.

I once had an interesting conversation with a friend who attends a non-Orthodox church. He was telling me that his congregation had recently acquired a new building for their non-denominational services. He said, however, that one of the pastor’s first directions was to ask that the cross be taken down from the new church. When I asked him the reason for this, he told me that the crucifixion was a painful moment in the life of Christ, and so they don’t want to display it. He went on to say that the people in his congregation don’t wear crosses either, for the same reason.

For Orthodox, why does the cross hold such a central place in our faith? We make the sign of the cross, we wear crosses, and the priest blesses and even absolves sins and expels demons with the sign of the Lord’s cross. Why is our faith uniquely represented by the symbol of an ancient instrument of torture and execution? While this is certainly illogical by worldly standards, the cross embodies the mystery of the humility of God.

We understand from the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church that all evil has its first origin in pride. The devil fell through pride, and humans continue to fall away from God through preferring their own way to the way of God. This pride infects the order of the world: the way of the world seeks more and more power, wealth, fame, status, and illusory self-importance. Rather than love of neighbor, the worldly mentality seeks one’s own good at the expense of others.

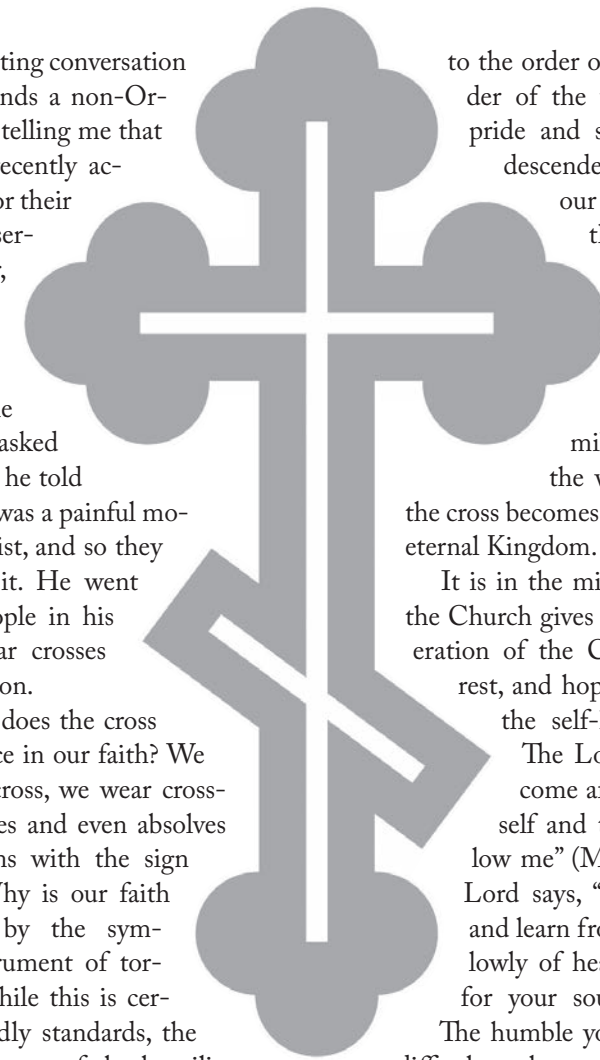
The cross of our Lord stands in absolute contrast

to the order of the world. While the order of the world seeks to ascend in pride and self-importance, our Lord descended in humility and love for our salvation. The extreme of this humble love and self-emptying is found in the cross, through which the power and glory of our all-loving God is made manifest. This humility and love of our Lord is the way of His Kingdom, and the cross becomes the symbol and flag of this eternal Kingdom.

It is in the midst of the Great Fast that the Church gives us the Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross, to give us strength, rest, and hope by the power of God in the self-humiliation of our Lord. The Lord says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). Again, the Lord says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29).

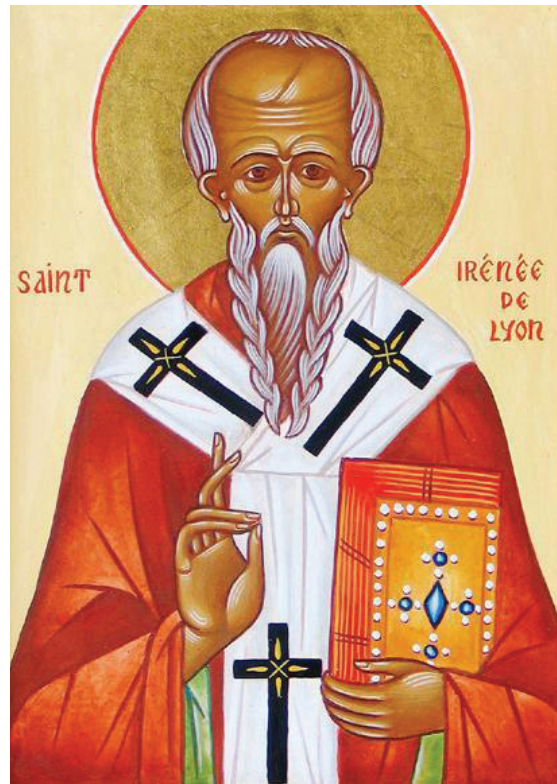
The humble yoke of the cross may seem difficult to the world, but the cross is infused with the power of God, by which He gives us rest and peace for our souls. In reality, it is the yoke of pride that is truly heavy: there is no peace in revenge, bitterness, and seeking our own way and our own desires apart from God.

In making the sign of the cross, we join ourselves to the reality of Christ’s eternal Kingdom. In wearing and displaying crosses, we mark ourselves with the flag of our Lord’s eternal Kingdom. In venerating the cross, we reverence the everlasting victory of our Lord’s humble love and sacrifice over all the vain forces of evil.



ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON, AGAINST THE GNOSTICS

Father Dan Daly



GIVEN THE MANY GREAT THEOLOGIANs AMONG THE CHURCH FATHERS, FOR ONE TO BE CALLED THE “FOUNDER OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY” IS CERTAINLY NOTEWORTHY.¹ THIS ATTRIBUTION BELONGS TO ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON (c. 130- c. 200 A.D.), WHO IS REGARDED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT THEOLOGIAN OF THE SECOND CENTURY. HE LIVED IN THE LATTER HALF OF THAT CENTURY, A TIME PLAGUED BY THE MOST PERNICIOUS AND COMPLICATED HERESY, THAT OF *Gnosticism*.

The greatness of St. Irenaeus is in large part due to his “*Unmasking and Refutation of False Gnosis*” (the title of his famous work). Gnosticism was a collection of philosophical and religious thoughts whose advocates had endeavored to sabotage the most fundamental truths of the faith: its beliefs regarding creation, divine revelation and salvation. Much of Irenaeus’ life was caught up in preventing the Church from being hijacked by Gnosticism.

This conflict produced the five books known also by the Latin title *Adversus Haereses*.

St. Irenaeus was born in the mid-Second Century, very likely in Asia Minor and possibly in Smyrna. We know that he was both a priest and a bishop of Lyon in Gaul, although we do not know what circumstances took him there. He was involved in two controversies that troubled the Church of Rome: the conflict over the date of Pascha and the problems surrounding Montanism.² Beyond these events we know very little. Fortunately, Irenaeus left us a most remarkable letter, written to his childhood friend Florinus, in which he reveals experiences that would mark him for the rest of his life, and give us insight into the life of this Church Father. These experiences set the theological path that he would follow for the rest of his life, the path of the living Apostolic Tradition.

When I was still a boy, I knew you, Florinus, in lower Asia, in Polycarp’s house I remember the events of those days more clearly than those which happened recently ... so that I can speak even of the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and disputed, how he came in and went out, the character of his life, the appearance of his body, the discourses, which he made to the people, how he reported his relationship with John and with the others who had seen the Lord, how he remembered their words, and what were the things concerning the Lord, which he had heard from them, and about their miracles, and about their teachings, and how Polycarp had received them from the eye-witnesses of the Logos of Life, and reported all things in agreement with the Scriptures. I listened eagerly even then to these things through the mercy of God, which was given me, and made notes of them, not on paper, but in my heart, and ever by the grace of God do I truly ruminate on them.³

St. Irenaeus is clearly linked to the Apostolic Age. Irenaeus sat at the foot of the Great Martyr Polycarp of Smyrna. Here he encountered the living faith of the apostles. St. Polycarp was a living link to St. John the Evangelist, who in turn was a witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. St. Polycarp went to his death defending its truth. This childhood experience marked Irenaeus for the rest of his life. He championed the living gospel against the second-century attack on the fundamentals of the Gospel by the Gnostics.

GNOSTICISM

Gnosticism has been called “one of the worst dangers ever to face Christianity,”⁴ It was a movement that swept from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, disseminating scriptures and mythologies, ravaging Gaul as it was also ravaging Italy and the East. It was present in all the major cities of the Mediterranean world, in Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Rome. As will be shown, it sought to destroy both the Scriptures and the Faith of the Church.

It lasted for centuries, and yet it was a movement so complex that it defies a comprehensive definition. The Jesuit scholar Rev. George MacRae defines it as “a widespread religious philosophy, current

especially in the early centuries of the Christian Era, which was characterized by the doctrine that salvation is achieved through knowledge or gnosis.”⁵ It was much more, however. The later, fourth-century heretics would attack the Blessed Trinity and the Person of Jesus Christ. Gnosticism attacked virtually every belief of the Church.

THE ORIGINS OF GNOSTICISM

Scholars have offered differing opinions about where and when it began. Most likely it arose in the Middle East. Much of what we know comes from the writings of the early Church Fathers who refuted it. In 1947, a library of gnostic writings was discovered in Chenoboskion, also known as Nag Hamadi, Egypt, which tend to affirm what the Fathers of the Church reported about the movement.⁶

MacRae offers a clarification of this historic movement. The Gnosticism of the early Christian centuries was regarded as a Christian heresy. “In various forms it persisted until the 7th Century, and the name *Gnosticism* was limited to them until modern times. In the 18th and 19th centuries it began to receive a much broader scope when historians observed many of the distinguished features of Gnosticism, particularly its myths and images in a host of other religious movements, some of them decidedly not Christian.” Even in the twenty-first century there exist gnostic churches and organizations.⁷ Gnostic ideas fill the shelves of modern bookstores. We may discover that the “new age” ideas are in fact really “old age” ideas.

