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THE WORD

CONTENTS



COVER: THEOPHANY ICON by
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- 3 EDITORIAL
by Bishop JOHN
- 4 METROPOLITAN JOSEPH
WELCOMES ECUMENICAL
PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW
TO THE ARCHDIOCESE
HEADQUARTERS
by Peter Samore
- 6 METROPOLITAN HILARION
CELEBRATES PATRONAL
FEAST DAY WITH
METROPOLITAN JOSEPH
by Peter Samore
- 8 PARABLE OF THE GARDENER
by Fr. George Washburn
- 10 HOW WE RELATE TO OURSELVES
by Fr. Joshua Makoul
- 12 A GEN Z'S LETTER TO HIS
ORTHODOX COMMUNITY
by Peter Nassif
- 14 ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS
- 16 HOMO CONNECTICUS:
OUR NEED TO UNPLUG
by Fr. Peter Kavanaugh
- 18 THE HOLY DIACONATE AND
THE CLARION CALL
by Deacon David Lochbihler
- 22 ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE
- 23 SECOND ANNUAL PACIFIC
NORTHWEST DEANERY RETREAT
by Deacon Joseph Frangipani
- 25 CHURCH IN THE TIME OF COVID
by Valerie Yova
- 28 COMMUNITIES IN ACTION
- 32 ARCH WEEKEND AT
ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE
- 33 FORMER EDITOR OF
THE WORD MAGAZINE HAS A
STREET NAMED IN HIS MEMORY
by Dr. John Alexander
- 35 A THANK-YOU TO KATRINA BITAR

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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NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION, CONFESSION AND EDITORIAL

Bishop JOHN

What do I need to do, to “walk the talk” better and be what God created me to be? I was created by God in His image and likeness, purchased and freed by Jesus Christ, and sent out to preach, teach, and baptize. New Year’s is one of those times to pause and reflect on who we are and what we are doing, a time to sharpen our metaphorical blades and be deliberate.

The year 2021 has been one of challenges, struggles, and losses. I have not always transcended my challenges. I have allowed political and philosophical ideologies to divide us and weaken our common Orthodox witness to Christ. I have judged and accused those who have judged me of all kinds of worldly and spiritual sins. I have worn and not worn masks, displaying the political divides. I have judged others for not following what I think best at any given moment. I have failed to love and cherish everyone. For all this I need to repent.

Repentance is a change of mind, or, if you will, of “mindset.” A mindset is a way of seeing the world, experiencing God, and being with each other. The first Christians said that they followed

The Way. Christ is the Way, the Truth, the Law, the Gift, the Savior. He shows us the way to correct life, real freedom, happiness, joy, and peace. Have I always acted in “the way” that reflects God’s joy, peace, mercy, kindness, and forgiveness? How can one claim to be God’s own and not follow His way? This past year has provided me with reasons to pause, rethink, reprioritize, recommit, and repent.

What does such repentance look like? Please feel free to finish my confession/editorial yourself. As for me, it’s all about thankfulness. I’m grateful to God that you are willing to pause with me and think, even if for a moment, as we go into another Covid year together. I am thankful for all that God has put before us. I am thankful that He is merciful, and thankful that we have this

option to be one in Christ and one with each other, thankful even when we disagree about politics, philosophy, academics, and everything else. Most importantly, Orthodox Christians agree on God’s love. For this we transcend all earthly cares to be together in the Kingdom of God, which

of course is at hand. I resolve and commit to try to show everyone God’s mercy, even when others are anxious or frightened. I commit to try to redirect others to God better, as Christ has shown us as recorded in the Gospels. I commit, when I fail, to trying again and again.



METROPOLITAN JOSEPH WELCOMES ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW TO ARCHDIOCESAN HEADQUARTERS

Peter Samore

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop BASIL

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS

The Right Reverend
Bishop ALEXANDER

The Right Reverend
Bishop JOHN

The Right Reverend
Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend
Bishop NICHOLAS

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Accompanied by his brother bishops, clergy, and members of the board of trustees of the Antiochian Archdiocese, His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH received His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW of Constantinople at the headquarters of the Archdiocese in Englewood, New Jersey on Monday, November 1, 2021.



