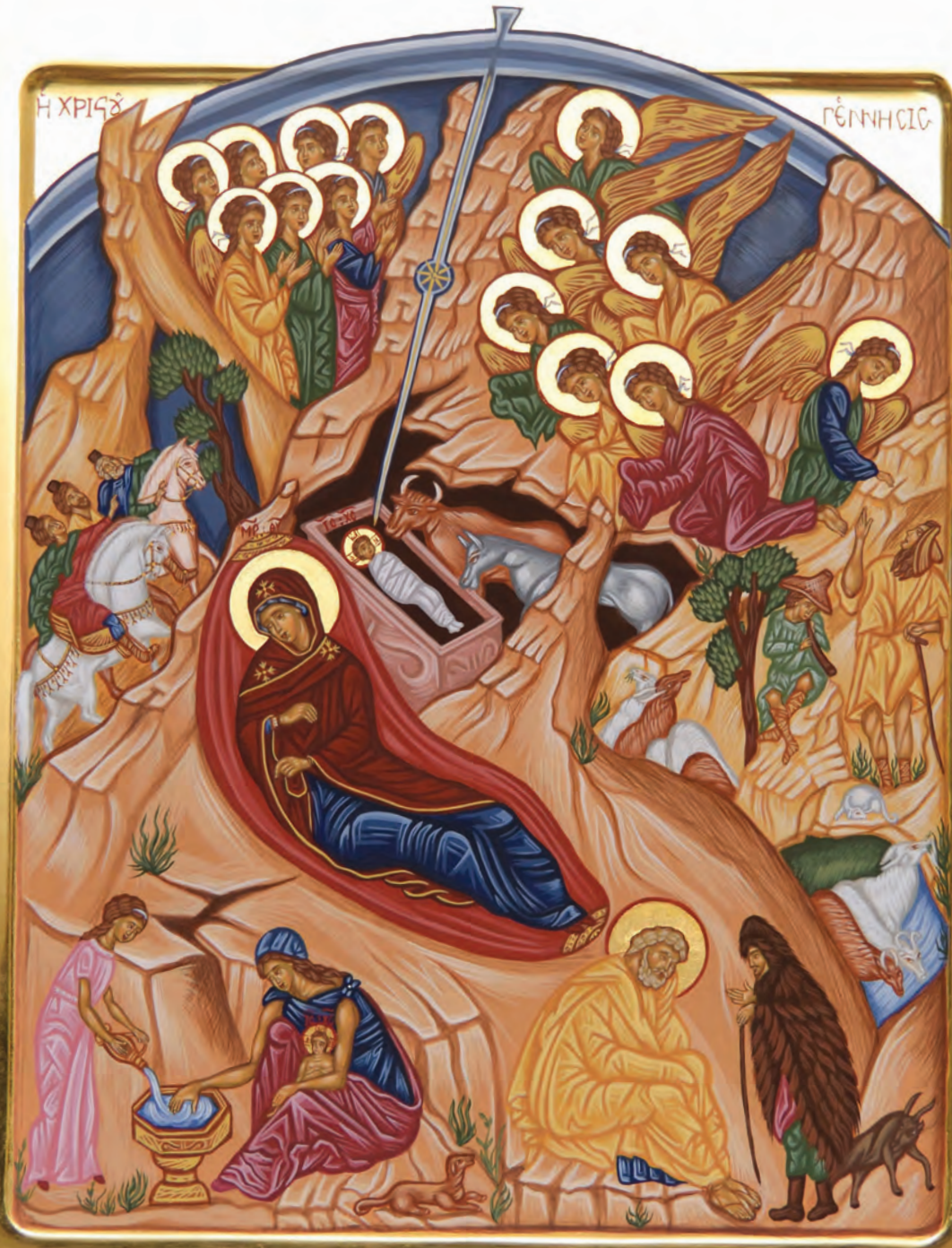


# THE WORD

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December 2018  
Volume 62 No. 10



# 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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# Christmas Spirit

BISHOP JOHN

It's hard to get into the "Christmas spirit" when everything seems to be done to such excess; when we are surrounded by anger and violence; when we are reminded of the loss of loved ones; and wars trouble the world. I am already tired of the "hype" from the advertisers. I don't want to hear about another Christmas sale or bargain. I am weary, too, of the political rhetoric; it sounds like we are still in the midst of the last presidential campaign. I'm constantly saddened by the news reports of violence. At this time of year I yearn for reunion with my loved ones. And I am distressed by the terrors of war all over the globe. In the midst of all of this, one more jingle bell or "white Christmas" song may very well put me over the edge!

This morning I went to Liturgy, and the Gospel lesson was the Good Samaritan. I was jolted back from the edge! Jesus reminded me of the lawyer I find in myself, testing Him about His message and His place in my life and my salvation history. My, my, my! As I write this, already late for publication, I am brought back to the truth that our journey to receive the incarnate Lord has begun. We are created and baptized to be the kind of priests that the good Samaritan is in the story. He loved the stranger, his neighbor. We unite ourselves to Christ through love, first in our minds, then in our hearts, and finally in His love permeating our souls. Then we show our love by meeting Christ, by caring for the neighbor. God allows us to really love Him with our whole being. We really encounter Christ in each other, in every neighbor we encounter, from our spouses and siblings to our children, co-workers, parishioners, and the world.

This year, the Christmas spirit for me will not be in the Christmas carols, gingerbread houses, shopping and decorations. I have nothing against any of



those things; in fact, I have always enjoyed them. This year, however, I need to unplug from all of the hyper moodiness and real suffering of the world, to sit with the Incarnate One, the infant who comes to meet me. He comes to meet me in no lofty way, full of power and glory. Instead he comes as a vulnerable and accessible infant, an innocent and holy God in the infant Jesus Christ. We can't hear the breath of the Saviour if we are blasting music of holiday cheer from loudspeakers in our malls. We can't hear his heartbeat while we watch violence on our televisions. We can't be with Christ without putting our feelings and thoughts aside.

I need to unplug to come to Christ, who comes to me. May you be filled with the joy that comes from meeting the incarnate Christ – who was born in the cavern, lay in the manger, died on the cross, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and awaits us now this Christmas.

Christ is Born!



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# The BIRTH of CHRIST and the Embracing of DEATH

Daniel Manzuk



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**I**t might seem odd to talk about death while we are preparing to celebrate Christ's birth; but not if we remember that Christ – alone among all people – was born to die. This wasn't a decision the Father made during Christ's earthly ministry; this was the plan from the beginning: "And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, for this purpose I have come to this hour" (John 12:27; cf. Mark 10:45 and Luke 18:31–33). God created us to be body and soul together; thus their separation through death is a travesty and tragedy. We were not intended for death, but for life. We die because we habitually sin, which is any violation of the 'Golden Rule' (Luke 6:31) and the "first and greatest commandment" (Matthew 22:37–39) – "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Christ, on the other hand, was born specifically to die. The very Epistle read on His Nativity says so: "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4–5). This is reiterated in the Epistle read on the Second Day of the Nativity (*Synaxis of the Theotokos*): "Inasmuch then as the

children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of Death, that is, the Devil, and release those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage” (Hebrews 2:14–15). The Church bears this out in the hymnography – lyrics and melodies – and imagery of the Feast; the Compline Canons for the Fore-feast of the Nativity are intentionally almost identical to those of Holy Week. The Paschal and Nativity Canons (both written by St. John of Damascus) closely parallel each other: Christ is born in a cave and buried in a cave; Herod wants to kill Him, Pilate does it; and the Wise Men bring gold, frankincense and myrrh “as though He had been dead three days” (Nativity *Aposticha*), prefiguring the Myrrh-bearers; while, the image of Christ in swaddling clothes evokes the image of Him in grave clothes. (Compare Christ in swaddling clothes to Lazarus in his grave clothes.)

Christ embraced this fact though, like any human, He did agonize over it before accepting that it was why He came and freely decided to go through with it. Like Christ, we are called to embrace death; not in a fatalistic way, as though it were doomsday, or as though there were no hope, “we’re doomed, let’s get it over with.” This is exactly what St. Paul rejects when he writes, “But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). For by His death, Christ has permanently broken the power of death; death is no longer *The End*. There is life beyond it in Him.

Then what do we mean by “embracing death”? We mean accepting that it will happen, and there is no avoiding it. This goes against our culture, which tries to convince us to fight against the inevitability of death, to put the idea of death and dying out of our minds. True funerals, with the loved ones around the open casket, are being supplanted by memorial celebrations, with just a portrait of the deceased: the fact and face of death are kept at arm’s length. Even where the fact of death is accepted in our culture, it is often coupled with the hedonistic mantra, “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die!” (In the Bible, it is not “tomorrow,” but “tonight”; Luke 12:19–20.) So even in the face of death, there is an attempt to put off death.

What the true embracing of death means is, as

the Tim McGraw song goes, to “live like you were dying.” (There are some very Christian lyrics in that song.) Specifically, embracing death means to live as though, at any moment, your soul could be face to face with God. The warnings about preparedness for the Second Coming which we hear at the Presanctified Liturgy on Great and Holy Tuesday (Matthew 24:44–25:46) also apply to preparation for each person’s individual passing to the next life and the judgment that will accompany it. One of the prayers before sleep says, “If my bed should be my coffin . . .” Even a children’s prayer says, “If I die before I wake . . .” The Church has always tried to help us think in terms of a sudden end, and how well or poorly we will have prepared for it.

Christ knew that every day of His earthly life brought Him one step closer to the Cross. Throughout that life He freely complied with the will of His Father: genuinely resisting temptations at the beginning of His ministry and making the agonizing decision to go through with His death at the end. Though He knew He would be raised from the dead, the human instinct for self-preservation was genuinely there. Christ’s death was a pre-planned self-sacrifice. Ours will come – most often – when we least expect it or want it . . . but it will come. The question is, how prepared or unprepared will we be? Will we be like the rich fool (Luke 12:13–21) or the goats in Jesus’ parable (Matthew 25:31–46), and act like death and judgment will never come? Or will we be like the wise virgins (Matthew 25:1–13) or the watchful and dutiful servant (Matthew 24:45–51), and be as ready for it as possible?

As she celebrates His birth, the Church simultaneously looks forward to His death and views His birth through the prism of His death – the reason for His First Coming. Therefore, as we celebrate the beginning of Christ’s saving condescension, let us live as He did, knowing that death will come, and live a life that reflects the incomprehensible sacrifices He made for our sake – becoming one of us and being executed for us – and all He has taught us, by carrying our crosses, lovingly fulfilling His commandments, and “complet[ing] the remaining time of our lives in peace and repentance” (Evening/Morning Litany), that by His grace, when our end comes, we may eternally revel in the presence of Him, our God incarnate.

Daniel Manzuk  
St. Mary’s Orthodox Cathedral (OCA)  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

# SHARING THE FAITH

## BELOVED BROTHERS AND SISTERS,



I hope all of you get to enjoy a holiday pageant this year. Although they require a lot of effort, they are a learning experience for the children, and also for the audience.

In my experience, the new year means attention to the Creative Festivals. On that subject, please see the notice in Rosemary’s article, below. Church **School Directors will need to contact the various Festival Coordinators via e-mail well in advance to obtain their mailing addresses**, due to a policy change regarding Antiochian.org.

We turned our attention to the middle and high school teachers in the Resource Review section. Please download the important, free PDFs from Faithtree.org.

Finally, we offer an article for parents that is timely for the season. We all wish for the good feelings and caring attitudes of the “Christmas spirit” to continue all year. Pres. Oshaana offers many ideas for teaching children at home the valuable trait of true, Christ-like caring.

Thank you, parents, teachers, and directors for taking on the task, not always easy, of passing on our faith. As our patron St. John Chrysostom said so well, “This then, is our task: to educate ourselves and our children in godliness.” Let us pray for strength to St. John! Blessed holy days to you and yours!

Carole A. Buleza, Director

**St. George Orthodox Church, Houston, TX**, welcomed Khouria Gigi Shadid for a workshop entitled “Ready, Set, Engage!” On Saturday, August 25, Kh. Gigi led the group of 30 participants from five local parishes through the nuts and bolts of teaching class, and using music.