The most plausible explanation for the origins of Gnosticism would seem to be syncretism, which was the attempt to merge various religious and philosophical traditions of Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia into one system, even though they might be inconsistent and contradictory.

One common component in all forms of early Gnosticism is cosmic dualism. Gnostic cosmology presents two opposing realms: the heavenly, spiritual realm of goodness, spirit and light, called the *Pleroma*, and the lower, created world of matter, darkness and evil. Mystery religions, astrology, pagan gods, were all merged into the Gnostic cosmic view. Gnosticism was an attempt to resolve the age-old questions that have plagued mankind, those of evil and death. Its continued seductiveness lies in its appeal to those not grounded in biblical faith. The gnostic solutions were decidedly not Christian.

They offered special, secret knowledge that the Gnostics alone possessed, as a way of salvation, which for them was to escape the physical creation which they regarded as evil.

THE BATTLE AGAINST THE GNOSTICS

The Christian fathers of the Second Century were well aware of its dangers. Hegisippus, the early church historian, Tertulian of North Africa, Clement of Alexandria, and Hippolytus of Rome were all conscious of its dangers to the Christian faith. The most important early Christian writer to analyze and condemn it, however, was St. Irenaeus of Lyon.

At the request of a friend, St. Irenaeus wrote the most famous rebuttal of Gnosticism in the five books entitled, *Unmasking and Refutation of False Gnosis*, or commonly known as *Adversus Heraeses*.⁸

Book I of the *Adversus Hereses* deals with the detection of the gnostic heresies. He begins with a description of the doctrine of the most important Gnostic, Valentinian. He then examines the teachings of a series of other, well-known, gnostic teachers. The second part of his work consists in the “overthrow” of Gnosticism. Book II refutes the *gnosis* of the Valentinians and the Marcionites from reason; Book III does the same from the doctrine of the Church and Christ; and Book IV does so from the sayings of the Lord. Book V treats almost exclusively the resurrection of the flesh.⁹

The description of the doctrines of Valentinian make very difficult reading. Irenaeus is to be admired for his ability to describe and refute what have been called writings of which “nothing more absurd than these has probably ever been imagined by rational beings.”¹⁰ *Adversus Heraeses* is not a “page turner.”

Valentinian presents a twofold cosmos: the upper realm, called the *Pleroma*, and the lower material world of creation. The *Pleroma* is not the heavenly realm where God dwells in light. It is the realm of an *Aeon* named Bythus who with his consort Ennoea brings forth further *Aeons*, who in turn produce a series of lesser *aeons*.

Unlike the Creation account in the Book of Genesis, the world is not created out of nothing, and most emphatically, it is not good! The lower world, the world of matter, comes about through the “passions” of another Aeon known as Sophia. Sophia had been removed from the *Pleroma*. Along

with a Demiurge named Metropator, the material world comes into existence. Matter is incapable of salvation. Man’s salvation can only be attained through a special gnostic revelation; not the salvation available through the Incarnate Word of God Jesus Christ, but through a secret knowledge available only from the Gnostics. Gnostic salvation is an escape from the created evil world. Salvation for the Gnostics is freeing the divine spark that is within each man. This stands in absolute contradistinction to the mystery of the Incarnation, in which the uncreated Word of God becomes flesh for the life of the world. Irenaeus presents an all-embracing understanding of salvation in a theology of “recapitulation.” “Recapitulation for Irenaeus is a taking up in Christ of all since the beginning. God rehabilitates the earlier divine plan for the salvation of mankind which was interrupted by the fall of Adam, and gathers up his entire work from the beginning to renew, to restore, to reorganize it in his Incarnate Son, who in this way becomes for us a second Adam.”¹¹

Gnostic Revelation comes not through Jesus Christ but is a secret knowledge passed on to the gnostic teachers. This is both completely heretical and a distortion of the historical events of the Incarnation. The biblical understanding of Creation, Revelation and Salvation is completely distorted. The events and persons of the Bible are completely reinterpreted as part of their gnostic system. Nothing is as it appears in the Scriptures. “These men falsify the oracles of God and prove themselves evil interpreters of the oracles of God.” As the persons and events of the Scriptures are absorbed and distorted into the gnostic explanation of creation and salvation, Gnosticism becomes a parasitic religion, capable of confusing susceptible people.

As Fr. Georges Florovsky notes, Irenaeus “made it a kind of official duty to know all the heresies with the explicit purpose of refuting them so that the received faith, the faith from the tradition of the Apostles would triumph For him, the very fact of revealing the system of the Gnostics was to vanquish them.”¹² And this is what he does, insisting on the fundamental truth of the Apostolic Tradition.

How important the “received tradition” is for St. Irenaeus is clear when he discusses “the writings,” that is, the Scriptures. The gnostic heretics attack “the writings,” saying that they are “not correct, or authoritative.” St. Irenaeus then turns for his defense to the received and preserved tradition, a

defense which becomes the crucial test for orthodoxy and heterodoxy. He must present a specific defense because, as he writes, “what it comes to is that they will not agree with either Scripture or tradition.”¹³ “The tradition of the apostles, made clear in the entire world, can be clearly seen in every church by those who wish to behold the truth. We can enumerate those who were established by the apostles as bishops in the churches, and their successors down to our time, none of whom taught or thought anything like their mad ideas. Even if the apostles had known of hidden mysteries, which they taught to the perfect secretly and apart from others, they would have handed them down especially to those to whom they were entrusting the churches themselves.”¹⁴ Here we have the foundation of Christian theology.

In his later work, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Tradition*, Irenaeus summarizes his argument both from Scripture and from Tradition:

If the prophets thus predicted that the Son of God would appear on the earth, if they announced where on earth, how and in what manner he would manifest Himself, and if the Lord took upon Himself all that had been foretold of Him, our belief in Him is firmly established and the tradition of our preaching must be true, i.e., true is the testimony of the Apostles who were sent by God, who preached all over the world about the sacrifice which the Son of God made by suffering death and resurrection.¹⁵

TRADITION

In his refutation of the false gnosis, St. Irenaeus returns to the historic events of the Christian faith, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These events occurred in time, and on earth. The events were witnessed by human beings. What makes the church apostolic is its links to these witnesses. The New Testament, especially the Gospels, contains the record of that witness. Fr. John Meyendorff notes, “Scripture while complete in itself presupposes Tradition, not as an addition, but as a milieu in which it becomes understandable and meaningful.”¹⁶ St. Basil the Great spoke of Scripture and Tradition. Some teachings were preserved in writings, others from apostolic teaching. Both are of the same value.¹⁷ This is the Tradition St. Irenaeus heard at the feet of St. Polycarp. The Gnostics appealed

to a secret tradition; Irenaeus appealed to the public Apostolic Tradition. “Tradition is the sacramental continuity in history of the communion of the saints; in a way it is the Church itself.”¹⁸ “Again, when we refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles, [and] which is preserved by means of the succession of presbyters in the Churches, they object to tradition, saying that they themselves are wiser not merely than the presbyters, but even than the apostles”¹⁹

THE APOSTOLIC FAITH

Now the Church, although scattered over the whole civilized world to the end of the earth, received from the apostles and their disciples its faith in one God, the Father Almighty... and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation, and in the Holy Spirit... Having received this preaching and this faith... the Church, although scattered in the whole world, carefully preserves it, as if living in one house. She believes these things everywhere alike, as if she had but one heart and one soul, and preaches them harmoniously, teaches them, and hands them down, as if she had but one mouth. For the languages of the world are different but the meaning of the tradition is one and the same... For since the faith is one and the same, he who can say much about it does not add to it, nor does he who can say little diminish it... the real Church has one and the same faith everywhere in the world.

...

For we learned the plan of salvation from no others but from those through whom the gospel came to us, they first preached it abroad, and then later ... handed it down to us in writings.²⁰

THE IMPORTANCE OF ST. IRENAEUS

The importance of St. Irenaeus can be seen certainly in his defense of the faith against the Gnostics, but his theology is vital to Orthodox Christianity in the Twenty-First Century. He affirmed that Christianity is based on the intervention of God into human history. The events of that intervention are the foundation of Christian faith. The only valid source of information about those events are to be found in the witnesses to those

events. That witness is available to us in Scripture and the Apostolic Tradition.

Today modern Gnostics attempt to tell us the “real history of Jesus.” The so-called “historical Jesus” is contrasted with the Jesus of the New Testament. Their method bears close resemblance to the second-century Gnostics. What we know of Jesus Christ we know through the witnesses to his life, death and resurrection. This is the Apostolic witness. There is no other Christ than the Christ of the Gospels. No books have undergone more scholarly scrutiny than the books of the New Testament. And so we hear at every divine liturgy, “Wisdom, attend!”

The Gnostics regarded the material world as evil, and spiritual reality as good. Although most Christians would not regard the material world as evil, there is a noticeable aversion among non-Orthodox to the use of material things in worship. To deny the goodness of the creation is to deny the goodness of the Creator. The maxim, “to worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24) can be misinterpreted to mean living in a world of religious ideas, not touching the world that Christ came to save. The use of incense, sacred images, oil, water, and wine is troublesome to many non-Orthodox Christians. Holy relics are very problematic to many Protestants. Sadly, the tomb and remains of St. Irenaeus were utterly destroyed in 1562 by the Huguenots.

The sacraments involve the material world. Water, bread, wine, oil are seen as means of divine grace. The rejection of the sacraments and the Church itself as a means of salvation may well be rooted in the gnostic rejection of the world. Christ has come to save the world (John 3:17). “Behold,” He says, “I come to make all things new” (Revelation 21:5). St. Irenaeus’s theology is important for its method of defending the faith on the basis of both Scripture and Tradition. From him we are reminded of the authenticity of the Gospel, salvation through the Incarnation, and the goodness of the created world. Finally Irenaeus reminds us of the importance of Tradition.

Tradition may be described as the living memory of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, which finds its expression in the Scriptures, the church Fathers, the creed and ecumenical councils, the liturgical life of the church, and the orthodox icons. All are vital to the life of the Church. The loss of memory in a human being brings about the tragic state of amnesia. Should a church lose its memory,

the consequences would be similar. This amnesia is the cause of much confusion in twenty-first-century Christianity.