The evening began with a doxology service of thanksgiving in St. John Chrysostom Chapel, followed by a private dinner, during which His Eminence congratulated His All-Holiness upon his thirtieth anniversary as Ecumenical Patriarch. His Eminence presented His All-Holiness an *engolpion* of the Theotokos, and a newly painted icon of St. Raphael of Brooklyn. It holds his relic, and depicts the Halki Seminary of the Ecumenical Patriarchate where the saint studied, St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn at the time of St. Raphael, and the Brooklyn Bridge.

“More than mere practical cooperation, it is the spiritual openness and connectedness that allow Christ’s grace to flow between us and through us, to bring light, nourishment, and refreshment to the world,” His Eminence said in his remarks to His All-Holiness. “We must never tire of seeking this indispensable unity, through love, mutual respect,

and collaboration, under the headship of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In response, His All-Holiness thanked His Eminence for his hospitality. He also reflected on St. John Chrysostom and his legacy that their churches share. The saint was a priest in Antioch before he became Archbishop of Constantinople. His All-Holiness also presented His Eminence with an *engolpion* of the Theotokos, and gifts to the clergy present in commemoration of his thirtieth anniversary. His All-Holiness added that the new icon of St. Raphael will be displayed in the church at Halki.

On Tuesday, November 2, Metropolitan JOSEPH was a guest of the Greek Archdiocese of America at the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine in Manhattan, where Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW celebrated the “Thyranoixia,” the Opening of the Doors Ceremony.





METROPOLITAN HILARION CELEBRATES PATRONAL FEAST DAY WITH METROPOLITAN JOSEPH

Peter Samore



On the day commemorating his patron saint, Hilarion the Schema-monk of the Kiev Caves, His Eminence Metropolitan HILARION – First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) – welcomed His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH to concelebrate the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Synodal Cathedral of the Mother of God of the Sign in Manhattan, New York.

At the conclusion of the Liturgy on

November 3 (old calendar October 21), 2021, Metropolitan JOSEPH presented Metropolitan HILARION with a hand-painted icon of St. Tikhon of Moscow and St. Raphael of Brooklyn. The icon contains relics of St. Raphael. Metropolitan JOSEPH noted the common history and Orthodox Christian witness that the churches of Antioch and Russia share in North America, beginning with these two great saints.



PARABLE OF THE GARDENER

(LUKE 8:1-15)

Fr. George Washburn

Today I'm temporarily changing the title of the familiar Parable of the Sower, or at least of today's sermon, to "The Parable of the Gardener." Why? My wife and I are more joyful gardeners than sowers.



What do sowers and gardeners have in common with all sincere Orthodox Christians?: the desire for soil that yields rich crops. So today let's focus on practices of good soil formation.

Here are four time-tested strategies for getting good soil and crops from gardens ... and hearts!

1. Clean Out the Junk

When Suzanne and I moved back into our first house after 25 years of renters, the front yard was a mess of Bermuda grass and weeds. It was so bad we completely gave up on a lawn and chose to make a flower and veggie garden instead.

Clean out took about a week. Passersby chuckled at two old folks on hands and knees in the hot sun, digging the whole yard down more than a foot, sifting, and discarding! Every root of every nuisance plant: scoured out. It hadn't been disturbed since 1947. A bucketful of old nails, screws, rocks and marbles accumulated, and was tossed! (We kept the coins.)

Orthodox Christianity teaches us a similar process is necessary to produce good inner soil. Only serious scouring severs deep roots of sin and removes the weedy, contaminated habits of thought that doom inattentive Christians to a life of poor soil and harvests!

2. Enrich the Soil

When our sifting ended, amending began! Shredded leaves, manure, straw, coffee hulls from a local roaster, even crushed grapes from a winery! Our little backyard worm tower yielded rich castings. We built and fed a series of three compost piles so that one was always ready to use. Each year we repeated each step except the initial scour. Eyecatching flowers and mouth-watering veggies gradually became the norm!

Hearts need enriching too. The saints advise regular Bible-reading, especially the Psalms and Gospels. We add the lives of saints and the classics of Orthodox spiritual life. Contemporary interpreters and advocates of spiritual vigilance and growth round out the enrichment. Gradually, with care, fallow, secularized, media-dominated inner mediocrity becomes rich and fertile.

3. Water the Soil

We live in drought-plagued, fire-threatened coastal California. Once in a while it rains. Water is rationed carefully. We water at sunset to allow plants to absorb what the daytime sun would evaporate. We catch shower warm-up water in a bucket to distribute plant by plant. Even food rinse water gets repurposed!