**St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Bridgeport, CT**, hosted a Teacher Training II workshop on Saturday, September 29. Fr. George Alberts and Matushka Anna Timko-Hughes led 12 church school teachers through the elementary and middle school/high school classes. Fr. Romanos Malouf organized the event for his parish’s teachers and invited other churches in the area.

**St. George Orthodox Church, Little Falls, NJ**, also hosted a training event this fall. On Saturday, October 6, Carole Buleza, Director, AODCE, customized our Teacher Training I to meet the needs of the parish educators. Antiochian, GOA and OCA parishes were represented by 20 church school teachers at the training event.



St. George Orthodox Church, Little Falls, NJ

**Holy Cross Orthodox Church, Linthicum, MD**, is slated to host Teacher Training II during November 2018.

Leslie Atkerholt, Staff Assistant for Special Projects



## EVENT UPDATES/REPORTS

The Department of Christian Education coordinates with local parishes throughout the United States and Canada who wish to host training events for their teachers. The following is a recap of those held in the Fall of 2018.

**St. Elijah Orthodox Church, Oklahoma City, OK**, hosted a training for 17 teachers on Saturday, August 18. Diocese of Wichita and Middle America Coordinator Vasiliki Oldziej presented “Using the Classical Trivium to Engage Students,” and “The Theotokos: Your Elevator Apologia for our Veneration of the Theotokos.” Holy Ascension, Norman, OK, teachers also participated.

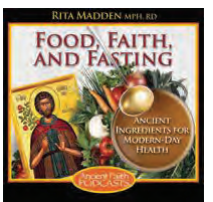


## AODCE SOCIAL NETWORKING MINISTRY

**To nurture the children God has placed in our care!**

Greetings! Teachers and Parents, take a look at our Pinterest Site, AODCE. Here is one of the 43 pins of our Fasting Board, which includes many, many recipes. The Nativity Board has 43 pins as well. These are here for your use and enjoyment! Explore!

Kristina Wenger



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

## ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH SCHOOL DIRECTORS



Once the Nativity Season has been celebrated, Church School Directors usually begin preparing for Great Lent and Pascha. In January we will discuss opportunities for expanding a Christian Education Ministry in

ways that enable Sunday School students to participate in Lenten activities and acts of service beyond the classroom. We will discuss organizing a youth choir, forming a young myrrh-bearers group, encouraging youth to participate in a vigil on Holy Friday, increasing community outreach, and more.

Additionally, Great Lent is a wonderful time to hold Creative Festival workshops, since families often attend services during the week and can usually stay a little while after service to share a meal and work on creative arts entries. Complete information on the 2019 Creative Festivals can be found at: <http://www1.antiochian.org/festivals/cf> Visit the Orthodox Christian Church School Directors Facebook page for video reviews of curricula and other Christian education materials and resources: <https://www.facebook.com/OrthodoxChristianChurchSchoolDirectors/>

*Anna Sarah Farba*

## 2019 CREATIVE FESTIVALS

**Notice:** Church School Directors will need to **contact the various Festival Coordinators via e-mail well in advance to obtain their mailing address.** The Department of Internet Ministry has a new policy this year. Home addresses cannot be posted on Antiochian.org. However, entries can be mailed to the Coordinator in care of his or her church, a business address, or a post office box. **Please don't wait until the last minute to do this!** Check out the information for your diocese and contact your Creative Festival Coordinators as soon as possible:



<http://www1.antiochian.org/festivals/cf/contacts>

## THE THEME THIS YEAR

"Antiochian Village: Past, Present, and Future"

*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*  
(Philippians 4:13)

The Department of Christian Education has provided numerous resources for the Festivals – lesson plans, an original theme song, possible interpretations of the theme, posters, and various ways of using the theme.

Entries must be postmarked by April 1. Let's try something "un-orthodox" for a change, and work

on the Creative Festivals early this year!

*Rosemary Shumski,*

Departmental Administrator for the Creative Festivals



## RESOURCE REVIEWS

### "Teen Guides" for Youth Directors and Teachers – Free Download



The Faithtree organization is continuing to provide materials for youth and those who guide them. Teachers of middle and high school students, please avail yourself of these very important resources.

*"How to Identify and Navigate 'Red Flags' in Youth Ministry"*

How do you respond when a teen tells you he or she is depressed? What questions are appropriate to ask? Do you need to share this information with anyone else?

It can be even more difficult to know what constitutes an actual 'red flag,' and what is just a part of the normal teenage struggle. This free resource is a guide to the way to respond to our teens when they come to us with serious issues.

*"13 Reasons Why We Must Engage with Our Teens"*

Dr. Mamalakis offers us a response to the popular Netflix series "13 Reasons Why." He gives insight into difficult teenage realities and shares practical guidance on how to engage with our teens at a time in their lives where it seems most difficult.

*"10 Ways to Form Meaningful Relationships with Your Teens" your Teens*

The real work of youth ministry takes place in the context of relationships. It is through deep and real relationships that our teens experience the transformative love of Christ. That's why we've created a collection of tips to better equip you!

*The Faithtree mission is to help Orthodox Christian parishes develop thriving communities. See Faithtree.org.*

## CrossRoad Institute

Sponsored by the Greek Archdiocese, this program for junior and senior students is open to all Orthodox and has been given great reviews by youth from our parish.

CrossRoad is a ten-day, academic summer institute that prepares high school juniors and seniors to make big life decisions. It invites them to connect with the richness of our faith and provides a venue to "explore your vocation, make lifelong friendships, encounter service in a totally new way, take theology and scripture courses with the best professors in the country, and discover Boston or Chicago." Applications are due February 1. Their website is <http://www.crossroadinstitute.org/>

## Curriculum Resource, Free Download

*"Orthodox Christian Teen Survival Guide"*

This resource, called a "Guide," is actually a series of well-done lessons. Each could be used for one or more class sessions. The lessons provide honest questions



posed by teens, advice on how to deal with the issue, the Church's response, and where to find additional information. Ten topics comprise the series: Sexual Purity, Pornography, Managing Stress, Drug and Alcohol Abuse, Peer Pressure, Body Image, Bullying, Gossip, Suicide, and Life after High School. It is available on the goarch.org website under Departments, Products and Services, Downloads, or go to <https://www.goarch.org/en/-/orthodox-christian-teen-survival-guide>.

## RAISING KIDS WHO CARE

*Tina Oshaana*

How do we teach empathy to our children? In a society of "me, me, me," it seems like an uphill battle to instill such virtues as kindness and generosity into the hearts of our young ones. We expect our children to share from a very young age. It's likely that you have heard or even said the word "share" frequently at home, school, or the playground, but is empathy something that is learned, something we're born with, or both?

In 1st Epistle of St. John 4:8, we read three short words that sum it all up: "God is love." When we read this, we are filled with wonder and hope. This sublime description of the Holy Trinity gives us an essential starting point to

understanding ourselves, because we are created in the image and likeness of God.

Therefore, empathy and compassion are not behaviors foreign to us that we must learn or acquire. Rather, they reside in our very being and are waiting to be revealed. These natural emotions and behaviors, however, can only blossom, thrive, and be expressed through personal encounters in relationships.

A one-year-old might show subtle and tender expressions of empathy and compassion toward someone who appears to be in some sort of pain. You can see his facial expressions change as his eyes look worried. Empathy is even observed among infants who begin to cry upon hearing the distress of another baby, a condition appropriately called contagious crying. Children are able, and perhaps even eager, to show compassion and empathy toward another person, even with their limited ability to express it physically, or to communicate verbally this part of themselves that they are still learning to discover and understand.

For example, the ability to comfort others is directly acquired through our own experience of needing comfort. In other words, the instinctual desire to pick up and soothe a crying baby was instilled in us when we were that crying baby and someone soothed us. It's not surprising to see the adverse effects on emotional well-being and its long-term consequences on a person who was not shown love and compassion as a child, even through something as basic as being held and soothed when crying.

As a mother of four, I witness firsthand many of their interactions on a daily basis, as well as the ups and downs of their emotions at any given time. Along with the typical sibling squabbles, there are golden moments when I see them care for each other and respond to each other in beautiful ways. Although interactions are never perfect, their hearts are what I'm most concerned about, and I look for and rejoice in their ability to turn toward each other with love and patience.

How can we, as Orthodox Christians, help our children reveal, nurture and cultivate the love and empathy hidden within their hearts in a society plastered with messages of self-seeking and self-fulfillment? How can we raise children who will become adults with a desire to care for and serve others wholeheartedly? Scripture repeatedly exhorts us as "the elect of God, holy and beloved" to always show "tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12).

We can help cultivate these virtues in our children and thereby help them reject the enticements of a destructive, self-seeking culture. Here are some practical ways we can encourage them to grow as beloved children of God who were made to love and be loved.



### Lead by Example

Parents are the greatest example and first teachers of their children. We set the tone for their emotional health through our own words, and by our actions and reactions. I can model empathy by giving my attention and time when my child is struggling with something, instead of thinking that he or she is being overly dramatic. I can model empathy for others in the way I care for my spouse, or my parents, or a person in need. Our children are always paying attention to how we respond when these times for empathy arise. Make the best of these opportunities.

### Give Them Opportunities

What better way to learn something than actually to do it? There are many community organizations that are in need of help. As a family, you can decide where you feel called to serve. Give back to the community at a soup kitchen, animal rescue center, retirement home or environmental cleanup day to give children an opportunity to cultivate a heart for service. Encouraging your children to contribute a dollar or two from their allowance during the passing of the tray in the Liturgy is a great way to instill a sense of gratitude for God's blessings and the responsibility of caring for His Church.

### Start in the Home

Siblings or nearby cousins are our first friends (or can be), and this is a great starting point to help children learn empathy and love for others. These expressions of love for their own siblings and extended family are essential in the development of their Christian identity. Children can make each other cards when they are not

feeling well or are having a bad day; older siblings can help younger ones tidy up their rooms; and younger siblings can learn to respect the personal space of older siblings. By encouraging them to help each other, empathy can be expressed and experienced in the home.

### Pray Together as a Family

Making time each day to gather together as a family to pray, whether around the dinner table or in front of your icon corner, in the car, on the way to piano practice, or to a soccer game, is how we can continually invite God's presence – His grace, peace and joy – into the often hectic and stressful daily routines of our lives. During your prayer time, remember others who may be struggling and are in need. What better way to teach our children empathy than to pray for family, friends, or even strangers. Make it a point every time you pray together to say the names. Encourage children to give a list of names to your priest to commemorate during the *proskomide*. During this service before the Divine Liturgy, the priest prays for the living and the departed while preparing the elements that will become the holy body and blood of Christ.

As we raise our children, we do everything in our power to meet their basic needs, including providing them with food, shelter and a good education. How we help shape their characters and instill the value of empathy and love for others is not always easy to figure out. Taking small steps toward this goal in our daily lives will set them in the right direction, and bring out the love that is already in them. And this love is God's gift to us.

*Presvytera Tina Oshaana (MA) lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband and four children. She has a background in counseling and public services. The article, from the magazine Praxis, Vol. 17, Issue 1, is reprinted with permission of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.*

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## Metropolitan JOSEPH Hosts Archbishop DEMETRIOS and Guests at Archdiocesan Headquarters

His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate of the Antiochian Archdiocese, hosted His Eminence Archbishop DEMETRIOS, Geron of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and other guests at the headquarters of the Antiochian Archdiocese in Englewood, New Jersey. They gathered not to discuss administrative items, but simply in Orthodox Christian fellowship.

The dinner had been in the works for months, ensuring that the primates, dignitaries and guests could coordinate their busy schedules to gather on the night of September 27, 2018. Sayidna JOSEPH also welcomed His Beatitude Metropolitan TIKHON, primate, and His Eminence Archbishop MICHAEL of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA); and Their Graces Bishop BASIL, Bishop THOMAS, and Bishop JOHN of the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Sayidna JOSEPH began his remarks by quoting the Psalmist, King David: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). He then turned to Archbishop

DEMETRIOS, saying, "There has always existed between us the respect and honor given by two beloved brothers, each of whom is grounded in the person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and in the sacred office of the holy episcopacy, and each working for the same goal of saving the souls of their flocks."