Should not the witness of the Orthodox Church in the Twenty-First Century be to hold fast to that memory and to assist our fellow Christians to rediscover it? The Orthodox of the Twenty-First Century must return to the spirit of St. Irenaeus.

Fr. Daniel Daly
Fr. Daniel Daly is a retired priest of the Antiochian Archdiocese living in Round Rock, Texas.

1. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. 1, (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics Inc.), p. 294.
2. The conflict over the date of Pascha was with the Christians of Asia Minor. They were known as Quartodecimans, who celebrated Easter on the eve of the 14th of the Jewish month of Nisan. Montanism also arose in Asia Minor. Known as the New Prophecy, it came to be regarded as heretical because of its dependence on prophetic revelations.
3. This letter was preserved by Eusebius in his *History of the Church* (Middlesex England: Dorset Press, 1965), pp. 227–228.
4. George MacRae, S.J., “Gnosticism,” in Vol. VI of the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (McGraw Hill Book Co., 1967), p. 523.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 524.
7. Linda Edwards, “*Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica*,” in *A Brief Guide to Beliefs: Ideas, Theologies, Mysteries, and Movements* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 481.
8. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, *Ante Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), pp. 315–567.
9. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. 1, p. 289.
10. *Ante Nicene Fathers*, op. cit., p. 311.
11. Quasten, op. cit., p. 296.
12. Richard S. Haugh, ed., “The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century,” in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* (Bellmont, MS: Notable & Academic/Buchervertriebanstalt, Nordland Publ., 1985), Chapter Five.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Tradition*, 86, cited by Quasten, op. cit., p. 292.
16. John Meyendorff, *Living Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1978), p. 16.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. *Adversus Heraeses*, III.2.2.
20. *Adversus Heraeses*, III.1.10.

SHARING THE FAITH

BELOVED BROTHERS AND SISTERS,



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

– St. John Chrysostom

We begin with a few notes: Church School Certificates of Attendance and Appreciation are on our website at <http://ww1.antiochian.org/attendance-certificates>.

I will be attending the National Convention, tentatively scheduled for the presentation, “The Orthodox Faith and the Next Generation.” The insights of Dr. John Boojamra along with those of Fr. Anton Vrame, and Sophie Koulomzin will be presented, as they contribute to my vision for the new curriculum.

I began my research for a new, formational curriculum by reading the articles of those who sought to form the curriculum of the Orthodox Christian Education Commission in the 1960s. Sophie Koulomzin solicited articles from noted theologians and catechists for the OCEC Bulletins. I am transcribing some of these, and they will be featured on the Christian Education website in the next school year, as well as in the Department’s pages for *The WORD*. (See “Church School Organization,” below.) In this issue we are also featuring current Church School Directors who have agreed to speak about their programs in Anna-Sarah Farha’s interview project. *Our heartfelt gratitude to all of you!*

I hope the upcoming celebration of Christ’s Resurrection inspires an abiding joy!

Carole A. Buleya, Director



AODCE SOCIAL NETWORKING MINISTRY

To nurture the children God has placed in our care!

Just a reminder that the AODCE Social Networking Ministry offers wonderful resources. Please take the time to explore the sites. We continue during the summer, too!

Kristina Wenger, Staff Assistant for Social Network Ministry



At Facebook.com
Orthodoxchristianparenting
Orthodoxchristiansundaychurchschoolteachers
Orthodoxchristianchurchschoololdirectors



At WordPress (.wordpress.com)
Orthodoxchristianparenting
Orthodoxchristianchurchschoolteachers

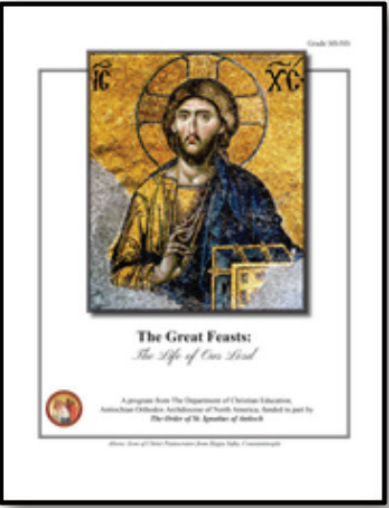


www.pinterest.com/aodce

“GREAT FEASTS: THE LIFE OF OUR LORD”

A new resource, at four levels: at <http://ww1.antiochian.org/great-feasts-life-our-lord>

Why Teach the Great Feasts? Taken together, they comprise the life of our Lord. The children need to know more than His teachings and miracles, they need to know His life story in order to *know and love Him*. In addition, His story must become the foundation for their lives, the foundation upon which they build their character and their own life story.



2019 CREATIVE FESTIVALS

Antiochian Village: Past, Present and Future; “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*”



The Department would like to thank every parish that participated. Knowing that it can be a challenge for the larger parishes to assemble all the entries, we are especially grateful that they gave their children the chance to submit their creative work!

In addition, we are certainly appreciative of the judges who volunteered for the difficult task of determining the rankings of the submissions! May God bless all of you for your donation of time on behalf of the children of the Archdiocese.



CHURCH SCHOOL DIRECTORS

For the past 18 months, Church School Directors across the Archdiocese have participated in an interview series with the Antiochian Orthodox Department of Christian Education (AODCE), sharing about the Church Schools in their parishes. Diversity of curriculum. East Coast and West, Eastern and Western Rite, small parishes and large – it might seem as though there are more differences than similarities between the directors. Yet, there are important common threads. In the highlights below you can see their resolute dedication to task and parish, and their emphasis on caring for the teachers who are educating our youth. Their methods may vary, but the aim of each is a healthy, growing Church School, in which students experience the fullness of our Faith and teachers feel supported and valued.

Rebekah Yergo, St. John Chrysostom Orthodox Church (York, PA)



St. John Chrysostom Sunday Church School enrolls an average of 80 students, with classes organized by groups of 2 to 3 grade levels, and high school students together in one class.

“In the past, we brainstormed a way to be accountable for what we do in the classroom setting; a way to become more visible and connected to those who don’t come or participate, and to encourage people to be faithful in attendance and volunteer in the programs. We came up with Recognition Day. On this day, teachers take turns telling the congregation a brief summary of their classroom ages, activities, or goals, or a funny anecdote. They then recognize students for attendance, participation and any measurable goals that they achieved in the year. Graduates are recognized on this day, and this year we will be recognizing the teachers as well.”

Laila Ferris, St. George Orthodox Church (El Paso, TX)



At the time of the interview, there were 37 students enrolled in St. George Sunday Church School and classes were organized by groups of two grade levels, plus grades 8 to 12 together as one class.

“I feel that it is important for the church school staff to use their abilities and knowledge to engage the students in learning about their faith through a variety of resources and instructional methods. These include hands-on activities, digital activities, and creative projects. The teacher/student relationship is also important. Church school staff

need to get to know their students, their families, their interests, and their abilities. We can then serve them better through the right variety of resources and activities and ensure their growing understanding of the Faith.”

Anna Rowe, St. Michael Orthodox Church (Van Nuys, CA)

Anna is in her third year as church school director at St. Michael. The parish had 70 students enrolled in Sunday Church School at the time of the interview.

“I love working with kids and helping them learn about Christ. I have a degree in education, and I am currently a teacher. Working with children has always been my goal. This year we launched a new attendance incentive program for the students. During the Christmas season, if students attend church school for a predetermined number of Sunday classes, then they will earn a Nativity piece to start their own collection. We can’t wait for the next church school year to grow this program further.”



Sammye Fuller, Holy Trinity Orthodox Church (Little Rock, AR)

As the only teacher at Holy Trinity Sunday Church School in the beginning, Sammye filled the roles of teacher and director, and much more. Through her dedication the program grew, and she has now officially served as Sunday School Director for seven years. The parish has 25 students enrolled for the 2018–2019 school year.

“As a small church, we don’t always have children of every age: thus the blended classes. In the years we have had Sunday School, our teenage population has been small, sometimes as few as one. And, the older children don’t always want to be added to a younger class. This year we were able to offer a class every other week for our teenagers. They are currently studying the Ecumenical Councils. They will also look at contemporary heresies. The subject matter seems to interest them, and they use smart phones to find information related to the topic during class.”



Arlyn Kantz, St. Peter Orthodox Church (Ft. Worth, TX)

Arlyn has taught History and Bible at St. Peter’s Classical school for the past six years and has served as Director of Christian Education for the parish for the last three. St. Peter Sunday Church School has approximately 22 students on a regular basis.

“We are blessed to have two teachers per level. Additionally, we have two energetic and spiritually mature leaders who take the youth into their hearts, praying for them regularly and investing on a personal level. SOYO leadership creates an interactive atmosphere so teenagers are not subjected simply to a second sermon by an adult figure, but are given the freedom to interact, both asking and answering spiritual questions. Most of our volunteers are veteran educators, so it is very much a team approach. We are always looking for and praying about the inclusion of fresh volunteers, guarding against a sense of ownership of a particular ministry.”

I am grateful to all the participating directors. Thank you for enthusiastically supporting Orthodox Christian Education and thank you for sharing about the Sunday Church Schools in your parishes. The Directors of Saints Peter and Paul, Potomac, MD, St. George Cathedral, Coral Gables, FL, and St. Andrew, Woodway, TX, will be featured in the September DCE pages. This interview series will continue as long as there are willing volunteers. To participate, email aodce.csdirectors@gmail.com

The full interviews are available at (<http://ww1.antiochian.org/category/christian-education/especially-directors>).

Anna-Sarah Farha



DEPARTMENT TRAINING AND EVENT UPDATES

Parish Life Conferences (PLC) Workshops are currently planned in several Dioceses. In the *Diocese of Wichita*, Deacon Elisha Long will present “Lessons from the Front Lines,” addressing the pressures and opportunities facing this generation, and how to lead them. Robert Snyder will host several workshops, including, “Equipping Parents as the Primary Educators,” and “Have We Done Christian Education Wrong?” for the *Diocese of Toledo* PLC. Carole Buleza will present a new resource developed by the Department, “The Great Feast Icons – The

Life of Our Lord,” during the *Diocese of Charleston and NY PLC*. This program will also be highlighted during the *Diocese of Miami* and the *Diocese of LA and Eagle River PLCs*. Details and workshops are still in process for the other dioceses – please check our website at ww1.antiochian.org/christianeducation in the coming weeks.