What waters our inner man? Scripture answers: tears of repentance. In old age King David faced and named the major sins of his life, and rich poetry of repentance poured out in Psalms. In one place he writes of the deep groaning prayers of the night and watering his bed with tears of repentance (Psalm 6:6). St. Maximos the Confessor compares this good-soil mentality with the poor-soil habits we often follow: "He who busies himself with the sins of others, or judges his brother on suspicion, has not yet even begun to repent or to examine himself so as to discover his own sins."

4. Rest the Soil

We had season after season of bountiful flowers and veggies, but it couldn't go on indefinitely without damaging and defeating what we had worked hard to build up. So we set aside late fall and early winter as our season to recharge the garden. The amendments gradually break down, a modest cover crop grows and gets chopped down, then turned back into the soil to add nitrogen.

Can we even hear Jesus Christ Himself retell the Parable of the Gardener in this Sunday Gospel and sermon? Surely, we are meant for the thriving crops of carefully cultivated inner soil that yields the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, and so forth (Galatians



5:22–23) instead of the “weeds” of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21).

Can I make a little bet with you? One of these four strategies for inner soil enrichment is probably calling out to you more than the others at this time in your journey. Which one is it, and how could you choose to be practical about it?

1. *Junk removal:* Orthodox Tradition teaches us that individual, sacramental confession is indispensable to serious inner soil health. Great confessors are hard to come by. So why not stop delaying, find the best one within reach ... and call today for an appointment?

2. *Enrichment:* Ancient Faith ministries and our antiochian.org website have inventories of resources and recommendations for enriching the inner man. Maybe you could commit right now to filling the mental vacuum of commute or chore time with good listening.

3. *Water:* King David’s Psalm 50 (51) is a great one to memorize and pray daily. The world teaches us to ignore, conceal, or even revel in our sins. It despises and even punishes candor and transparency about our failings. God tells us a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 50/51:17) watered by tears of

repentance is not despised. Whom do we believe?

4. *Rest:* Once again, Orthodox Tradition is full of time-tested practices that work. Keep a weekly day of rest, worship, and recharge. Follow habits of periodic abstaining from foods and drink that allow the body to recharge and carry over to the heart. In our day, could anything be more utterly crucial than rest from soul-fragmenting media and electronic devices? What do you and I really need to change? How can we commit today to the first step?

Our destiny? Do we choose to fulfill our destiny to be “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), producers of bountiful crops of thirty, sixty, and a hundred-fold (Matt. 13:23)? Or do we settle for being ill-nourished consumers (not to say producers!) of the crops of waste, misery, despair, endless drama, and friction, that secularism is producing in seemingly accelerating abundance? A firm decision today to focus on one of these soil-improvement strategies and to make at least one change in our habits could bless us, and many around us, with joyful, surprising results!

Fr. George Washburn,
Ben Lomond, California

HOW WE RELATE TO OURSELVES:

AN OFTEN-OVERLOOKED AREA OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Fr. Joshua Makoul



WE ARE OFTEN ENCOURAGED TO REFLECT ON AND BE MINDFUL OF HOW WE RELATE TO AND TREAT OTHERS. WE ALSO, QUITE NATURALLY, ARE VERY MINDFUL OF HOW OTHERS TREAT US. WE VERY OFTEN, HOWEVER, PAY LITTLE ATTENTION TO HOW WE RELATE TO OURSELVES OR HOW WE TREAT OURSELVES. THIS ASPECT OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES IS ALMOST ENTIRELY OVERLOOKED. SOME OF US MIGHT HAVE AN AVERSION TO BEING MINDFUL OF HOW WE RELATE TO OURSELVES. PERHAPS IT CONJURES UP FEARS OF BEING EGO-CENTRIC OR SELF-FOCUSED. AS WE SHALL SEE, HOWEVER, MAKING SURE WE ARE RELATING TO OURSELVES AS CHRIST WOULD WANT US TO DO, HAS HUGE RAMIFICATIONS FOR ALL AREAS OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE.