Metropolitan JOSEPH then bestowed on Archbishop DEMETRIOS the Golden Order of St. Raphael of Brooklyn, the highest award of the Antiochian Archdiocese. In giving thanks, Archbishop DEMETRIOS replied that Antioch has a prominent place in Orthodoxy, and that no matter what happens in the Middle East, it will never be deprived of Christians who call it home.



## Metropolitan JOSEPH Meets with Secretary Pompeo

Peter Samore

With great honor, His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH was received by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in his office at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. Accompanying Sayidna JOSEPH on Tuesday, August 21, were His Grace Bishop BASIL of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America, and V. Rev. Paul O'Callaghan, Dean of St. George Cathedral in Wichita, Kansas.

Sayidna JOSEPH conveyed the greetings of His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X of Antioch and All the East, as well as the entire Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, especially congratulating Mr. Pompeo on being recently chosen as Secretary of State. His Eminence and Mr. Pompeo became more acquainted with one another, which should prove helpful in the event of future discussions.



# THE INTEGRITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD

*Your Eminence, Your Graces, and all of our beloved clergy, it's my honor to be with you and to deliver this lecture that was originally planned by His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER. He called me with the wish that we should consider the integrity of the priesthood, but these notes are mine from the seminary, and from my own reflections over time. I'm going to present them today. They come from Professor Verhovskoy, Fr. Hopko, Fr. Meyendorff, Fr. Schmemmann, and from various sources I've read, so I don't want to claim them all for myself, although as a bishop I could claim them... But I don't want to claim them for myself!*

*His Eminence talked more about the administrative side of the priestly life, and also about priests' families, and Bishop BASIL talked about the high calling and the theology of the priesthood. I will speak more of the moral side on the priesthood, how the living-out of the priesthood is done according to the canons of the Church and the services of the Church, and I hope to include a lot of Scripture references as well.*

What I would like to say, to begin, is that the priesthood essentially is the mystery of Christ's high-priestly presence. What does that really mean? I think a good analogy can be seen in the following. The Southern poet Allen Tate actually understood the Eastern Church in a certain way. He said, "If you were to describe a horse, you would call it a quadruped and it would have a certain weight, and you could see a picture of it. You could even know the details of its anatomy. But until you see Secretariat run, you don't know what a horse is; until he wins the Belmont by 31 lengths. You don't know the glistening of the sun, the hearing of the crowd, the wonderful Pegasus-like victory of that horse."

That really is the priesthood in the whole Orthodox Church. It's not so much an explanation of things; it's an entrance into something, it's a personal experience, it's something imbibed more than described. That's the priesthood, and all of you carry it in your own unique way for Christ Himself.

We can think of the pastorate in four ways. First, it's collegial, because it's a fraternity of brethren. Next, it's congenial, because it contains the joy of

Christ for all people. Next, it's congenial, because it's been given to us by Christ Himself. Lastly, it's constructive, because it builds up the body of Christ. Collegial, congenial, congenial, and constructive – these four elements make up a pastoral presence in our communities.

Let's look again at the priesthood itself and the integrity of the priesthood. There is no job description for a priest, because holy orders have to do, as Metropolitan JOSEPH said, with the fact that the priest has no job, but he gives a job to everybody else by making their lives priestly. In that light, I would like to quote from Fr. Schmemmann's book, in his chapter, "On the Mystery of Love for the Holy Orders," because it's so beautifully put.

And there must be priests, because we live in this world, and nothing in it is the kingdom of God, not in this world. The Church is in the world but certainly not of the world, because only by not being of the world can it reveal that world which is to come, the beyond, which alone reveals all things as old – makes all things new. Therefore, no vocation in this world can fulfill the priesthood of Christ. There must be someone whose specific vocation is to have no vocation [I may add: so that we can discover where the *location* of that kingdom could be,

which is in heaven], ... to be all things to all men, and to reveal that the end and meaning of all things is still in the future. It's still dynamic, and still waits its completion in the anticipation we have by offering the holy gifts on the holy table, now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

That's really all I need to say on the priesthood, but isn't that a beautiful way of explaining the presence of the mystery of the priesthood?

There are a lot of things in the service itself that tell us about the integrity of the priestly life. There is an emphasis on the examination of the candidate before ordination: on a strict life lived, with the call of the Holy Spirit. The canons in general give us a framework for understanding the mind of the Church, and do not exhaust the Church with rules. They are a prescient framework that gives us an opportunity to find our own experience in Christ. Their theme is a strict life united to the call of the priest to Christ by the Holy Spirit. The canons insist on a continent and a strict life in its ideal for the candidates for priesthood. There's a clarity and a transparency about the priest's heart in his own person that reveals Christ as the icon of the Father and the priest as an icon of Christ. The clearer we are and less burdened by the weight of accumulated transgression, the more open we will be to Christ's intercession.

According to the design of God, a priest is made. "O Lord our God, who by thy foreknowledge dost send down the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon those who are ordained by thine unscrutable power to be thy servers..." Instantly we find the mystery that someone is *chosen*. God is not limited to our definition of our capabilities, because He can do anything with our abilities. He needs our *availability*.

Moses tried to figure every way he could *not* serve, *not* go back to Egypt. "I can't speak." God said, "I'll send your brother to help you." "I can't go. I had a terrible thing happen to me." As we know, this was his killing of the Egyptian and the consequences. But God didn't care. He knew that Moses' heart was made for Him. In Numbers 12, it says, "With other men, I speak as a prophet, but with Moses I speak face to face, because he is the humblest man who has lived on the earth." So I think the capability of priesthood is exactly that: availability.

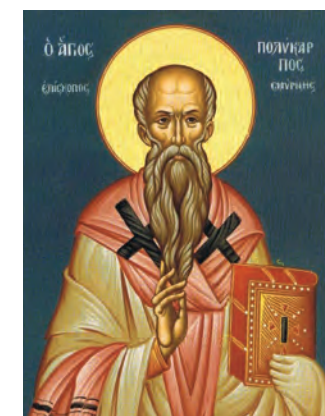
We begin with this foreknowledge of God, knowing the candidate will be a priest perhaps even

before the candidate has any idea himself. So it's something we grow into over time. (Mentors can help us realize what God is already speaking to us, and can confirm that which is in our conscience by their conscious explanation to us.) The priesthood itself is part of *koinonia*. It is part of the *synaxis* and *ecclesia*. The making of a priest is an act of the Church, and not simply a personal decision.

So then also it says in the ordination of a priest: "We deign to preserve pureness of life." You hear that over and over: strictness of life, pureness of life, openness to God. I find these phrases over and over in my examination of the canons, including, especially, the African Codex canons in the Second Century. These go back to St. Irenaeus of Lyons and also St. Polycarp, and have that whole St. John tradition. It's interesting that the Roman patriarchate was in charge of North Africa, but the latter was very close to Antioch, so the patriarchate of Antioch knew about these codes. They're very ancient.

During the time of the great pagan Emperor, Diocletian, who was persecuting the Church, the Church experienced a great flux and fluidity in its norms and canons for priesthood. It was obvious that there had to be a code, something to follow, so that people would know who would be a worthy candidate. Also, at the Second Quinisext Council of Trullo in the Seventh Century A.D., we had to do the same thing in the East. Both in the West and the East they claimed apostolic foundation as a given, an inheritance from the apostles, which had to do with structuring the call to priesthood. The making of a priest is really done by the Church and for the Church. The candidates are open to the call of what Christ says in the *synaxis* and the gathering of the community represented in the bishops. Rarely is it done on a personal basis, in response to the idea that "I've decided now I would like to be a priest."

So the world we live in, where the private conscience determines if one is called by God, was really secondary, and in some cases non-existent, when the Church chose candidates. They did it all using objective criteria: 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, which almost dove-tail with each other and show you exactly what the qualifications are. After these



lectures, I would suggest that each of us read both these chapters at least once a month to renew those objective criteria and determinations which create our pastorate.

So we once again have the great grace of the Holy Spirit following a pure life. “O God, great in might and inscrutable in wisdom, marvelous in counsel above the sons of men, do thou now, the same Lord, fill with the gift of the Holy Spirit....” “Endow us with the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit” is actually the phrase, so you’re getting the entire Holy Spirit in a kind of personal Pentecost fire that comes upon you, in the same way that it was in the first chapter of the Book of Acts in the making of the Church. We ask our God “to advance to the degree of priest he that is worthy to stand [and here we have the word again] in innocence, strictness of life, purity of heart, innocence of the call.” These qualities have to do with morality, but

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also with that inscrutable, mysterious desire of the Holy Spirit to have some of us enter into the holy high priesthood of the Lord. We should never forget that. Let us not, after we are ordained, review the question of whether we should have been ordained. If, in the wisdom of the Church, we *were* accepted into that call, let us go forward and not back, and turn into a pillar of salt before we reach the mountains of Moab. God doesn’t want that review; He wants that concerted effort to go forward.

Having said this, I want to say too that not everybody meets every criterion perfectly, but the criteria are there as a constant reminder that we must never lose the ideal. Otherwise, whatever is *real* of the priesthood will evaporate. An ideal is the true realistic approach, because it takes us from where we are to where we should be. Let us not lose that.

We seek to advance, then, by piety and veneration. A person who has a pure life, who has an open life, who has an innocent life, will be somebody who is pious and has a veneration for God. “Let the children come unto me, for unto such belong the kingdom of God.” It is children who receive the authority of Christ, because Christ remains the eternal Child of His Father and the Child of His mother forever. If we don’t maintain that childlike love of God, we can never achieve that innocence of a child before the Father either.

So these are all prescriptions. For the priest who serves the sacred mystery, there is a strong sense of the angelic calling. Jesus said, “For in heaven they are neither given in marriage nor are married, but are like the angels in heaven.” His emphasis was that they are high like the angels in heaven. Psalm 8 tells us that man is a little lower than God or the angels, depending on the translation. That’s where the priest exists, as Bishop BASIL said yesterday.

And if you go through the liturgy, you say or hear the prayer before the Gospel: “Illuminate our hearts, O Master, with thy blessed Gospel teachings. Implant in us also the fear of thy blessed commandments, that, trampling down all carnal desires, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing unto thee, for thou art the illuminator of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto thee we give glory, to the Father and to the

Son and to the Holy Spirit.”

So even before we read the Gospel, we have to renew the ordination of the purity and the strictness and the innocence that those prayers had given us. We renew the ordination every time, because it’s not something only given to us; it’s something that flows from us. My professor, Professor Verhovskoy, wrote a beautiful piece on the integrity of the priesthood. He was one of those great European Russian professors. I don’t know how many of you had him. There may be a few of you who still have their notes. You may have these, but these also contain some of my reflections on what he said.

A priest’s vocation is elastic. If you seriously consider it and you actually fulfill God’s call, you will be a hero and a saint. The ideal of the priest is that he save others, and “others” means everyone. He has a universal calling, not only a calling to a local church. He invests himself in others and motivates the love that always exists in the goodness of human nature. There must be a treasure of the kingdom in his heart, for the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21). He kindles in others, he pokes the fires that already exist from their baptism and chrismation. He allows them to enter the general priesthood of Christ through his own priesthood. He is willing to complete the sufferings in Christ in his body.

If people hurt him, he does not consider the fact that the hurt is important, but the wound enters into the wounds of Christ. The more he can silently accept the beatings and the scourings and the slappings and the mockeries that may come his way in small and routine ways, the more he can serve at the altar and in fact his service becomes stronger at the altar.

When I say these things, I always preach them back to myself. It takes a lot of courage to stand before the altar, in that light.

Jesus Christ Himself is the High Priest, and we have to imitate Him. I said earlier that we have a vocation that’s vocation-less. (Some people in our parishes think we don’t have a job, by the way, so we may not want to emphasize the fact that a priest has no job. It may confirm some people’s opinion, and they’ll say, “Oh, I always knew that!” If you get too abstract with many of our people, they say, “Well, that’s why you went into the priesthood.”) In order

to develop a potential model of priesthood, we have to look at Jesus Christ, and I’m going to go through all kinds of interesting contrasts. His calling was to save the world – that’s something that’s pretty big to do, save the world – and obey His Father, which He always did because He’s a child, and He had no particular job: He just had to get *the job* done. Whenever I would say, “I’m going to do my best, Dad,” my dad would say, “Doing your best is doing the job.” Doing your best is completing the task. I miss my own father that way. It’s good to have dads who have faith in you to do that.