The Department is also working on several workshops for teacher development. St. George Orthodox Church, *West St. Paul, MN*, is planning a training event on Saturday, May 4, with the courses Overview of Orthodoxy, New Methods in Teaching, and Moral Issues. Several parishes in Idaho have also expressed an interest in scheduling training for the teachers.

REPORT ON LINTHICUM TRAINING

On November 17, 2018, Holy Cross Church in Linthicum, Maryland hosted a teacher training event.

Eighteen teachers from four parishes attended. The training was conducted by Carole Buleza, Director of the Department of Christian Education, and the sessions were: Enriching the Classroom Experience, Child Development and the Exceptional Learner, and Creative Expressions. The participants truly enjoyed the interactive presentation and practical information. The workshop on Child Development and the Exceptional Learner was enhanced by all the shared stories and advice. During the final course, which everyone enjoyed, the point was made that our students also need “down time” to relax and be creative.

If you are interested in hosting a Church School Teacher Development Workshop at your parish, please contact aodce.events@gmail.com.

Leslie Arberholt,

Staff Assistant for Special Projects and Website



CHURCH SCHOOL ORGANIZATION:
ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS OF THE
CHURCH SCHOOL

By Rev. Constantine Volaitis

Excerpts from the article published in the “Bulletin of the Orthodox Christian Education Commission,” Winter 1960. Italics mine.

A new age is dawning upon us ... a time of excitement with expectancy in the air. It is a time to set ourselves to the consideration of some of the problems and tasks that lie ahead. One of the most important is that of religious education in the church. The first problem that we are faced with is the vast hoard of children arriving on Sunday mornings; what are we to do with them and what are we to teach them?

We need materials that can convey certain facts about the church to them and elicit the proper emotional response in accordance with their age and psychological needs. We must cultivate, through the means of curriculum and materials, the means by which the child is truly made a member of the *ekklesia*; the church by this definition is not an institution, nor a fraternal order, nor a set of buildings spread out all over the world, but exists as the Body of Christ in the flaming hearts of the true believers who have come into contact with real life and feel the presence of Christ as a reality. This is the world into which our whole educational program must be geared in order to bring the child into contact with the reality of Christ.

...
Within the local church, technically, the program of religious education is in the hands of the pastor and full responsibility lies with him. This is, of course, as it should be, for this is the essential nature of the church. But education within the parish is of extreme importance and concern to the whole congregation. Unless the congregation is vitally and directly concerned, the spiritual life of that parish will ultimately dry up.

...
It seems time for Orthodox education to provide a new type of worker, namely, the professional director of religious education. Also, these religious educators must be provided with funds and authority that they may honorably work and devote themselves completely to their dedicated tasks.

...
Another relevant aspect of the Church School life, the teacher, is the key to the organization of any school. Their work is to teach the children the love of God and plant within them the reality of Jesus who is ever with us, the mystery of the *synergia*, of the “coming together,” as St.

Cyril of Jerusalem so beautifully told. It is to teach them that the Church of Christ is not in buildings and organizations, *but in the hearts of men who now love one another and have become brothers because of Jesus and His love for us*. A teacher needs training for this; it is known how far short we fall in this goal of properly training the teacher. The preparation is not so much in techniques or in methods, although these things are important, *but it is the training of the flaming heart and the burning mind*. We are reminded of the words of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, who said to one another, *“Did not our hearts burn within us as He spoke to us on the road?”*

The quality of *being able to hear the words of the Master through Scripture readings and through prayer*, is the initiation into the kind of training that we really need. One cannot be a Christian alone, but only in company with other Christians. The hearts of clergy and teachers alike must be replenished by coming into contact *with other hearts on fire* with the love of Christ. This is, perhaps, the sacrament of the Word, the hearing of the Word, and the response to it, in one's inner heart. *Here is the core of the problem*, the answer to which will make the solution of our other problems easier. ...

Fr. Constantine, appointed in 1955 first pastor of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Flushing, New York, lived to see his parish become one of the largest Orthodox Churches in the United States. May we all be inspired.

Carole Buleza

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The Road We Take to The Cross

Theo Smith

I can still point to the summer of 2013, when I attended the CrossRoad program, as one of the most transformative periods in my faith. My CrossRoad journal still sits on my bookshelf five years later, next to my yearbook and camp photos. From time to time I pull it out and flip through the pages of hastily scribbled notes. I recall the ten days I spent learning about the meaning of vocation and how to transition my faith from high school to college and beyond. The floppy leather binding is worn, having survived more moves than I can count, and the rings are bursting with pages of added notes from alumni reunions and College Conference. As I open it up, the entry marked *Day 1* brings me back to the inauspicious beginnings of what would turn out to be an eye-opening ten days.

Ride over wasn't fun. That was my first note in the journal. I had graduated from high school a few weeks prior and was set to begin college in the fall. The gargantuan tuition bill had arrived, setting everyone in my family on edge, a situation, I concluded, that was entirely my own fault. The car ride with my parents was an unpleasant, close-quarters exercise in surly teenage glowering, punctuated by tense arguments. In short, everything was miserable and I was determined to have a terrible time.

If you skip ahead to the very last page of my journal you will find, written in large letters, *Cross-Road: The road WE take to the cross*, with the word “WE” circled furiously. The pages in between describe a transformation from a scared, angry teenager to a young man hungry for spiritual knowledge and eager to share it with the world. I learned that the cross is an awesome paradox of humility and triumph. I learned that the road can be hard, but that we have steady guides in the church, the prayers, the Scriptures, and the Church Fathers and Mothers. The most important thing I got from CrossRoad, however, was that *we*. It was the thirty other young people with whom I opened myself up, laughed, danced, sang, prayed, questioned, learned, and grew. Though I did not know it at the time, that *we* also

included the greater community of people who had also attended CrossRoad in the past. They would be integral in supporting me as I walked the often difficult road through college. I was changed and prepared in a way I could not have anticipated. I do not think anyone can describe it better than 18-year-old me, who wrote, *I'm scared of being hit with all the things I was able to escape from ... but I'm excited to be a better me.*

What is CrossRoad? In their own words, *Cross-Road is a ten-day academic summer institute that prepares high school juniors and seniors to make big life decisions and invites them to connect with the Orthodox Christian theological and spiritual tradition. Participants from all over the country come together to experience daily worship, to take theology classes from some of the best professors in the country, to visit local parishes, to serve their neighbor, to tour the city, and even to spend a day at the beach.*

If you or someone you know would be interested in this transformative opportunity, you can find more information at <http://www.crossroadinstitute.org/>. Applications for 2019 are due February 1. It is my wish that every young person should have the opportunity to discover the joy and comfort I found in the Church during this critical period of transition. CrossRoad is one of the best places to take that first step. I look forward to meeting you on the road to the cross.



CROSSROAD SUMMER INSTITUTE
CrossRoad is a ten-day academic summer institute, for Orthodox high school juniors and seniors to grow closer to Christ – through participating in world-class lectures, wrestling with big questions, and loving their neighbor. Take the challenge, apply today.

SESSION 1
JUNE 15 - 25
SESSION 2
JULY 2 - 12
SESSION 3
JULY 23 - AUGUST 2

APPLY TODAY
PRIORITY DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 1, 2019
CROSSROADINSTITUTE.ORG

FOREWARNED AND FOREARMED, IN CHRIST

Oratorical Festival Judges' Choice from the Diocese of Toledo and the Mid-West

Danielle Duvall

Ten days after our Lord's Ascension, the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled. The Apostles at Pentecost were given the grace necessary to spread Christ's teachings to people of all nations. These first converts to the true faith "continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in the prayers" (Acts 2:42). This is what we as Orthodox Christians are called to do. We are faced every day, however, with countless temptations to do otherwise.

According to *You Lost Me* (Baker Books, 2011), a book which includes a great deal of research about young adults in various Christian churches, there is a 43 percent drop off in church engagement between the teen and early adult years. Those 18 to 29 years old are "Missing in Action" from most congregations. The study found that it is not that teenagers of this generation have been less religious or involved in church than those before them. The problem is that much spiritual energy fades away during a crucial decade of life – the twenties (p. 22). Being 18, I find these statistics concerning. Yet, as has been said, "forewarned is forearmed." Knowing that my faith will be tested, and being aware that this is a time when it can be especially easy to fall away will help me to remain prayerfully steadfast. In the midst of studying and other responsibilities in college, it may begin to feel like there is not enough time for God. So much competes for my time, and so I must constantly prioritize. If the Lord and His Church did



not remain at the top of my list, I would become gradually less engaged, and possibly fall away without realizing it. I must take warning from Deuteronomy 8:11, which states: "Watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, judgments, and ordinances I command you today." If I strive to live my faith daily, and not just on Sundays, if I strive to make all decisions in prayer, according to my beliefs, it will be impossible to forget the Lord and His Church as I move into another stage of life.

From a very young age I felt that I was called to help and serve others as a nurse and to share Christ's love and compassion with those in my care. This past year, I began to fulfill this calling, and I completed my freshman year at a community college near our home, taking several classes in my nursing program. Soon after beginning an online Nutrition class, I realized that it was teaching material that should not be included in a Nutrition class. So, for one assignment I was given a survey that asked very personal questions, questions that assumed I was engaging in behaviors that Christians believe are reserved for married people. I was shocked that these questions would be asked, and I was also conflicted as to what I should do. I knew that I needed the class for admission to the nursing program, but also that it would be dishonest of me and even cowardly to complete the survey. I decided I had to speak up about the assignment.

I wrote a letter to the Dean of Student Affairs and requested that the class be removed from my record without a "W," because I could not complete the survey for religious reasons and the class had been misrepresented. He approved my request and granted me an unprecedented return of the class tuition fee, which is a blessing.