First, let us start with the question, “What does it mean to relate to ourselves?” It means how we perceive ourselves, how we respond to ourselves with our thoughts, how we dialogue with ourselves when we are alone or have quiet moments, and how we respond and feel about ourselves when we make perceived mistakes. We tend to see that there are certain themes in the way we relate to others or ourselves. Do we tend to be more peaceful, gentle, and positive, or do we tend frequently to be combative, defensive, and harsh? How we relate to others or ourselves comes from our disposition of heart or our inner disposition. Do we tend to have an easy-going, peaceful disposition, or one that is easily irritated, defensive, and critical? Do we have a more merciful disposition, or a more punishing disposition? It is the goal of every Christian to make sure our inner disposition is that of Christ: one that is merciful, patient, kind, gentle, affirming, and loving.

For some of us, there may be a dramatic difference between how we relate to others and how we relate to ourselves. We may be very easy on ourselves, but very harsh and demanding of others with our expectations. Then, some of us might be very easy and merciful with others, but too harsh and demanding of ourselves. Many would say of the latter: isn’t this how we are supposed to be as Orthodox Christians? We are indeed called to be merciful with others and firm with ourselves, but that does not mean being merciless or shaming towards ourselves.

We are called to show ourselves the same mercy and love that Christ Himself shows us. It is not spiritually self-indulgent to be merciful towards ourselves, if that mercy is applied and practiced appropriately. We all sin and make mistakes, and when we do, we must go through the process of repentance. Some of us, however, are constantly and forever punishing ourselves and feeling badly about ourselves. We sometimes confuse this with humility. Living in a state of shame is not humility. Many of us relate to ourselves in a very harsh, demanding, and critical way; always feeling bad about everything we do. This is because, ultimately, we feel bad about who we are. This is not what God wants. We are children of God and made in the image of God.

We must show ourselves the same mercy that Christ would show us, and affirm ourselves in the same way Christ affirmed all others. It is okay to forgive ourselves once we have repented. It is okay

to relax. It is okay to enjoy something. It is okay to let others do something for us. It is okay to allow ourselves to be loved. It is okay to come to the conclusion, when appropriate, that we are being too hard on ourselves. Many who have been abused learn to relate to themselves in an abusive way. Long after the abuser has left their lives, they continue the abuse without realizing it by relating to themselves in a harsh and shaming way, just as the abuser conditioned them. If this is not addressed, it will be an obstacle to spiritual growth and healing. It is amazing how much more efficiently someone heals and grows spiritually once they cease having a harsh and merciless disposition towards themselves.

If we continue to relate to ourselves in a shaming way or in a way that is too harsh, we will become burned out spiritually, be inclined towards depression, and feel alienated and distant from God and others. Our harsh and critical disposition towards ourselves can actually cut us off from accepting and receiving the love of God. It surrounds our soul with dark clouds that block out the love of God. When those of us who are too hard on ourselves learn to ease up on ourselves, it is as though rays of light suddenly start to break through, as God’s love begins to reach our soul. Orthodoxy is all about balance. We are firm with ourselves, never accepting sin; but also merciful and kind to ourselves. Having this balanced disposition only means we will better be able to show love to others and grow spiritually more efficiently.

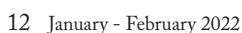
Fr. Joshua Makoul
Father Joshua is Pastor of St. George Cathedral in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and is a licensed counselor.



Peter Nassif

to think of the constancy
of the image of God
in our faith. Or-
thodoxy has
provided

I have immense hope for that Church in the future. That Church is so clearly established in God that you cannot help but feel the rush of wind when you enter it. I just wish more people could step through those doors into the faith, both metaphorically and physically. My generation is searching for solid ground in what feels like an endless sea. We are consumed by a virtual presence that misinterprets



us, career paths that seem to be shifting faster than we can establish ourselves, and global issues that appear like mountains that cannot be “summitted” in front of us. Our generation needs stability, something that transcends time and space, something that is “not of this world.” We need a place that seeks us and accepts us, a place where we can simply rest; where we can look up and see a brighter world; where we can get a glimpse of an eternal peace; a place where we can hear “a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind ... [that] filled the whole house when they were sitting.” The source of that wind can grasp those searching and release them from the weight of this world. The Holy Spirit can do all things, so why don’t we let Him?

We have the Holy Spirit within us, the One by whom the disciples were able to preach the word of God in the language of all nations. Yet we often see the opportunity to speak and let it slip past. Someone opened the window for us, and we felt the wind come rushing in. Why do we then let it close behind us? I wonder if we need to redefine the way we talk about Orthodoxy to others. I wonder if I should not begin with the past, but rather start with what is to come. In the past year, I have journeyed from church to church, However, this has only deepened my love and reverence for the Orthodox Church. Sure, there is absolutely a discussion to be had about theological differences. I so admire, however, the way in which each space has fostered my embrace of the future with God.