What is required to be the Messiah? There were thirty years of silent preparation for the Lord. He had His job as a carpenter, but we know that after that He was unemployed. He was not part of any religious party, although every party sought to coalesce, to make Him theirs, to compromise Him. He was called a rabbi, a teacher, a master, a great prophet, but in actuality, He wasn’t an institutionalized priest or a prophet or a scribe or a Pharisee. They figured He was illegitimate when, at twelve years old, He was answering all the questions that *they* should have answered in the temple of God. You could not determine what He really was. He was certainly not a scholar in the traditional sense. He was not a theologian, but He brought the world the words of God because He *is* the Word of God. So He brought the word of God to the people, but He had no title that they could claim, and He had nothing that would identify Him *as* the Word of God, because it was once again the experience of Christ that allowed us to know what Christ said. Sometimes in this world we need the words to convince us or persuade us. I think with Him you needed to meet Him in order to have words that would persuade you. It was just the opposite of what we have now.

He brought Himself. As priests, that’s what we do: we bring our authentic self. Be yourself; it’s the only fashion that suits you. I say that to teenagers. Go from your own space, at your own pace, to get to your special place. If you’re an introvert as a person, as a priest, you can’t all of a sudden become a social extrovert. If you’re a social extrovert, you still need time in silence and reflection to be an introvert. But you have to be who you are, and we have to be who we are. I don’t have to tell you that; you already know that by your own experience. Authenticity is contagious; artificiality is repulsive.



An old priest when I was ordained said, “You will never fool them. They will always be polite to you, your parishioners, or they will get mad at you, but the whole thing is seen through you as a transparent element of Christ. And therefore they know you better than yourself.” I’ve never forgotten that. The parish will know us better than we know ourselves, but they won’t tell us what they see in us.

So we had better prepare for the Divine Liturgies as best we can. I myself do have preparations on Saturday evening: the canon on repentance, the canon to the Mother of God, and to my guardian angel. They’re in this very fine book called *Orthodox Daily Prayers*. I don’t know if it’s still published: 1982, from St. Tikhon’s Press, a good translation. In fact, that’s a better translation in 1982 than what they’re doing now, if I may say so.

Also, may I add another thing, since I got off-track? I think we have the *Orthodox Study Bible*, which is a New King James Version of the Bible, but I still think the best English translation is the

not reveal that kingdom yet to come, then we lose our whole *raison d’être* as priests.

In this sense, there can be no kingdom of this world, because instantly it categorizes us as being of the world and not above the world. We have to maintain the eschatological dimension of what it means to be a priest. Jesus didn’t change a thing. When He had to pay a coin, He got it from the mouth of a fish. He said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” He didn’t worry about it. He did use money, but He never earned much money Himself. He would always go to the money-box and to the ladies and the women that took care of that for Him, and He was not concerned about that, because He believed that all things would be taken care of. His Eminence and I were taking a walk, and he was showing us where we would build the new church, God willing, some day. I said, “How much will it cost?” He said, “I’m not going to worry about the cost. If it’s God’s will, we’ll get the money.” That’s pretty much what Jesus did. He went fishing, and he did get the money.

He didn’t have a kingdom of this world – no social movement. Once we’re associated with a political party or a social movement or even the latest current event, and even if we speak eloquently about it, I think we lose something. In fact, I know we lose something. We lose an objectivity that people are looking for. If they can categorize it and make it a subjective opinion, then it isn’t the word of God; it’s just our words.

Jesus had no social movement. He came to destroy sin and to baptize men into His ministry. He came to grant well-being on the whole world as a commission from His Father. He was a pastor because He was a priest. He offered Himself. The only way we can be a pastor and console people is if we are wounded, as both Sayidna JOSEPH and Sayidna BASIL said in their talks. The woundedness of Christ makes a real co-suffering with us. And you have done that: when you go to the hospitals and you see the people there.

Once I went into the wrong hospital room. It wasn’t an Orthodox person, and the whole family was in the room. This has probably happened to you many times. The man who was very ill lifted himself on the bed with all those tubes around and said,

**Once I went into the wrong hospital room. It wasn’t an Orthodox person, and the whole family was in the room. This has probably happened to you many times. The man who was very ill lifted himself on the bed with all those tubes around and said, “I’ve been waiting for a priest.” I did a general prayer for him and sat with him for a while. Then he said, “See? I told you a priest would come,” to the other family members. I went into the wrong room, but it was the right room.**

Revised Standard Version from 1952, ’71, and ’73. After that, don’t read that version. Those are the best. Or if you get an American Standard that was in 1946. That is a translation that is in better English from the King James Version, which is still a masterpiece of its translation from Greek.

Now I’ll get back to Jesus. He was born to be a king, a ruler and a shepherd, to heal, to reconcile, to console, to comfort, and to forgive. He is the pastor-king, but He had no kingdom of this world. He was not the founder of a social movement. This is important. Sometimes people criticize us as Orthodox because we’re not involved in every changing vicissitude of the world. Everything that happens in the news, in *The New York Times*, we’re not responding to directly. That can be somewhat of a weakness if we never respond, but we still have to keep that high position above the world we live in, because if we do

“I’ve been waiting for a priest.” I did a general prayer for him and sat with him for a while. Then he said, “See? I told you a priest would come,” to the other family members. I went into the wrong room, but it was the right room.

The priest sacrifices himself. St. Paul exemplifies this in the great depth of 2 Corinthians: “I fulfill the sufferings of Christ in myself.” He fulfilled that. How many times have we had loved ones who were passing on, or who were ill, and we wanted everything in the world to take their place, to be able to take their pain, to relieve them of all of it, all the suffering? So much more should we want to relieve the suffering of our dear Lord and stay at His side so that His wounds would become our wounds, and the only way we can become a fountain of grace is if we’re opened up to the suffering wounds of Christ on the cross. Unless the Spirit is in our side and the nails are in our hands, we cannot open the doors to other people to enter into the kingdom of God.

Jesus gave up any sense of self-fulfillment in

the world, because His only goal was to make His Father happy. Everything works and falls in place when we don’t look to our own selves. He satisfied no one when He was on earth. No one was happy completely with Him. Everyone was befuddled. When the guards came from Herod to take Him, they said, “We couldn’t take Him. Nobody spoke like that man.” When He multiplied the loaves and the fishes, the people wanted to make Him king. What did He do? He got away as quick as He could and went to a mountain to pray. He didn’t want to be a king. But if you can feed people on loaves of bread and raise the dead, your army is invincible. So if you’re looking at it in a worldly way, He’s the man. But He wasn’t the man.

He was not even a great religious leader. He was not a national leader. He just came for lost sheep. He defined Israel in a different way, by going to the Samaritan woman, something even His disciples didn’t understand. Certainly the Pharisees did not understand it. He shared His most difficult words



with the leaders who were supposed to be guiding people to the Messiah. All of these things were befuddling to the people. He came to lost sheep wherever they were. He does a lot of things, but He can't be defined by anything. Whatever Christ *is*, that's what a priest is. Whatever he is: it's kind of an apophatic thing. He satisfies nobody so that he could become something for everybody.

Mostly the priest, then, has to work for the inner life of people. I've gathered some scriptural quotations on this. I think this really encapsulates what the priest does. We read in Ephesians 3:14–19: “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the richness of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man; and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith....”

The reason Jesus could have nothing in this world was because His kingship starts as a spiritual kingship, as a fulfillment of Isaiah 53, as the real meaning of Isaiah 11, when He's the Messiah who conquers. He has to conquer sin before He can re-order the world, or, as somebody said in this magazine, *Country Home Living*, “Nothing cleans the house better than knowing that company is coming.” So the first thing He has to do is clean the house. If He begins His reign, it has to be a spiritual reign. It has to exist in heaven. So He was entering the strong man's house and taking it away, but it was done spiritually, and the inner man was strengthened. So we find that this was the very truth of what a pastor is. He has – we have – to strengthen the inner life of the people. It's well said here: “...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth [what is the cross] and know the love of Christ, which passes all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

It's good for us to put on record these Scriptures. This is the work of the pastorate. Again, we quote: “So we do not lose heart, though our outer nature, our mortal flesh, our garments of skin (Genesis 3:21) is wasting away....” Sometimes when I look in a mirror, I have a confirmation of that, as I get older. I am comforted, however, by Psalm 110: “Like the dew of the morning, your youth will return to you.” Our outer nature may be “wasting away,” but

“our inner nature is being renewed every day” – once again, the inner man – “for this slight, momentary affliction is preparing an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison because we look to the things not that are seen but that are not seen.”

In 2 Corinthians 12, St. Paul speaks of the third heaven, in which he saw things that he could not utter, because he co-suffered with Christ. “For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

Here is a final quotation: “Now, the Lord is the Spirit, and we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” This, it seems to me, is the reason that Jesus Christ, who created all things in the world, was the most unworldly of all religious messengers, that His word had to wait for the triumph over sin so His reign can begin in heaven now. This, by the way, is the true meaning of the 20th Chapter of the Book of Revelation, where His millennial kingdom is reigning. He's reigning already. Orthodoxy holds to an amillennialism, not a post- or a pre-millennialism, not in a literal reign on earth. We believe that Christ is already spiritually in heaven, reigning, and He will come to show the world that which is obvious, historical, and eventful at His second and glorious coming.

We have somehow to maintain that otherworldly nature of the priesthood, that everything that a priest does is what Christ does, this co-suffering and dying. A priest must be the center of everything. He can't be outside of anything. A priest *is*. He's a *being*, not a *doing*. It comes from inside him. It *is* him. A priest is someone before he does anything. He communicates to us the love he has for Christ. It is not a burden to be a priest.

Fr. Alexander Elchaninov, in *The Diary of a Russian Priest*, writes: “He has to be correctly poised in his soul. Caruso sang without fatigue. (He's an old tenor.) Pushkin would never have said the writing of poetry made him tired. The nightingale sings all night, and when we wake up, he's still singing. There are voices naturally poised in the priesthood; others are forced to seek it through prolonged effort and exercises.” But this is the only way you can save souls, by having a clarity and being a poised soul yourself. Fr. Alexander Elchaninov writes again, “When others meet a priest, they should ask

themselves, ‘Who am I?’ The priest is the term of reference for all personal identity.”

So a priest is unsettling, sometimes challenging, a trouble-maker. Not a trouble-maker as one committing a crime, but a trouble-maker because he troubles people in the comfort zones of their lives without saying anything: creates a fruitful disturbance. The land cannot be produced until it is tilled. In a way, everyone sees in us the possibility of who they are.

He is fascinating on one hand and foreboding on the other hand. One can't change the subject by being in his presence. In his book, also called *The Orthodox Pastor*, and published by St. Vladimir's Press, Bishop JOHN (Shahovskoy) says that any time we are invited to someone's home, we have to realize that they're inviting us because they believe that we take the altar upon which the holy gifts are consecrated and bring it to their table. So we have to watch that our conversation is always uplifting, spiritually and priestly, in their presence. They may try to change the subject on us, they may not want us to say that in their conscious mind, but in their unconscious feelings, they want us to bring Christ to that table. That is said by all experienced priests, and you know that it is true.

There is a tendency to think that only holy people get ordained, but how do we define a static holiness? The priest is in the process of holiness, of finding himself in Christ. As long as he's there and he's working for his own salvation, then he will be able to bring people to salvation themselves.

May I diverge just for a moment here about the pastorate. The pastor in the church, in his institutional position, growing in Christ with all humility, is not an elder or a spiritual father in that sense. Eldership is a special gift and a charismatic gift that *may* be in the institutional priesthood, but may not be. A lot of people in our world are looking for an escape in their own freedom, because the secular world really hasn't given them answers. They will come to us as pastors and priests and expect us to solve all their problems. In fact, they want to transfer all their lost hopes and expectations on the priest. We must not fall into the idea that we can be the problem-solver. The only solution can be Christ.