It would have certainly been easier and more convenient, however, to simply accept the "W" or even stay in the class to receive the credit. It was tempting to feel that this was a trifle; nothing worth being concerned about. What harm could it do? But by thinking this way I could easily be led astray: in the words of St. Mark the Ascetic, "The Devil makes small sins seem smaller in our eyes, for otherwise he can't lead us to greater evil." I know that this incident will not be the only challenge I face in college, nor will it be the most difficult. It is certainly preparation for the future. I believe in this case that the Holy Spirit empowered me to fight against temptation and guided me to speak the truth in love. St. Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians says, "... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ" (Ephesians 4:14–15). I feel that I was called to stand up for what I know to be right. "Paul implores his hearers to realize what has been given to them and to be in practice what they are in Christ. So, he turns the focus of his letter from what God does for us to what we are to do in response. How you believe must affect how you live, creed must influence conduct" (Orthodox Study Bible, 2008, p.1,603). So, it is not enough to say what I believe; rather, I must strive to live the Orthodox Faith in all areas of my life. Next year I will be transitioning from living at home to staying on campus. This will present challenges that I have never experienced before. So, I will pray for the strength to remain steadfast in the Apostle's doctrine as I continue my education on campus.

St. Paisios said the following: "Our goal is to live in an Orthodox way, not simply to speak or to write in an Orthodox way..." So, how can I live in an Orthodox way in this unfamiliar setting? Knowing myself, I am going to feel very overwhelmed with classes and studying. Setting aside time for morning and evening prayers, as well as making a routine

of reading a Bible passage, or the life of a Saint, will help me remember the one thing needful. Another added challenge is negative peer pressure. It will surely be part of the college experience, but surrounding myself with friends who share the same values would certainly be an encouragement. I'm already thinking ahead about what it would be like to have an icon corner in my shared dorm room or following Fast days in the cafeteria. These habits are part of a lifestyle that I once took for granted. So, it is now my decision to continue them as I transition to being away from home. Continuing this lifestyle may prove to be a little challenging, but I can pray about these things and plan for them.

How will I get the strength to live an Orthodox life in a world that is often not supportive? Given that those aged 18 to 29 are absent from most congregations, it may require persistence and effort to find others who desire to grow in the Faith. Yet the same Spirit that was given to the Apostles at Pentecost is bestowed on us during our chrismation. Thus we are fully equipped with grace and strength, just as the Apostles were. Let us remember the words of St. Paul as he encourages us not to be conformed to this world, but transformed through the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). St. John Chrysostom, in his Homily on Pentecost, said, "Having received the abundant promise of the Father and the Holy Spirit, they were strengthened, and they manifested Him Who was sent to them, His grace and His power." My parish priest explained that although the Holy Spirit was given to us to provide us with the strength necessary to follow the Lord, it is ultimately our decision to do so. The Holy Spirit will guide us, but because the Lord gave us free will, it is our choice.

It is our choice to be steadfast in prayer, in attending the services, and partaking of the sacraments. Choosing to do this will keep me connected to Christ, who said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). I must remember that the reason I am in college is so that I may become a nurse and serve Christ and others. I must not forget what Christ did for me, or the Faith that I have been taught. Rather, I hope to be numbered among those who continue steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in the prayers.

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION



BISHOP NICHOLAS VISITS
ARCHANGEL GABRIEL
PARISH, LAFAYETTE,
LOUISIANA

His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS of the Diocese of Miami and the Southeast visited Archangel Gabriel Parish in Lafayette, Louisiana, from November 30 through December 2. This was the first visit by a bishop to this parish in six years. In a busy schedule, the bishop met with the Parish Council, the children, the women and the men of the parish, led Vespers on Saturday night and Orthros and Liturgy on Sunday. On each of these occasions Bishop Nicholas energized the parish with messages both spiritual and practical. In his spiritual message, the Bishop reminded us of the uniquely Orthodox goal: that each of us should become like God, acquiring His attributes of love, selflessness, compassion, justice (among others), and the underlying attribute of self-control that makes the others possible. On the practical side, the Bishop urged us to participate in the many meetings

and activities he is instituting at the diocesan level, especially the Winter Retreat in Atlanta, January 25–27, 2019. We were all energized by both messages and impressed with Bishop NICHOLAS's dynamism, ambition, and enthusiasm. We were especially pleased that he plans to visit each parish twice a year. We look forward to working with His Grace to bind ourselves with other parishes in a real diocesan family.

BISHOP THOMAS
CELEBRATES THE NATIVITY
WITH ST. PHILIP,
SOUDERTON,
PENNSYLVANIA

St. Philip Orthodox Church, Souderton, Pennsylvania, enjoyed the privilege of beginning the Nativity celebrations with an archpastoral visit by Bishop THOMAS (Joseph). Sayidna visited St. Philip from December 22 to 24, celebrating the full cycle of services from Vespers on Saturday the 23 to a Hierarchical Divine

Liturgy for Nativity on the evening of December 24. During his visit, the Sunday School children and youth performed a Christmas program on the life of St. Ignatius the God-Bearer, Bishop of Antioch, as well as a retelling of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Sayidna encouraged the faithful to keep the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the focus of our Nativity celebrations, and to greet one another with "Christ is born! Glorify Him!" Additionally, before the Divine Liturgy on December 23, Bishop THOMAS tonsured Dr. Jeffrey Carpenter (Chief of Surgery and Vice President for Surgical Services, Cooper University Hospital and Cooper Health System, and new Member of the Board of Trustees of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary) as Reader Luke. Sayidna also made archpastoral visits to St. George (Upper Darby, Pennsylvania) and Eastern Shore Mission (Maryland), and met with Orthodox clergy from the area.



LADIES' SOCIETIES OF
WASHINGTON, D.C.,
CHURCHES MEET FOR
LUNCHEON

On a glorious fall day, the Ladies of St. George and Ss. Peter and Paul joined together for a Fall Gathering Luncheon, hosted by the Ladies Myrrh-Bearing Society (LMBS) of St. George, Washington, D.C. The St. George ballroom was nicely decorated with a fall harvest theme that set the tone for the afternoon. All sixty ladies enjoyed themselves greatly, thankful for the many blessings of old friendships, as well as new, and pleased to unite together in fellowship and the breaking of bread.

The ladies enjoyed mingling, engaging in conversation, and sharing their faith with one another. St. George LMBS President, Nicollete Aftimos, welcomed all in attendance and lead us in the Antiochian Women's Prayer and the Lord's Prayer, before we all sat down to a delightful and



rustic lunch, served by the "Master Chefs" of the St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church. We concluded our luncheon with coffee, tea, and dessert, and then the President of the Ss. Peter and Paul LMBS, Carol Laham, invited us all for an Afternoon Tea in spring 2019. The afternoon concluded with Evening Vespers for those in attendance. We thank all who came for helping make this Fall Gathering Luncheon a true success.

FIRST ORDINATION AT
ST. GEORGE,
SOUTH GLENS FALLS,
SINCE 1906

On July 28, 2018, His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER made his annual visit to St. George Church of South Glens Falls, New York, and ordained Deacon Gregory Potter to the holy priesthood. Other clergy from New York State assisted him: V. Rev. Elias Nasr from St. Elias, Syracuse; V. Rev. Gregory Murphy from St. Michael, Geneva; V. Rev. Gregory Desmarais from St. George,

Albany; and Fr. Nikolai Meyers from St. George, New Hartford. They were joined by Fr. Jeremiah Phillips from St. George, Wichita, Kansas, and V. Rev. Joseph Kimmett from St. George, Norwood, Massachusetts, Fr. Gregory Potter's home parish.

This was an historic event: the first ordination at this parish since its founding in 1906. Bishop ALEXANDER thought it fitting, since the newly ordained Fr. Gregory was assigned to this church as a permanent pastor. The ordination was attended by his family, friends, and parishioners.

Following the ordination, the Parish Council and Ladies Society sponsored a luncheon in the Parish Center. Everyone enjoyed an afternoon of fellowship and becoming acquainted with Fr. Gregory and Khouria Faith, as well as the area clergy. We will remember this event for years to come.

Members of the Ladies
Myrrh-Bearing Societies
of both churches, St.
George, and Ss. Peter
and Paul of Maryland, at
St. George, Washington,
D.C.





BISHOP BASIL BREAKS GROUND FOR A LARGER SAINT CONSTANTINE SCHOOL, HOUSTON

On his recent visit to Texas, Bishop BASIL of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America honored our school by leading the groundbreaking for a new classroom building. The Saint Constantine School opened its doors in the fall of 2016 to 115 students from four years to college-age. Two years later, we have almost 200 students at our Orthodox classical school, and we have outgrown our space!

The ceremony on November 6, 2018, included clergy from five Antiochian parishes in the Houston metropolitan area. Board members Fr. Joseph Huneycutt (St. Joseph), Fr. James Shadid (St. George), Fr. Symeon Kees (St. Paul) and Fr. Richard Petranek (retired, St. Paul), together with Board member (and past Board President) Dr. Melissa Kean, put on hardhats to help Sayidna BASIL turn up some earth. Fr. Anthony Baba (St. Anthony) and Fr. Joseph Gereige (Forty Holy Martyrs of Sebaste) also lent their support, as Bishop BASIL



conducted the Blessing for the Breaking of New Ground at a School.

As School President, Dr. John Mark Reynolds, said, "It is our goal to serve 500 students on this campus by 2022. Today we take our first step toward that goal. With the purchase of this land, we commit to continuing to offer excellent, Christ-centered, classical education to the city of Houston. With the breaking of this ground, we dedicate ourselves to providing opportunities for mental and spiritual renewal to even greater numbers of students, to the benefit of their souls and to the glory of God."

Standing on the spot that will hold ten new classrooms and parking by Fall 2019, attendees were able to see the existing school buildings, located on six acres of wooded fields, garden and natural playground. Joining the ceremony were members of the business community who assisted with the process to purchase the property and plan the new building: bankers, lawyers, real estate agents, architects and contractors.

All the guests were moved by the Lower School Choir, who

sang rounds of "God So Loved the World." The entire school participated in the singing of the Troparion to Saint Constantine, well-loved as our daily hymn from morning prayer.

The reception was generously sponsored by The French Corner (owned by St. George members George and Micheline Haddad) and First Citizens Bank, lender to the school. The event allowed Board members, donors, parents and business partners to meet each other and share their enthusiasm for the school's mission: providing an education in pursuit of virtue, wisdom, and joy to all qualified students, regardless of ability to pay.

The faculty, students and parents of The Saint Constantine School are grateful to His Grace Bishop BASIL and so many of the clergy of the East Texas Deanery for sharing in this historic day with us.