The leadership of a church has a duty to help guide parishioners in their walk with Christ, and the parishioners have an obligation to share the beauty of that walk with others. In other words, the parishioners have a duty to *evangelize*. I know that this word may seem out of place in Orthodox discussion. We are not “evangelicals,” as the news pundits use the term, that is, we do not stand at street corners, or knock on doors, but aren’t we also called to share the good news? “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature’” (Mark 16:15).

The final commandment the Lord gave us was to do just that: *evangelize*. I once heard someone describe delivering this message as like giving someone CPR. If you saw someone on the side of the street that stopped breathing, would you walk by on the other side? Why do I so often miss the urgency in the message Christ gave while He was still on

this earth? Why do I so often leave a conversation in which I see and empathize with others who are struggling, without sharing the medicine? Why do I see the weight of the world on my brother’s back, yet do nothing to help him lift it? I am fearful of that sin, of that selfishness, and I ask for forgiveness before God and before each one of you.

I wonder if we as a Church can come together to right that wrong. If we all can work together as the body of Christ, we can share the life of this community with a generation that is desperately searching for it. We can offer life in the One who gives it to all of us. In doing that we cannot focus completely on the past, but open our hearts and minds to the consistent love and image of heaven that we receive each Sunday, and beyond. Let us set aside our fear of uncertainty, of rejection, of earthly judgement. Let us pave a path forward with Christ and towards Christ, focusing not only on what He has done for us in the past, but what He is going to do in the future. I pray we can look to our brothers and sisters and open that door for them, that they too might feel “a rushing mighty wind.”

With Peace,

Peter Nassif
Cedar Rapids, Iowa



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ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS

CONCLUDES 10TH ANNIVERSARY MEETINGS, CREATES NEW AGENCIES

THE ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL ORTHODOX BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA CONVENED IN PERSON FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, IN WASHINGTON, D.C., OCTOBER 2-5, FOR ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY MEETING. THIS IS THE FIRST IN-PERSON MEETING PRESIDED OVER BY ARCHBISHOP ELPIDOPHOROS. TWENTY-NINE HIERARCHS PARTICIPATED IN-PERSON AND WERE JOINED BY SEVEN HIERARCHS WHO PARTICIPATED VIRTUALLY. IN THEIR OPENING SESSION, THEY CALLED TO MIND THE LOSSES SUFFERED OVER THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF, DUE TO THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC, AND OFFERED PRAYERS FOR THE CONTINUED HEALTH AND RECOVERY OF THE FAITHFUL AND ALL PEOPLE.

The events began on October 2nd with a meeting of the Executive Committee. Later that evening, all the Bishops gathered at Saints Peter and Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church in Potomac, Maryland, for Great Vespers, presided over by Metropolitan JOSEPH, Vice-Chairman of the Assembly. A reception hosted by the parish for local clergy and their families followed.

On Sunday, October 3rd, members of the Executive Committee – Archbishop ELPIDOPHOROS (GOA), Metropolitan JOSEPH (AOCA), Bishop IRINEJ (SOC), Metropolitan NICOLAE (ROC), Bishop SABA (GOC), Metropolitan TIKHON (OCA), and Metropolitan GREGORY (ACROD) – concelebrated the Divine Liturgy at Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Washington, D.C. This historic event was the first time the Assembly opened with a concelebration of the heads and representatives of the jurisdictions, fostering the bond of love and communion. The sermon was offered by Metropolitan TIKHON. After the liturgy, met with the faithful during a reception hosted by the parish.

The bishops then engaged the local faithful at a Networking Charity Event at the Museum of the Bible on Sunday evening, where a panel of youth and young adults presented challenges and opportunities facing the youth today, as well as how the Church can support youth in remaining faithful. At the conclusion of the panel, all the participants joined the bishops in assembling hygiene kits to

be distributed by IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) to those in need.

In his opening remarks on Monday, October 4, Archbishop ELPIDOPHOROS, Chairman of the Assembly, shared his joy that the Hierarchs were able to gather in person this year, continuing their 10th Anniversary Celebration. He also expressed sorrow at the falling asleep in the Lord since the last gathering of Metropolitan THEODOSIUS of the OCA, Metropolitan MAXIMOS of the GOA, and Archbishop DAVID of the OCA; and joyfully welcomed the new members to their first Assembly meeting.