We can reflect the patient endurance that they must have in confession, not give them all the answers, because once we make that transference, they will either create an idol of us by thinking we

are Christ, or, if something goes wrong, their faith will deflate rather than elevate. So we must not fall into that. St. Ignatius Brianchaninov in *The Arena*, pages 43–47, talks about false eldership. Priests are sometimes, without knowing it, lured into a situation. It's much better to be, and to think of oneself, as a father-confessor, not an elder.

If you want to read about this, you can read it in 1 Corinthians 12:21–28. It talks about apostles, prophets, and teachers. Apostles and prophets are not necessarily the same. A prophet is usually in a monastic setting or has a special gift, and even then there's no guarantee. Let us not romanticize monasticism. Let us not think that we can rationally, externally, ethically, become that which has taken them many years of formation. This formation takes time, and it takes great courage, and it's revealed only by God. It's not something that you graduate from. I don't know if everyone needed that, but it's something to be careful about.

When a priest is called to be a priest, certain things are evident. He seems to have it all together. He has an authenticity, as I said. He does not play at being a priest. He has no style as such. There is a no-nonsense quality, but it's not artificial. His calling, as he has the gift, is showing Christ as the Giver, and a genuine gift for God, and a real sanctity that he struggles for. He has this, and then he will be a teacher, he will be a priest, he will have the miracle of grace residing in him. Now here is something I'll never forget, and I believe it's Fr. Hopko or Fr. Schmemmann who said it: technical skills are not even necessary, and may get in the way. When a priest says something, it rings true. The words coming through are backed up by the life that's lived. They have an authority all their own. That's what they meant in the gospels: “No man ever spoke like this man did.”

From a biblical and canonical point of view, the candidate must be a male of a certain maturity, an older man: a presbyter is an older man. There are two main qualities: subjective or spiritual, and moral, and there are objective conditions: family, children, wife. There's a regulation about his life, an order, that people know about. He has a personal history that's transparent and clear. He's physically a man who is whole, not missing any parts, mentally or physically. Mentally, spiritually: he is a balanced, sane person. Today, sanity is a high quality.

A priest must be mature. The ideal person is

sound and doesn't draw attention to any aspect of himself. He's a regular person. He's not a genius in one area or another. He's an apt teacher, more by intuition than investigation. He has the ability to discern situations, an ability to figure out the best thing to say. A model of this is St. Nicholas of Myra in Lycia, who didn't go in any particular direction. He wasn't a great ascetic, but he was ascetical. He wasn't known as a high scholar, but he was a great teacher. He conquered by his purity. He was not a theologian, and he never wrote a book, but he was detached. He was not averse to using money. He helped those girls get a dowry for their marriage. He cared for widows and orphans and was unstained by the world, because he cared for others before he cared for himself. He never sought personal time. He was available and never had his own time. I was thinking: we can be on time if we don't have our own time. He was more like a nurse: full of mercy, gentleness, charity, a co-sufferer. He had a balanced sanctity, not exaggerated in any direction. You can't reduce the office of the priesthood to anything in the world.

The priesthood is a great mystery. In fact, its mystery, our ordination, is comparable to baptism. In *The Ancestral Sin*, John Romanides talks about ancestral sin and so forth, but there's a wonderful part in which he talks about how, when the child is baptized, he or she is instantly made new, as Jesus said in the third chapter of St. John. The soul is already resurrected; it just waits for the fulfillment when Christ comes again at the second and glorious coming. So we're not what we were before. We're really born into eternity, born into heaven at that baptism.

I think something happens to us at the priest's ordination as well. We're elevated immediately to a different standing. When you look at the baptized child after they come out of the font, you really don't see any difference in their features, not yet, but they've already received the guarantee and the down-payment on eternity. From now on, it's up to the pastor and the godparents to lead them into that kingdom. Isn't it beautiful, when we church the babies, now that they have seen the natural light, we pray that they will be partakers of the uncreated light? At the entrance into the church, we hear, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Something has happened to the priest; he's been elevated. His mind has now been made

capable of transcending just earthly rationalism. He can now become a font of the mysteries of God. In a certain sense, he's conformed and grafted into the one priesthood in Christ Himself. He becomes an extension in time, a prolongation of the ministry of Christ in this world. It's not merely a place we occupy; it's a Person into whom we are grafted.

We do not even believe that redemption is a static thing, that it happens only once, that the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right hand was the finish of everything. If we just think it's a static, finished thing, and it's not an ongoing reality, then we'll have to rethink the sixth chapter of St. John, which says, "Unless you eat of my body and drink of my blood, you have no life in me." Christ's body *is* the resurrected body. His is the body that's been deified. That's the humanity that sits at the right hand of the Father. That's the thing that will never change ontologically with Him anymore.

Therefore we, who are given the grace to deliver this sacrament to the people, extend in time His wounded arm and His glorified presence and the deified humanity to all those who are baptized into Christ. "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ," and their formation, the formation of the inner man, in the third chapter of Ephesians, is taking place with and through the priesthood for the people. The priesthood is essential to redemption because redemption and salvation is a dynamic, continual thing, and it's not locked in time. It is a tangible and material thing, because people have bodies when they leave this earth. Those bodies are imprinted and configured to Christ Himself so that the icon of Christ Himself becomes a matter of the icon of us. We bring Jesus' literal redemption in time unto ages of ages, until he comes and brings heaven and earth together (Revelation 22).

That's a great thing. So the most important Person in the world is Jesus Christ; the most important person, as His reflection, is the priest, the bishop-priest. There is no eternity for the people that the people in our parish love, unless the priest distributes the medicine of immortality. We stand at the still point in the turning world. Nothing is like this. No calling is like this. None of us deserves that. We bring redemption through the sacraments, especially of holy baptism and holy Communion, to the people.

## AN INSPIRING PILGRIMAGE TO GREECE A COUPLE'S JOURNEY TO THANK A SAINT

Lindsey Schip Weber and William Weber

Since joining the Orthodox Church nearly 30 years ago, we have been blessed with wonderful priests in the different states where we have resided. After we moved to Louisville, Kentucky, in 2002, our priest at the time, Father Alexander Atty, encouraged us to visit a monastery when on vacation. Since then, we have tried to make this a practice.

After losing our son, Joseph, in 2013, and receiving divine consolation from St. Ephraim of Nea Makri,<sup>1</sup> it seemed only right to go to his monastery in Greece to venerate his relics and say, "Thank you." Father Alexis Kouri, our current priest, kindly blessed our pilgrimage with his prayers and advice, and we went to Greece in June 2018.

We landed in Athens and headed straight for Nea Makri, about a half hour from the airport along the eastern coast of Greece, across from the island of Evia. Early the next morning we arose and went up Mount Amomon to St. Ephraim's monastery. The Liturgy was almost at an end and the faithful soon began receiving communion. Afterwards, we caught the priest before he went back up into the altar. He spoke no English and quickly called for his *presbytera* to translate. Time and again, language would not prove to be a problem. He exclaimed with vibrant animation, "Christ was on the cross for three hours – in great pain! Afterwards, all was light and resurrection! The fragrant relics you have of St. Ephraim show that the saint is alive and Christ is alive and we will all be alive!" Over the course of our trip, we would have many such encounters, where priests, monastics, and laity would bring us words that cheered our souls and challenged us to walk more worthily of the Lord. They all exuded such a warm love for the Lord and for the many saints who had touched their lives.

Over the next few days, while still in Nea Makri, we spent time in thanksgiving, intercession, and meditation before Saint Ephraim, whose relics lie



vested on a bier under glass in the midst of the monastery church.<sup>2</sup> While there, we lit candles for family, Godchildren, and friends. The profound spiritual presence in the churches and monasteries we visited was amazing. To be before the relics of Orthodox martyrs, who had refused to deny Christ and suffered through difficult tortures, was awe-inspiring. Besides St. Ephraim at Nea Makri, especially impressive for us were St. Gregory Palamas, St. Demetrios, St. Theocharis, and St. Paul, in Thessaloniki; St. Raphael, St. Irene, St. Nicholas, and St. Olympiada, on Mytilene; St. Phanourios on Rhodes; and St. Gregory V of Constantinople and St. Philothei,

1. The story of this consolation, including how we came to have relics of St. Ephraim that exude a fragrance, is recounted in the article, "A Most Unexpected Blessing," found in the December 2017 edition of *The WORD* magazine, page 32 (available in print and on-line).
2. For photographs and information on the monastery, go to <http://www.monastiria.gr/monasteries/holy-monastery-of-saint-eufraim-nea-makriattica/?lang=en>.
3. For the monastery's website, go to <http://www.ieramoni-agiou-rafael.gr>.
4. For photographs and comments on the church, see [https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction\\_Review-g635613-d7050527-Reviews-Agios\\_Fanourios\\_Church-Rhodes\\_Town-Rhodes\\_Dodecanese\\_South\\_Aegean.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g635613-d7050527-Reviews-Agios_Fanourios_Church-Rhodes_Town-Rhodes_Dodecanese_South_Aegean.html).
5. For photographs, see [https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction\\_Review-g635613-d12991207-Reviews-Cave\\_Archangel\\_Michael\\_Panormitis-Rhodes\\_Town-Rhodes\\_Dodecanese\\_South\\_Aegean.html#photos;aggregationId=101&albumid=101&filter=7&ff=324324893](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g635613-d12991207-Reviews-Cave_Archangel_Michael_Panormitis-Rhodes_Town-Rhodes_Dodecanese_South_Aegean.html#photos;aggregationId=101&albumid=101&filter=7&ff=324324893).
6. A great resource about them is *Atlas of American Orthodox Christian Monasteries*, edited by Alexei Krindatch.

in Athens. To have opportunities for prayer before these spiritual giants was priceless.

Attending the Divine Liturgy in Greek in the churches and monasteries was an especially blessed experience. Our ability to enter into the worship was enhanced by a book we brought with us, Father Magoulias' *Greek Orthodox Divine Liturgy*, which includes the text in Greek, with phonetic transliteration and English translation. Our visits to churches and monasteries came with many surprises. In Thessaloniki, we almost literally ran into a man in the Church of St. Demetrios who was all but identical to a friend from our parish. He was his twin brother! He and his family were visiting from St. Louis. Another time we visited with a priest who had held the holy light for the Patriarch of Jerusalem on Holy Saturday. He told us that you get to Paradise in this life and the next through communion and confession, and by talking to God from the heart throughout the day.

Our stay on the island of Mytilene (also called Lesbos) was like a ship coming to rest in a calm harbor. We came because of three newly revealed saints, Raphael, Irene, and Nicholas, who had been martyred the decade after Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453. Since about 1960, they have been appearing to people all over the world and working great wonders. Their monastery is high on a mountain overlooking the Aegean. To get there we took our rental car up a winding country road surrounded by olive groves and frequented by sheep and goats! The peace in that place is indescribable. We were blessed to converse with an English-speaking nun who told us of their recently departed abbess, holy Mother Evgenia (may her memory be eternal!), who was chosen by St. Raphael to start the monastery when there were only snakes and scorpions on the mountaintop.<sup>3</sup> Through the mighty sustaining power of Saint Raphael, Mother Evgenia would often counsel pilgrims from eight o'clock in the morning until two o'clock the next morning. Then she would spend the quiet hours before dawn writing book upon book to provide for the monastery and its many outreach ministries. Many of these books recount Saint

Raphael's modern-day miracles. Mother Evgenia slept little and loved much. Her spiritual legacy is rich. We cannot recommend going there enough.

On the island of Rhodes, we were blessed to worship and pray in the cave church where the icon of St. Phanourios was found in 1500.<sup>4</sup> The saint was martyred around the early Fourth Century, and his icon had been lost for centuries. Fittingly, he is the saint who has helped countless people – including ourselves – to find lost things, including restored health of body and soul. He even sent someone to his church to take us to a newly found cave chapel in the cliffs overlooking the Aegean.<sup>5</sup> The whereabouts of this cave were miraculously revealed by an icon of St. Michael the Archangel, the patron of our church in America.

From Rhodes, we flew back to Athens. As our plane took off, we made the sign of the cross and the couple seated by us warmly made their cross, too, showing that they were fellow Orthodox. Though we could not converse because of our language barrier, we bonded and they bestowed on us an icon of St. Michael the Archangel! This kind of support and positive interaction with the Greek Orthodox faithful would be repeated many times.