The Saint Constantine School
6000 Dale Carnegie Lane,
Houston, Texas 77036

For more information, please contact Emily Kasradze at ekasradze@saintconstantine.org or (832) 975-7075.



Top: Students breaking ground: The first to break ground were Bishop BASIL and nine students who have been at The Saint Constantine School (TSCS) since it opened in fall 2016.

Right: Students on lawn: All TSCS students (numbering almost 200) joined in the groundbreaking celebration. The school benefits from diversity both of background (about half are people of color) and economic situation (62 percent of students receive tuition assistance).

Left: Sisters breaking ground: Two of our students took up shovels to help break ground.

A SPECIAL WEEKEND FOR ST. GEORGE PARISH, DANBURY



Richard Jabara receives the plaque.

St. George Church of Danbury, Connecticut, and our pastor the Very Rev. Fr. George M. Al-Dehneh extend a heartfelt thank-you to Bishop JOHN of Worcester, Massachusetts, for his visit on the weekend of September 29–30, 2018.

Bishop JOHN graciously filled in for His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, who had planned to be in Danbury but was called away for a meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch.

Saturday after Great Vespers Fr. George, Khouria Mageda, and members of the Parish Council and Ladies Society, and other parishioners enjoyed a dinner and conversation with His Grace Bishop JOHN at a local restaurant.

Sunday morning Bishop JOHN presided at the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, assisted by the Very Rev. Fr. George M. Al-Dehneh, the Very Rev. Dr. Chad Hatfield (President of St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary), Rev. Fr. Josiah Trenham, Rev. Fr. Adrian Budica, and several other clergy and deacons. It was the occasion of two ordinations, with many clergy families also in attendance. Deacon Herman Fields was elevated to the holy Priesthood and Sub-deacon Christopher Dillon was

ordained a Deacon. AXIOS! May God bless them and their families in their service to our Lord and His Holy Church. The service was especially moving as the singing and chanting filled the Church with beautiful hymns of praise to God.

After the Liturgy, Mr. Richard Jabara and his family were called to the front of the Church, where Bishop JOHN presented him with a plaque which memorialized his many contributions to St. George. Richard recently donated the cost of an extensive and beautiful renovation of the church hall, including a Learning Center for church school classes and meetings of organizations. The St. George family is grateful for the love and dedication of Richard and his family. God grant them all many years!

A sumptuous luncheon prepared by members of the St. George Ladies Society and the Parish Council was enjoyed by all after the Liturgy. This very special weekend will be long remembered by the St. George parish.

ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH CHURCH OF TWIN FALLS, IDAHO CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

On the weekend December 14–16, 2018, St. Ignatius of

Antioch Orthodox Church of Twin Falls, Idaho, celebrated its Twenty-Fifth Anniversary. The church first opened in 1993 in the home of the late Sub-deacon Benjamin Roberts, where worship took place in the Sub-deacon's living room. At the time, Benjamin wanted to bring Orthodoxy to the Twin Falls area. Unfortunately, there were few Orthodox Christians to be found. Benjamin personally bought most of the adornments that we have today, made a few of the icon holders, and used his own home to bring Orthodoxy to central southern Idaho. Through the years, the church grew out of his home and into the local YMCA. After a time, the church grew again, and moved into a small building on Addison Avenue in Twin Falls.

After around twenty years in the Addison Avenue building, the church grew yet again, and needed a bigger space. Through the leadership of our priest, parish council, and generous donors, the church was able to move to its current location, with enough space to hold around four hundred people. Since the move in 2015, the church has seen many baptisms, weddings and ordinations of parishioners, both of those born into Orthodoxy and those converting to it.



On Friday, December 14, His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH arrived in Twin Falls to preside over the weekend's festivities. His first event was an informal dinner that evening with members of the parish council and their spouses. During this dinner, His Eminence gave words of encouragement to the council. He told them that one can look for three things that indicate an opportunity for church growth: the desire for peace, the need for community, and hunger for something more. When people are trying to find peace in their lives, when their communities are not fulfilling them anymore, and when they are hungry for something more, there is the potential for church growth.

On Saturday morning, December 15, His Eminence met with the young adults for a time of questions and teaching. The members asked His Eminence about the current struggles within the church in Eastern Europe, and how to be Orthodox Christians with family members who do not understand. He discussed the importance of *being* Orthodox, *being* implying a sense of wholeness, and being not just

by *doing*, but through *living* Orthodoxy. After the meeting, the faithful hosted an open house for the public. Father Michael and parishioners facilitated tours of the church and viewings of the newest icon of the Mystical Supper in the back of the altar. That evening, His Eminence presided over Great Vespers with Litia and Artoklasia for the feast of St. Ignatius.

On Sunday, December 16, Saint Ignatius Orthodox Church celebrated its Twenty-Fifth Anniversary with the ordination of Sub-deacon Steven Beck to the holy diaconate, and the tonsuring of Reader Peter (Charles) McBride to the sub-diaconate. After the service, a celebratory luncheon in the church hall was held. Mary Lou Panatopoulos, a founding member, recounted the early part of the church's history, and described their uncertainty in starting an Orthodox Church. Father John Finley shared his memories of the time when the church did not have a permanent priest. Brent Butler, a catechumen and former Protestant pastor, talked about his journey on the road into Orthodoxy. The newly ordained Deacon Steven



told his story, from becoming Orthodox to becoming a Deacon, and the awe and wonder inspired by God's mysterious workings. Father Michael praised the dedication of the faithful from the beginnings of the church to what it has become today. His Eminence finished with praises to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for the miraculous achievements of the church.

Saint Ignatius Orthodox Church of Twin Falls, Idaho, has its eyes set on growth, with the hope of one day being able to build a cathedral of its own.

Eric Nelson

St. Ignatius’s Icon of the Church

Nicholas A. Pappas

ECCLESIOLOGY: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Ecclesiology (Greek: *ekklēsiologia*) is the study (*logia*) of the church (*ekklēsia* – “the called-out”). Ecclesiology is multi-layered; we can understand it by comparing it to the creation of an authentic, Byzantine icon. In the latter, the first application of pigment acts as a flat foundation for subsequent, multilayered applications of pigments. The second application outlines the volume of the elements (that is, the body, the face, the clothing with folds). The third layer of pigment, when applied within the parameters of the second layer, highlights the element by using geometric shapes. These shapes reflect the light within the icon’s image; the underlying symmetry of the facets reflects the soul of the icon’s image.¹

Ecclesiology, like iconography, is layered not with pigments but with several related studies: church history, the study of Scripture, eschatology, Christology, soteriology, pneumatology and the mysteries (*mustēria*). When carefully undertaken, the underlying pattern in these studies reflects, similar to the icon, an inner light. This inner light is found as well in the heart of the ecclesiology of St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. This slave of Christ describes the Church in painstaking detail. It is supported with a firm foundation: 1. Leadership is needed; and, 2. Heresy is to be exposed and repudiated, while the bonds tying Christianity to Judaism are broken. The center of his ecclesiology, however, is the Eucharist.²



SETTING THE STAGE

Let us witness Ignatius’ arrest and detention by a legion of Roman soldiers in Antioch; we accompany him, shackled, as he goes to Rome for certain martyrdom. We make stops along the way in many Christian enclaves: Smyrna, Troas, Neapolis and Philippi. Ignatius did not sit idle, nor bemoan his fate. We see him rejuvenated when mobs of Christian well-wishers turn out to greet

him. Ignatius seems to know everyone: Polycarp and Polybius, bishops of Smyrna and Tralles, respectively; and presbyters: Apollonius and Bassus, of Magnesia; and deacons Burrhus and Philo, of Ephesus and Cilicia, respectively. He had time to think, to pray and to write; it was a long trip. Ignatius authored, while in transit, letters to Christian communities in Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, and Smyrna.

As Bishop of Antioch, Ignatius presents a vision of the Church in his epistles from a unique perspective. He repeatedly reminds us and his followers throughout his journey to “regard the Bishop as the Lord Himself,”³ and that the Bishop presides “in the place of God and the presbyters in place of the council of the Apostles and the deacons, having been entrusted in the service of Jesus Christ.” They are to “do nothing without the bishop and presbyters.”⁴ When seeing the bishop, Ignatius “sees the entire congregation,”⁵ where “bishops and presbyters and deacons make up the church”⁶ and “all those to whom God and Jesus Christ are with the bishop.”⁷ “One who honors the bishop is honored by God.”⁸ It would not be surprising if one were

to learn that Ignatius coined the Latin phrase: “*ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia*” (“where the bishop is, there is the Church”).⁹ His stature as Bishop catapulted him to a position of unchallenged authority; nothing should be done without the bishop. The bishop was to be regarded as the Lord Himself, an embodiment of the congregation, a beneficiary of honor, and entrusted in the service of Christ. He declared that Man’s salvation is dependent on the bishop. While he makes many exhortations in support of the role of the bishop, Ignatius remains silent on the process of his selection and appointment, and on apostolic succession.

Ignatius then declares, “Only that Eucharist which is under the authority of the bishop is to be considered valid.”¹⁰ This seemingly binds the bishop to the Eucharist. “Presbyters are attuned to the bishop as strings to a lyre”¹¹ and “unity with the bishop is akin to having a share in God.”¹² This understanding supports his ecclesiology centered on the Eucharist.

GUIDELINES

Ignatius required concise and unambiguous guidelines to defeat in argument those who erroneously believed otherwise. He was certain that Christ was human, a physical descendant of David, born of a woman, Mary, His mother. Christ consumed necessities (food and drink) as do all humans, as *He is* the Son of Man. Nails were driven through Christ to affix Him to a cross, for Him to be pulled upright by the Holy Spirit, where He hung to die in the presence of all – including those waiting beneath the earth and those up above. He was the same sinless Christ – now raised from the dead by His Father, God, as *He is* the Son of God. Without these actions, there could be no “renewal of eternal life” for Man.¹³ Ignatius concluded that Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection rescued Man from his Expulsion and Fall, and restored Man’s ability to live in perpetual harmony with God through Christ. Sin’s relentless onslaught would continue to seduce Man into conduct contrary to the goodness of God and the grace of love. However, Man was now equipped to engage the enemy through the Eucharist. Ignatius longed for the celestial food of life, the flesh and blood of the Son of God, convinced of its life-giving effects. He says it best: “I desire the drink of God, namely

His Blood.”¹⁴ He issued stern caveats for those who strayed from the faith: “If they believe not in the blood of Christ, then to them there is judgment.”¹⁵

MIMIC CHRIST THROUGH MARTYRDOM

Ignatius’ desire for martyrdom reflects another facet of his ecclesiology centered on the Eucharist. This desire never waned while he was hauled to Rome. Instead, it strengthened him. He sought to mimic Christ, submitting to death not by crucifixion, but by wild animals; he became so emboldened that he rejected any attempt to bar him from martyrdom. Ignatius was determined to be mauled in the hope of being ground down – like wheat – as the pure bread of Christ.