The Chairman spoke about unity in diversity: “Orthodoxy, as we all know, is not a federation of Churches, but a family – a very large global family.” He also spoke about the current climate in America and challenges posed by the culture, and the Assembly’s responsibility to be a unified voice defending the traditions of the Church, while being balanced and above all else pastoral.

In 2020, the hierarchs declared 2021 the “Year of the Youth.” A highlight of this gathering was the formation of two new transformational Assembly Agencies focused on serving youth and young adults to better address their needs. A pan-Orthodox Agency for Youth and Young Adults will prepare and provide effective resources, programs, tools, and gatherings to assist ministry workers, clergy, parishes and parents in order to form and strengthen future generations of engaged and

faithful Orthodox Christians. The new Orthodox Volunteer Corps will respond to the deep desire of our Orthodox young adults to serve others, by providing year-long immersive service opportunities in nonprofit organizations. These two new agencies will continue the Assembly of bishop's focus on youth and young adults.

The Assembly also reviewed the extensive work of its Committees and Task Forces undertaken over the past year and considered committee proposals. The Assembly approved the ongoing work of the Committee for Canonical Matters to continue developing a clergy database, the Committee for Youth's upcoming Orthodox Camping and Youth Worker Conference to be held in the first quarter of 2022, and the Committee for Chaplaincy's Institutional Chaplaincy Program. The Mental Health Task Force reported that it will continue its work, having completed the Mental Health Needs Assessment Survey by developing program proposals based on the results.

On their final day of meetings, the hierarchs engaged in a thoughtful dialogue about their respective practices for the reception of converts into the Orthodox Church. As a result, the Assembly approved the formation of a task force, under the oversight of the Committee for Pastoral Practice, to examine the issue of the reception of converts into the Church.

The last session of the meetings examined the North American Orthodox-Roman Catholic Theological Consultation, looking at the past, present, and future of this historic and important ministry.

The Assembly of Bishops also introduced a new iPhone/Android app that will allow the Assembly to gather valid research and better meet the needs of the faithful. The App will also serve as a tool to enhance and promote communication among the hierarchs and the faithful. The app will roll out in phases, starting late 2021/early 2022.

As the meetings were underway in Washington, D.C., the Assembly acknowledged the joint statement of Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, Pope Francis, Archbishop Justin of Canterbury, Metropolitan HILARION of Volokolamsk, Rev. Ioan Saucă, WCC Acting Secretary General, and other global faith leaders on



the climate prior to the upcoming United Nations Climate Conference (COP-26).

Before concluding, the hierarchs agreed to convene again October 2-4, 2022. They regretted the absence of their brother hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate and reiterated their invitation to participate in the following Assemblies.

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- Sermon at the Opening Liturgy
- Opening Remarks of the Chairman
- Closing Remarks of the Chairman
- Photos from Vespers and the Clergy Family Reception on October 2, 2021
- Photos from Divine Liturgy on October 3, 2021
- Photos from the Networking Charity Event on October 3, 2021

Contact: communications@assemblyofbishops.org

The Assembly of Bishops, comprised of all the active, canonical Orthodox Bishops of every jurisdiction in the United States of America, is the primary and official forum for Orthodox Christian Unity in the United States of America. Its purpose is to preserve and contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church by helping to further her spiritual, theological, ecclesiological, canonical, educational, missionary, and philanthropic aims.



HOMO CONNECTICUS: OUR NEED TO UNPLUG

Fr. Peter Kavanaugh

“They picked up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple” (John 8:59).

The Information Age is over. Some call it the “Shift Age,” and others, the “Experience Age.” Perhaps it is the Misinformation Age, or the Post-Truth Age. There is such an abundance of information that we all feel dizzy trying to sort through it all. Perhaps, however, people feel that it does not even matter anymore. *We* are the makers of truth, the world exclaims. *We* are redefining reality, morality, and humanity. In all this frenzy, how can anyone know God? How can we know truth? There is only one way. We have to get in the habit of unplugging from the system, of taking Sabbaths, and retuning our hearts.