Our pilgrimage to Greece was definitely inspiring. In thanks to the many saints whose paths we crossed, we wanted to pass on in writing a little something from our journey. We should note that of particular help for our planning was the invaluable and very uplifting book, *Evlogeite! A Pilgrim's Guide to Greece*, by Mother Nectaria McLees. Through the aid of this book, we learned details and directions to various Orthodox sites of interest. With it, too, we figured out that, even as seniors, we could make our own itinerary for visiting them without having to go through an expensive tour that would be planned and paced by someone else. We hope that we can return to Greece – and that others can go as well! But either way, there are plenty of monasteries to visit right here in America.<sup>6</sup> May we all live as grateful pilgrims until we reach our heavenly home.

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# PREGNANCY HELP SAVES MORE LIVES EVERY YEAR

ADVERTISING AMPLIFIES THE EFFECT

Chris Humphrey

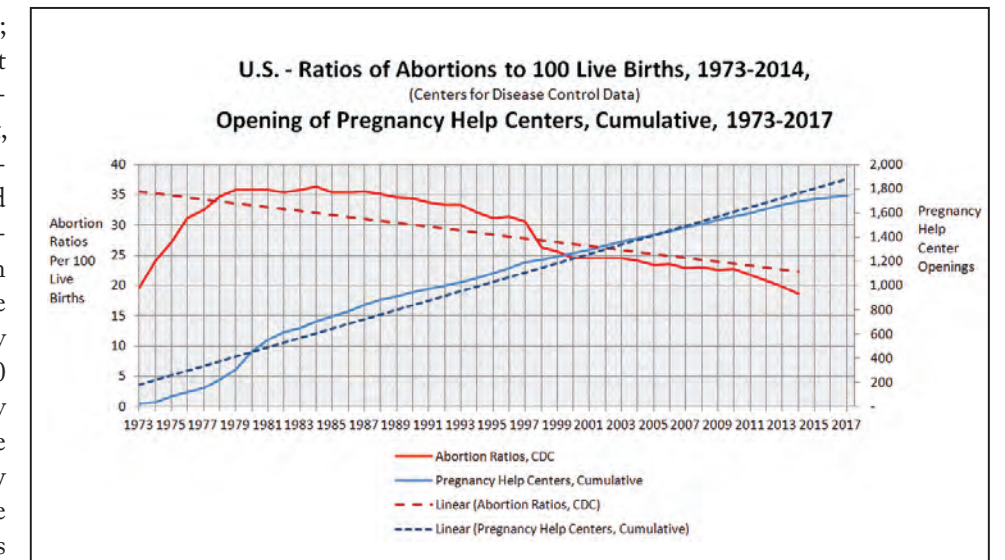
It is sobering to realize that, in all of history, *more human beings have been killed before birth* than after, and that most of this killing has been done in the last half-century.<sup>1</sup> The human heart starts beating as early as *16 days after conception*.<sup>2</sup> All those hearts!<sup>3</sup> As Christians, however, we can look at a ghastly evil like abortion and see it truly, without flinching. After all, God became a man who suffered, was tortured, and died a humiliating death – and we glorify His Cross! He has “trampled down death by death”; He is risen!

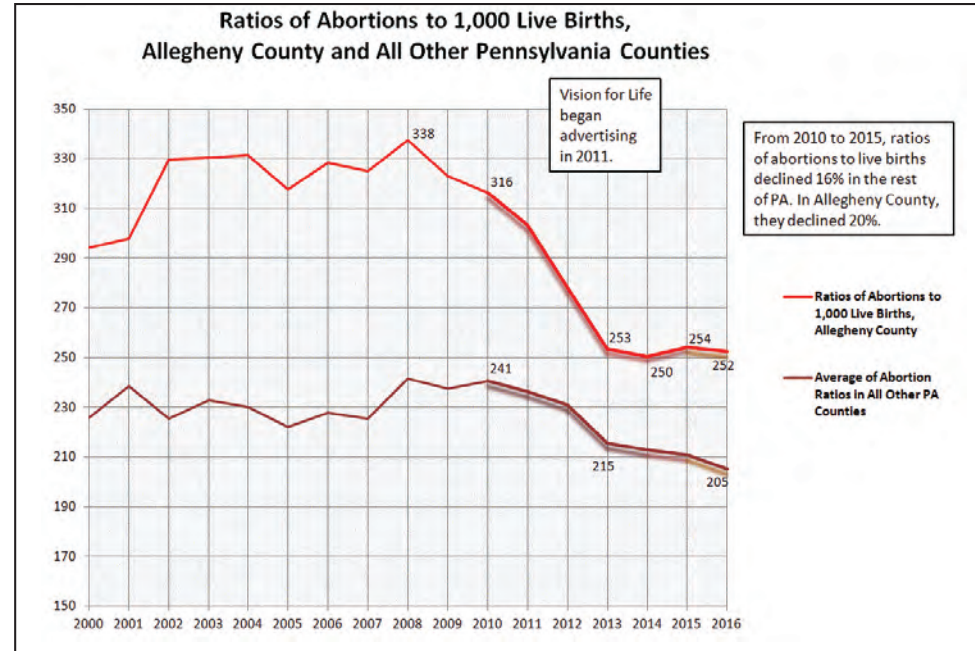
Abortion is grim, but there is relatively good news on abortion, too: abortion numbers have been going down continuously in this country since the early 1980s, to about a million a year currently. I have looked closely at all the possible reasons for this decline – increased use of contraception; changes to public opinion; education about prenatal development or abortion; changes to state laws (informed consent, parental involvement, waiting periods, and so forth); reductions in Medicaid payments; and decreasing numbers of abortion centers. None of these, I believe, explain the drop.<sup>4</sup> The most likely reason is the increase in the number of pregnancy help centers – there are over 2,750 in America today, and last year they served almost two million clients. The chart below shows the opening of new centers over the years, and the decline in the ratios of abortions to live births

over the same period.

The Charlotte Lozier Institute, a pro-life research organization, is laying the groundwork for an in-depth, statistical analysis of abortion numbers and the presence of pregnancy help organizations, to see if we can *prove* that pregnancy help reduces those numbers, and to quantify that effect.

Regarding abortion, as in regard to other evils, “no one can do *everything*, but everyone can do *something*.” You may be moved by God serve as a volunteer at a pregnancy help center. (If you live in the Cleveland area, contact the Orthodox center *Zoe for Life*.) If there isn't one in your community, or if you live in an urban area where abortion rates are higher, you can *get together with other Orthodox or Christians and start one*.<sup>5</sup> Pregnancy help centers offer free services, including pregnancy testing, emotional and material support, and options





(Pittsburgh), compared with an 11% decline in the rest of Pennsylvania. (We estimate that roughly 450 more children were born because of that difference in 2011–2015).

“No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.” We can close our eyes to the modern abortion holocaust, or we can do *something*. We are told,

Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?

(Proverbs 24:11–12a)

counseling. Most centers offer *medical* services, too: limited obstetrical ultrasounds, and in many cases, STI testing.<sup>6</sup> (Many women decide to keep their babies when they see them moving on the ultrasound screen.) These have professional staff, like Dr. Rocco Adams of St. George Orthodox Cathedral in Oakland (Pittsburgh), who is the Medical Director for Choices Pregnancy Services. (You can see our ad for Choices with Dr. Adams at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtcTUQxVnpo>.)

### Women Like Pregnancy Help, But They Don't Know It's There

Americans like people who help women choose life. So, in a 2014 national poll, 92% of women said that pregnancy help centers were necessary in their communities. Pregnancy help centers, however, are physically small and low-profile, compared to the maternity homes of the past. They are more like doctor's offices. In the same poll, 54% of women did not know that there were such centers in their communities.

### Advertising Makes the Centers Even More Effective

Not only is advertising essential, but we believe it makes pregnancy help centers even more effective. Since 2010, Vision for Life – Pittsburgh, an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) non-profit, has been advertising local pregnancy medical centers which have been serving women since the mid-1980s. We saw *abortion ratios drop 20% from 2010 to 2013 in Allegheny County*

Please do what you can. For the biggest impact, *help your local pregnancy center by donating money specifically for advertising*. If you live in the Pittsburgh or Philadelphia areas, make a tax-deductible donation today to all-volunteer, non-profit, Vision for Life (5709 McCandless Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15201). Donate online at [www.visionforlifepgh.org](http://www.visionforlifepgh.org), or donate through the United Way (our Contributor's Choice number is 10244747). Follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/VisionforLifePGH](http://www.facebook.com/VisionforLifePGH).

Chris Humphrey  
Ex. Dir., Vision for Life - Pittsburgh

1. In 2013, the Chinese reported that in the past 40 years or so they had aborted 336 million unborn children, and continue to abort 13 to 14 million annually. Abortionists in India destroy about 11 million children a year.
2. <http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2016-10-11-first-our-three-billion-heartbeats-sooner-we-thought>
3. The high rate of miscarriage (between 20 to 30 percent of pregnancies) does not mitigate the evil of mass abortions, any more than widespread deaths from medieval plagues mitigated the (perhaps necessary) evil of mass deaths in battle.
4. For more information, fuller analysis, and references, go to <https://bit.ly/2vtRL8A>.
5. Heartbeat International is offering \$30,000 in goods and services, as well as cash, for the establishment of new centers. (For more information, go to <https://www.heartbeatinternational.org/life-launch-grant>.)
6. For details on services provided nationally, go to <https://lozierinstitute.org/pro-life-pregnancy-centers-served-2-million-people-saved-communities-161m-in-2017/>

## Judges Choice, the Oratorical Festival from the Diocese of the West

Samantha Nassief

**D**id you happen to catch the national spelling bee last month? Kids had to spell words that I can't even pronounce, let alone spell. But, the winning word was *koinonia* (a word of Greek origin), which is translated as *communion*. In Acts 2:42, St.

Luke writes that “they (the first converts) continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” The word *fellowship* here in the Greek is *koinonia*. But what does all of this mean: doctrine, fellowship, breaking bread, and the prayers? How are they related?

The breaking of bread, communion, brought the converts together. When in communion with one another, we are molded into one – one voice and one body in our prayers – especially in the Holy Liturgy. The Apostles structured the Church in this way, and we have maintained this same Orthodox faith down to our own day. When we partake of the Eucharist, we are united with the body and blood of Christ. Through this, we are united with one another. If we are united to one another, we must share ourselves and our possessions with each other – “Almsgiving.”

Acts 2:44–45 reads, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” This entire verse expands upon the idea of being in communion with one another. When they all lived to work together through Christ,

the converts were able to share their belongings with those who needed them. Verses 2:46–47 read, “They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.” Those who sold their possessions were happy. They didn't need physical things to live a good life; all they needed was communion and prayer.

The Apostles preached from the beginning that we should live a life of simplicity, prayer, and almsgiving, much like Lent. Saint John Chrysostom says that “no gladness can exist where there is no simplicity.” What is the meaning of Lent if we fast from meat and dairy but do not pray? It would be like having a good workout, then eating candy and ice cream when you get home. It would be wrong of us to live the quiet life we do during Lent without extra prayer. With simplicity, we have more time for prayer. The converts were able to achieve simplicity through almsgiving; they wisely distributed their possessions to those who needed them. They prayed unceasingly, many of their prayers coming from the Book of Psalms, just as the Jews had done before Christ and just as we do today.

The beginning of the Church emphasized the joy of living a simple life. We shouldn't have to worry so much about material things and should put our focus on living through Christ. As teenagers, we find it hard to devote all of our time to God. I find that the pressures of school, sports, and society drive us farther away from God and lead us to fall to temptations. I had to read a book this summer for my AP Literature class called



**koi-no-ni-a**  
/koina'nee/ ⓘ  
noun THEOLOGY  
noun: koinonia  
Christian fellowship or communion, with God or, more commonly, with fellow Christians.  
Origin  
GREEK  
koinōnia → koinōnia  
κοινωνία (koinōnia) → κοινός (koinos) + νία (nia)  
early 20th century; from Greek koinōnia 'fellowship.'