ECCLESIOLOGY CENTERED ON THE EUCHARIST

Finally we come to that which could be described as foundational. Ignatius believed the Church to be one, undivided Eucharist: one Flesh, broken for humanity, with His Blood. It is distributed to the many from one altar, for the whole Church, in one vessel, just as there is one bishop to Christ, as Christ is to His Father. He rejected any premise that Man is inherently immortal; rather, the sole source of Man’s life is the Eucharist. Yes: Ignatius was convinced that the unity of all men, humanly and spiritually, could only be realized through an undivided Eucharist in a unity of love among men, by submission to the bishop. Failing to so submit, he opined, leads to division and is detested by God.

CONCLUSION

Imagine for a moment Ignatius standing before an easel, a pallet of pigments in one hand, a brush in the other, seeking to draw an icon of the Church. He dips the brush into one pigment and applies it to the blank board, in preparation for more layers. One is known as Christology, the other soteriology, yet another is called pneumatology. Each application contributes to the image’s shape, when the perfect symmetry of the facets begin to glow. Suddenly a bright light within the icon’s image appears, reflecting the soul of the icon’s subject. Look again and you’ll be blinded by one harmonious doctrine of the Church, centered on the Eucharist.



1. This terse description of icon-drawing was previously provided to me by Monica Διαζόνισσα, an accomplished iconographer, for which I am grateful.
2. See the expanded assessment below.
3. Letter to the Ephesians
4. Letter to the Magnesians
5. Letter to the Trallians
6. Ibid.
7. Letter to the Philadelphians
8. Letter to the Smyrnacans
9. “Where the Bishop is, the Church is.”
10. Translation by the text’s editor.
11. Letter to the Ephesians
12. Ibid.
13. Letter to the Ephesians
14. Letter to the Romans
15. Letter to Smyrna

SOYO GROUP GOES ON PILGRIMAGE



CLOCKWISE: St. George Cathedral SOYO visits United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

St. George Cathedral SOYO visits with SOYO of Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Potomac, MD.

St. George Cathedral SOYO visits with SOYO of St. George Church, Washington, D.C.

St. George Cathedral SOYO visits with SOYO of St. Mary Church, Hunt Valley, MD.

Thirty-seven Teen SOYO members and advisors from St. George Cathedral in Coral Gables, Florida, boarded a flight early on Saturday, January 19, 2019, and began their pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., where they visited the Antiochian Churches in the D.C./Maryland area, and the National, Greek, and OCA Cathedrals. They were also blessed to see so many of our Nation's beautiful sites, many of which have religious significance. In addition, many bonds were formed, and memories created, which will last forever. Some of the occasions for those memories are shown below.

"Glory to God!"



REMEMBERING THE FAITH OF EDWARD DEEB

I would like to share a part of the remarkable life of Edward Deeb, who passed from this earth on May 31, 2018, so future generations may understand this humble layperson who was such a devoted servant to the Orthodox Church. I will be forever grateful to him, my father and role model for 55 years.

As Father Joe Allen, our lifelong pastor at St. Anthony's, eloquently stated in my father's eulogy, we are all equal in the eyes of God. God created *us* all equally. Yet we live in a fallen, earthly world of positives and negatives, good and evil. How we distinguish ourselves as Orthodox Christians is the way we manage these positive and negative forces. Do we allow the negatives to encompass and control our lives? Alternatively, do we overcome the negatives and transform them into life-giving positives? For Edward Deeb, the negatives became positives.

Edward overcame being disabled at birth with club feet. His father died when he was two years old, because of complications following gall bladder surgery. His mother, Tata Barbara, raised the three children during the Great Depression. They had nothing and scraped for bread. Though born handicapped, Edward proudly served in the U.S. Army in World War II. After the war, he adjusted to civilian life, and centered his life in Christ and in the Church. He taught Sunday school, and met my mother, Florence Kenan, who was also a Sunday school teacher. The two were married at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Brooklyn, New York, in 1950.

That year a special event made a lasting impact on my father. Right after he was married, Bishop ANTHONY (Bashir) organized a special meeting in the back room of the basement meeting hall of St. Nicholas Cathedral. The bishop declared that *no one* could leave the room until they formed an organization similar to the one he had in the western part of the United States. This was the Syrian Orthodox

Youth Organization, commonly known as *SOYO*. Edward Deeb, his cousin, George Dib, his sister Violet Husni (Deeb), and brother Alexander Deeb, together with other friends who were the youth of St. Nicholas and St. George in Paterson, New Jersey, all put their heads together and inaugurated SOYO, Eastern Region. They selected Edward Deeb to be their first President, and he presided over their first convention in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, in 1951.

Edward was newly married and was in the final years of college. He was working at night toward getting an engineering degree, and was now the first President of SOYO, Eastern Region. His cup runneth over! He soon discovered that the Good Lord never gives us any more than we can handle. Everything worked out, and he and my mom chugged along, happy as lovebirds. In 1950, my father and mother made many trips to other parishes in the Eastern region to rally support. That is how he and others successfully launched SOYO Eastern Region.

Edward received the "key to the city" from the Wilkes Barre mayor at the convention that year, and turned the presidency over to Isaac Abraham. SOYO would eventually be renamed the Society of Orthodox Youth Organizations to include



the broader ethnicities which encompass the Church. Teen SOYO, the Youth Movement, continues to thrive today across the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese. Our annual conventions have become enlivening Parish Life Conferences bringing together families and the Church across many dioceses.

Edward Deeb would later become one of the seven founding fathers of St. Anthony's Orthodox Church in Bergenfield, New Jersey. In 1956, a meeting was held with a group of Orthodox laymen, all relocated from Brooklyn, to start a parish in New Jersey to serve their religious needs. The closest parish was 45 minutes away and everyone had children, which made it difficult to travel during inclement weather

When we were down and feeling sorry for ourselves, dad would remind us of the greatest commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.”

to regular services. “It is our duty to our children and the Church to regularly attend the Divine Liturgy,” and, “it is apparent that unless we attend regular services our children may be lost to other faiths,” he writes. Edward would go on to serve in many capacities in the successfully launched and newly dedicated St. Anthony's – building committee, Parish Council President, Sunday School Superintendent and Sunday School teacher, and lifelong parishioner. Edward stayed a leader in the Church his entire life.

In the midst of this life of work, an active family, and service in the Church, Edward Deeb ran for the local School Board and Borough Council. He was planning a run for Mayor, when his wife of nearly 43 years suffered a massive stroke that left her blind and mostly paralyzed. He decided to leave everything and stay at home to care for his wife. “When I took care of Florence, I couldn't see the old Florence. All I could see was the young Florence who was witty, smart and talented,” he said. “We re-learned each other.” Ed brought Florence to church every Sunday, from the age of 71 to 87. He would push her in her wheelchair and sit in the front pew. Edward ensured that an elevator was retrofitted so Florence and others could be transported to the liturgy safely.

Edward could have died of a broken heart when his wife died in 2010. Still grieving, at the age of 87, he took a course on memoir-writing and wrote a series of essays and two books. He made new friends at the age of 92, and lived out the rest of his days at

the Veterans Memorial Home. He lost his mobility, but never his faith and trust in God.

As SOYO's first president, Edward had an impact on many lives. As I listened to this day's Gospel reading about Christ feeding the five thousand, I could not help but think that my father touched thousands of lives through his dedicated, lifelong service to the Church. He believed in himself and in God and in doing so, he inspired others to believe in themselves and trust in God. He inspired me to serve as Teen SOYO President, Eastern Region SOYO Treasurer, NAC Teen SOYO Treasurer, and Antiochian Village Counselor for the Special Olympics. This led to my career in elected public service, a career that began in service to our Church. Our parents are role models, and the Church shapes who we become.

Edward's passing the day after Memorial Day and during the season of Holy Pentecost reflects the life he led and the many lives he touched. The Holy Spirit that Christ had promised descended upon the disciples of Christ on the day of Pentecost. They received “the power from on high,” and they began to preach and bear witness to Jesus as the risen Lord. This moment has traditionally been called the birthday of the Church. I truly believe the Holy Spirit descended on Edward's life to enable him to overcome his challenges, from birth to death.

I am grateful to have shared so many happy SOYO memories with my father. My fondest memory is when my father designed the scrapbook cover for the Parish Life Conference in 1980. He sketched St. Anthony's newly designed logo of the three domes and then torched the design into a wooden scrapbook cover with a Bunsen burner. Only an engineer could do this! We won “Best Scrapbook”!

My father's long life reveals the many teachings of Christ. When we were down and feeling sorry for ourselves, dad would remind us of the greatest commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.” “Put your faith in God.” “Jesus has a plan for each of us.” “Believe in Jesus and things will always work out.” At the eulogy, Fr. Joe said my father was the finest man he has ever known. My father's negatives were turned all positives. Memory Eternal, Beloved Father!

Alison Deeb

FOR THE LOVE OF ORTHODOXY

Dan Abraham
Member of the Antiochian Orthodox Board of Trustees

I have often been accused of being boring, because all I talk about is the Church and our faith. It is what I know, and what is closest to my heart. I am passionate about Orthodoxy. It was instilled in me from the beginning.

I grew up and still live in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1946, His Eminence Metropolitan ANTONY (Bashir) called Walter Shamie in Detroit, and told Walter he wanted him to form a Syrian Orthodox Youth Organization. St. Nicholas was one of the founding members of this new movement. The first SOYO convention was held in Grand Rapids in 1948, at the very same hotel that will host the 2019 Archdiocese Convention. My father Wade was the Chairman of that convention and Salem Bashara, also of Grand Rapids, was elected as the first Chair of this new movement for the laity. The Right Reverend Ellis Khouri of St. Nicholas served as its first Spiritual Advisor. I was born in 1950.