Our Sunday Scriptures reach a climax on Passion Sunday. Two weeks before Pascha, in the Western Rite lectionary, we read about the clash between Christ and the leaders of Jerusalem. Our gospel readings have been building up to this all through Lent. Christ has been gradually revealing Himself to the world. First, He was baptized. Then, He was ushered off into the desert to pray. From that moment began a ministry of healing and preaching. At last, Christ reveals Himself to be God.

“Before Abraham was, I am.”

Jesus Christ is Yahweh. He is the eternal one: the “I am that I am.” He declares this boldly to

Jerusalem. It was like a flash of light, so brilliant, that it cast light on everything lurking in the nooks and crannies. Before, the crowd seemed like decent chaps. They were the religious leaders, the community builders, or else the ordinary, respectable citizens. The more Christ revealed the power of God, the more tension built up. Finally, He unveils Himself. Something clicks. The crowd sneers. They pick up stones. They had preached about God for years. Now, they see Him face to face, and they want to kill Him.

What goes on in the heart? What lies beneath our words and convictions, in the gut, in the inner man? How do we know truth? How is it that some believe in God so steadfastly? He is a concrete reality to them. He is close and real like, breath and water. For others, God is an idea, distant or impossible. Why is it that some saw Jesus and fell down in adoration. Others saw Him and felt nothing. Others still, looked at Jesus and hated Him vehemently.

It is no different today. There is so much stirring in our hearts. There are so many opinions, so many perspectives and attitudes. Everything is shouting different so-called “truths.” Everything is proselytizing. Everything is vying for our attention. What can we make of it all? How can we know Truth – real Truth?

“Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the

truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God" (John 8:46).

Christ answers our questions. Whoever is "from God" hears the "words of God." Whoever is made of the stuff of God knows Truth. There is an old adage that you are what you eat. How true this is. This came home to me once when a friend of mine was really getting into carrot juice. He was on a health craze, and he actually drank so much carrot juice that his skin began turning carrot-orange. The same principle applies to our soul. We are what we "eat" spiritually. Whatever our soul drinks in, whatever it is that we are giving our attention to most, what we spend our time soaking in, that becomes the stuff of our soul. This determines whether or not we are from God and can hear God.

Have you ever taken a log of your week? You know, marking down the time you spend in different activities – surfing Youtube channels, flipping through Facebook pages, or sitting in front of the television, as well as the time you sit saying the Jesus Prayer, studying Scripture, or simply listening to crickets. What are we absorbing through the week? With what are we feeding our soul?

"Their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak; they have eyes, but cannot see Those who make them become like them, as do all who trust in them" (Psalm 115:4-8).

How much are we plugged into the world? Jean-Claude Larchet, the Orthodox theologian, refers to modern man as *homo connecticus*. It is so true. We are ever-plugged into the system. Like a feeding tube, our media and television feed us a continual vision of reality. I did a Google search of *homo connecticus*, and I was surprised to find that it has become a common phrase. Many scientists talk about it as the new stage of human evolution. Rapidly developing technologies and human augmentation possibilities will make *homo connecticus* an ever fixed and absolute way of being. So we are told.

What are we becoming? From what are we cutting ourselves off?

We have to start unplugging. We need to rediscover the Sabbath.

God created the heavens and the earth in six days. On the seventh day, "He rested from all His work which He had done" (Genesis 2:2). God

instituted the Law of the Sabbath forever to set His people apart. No matter how much we intermingle with and live in the world, we need times to step back from it all. We have to cut off completely, for one day every week, and in all those scattered moments through each day. We need to re-learn the art of rest.

"The Sabbath has largely been forgotten," one author comments about American Christians. "The Sabbath has largely been forgotten by the Church, which has uncritically mimicked the rhythms of the industrial and success-obsessed West. The result? Our road-weary, exhausted churches have largely failed to integrate Sabbath into their lives as vital elements of Christian discipleship. It is not as though we do not love God – we love God deeply. We just do not know how to sit with God anymore We have become perhaps the most emotionally exhausted, psychological overworked, spiritually malnourished people in history" (A. J. Swoboda).

Jesus Christ lived the Sabbath. No one has ever been so busy. No one has ever had work so pressing. Yet, He regularly slipped away from everyone and went up a mountain to pray. Sometimes He lingered behind, and they found Him wandering in the desert or walking on the lake. On the Sabbath, Jesus Christ rested from all work. He relaxed. He enjoyed hours reclining on couches, drinking wine with His disciples, and simply letting conversations weave in and out without any agenda. Jesus took breaks from the world. So must we.