*Purple Hibiscus.* Two teens live with their mother and well-respected father in a wealthy city of Nigeria. Their father is very strict about their spiritual lives and has a schedule for the family to pray together and apart. This strict regimen may be what we need to get us started. As time goes on, prayer will become a habit and part of our daily routine. It will protect us from many of the temptations we face as teens today.

Let's revisit what the Apostles told us from the very beginning. We are to lead a life filled with prayer, simplicity, almsgiving, and communion, and to follow what the Apostles did at the start of the Church. Frederica Mathewes-Green says it was the Apostles' task to define and defend "Orthodox theology against the battering waves of heresies." This is the Church's doctrine. When the first converts "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship" (Acts 2:42), they were carrying the Christian faith to the world. We are much like the Apostles; they were witnesses of Christ and we have witnessed the effects of Christ. We are also like the converts; we trust and spread what the Apostles told us.

My Sunday School teacher always tells us that nine out of ten times, the answer to his questions will be love. At first, love didn't seem to me to be a major theme of Acts 2:42. I was definitely wrong. The very next verse says, "And they sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need." What is this, if not love?

Father Dorotheus of Gaza painted a beautiful picture of this in one of his sermons. He used a cir-

cle to represent the world. At the center of the circle is God. From Him there are rays that represent the ways of life of men that start at the center and work their way out. As the rays travel farther from the center, they spread apart from one another. These are the men that are occupied with the material world and grow far apart from God. They also separate themselves from the rest of mankind and lose their love for one another. The rays that don't distance themselves from the center are those that devote their lives to God and the saints, and love all people. Father Dorotheus said that "the closer we get to Him, [the more] we unite with love with our brethren, and the more we do that, we [more we] unite with God." Acts 2:42 fits this picture exactly. When we take communion, we are uniting ourselves with God. When we follow the doctrine of the Church and the Apostles, we are uniting ourselves with God. When we pray, we are uniting ourselves with God. When we love and care for others, we are uniting ourselves with God. When we stop focusing on this material world and devote ourselves to Christ, we are uniting ourselves with God. This is how those early Christians lived and this is how we must live.

We started with a Greek word, so now let's end with a Greek word. You never know: it could end up in the next spelling bee. *Synergia* (another word of Greek origin) means *synergy*, *cooperation*. The converts worked together to make sure that everyone was provided for. They followed the Apostles together, broke bread together, and prayed together. As they did this, God blessed them by adding more souls to the Church. In turn, the new converts continued to provide, protect, and teach one another, and God continued to bless them. He will bless us in the same way. We are the same Church as Acts 2:42. We are the Church of the Apostles. Our task is to continue in this same *koinonia* and *synergia*, into which they entered two thousand years ago.

Samantha Nassief, 16  
St. Simeon Church, Santa Clarita,  
California



On the weekend of September 7–9, the deacons of the Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic gathered together with His Grace Bishop THOMAS in prayer, worship, spiritual growth, and fellowship, for the annual Deacons' Retreat, graciously hosted by St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and Antiochian Village.

The retreat was organized by Father Anthony Roeber, and our retreat master was Father David Hestor. We were truly blessed with Father David's thoughtful, Christ-centered guidance as he led us in sessions on the topics of "The Qualities of Ministry According to St. John Chrysostom," and "The Deacon's Health and His Ministry."

Saturday morning, we discussed challenges that clergy face in their parishes and their families, as well as personally, and the qualities for which clergy must strive in their ministry, as presented by St. John in his "Six Books on the Priesthood." We greatly appreciated Father David's help in discussing these challenges and understanding St. John's instruction in very clear and practical ways. We should be able to apply this practical advice in our ministry to our communities and in our interactions with our parishioners and families. In our afternoon session, we focused on the deacon's health. We discussed the deacon's physical and mental health, as well as the health of his relationships with his spouse and children. We were reminded that these are impor-

tant, and sometimes overlooked or neglected, components of his ability to minister to his community. In our final session, we met with His Grace Bishop THOMAS and discussed the role and responsibilities of the deacon in the parish. As always, we were blessed by his guidance.

Our souls were nourished by prayer and worship throughout the weekend. We celebrated the Liturgy for the Nativity of the Theotokos on Friday evening, Third and Sixth Hour prayers, and Great Vespers on Saturday, and the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Sayidna THOMAS on Sunday morning.

Our bodies were nourished by our gracious hosts at St. Mary, who provided a delicious breakfast, lunch, and dinner on Saturday, and organized a brunch on Sunday following the Liturgy. It was fitting to share this final meal of the retreat in fellowship with the parishioners of St. Mary, before departing for our homes, families, and parishes.

It was truly a blessing to gather together as brothers again this year and to strengthen our commitment of service to our Lord, to our Bishop, to our parishes, and to our families. Thanks is given to His Grace Bishop THOMAS, Father Anthony, and Father David, for their spiritual guidance. We are grateful to our hosts, Father Don and Khouria Janet Shadid, all the parishioners of St. Mary, and Antiochian Village, for their hospitality and fellowship.

Deacon Abraham Cavalier

  
THE MOST REVEREND  
METROPOLITAN JOSEPH  
355 MOUNTAIN ROAD  
ENGLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY  
07631

## ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITAN PHILIP – FOUNDER  
A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS

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2019 ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN PROJECT

### “Building a New Cathedral”



*“What is more precious to all of us than the Antiochian Village?”*

His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH asked the members of the North American Board of the Antiochian Women (NAB) and Spiritual Advisors this question as he prepared to tell us the theme of our 2019 NAB Project.

The question immediately brought to mind what His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, of Thrice-Blessed Memory, used to say about the Antiochian Village:

*“The Antiochian Village is the HEART of our Archdiocese.”*

When Metropolitan JOSEPH told us of his inspiration to build a new and beautiful cathedral on the grounds of the Village, we all immediately understood why this is such a wonderful vision. Not only does the building of a new cathedral give form to Metropolitan PHILIP’s metaphor of a beating heart in the center of our Archdiocese, but a new and inspiring cathedral will also satisfy several practical and pressing needs. This vision of Metropolitan JOSEPH is one that I’m sure the Antiochian Women will be eager to help bring into reality.

As Metropolitan JOSEPH pointed out, the success of the Village has brought us to the point that we have outgrown our current facilities. The success of our camping program means that the St. Ignatius Chapel is not large enough, and does not have enough flexible space to meet the needs of our children. The continual growth of our Archdiocese, too, means that the Ss. Peter and Paul Chapel cannot hold all of the clergy who now attend our symposia. They have been forced to break into smaller groups and feel separated from each other. A new cathedral, with well-designed meeting spaces, is needed so that we will have one physical place which serves to unify us.

Also, a cathedral is meant to serve as a beacon to everyone as they gaze upon the symbol of the Heavenly Jerusalem, that perfect “new creation” which spans the chasm between the world and God. In witnessing this miracle descending from Heaven, the Angel of the Apocalypse cried out, “Behold, the Tabernacle of God is among men!” (Revelation 21:3) The architecture of our Orthodox churches is meant to proclaim, in stone and mortar, this mystical reality of God descending to dwell among His people. It simultaneously serves as the gateway to Paradise – an entrance that has been re-opened to mankind by the sacrifice of our Lord’s fleshly tabernacle upon the Cross. Metropolitan JOSEPH reiterated that the Holy Orthodox Church has one mission: to evangelize the world for Christ. He said that we evangelize by word, by music, by prayer, and also by architecture and the Holy Icons. He gave us several examples of how this evangelism can happen through the wordless – although powerful – testimony of our Orthodox architecture. He described our new churches built in Yakima, and Tucson, and Salt Lake City. He said that many people have been drawn to join these parishes because, in

beholding the physical church building, they had an intuitive sense that this place was where they could find God. They were drawn to hear the good news of the Gospel through the proclamation of our architecture that “Christ is in our midst!”

We often refer to the Antiochian Village as being our “holy mountain.” Metropolitan JOSEPH has the vision of building this new cathedral on the highest point of the Antiochian Village, near the entrance road, so that it can be seen over a great distance. The inspiring testimony of its domes and crosses will send out the blessing of God across the Ligonier Valley. Then, when our many groups gather at the Village – our children for summer camp; our bishops, priests, and deacons for the Clergy Symposium; our families for Family Camp – and when we host the Special Olympics and the OCF College Conference, or when outside groups come to the Village for their meetings and events, as we ascend the path up to our new cathedral, we will have the sense that we are ascending the “mountain of the Lord” (Psalms 24:3).

So, let’s immediately start our fundraising for this inspirational, once-in-a-lifetime project. Building a cathedral that will truly bring us all together at the heart of the Archdiocese is going to require a large investment of time and money. Let’s make a special effort this year, so that we can see the results in a very special and splendid cathedral for our Archdiocese at the Antiochian Village.

On behalf of the entire North American Board of the Antiochian Women, I thank you in advance for your tireless labor for this worthy cause.

Yours in Christ Jesus our Lord, God, and Savior,

Khouria Suzanne Murphy  
Vice President of the North American Board of the Antiochian Women  
NAB Project Coordinator

**NOTE:** *This letter and poster is being sent to every parish and mission, to all the hierarchs of our Archdiocese, and to the NAB officers and diocesan Project Coordinators as a way to kick-off our 2019 Project. Please display the poster and share the contents of this letter with all of the faithful so that we can build enthusiasm for this inspiring project and begin our fundraising efforts immediately. Thank you!*



Kh. Suzanne Murphy ❖ VICE PRESIDENT of the North American Board of the Antiochian Women & Projects Coordinator  
3 Maxwell Avenue, Geneva, NY 14456 - (h) 315-789-7210 - SuzanneM@rochester.rr.com

❖ ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA ❖



A group photo of the Teen SOYO group and the volunteers.



The DOMSE Teen SOYO board with Bishop NICHOLAS

The pink team during Glow in the Dark Capture the Flag.

## First Annual Fall Retreat Teen SOYO of the Diocese of Miami and the South East

It's hard for teenagers like me to find people that I can connect to and understand on a spiritual level. There are very few places where I feel completely accepted and where I am surrounded by friends who I know will always understand me. These places are camp, conventions, and retreats. At these events, I can only see friends who come from all over the Diocese of Miami and the South East (DOMSE) twice a year. I think everyone would agree, that is not enough. So when Bishop NICHOLAS proposed an annual Fall Retreat to the SOYO Board, the immediate response was Yes! Anyone who has talked to Bishop NICHOLAS knows that he loves Teen SOYO. Many would describe him as a teen himself, from the way he uses our slang and taps someone on the opposite shoulder from behind him, to joking around with us. Bishop NICHOLAS, like many others, knows that we teens are the future of the Church. This is why he wants to see every teen in his diocese active, not only in his or her parish, but within the diocese. This

way, not only will we each have a united parish family, but we will also have a cohesive diocesan family. What better way to accomplish this, than by having a Fall Retreat?

The retreat was held by St. Elias Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Mara Shuler was the main organizer, and had the help of Father Gabriel Tannous, Khouria Gigi Tannous, and countless other volunteers. The first task of the Teen SOYO Board was to pick a theme for the retreat. We all voted and came to the unanimous decision that the theme would be a quote by St. John Chrysostom: "The only person who is free, is the one who lives for Christ." This theme was elaborated on by the guest speaker of the retreat, Deacon George Katrib. Deacon George hosted three sessions for the teens to talk about the theme, and each session taught me something new spiritually. While this retreat was meant to be fun, there were also many opportunities to learn something new about Orthodoxy, arising from reflection on this quotation.