The convention of this young but growing organization came back to Grand Rapids in 1951. Metropolitan ANTHONY wrote in his message, “Our beloved members of SOYO, we depend on you to lead our youth and help them grow in the Faith. The very future of our church is in your hands.” Grand Rapids continued to host many SOYO conventions. Our parish saw many of its parishioners accept responsibilities in the Antiochian Archdiocese. Five parishioners served on the Archdiocese Board of Trustees; three served as North American Council (NAC) presidents. St. Nicholas is the only parish that witnessed two Chairs of The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch – our current Chair and yours truly. We are proud of our two North American Oratorical winners. While many of you have not been to Grand Rapids, you now know St. Nicholas by its people, and its reputation of service to the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Soon after my wife and I joined The Order of St. Ignatius, I became involved in the Governing Council. My first role was to lead the Membership Committee. I remember one of my first meetings. I was in the process of presenting my report, when I walked His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP. He looked at me and said one word, “Continue.” I got through a few more sentences when he interrupted me and told all sitting around the table, “Enough Hake; do something!” If you never believed in inspiration from above, I can tell you, it is real and alive! I looked at him and told him



Dan with Metropolitan PHILIP at The Order of St. Ignatius Dinner

that we need marketing materials, promotional programs, and people to reach out and tell our story. We have to be properly prepared and armed with the tools to be successful. He sat back, didn't say another word, and I think I saw a little smile on his face. This was my “baptism” into The Order, and I never looked back.

I traveled throughout the United States and Canada, encouraging men and women from all walks of life to join this God-inspired movement. There is joy in giving. People gave, and continue to give. I was never more proud and honored when His Eminence told me I was going to be Vice-Chair. I knew what would follow. I became a lightning rod for the passion of those who committed themselves to the glory of God. I traveled to city after city. I invited people to join The Order, and they did. Equally as important, I made many friends who welcomed me into their parishes, time after time. Antiochian Orthodox are known for their hospitality, and I am a witness to it.

I always wondered if I would ever get a chance to repay everyone for their hospitality. The 2019 Convention is it. St. Nicholas will welcome all to our city, our community, and a grand time in Grand Rapids. Why do we, or should we, participate? It is a time for our Archdiocese to be “on stage.” It is a time for friends to witness their faith together. It is a time to show the world that Orthodoxy is no longer the “best kept secret.” If you have never attended an Archdiocese convention, 2019 in Grand Rapids is a great time to do so. Come and enjoy the beauty of the Great Lakes that provide a backdrop to the rolling hills and lush green of our land. Come and witness Orthodoxy at its finest.

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2019 DIOCESAN PARISH LIFE CONFERENCES

Diocese of Miami
June 12–15, 2019
Hosted by All Saints Church
Raleigh, NC

Diocese of Wichita
June 18–23, 2019
Hosted by St. Peter Church
Fort Worth, TX

Diocese of Toledo
June 19–23, 2019
Hosted by St. Nicholas Church
Champaign, IL

Dioceses of Oakland, New York and Charleston
June 26–30, 2019
Hosted by St. John Chrysostom Church
York, PA
Held at the Antiochian Village

Diocese of Ottawa
July 3–7, 2019
Hosted by St. George Church
Richmond Hill, ON

Diocese of Los Angeles and Eagle River
July 4–7, 2019
Hosted by St. Anthony Church
San Diego, CA

Diocese of Worcester
June 22, 2019
Hosted by St. Stephen (Springfield) and Emmanuel
(Warren)
Held St. George Church, Boston

DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST ANNOUNCES THE 67TH ANNUAL



2019 Parish Life Conference San Diego, California! July 2nd - July 7th, 2019

Hosted by St. Anthony the Great Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church
For a COMPLETE List of Scheduled Events & INFO Visit: www.AntiochianEvents.com

Highlights!

Order of St. Ignatius Reception
Brunch with Metropolitan JOSEPH
Metropolitan JOSEPH'S Address
Workshops
DJ & Teen Dance

More . . .

Sunday Hierarchical Liturgy
Surfing with Abouna-
(Fr. Nathan Thompson)
Teen SOYO
BIBLE BOWL!
Daily Divine Services

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Nathan Hoppe missionary to Albania for nearly 20 years, now is witnessing the resurrection of the Orthodox faith!



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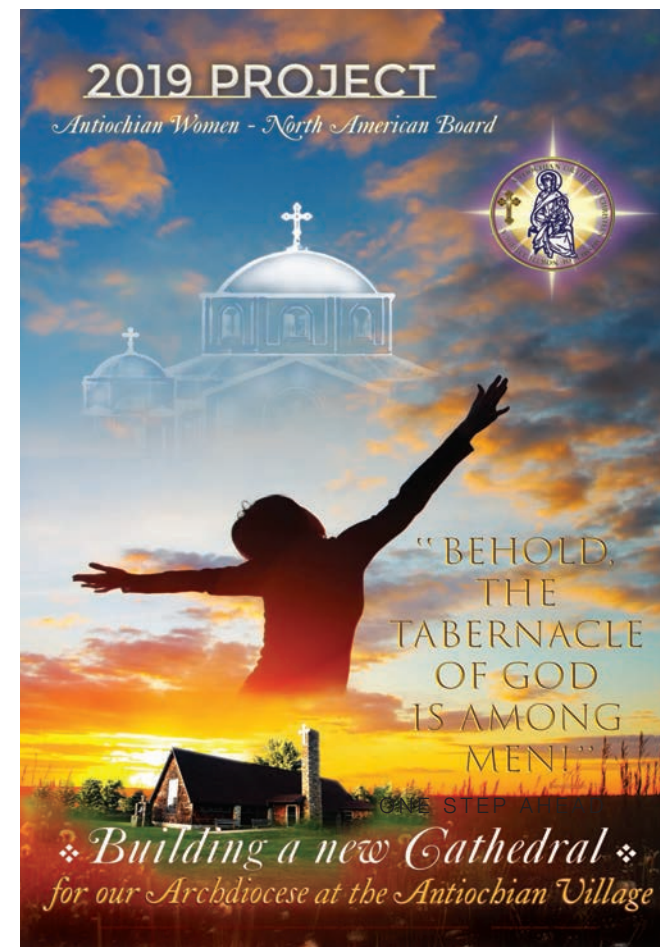


DEADLINES:

Hotel Reservations: June 18, 2019
Early Bird Registration: June 1, 2019
Souvenir Journal: May 1, 2019
Creative Festival: April 1, 2019
Oratorical Festival: June 20, 2019
Bible Bowl: June 20, 2019



Register Today! at: www.AntiochianEvents.com (click on Los Angeles)



A TABLE IN THE PRESENCE RETREAT FOR ORTHODOX COMBAT VETERANS



Orthodox Christian combat veterans of OEF and OIF:

The dust remains on your boots and in your rucksacks.

Your fallen brothers remain in your hearts and minds.

Combat is a threshold that cannot be uncrossed.

Your stories are not easy to tell. Who can bear them?

**BUT GOD KNOWS THEM ALL.
AND HIS LOVE FOR YOU ENDURES FOREVER.**

*Your Orthodox Military Chaplains
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No cost – just get to us, if you can. We'll take care of the rest.

**WE GATHER TO TALK. WE GATHER TO PRAY.
TO STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER AND TO FACE GOD.**

Columbus Day Weekend 2019 at the Antiochian Village

Contact Barli Ross at barli@Antiochianvillage.org

Dioceses of Charleston/Oakland & New York/Washington D.C.



PLC @AV

JUNE 26-30, 2019
Hosted by St. John Chrysostom, York, PA

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♦ Fellowship
♦ Spiritual Growth

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LODGING: registration.antiochianvillage.org/2019PLC
EVENT REGISTRATION: antiochianevents.com

81ST ANNUAL PARISH LIFE CELEBRATION DIOCESE OF WORCESTER AND NEW ENGLAND

Hosted by St. Stephen (Springfield) and Emmanuel (Warren)
at
St. George Orthodox Church
55 Emmonsedale Rd., West Roxbury, MA
Saturday, June 22, 2019

**Celebrating
the 40th Anniversary of the Antiochian Village,
60 Years of Western Rite Worship,
and Over 120 Years of Our Ministry in New England**

Theme:

I can do all things through Jesus Christ Who Strengthens Me

8:00 a.m.
9:00 a.m.

10:30 a.m.– 2:45 p.m.
12:45–2:15 p.m.

2:15–2:45 p.m.

2:45–4:30 p.m.
4:30–5:15 p.m.

5:30–7:30 p.m.

Orthros
Hierarchical Divine Liturgy
(with a mix of Diocese and Village Music)
Awards and General Assembly Brunch
Presentation on Conference Theme:
Fr. Seraphim Moslener
Gatherings for Parish Council,
Order of St Ignatius and Adults
Antiochian Women
Mens' Groups
Teens
Youth
Bible Bowl
Vespers – Western Rite /Winners of
Oratorical Contest
Dinner and “New England Got Talent”

DIOCESE OF OTTAWA TORONTO PLC 2019

JULY 4 -7,
2019



HOSTED BY: ST. GEORGE CHURCH, TORONTO

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***As we observe the holiest season of the Church year,
we approach Pascha together with anticipation and joy.***

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!



In just three months, we will be together in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for AC2019. We'll worship our Risen Lord with all our Hierarchs and Clergy, stay up for nightly Chats with Sayidna and Ask Abouna any question.

On Workshop Wednesday, we'll listen to speakers Philip Mamalakis, Dr. Daniel Hinshaw, and Paul Karos – and discuss pressing issues: Christianity in our culture, relationships, parenting, social media, gender identity, end-of-life.

We'll mark the 40th Anniversary of the Antiochian Village and 50th Anniversary of NAC SOYO.

We'll celebrate at Family Night, the 'Broadway to Grand Rapids' Show, the Hafli, and Dinner Dance.

We'll all be together, and everything will be well with us. Please join us!



JULY 21-28, 2019



Now is the time to register, book your hotel rooms, buy your event package! Go to AC2019GR.ORG and sign up today!