The retreat began Friday, and everyone was

filled with excitement. After registration and some fun ice-breakers, we had session one with Deacon George. Everyone was given a piece of paper on which to draw the things that make us who we are. Many drew images of sports, family, and friends, but the staple of all our papers was a drawing of a church or a cross. That led into a talk about who we are in the eyes of Christ, and our personhood, as well as how we spend our time. We found that school is where we spend most of our hours during the week. We talked about the fact that even though we spend significantly more hours at school than at church, church still has the biggest impact on our daily lives. In the second session, on Saturday after liturgy and brunch, we talked about how much time we spend on social media. After this session we took a snack break and then played some fun games, including a picture scavenger hunt, which was incredibly entertaining. In session three which followed, we engaged in an exercise called "Spotify vs. iTunes." Four teams were each to get from \$25,000 to \$30,000. They earned or lost money by picking either Spotify or iTunes. Gaining or losing depended on the combination of the teams' choices. For example, if two teams picked iTunes and two teams picked Spotify, those who picked iTunes would win \$2,000, and those who picked Spotify would lose \$2,000. The simplest way for everyone to get to the goal was for everyone to pick Spotify every time. However, some teams ignored the main point of the activity, which was for every team to reach \$30,000

by cooperation. Instead of working together, playful fear and greed made some teams turn against the others, which caused some teams to fail to reach the goal. After the activity we debriefed and talked about how that is also what can happen in real-life scenarios. Saturday night we played glow-in-the-dark capture-the-flag, which was a combination of capture-the-flag and freeze tag. We ended our night with "Ask Sayidna," which is a teen favorite, and a compline service. Sunday morning, we had a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and coffee hour. This was a perfect way to end a fantastic and exciting weekend with each other.

This first annual Fall Retreat was only open for DOMSE SOYO. Next year, however, we will host it as a retreat for all of our diocesan groups! I believe I speak for all of Teen SOYO when I say that I am more than excited for the Fall Retreat to become an annual tradition. Here is another opportunity to be surrounded by my brothers and sisters through Christ, as well as an opportunity to grow in my Faith. I would like to say a special thank-you to Mara Schuler, Fr. Gabriel Tannous, Khouria Gigi Tannous, and all the people who gave their time to help make the Fall Retreat a success. Also, I say an enormous thank-you to all the teens who attended this retreat. I am looking forward to the rest of this year as your Diocese's Teen SOYO Secretary! God bless you all!

Samantha AbuGhazaleh  
Secretary of DOMSE Teen SOYO



**The Western Rite Vicariate**  
The Antiochian Orthodox Christian  
Archdiocese of North America



The Right Reverend Bishop JOHN, Auxiliary Bishop  
Very Reverend Edward W. Hughes, Vicar General  
101 Pleasant Street, Methuen, MA 01844-7130  
Telephone/Fax: 978-685-4052  
WRVicarGeneral@gmail.com

7 September 2018

The Most Reverend Metropolitan JOSEPH  
Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of All North America  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America  
358 Mountain Road  
PO Box 5238  
Englewood, NJ 07631-5238

Sayidna Metropolitan JOSEPH:

I pray that all is well with Your Eminence and that you are enjoying a most rewarding summer.

Thank you so very much for Your Eminence's gracious and powerful presence with us at our Western Rite conference at St. Peter's in Fort Worth. Your kindness, your love, and your fatherly care for us was touching and comforting and inspiring to all of us. Your energy and your efforts on our behalf and in our midst filled us with excitement and incredible gratitude.

God has truly and greatly blessed us by sending us a father to love us as you do.

There is no way that we can adequately thank Your Eminence for all that you have done for us, especially your most inspired and inspiring words throughout the course of our conference. We pray that God will always watch over you, protect you, keep you safe, and bless all of Your Eminence's ministry in our beloved Archdiocese.

May God preserve you for us for many, many blessed years.

Kissing Your Eminence's hand with love and affection, and asking your holy prayers for us your grateful and loving flock, the Western Rite Vicariate of the Antiochian Archdiocese, I remain your devoted, loyal, and obedient son in Christ,

*Father Edward Hughes*  
The Very Reverend Edward Hughes

**ORDAINED**

HARJU, Benjamin, to the holy diaconate by Bishop ANTHONY on October 23, 2018, at St. James Church, Williamston, Michigan. He is assigned to the parish.

KATRIB, Deacon George, to the holy priesthood by Bishop BASIL on Sunday, November 11, 2018, at St. George Church, Houston, Texas. He is assigned as second priest of the parish.

KEENER, Peter (Burton), to the holy diaconate by Bishop NICHOLAS on September 23, 2018, at All Saints Church, Raleigh, North Carolina.

**ELEVATED**

KEIM, Deacon David, to Protodeacon by Bishop NICHOLAS on September 23, 2018, at All Saints Church, Raleigh, North Carolina.

**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

**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 at the Cathedral in Worcester, MA

**FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS**

Fr. John Oliver



Inner city, urban stress. Unlike many in such a place, one elementary-school teacher has chosen to work among the poor. His gift? – mentoring fatherless children, stepping into the muddy puddle of their lives with a paternal touch.

Asked about his vocation, he replied, “This work I do and this life I lead can all be traced back to when I was a boy in high-school, to a particular class, to a particular paper I wrote, to a particular word on that paper when the teacher handed it back to me. He wrote, ‘This is superb work, son. I congratulate you.’ It wasn’t “superb” or “congratulate” that set my heart on fire. Compliments didn’t mean much. To a kid from the projects who grew up without a dad, however, who longed for a man to be proud of him, when I saw the word “son,” it set something in motion in me that gave purpose to my life. So, I do what I do because of one word. I lead the kind of life I lead because of the right word at the right time.”

Church historian Jaroslav Pelikan noted that before we speak of the Bible as a book or as a text, we must speak of it as a voice. Eleven times in Genesis

1 the verb *to say* is identified with God, and we have to pass through eighty-one chapters before the God who speaks writes anything. And although the Judeo-Christian Scriptures contain almost three-quarters of a million words, this God who speaks essentially speaks only one: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

When humans speak, we share ourselves, concentrated into organized, coherent, expressed utterances which go forth and communicate us. We become known. Similarly, our heavenly Father issues forth an organized, coherent, expressed Utterance which goes forth and communicates Him. He becomes known. That Utterance is Christ – the Word of God – “in whom all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). Christ is God the Father speaking our language; the Word assumes flesh so that we might speak to Him in return. We call this *relationship*. We also call it Christmas.

This Word of God came “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Can we who are people of the Word say the same about our own?

Some speech may be gracious but not truthful: flattery, obsequious compliments, smooth talk, manipulative language. These words may seem gracious, but there is no truth, no honesty, no sobriety in them. Some speech may be truthful, but not gracious: gossip, sarcasm, insults, ridicule, complaining. These words may be truthful, but there is no grace, no love, no respect in them.

In our age of harsh airwaves and coarsening discourse, the Church stands as a healing haven because all her words – her Scriptures, her prayers, her writings, her hymns – are full of only grace and truth. To hear these words, to sing these words, to read and speak and memorize these words, is to fill our minds with grace and truth. Gradually, by the grace of God, we become gracious and truthful people. Isn’t that how the Church grows? People who feel drained of life are drawn to people who can offer it to them.

Words – our words – are powerful. A word is a living organism, capable of growing, changing, spreading, and influencing those who say them and those who hear them. Whatever we speak – good or evil, right or wrong, uplifting or berating – proceeds from our mouths, fills the ears of our hearers, and echos into eternity.

# YOUR FAMILY IS WAITING IN GRAND RAPIDS!

Kathy Abraham

**I**t is said that you can reach anyone in the world with three phone calls. Often in the Orthodox community, three phone calls are two too many! This is how one call changed my life.

Many people ask, why do we hold Archdiocese Conventions? For me, the answer is simple. Conventions foster our family environment. The relationships we forge during these conventions are built on our common faith. We are all members of an extended family that is the Church. These relationships last a lifetime, long after our high school and college friendships fade. These friendships sustain us through the good times in life, the weddings and baptisms, as well as the sorrows. The future generations need this now more than ever.

My experience began when my godmother Laurice decided that I needed to attend my first Midwest SOYO convention with her family. In two cars, we drove to Indianapolis, Indiana, and from there the rest is history! I can still remember snacking on pita bread in our rooms, meeting people from across the region, and talking and singing late into the evenings. I can honestly say, most of these people are still pivotal in my life, and a few I now call family.

After college, I moved to Canton, Ohio. My mother decided I needed a little push in finding a new parish. A call was made. Having served

as the Secretary of Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America (AOCWNA) in the Midwest, Mom reached out to her friend Rose. Within hours, I received a call from Rose, a total stranger to me, inviting me to her home for dinner and offering to pick me up for church! I was picked up every Sunday for several months, and was always invited to dinner whenever there was fresh talame. I have never forgotten the power of that one phone call! I found a new home parish in Canton, Ohio, and was quickly drafted to be on the Parish Council and became the SOYO leader. In the latter capacity, I was mentored by the incomparable Rachel Blair! Rachel told me that it was my duty to represent our parish at the regional meetings. I had not been to one since college. These powerful icons guided me and set strong examples of stewardship that I try to emulate in my life today. (Never underestimate your own power. There is a young adult waiting for your lead.) To this day, I try to connect the young people in the parish with a contact when they move to a new city or attend college. Because of my relationships outside of my own parish, I am successful in making these connections. Some remark, "Is there anyone you don't know?" I smile and say "I have eyes everywhere and I will know if you don't go to church!" I make a call!

My journey continued in the Midwest, leading me to serve as the President of what would then be known as the Fellowship of St. John the Divine. My involvement at the archdiocesan level began in 1987, when I married and moved to Grand Rapids. I was traveling to Detroit, Michigan, for what would be my first-ever Archdiocese Convention with then-NAC President Rob Rinvelt. We knew each other from our regional meetings, and now shared a parish. Rob encouraged me to become involved at the level of the North American Board of AW. At the Archdiocese conventions, you have the

opportunity to reach out and get to know layman and clergy from throughout North America, and to share ideas and values. I was elected NAC Secretary at that meeting, and later went on to serve as President of NAC Fellowship of St. John the Divine. During my four years as President, I had the opportunity to attend all seven of the Parish Life conferences during the summer. This gave me the opportunity to meet nearly all the clergy and many of the laity from across North America. I was also able to foster relationships with the NAC Teen officers as future leaders of our church. I was fortunate to have worked with a great spiritual advisor in V. Rev. Fr. John Abdalah, now Bishop JOHN! These were the best of times!

As NAC President, one is given the opportunity to serve with the amazing men and women of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees. Giving lay leaders a voice in the affairs of the Archdiocese is unique in the Orthodox world. The experience and knowledge gained from them is incomparable. I was admittedly intimidated at first, but found that the members of the Board are gracious and hospitable, not to mention charitable. If not for these dedicated men and women sharing their time, talents and treasures, our youth and departments would not be where they are today.

One of the most rewarding experiences of my

service was working with the North American Student Board, which was the predecessor to Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF)! The talent of these young college students and their commitment to the faith was awe-inspiring. Many of these amazing young adults are now leaders in their parishes and diocese. To the many "kids," as I called them, this is *your call!*

A chief benefit of attending the bi-annual convention is the relationships that are forged and the ideas that are shared. We are not an island. We are a community of the faithful. As an Antiochian Orthodox Christian, you can walk into any church in our Archdiocese and feel at home. There is always a familiar face. I remember attending a church in Florida while on vacation. The first person I ran into was an old friend from Ohio! When our young people move away and leave their parishes, they know that there isn't a city they can move to where we cannot connect them to a church and a mentor within three calls.

And now, coming full circle, as Co-Chair of the Archdiocese 2019 Convention – Welcome to Grand Rapids! (You'll Love It Here! as the slogan says.) Take the call and don't miss the opportunity to reconnect with old friends and to forge new and lasting bonds as we celebrate your church family July 21-28<sup>th</sup>.

[Top to bottom] Kathy Abraham served on the Archdiocese Board with Bill Nasser and then with NAC Teen SOYO President Becky Swayri, who is a current member of the Archdiocese Board.

Bishop JOHN and Kathy Abraham, with Khouria Betty Randolph at the end of the table as Secretary.

Kathy Abraham and Bishop JOHN with the late Thrice-Blessed Metropolitan PHILIP.

Bishop BASIL Essey, Kathy Abraham, and Esther Simbol at the MW Parish Life Conference, when Kathy was President.



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# Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

***I CAN DO ALL THINGS  
THROUGH CHRIST  
WHO STRENGTHENS ME***

*– Philippians 4:13*

***Our St. Nicholas Church Family  
in Grand Rapids, Michigan,  
host of AC2019, wishes you  
a Blessed Christmas.***

***We look forward to seeing you next summer!***



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