We live in a challenging world. However challenging it may be, one thing remains the same: Jesus Christ. "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Jesus is still with us. Jesus is in the Sabbath. As soon as we step back, He is there. The minute we shut off our iPhones and sit quietly, we find Him. The instant we turn off the newsfeed and unplug our computers, in that silence, in that solitude, we hear His word. When we step outside, when we sit on a bench, when we just look around at the trees, the birds, and the clouds, the hubris of this world becomes smaller. It is all vacuous. Jesus is the reality. If we live ever-plugged into the world, our hearts will have nothing in them but the world. If we learn to unplug, we can be filled up again with God. No longer *homo connecticus*, we become *homo adorans*, beings of worship, children of God.

Fr. Peter Kavanaugh
Pastor, St. Benedict Church, Wichita, Texas

THE HOLY DIACONATE AND THE CLARION CALL

Deacon David Lochbihler

After celebrating Mom's 99th birthday in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, my brother Vince and I boarded a train from Milwaukee and travelled through Chicago to a small town near Fort Wayne, Indiana, our final destination. The train faced some significant stops and delays, and we arrived at the Waterloo train depot two hours late. Despite our fatigue, knowing a hot meal waited for us at home was a great consolation. After arriving at my brother's house, I realized it was past midnight, and with our Orthodox Eucharistic fast, I could eat either a warm, wonderful hot dinner right now or Holy Communion later in the morning. The choice was obvious, what my fourth-grade students would call a no-brainer. I went to bed a little hungry, grabbed three hours sleep, and well before dawn drove four hours to All Saints Orthodox Church in Bloomington, Indiana, for the Sunday morning Divine Liturgy.

I visit All Saints in Bloomington each summer when I travel up north, as more than a decade ago, it was Father Peter Gillquist of blessed memory who spoke with me after church there, at Cracker Barrel with his son Father Peter Jon, and at his home with Khouria Marilyn. These key conversations were instrumental to my coming home to Orthodoxy. This summer, after a two-year hiatus because of the pandemic, Father Peter Jon greeted my arrival with an enthusiastic hug. Tired and hungry, I was glad to come to church and looked forward to a simple time of peaceful, behind-the-scenes worship. Father Peter Jon had other plans, and with his skillful teaching and encouraging guidance, I jumped into the arena when summoned and served my first Divine Liturgy as a deacon during an Eastern



Rite service. The experience was both powerful and heart-altering. I love serving with great joy as a deacon during Mass at my Western Rite parish in Virginia, and now, after this wonderful experience, equally treasure in my heart the transcendent beauty of the Eastern Rite

Divine Liturgy.

His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH during the Feast of Saint Laurence in August 2018 at St. Peter Orthodox Church, Fort Worth, called the diaconate both "historical" and "a holy office," and challenged his deacons to "listen only to the Word of God in your life and follow it." Our mission and ministry are clear. At the same Western Rite Vicariate Conference, Bishop JOHN encouraged and inspired the deacons with these words: "The deacon proclaims the Gospel – he is the leader of the people. The deacon holds the chalice at communion which even angels do not dare. It is on behalf of the people, the deacon touches God."

As an Orthodox deacon, my most timeless moment during the Divine Liturgy occurs whenever I am called to chant the Holy Gospel. "St. Jerome († 420) speaks of the deacon as reader of the Gospel."¹ Saint Paul advises Saint Timothy, "Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2, NKJV). A second source of joy is holding the chalice during Holy Communion. Indeed, "there are many witnesses that deacons gave Communion to the faithful, from Justin Martyr through the Middle Ages down to our own time. We find quite early that the deacon has special charge of the chalice, as St. Lawrence reminded St. Sixtus."²

Bishop JOHN spoke to the assembled deacons

about the indescribable wonder of mystery. At the Transfiguration, the eyes of Peter, James, and John were closed by necessity, because they would have been blinded by the glory of Christ. “In the holy mystery or sacrament, God reveals Himself veiled and invisible as His mercy.” The Theotokos undoubtedly understood mystery and sought the still silence as her constant companion and friend. “Be still and know that I *am* God” (Psalm 46:10a, NKJV). Amidst an array of activities during the day, the Blessed Virgin Mary would need to seek God, and He is best found in silence. God is the ultimate mystery, and to contemplate this mystery, Mary sought to be still. Bishop JOHN quoted Bishop KALLISTOS (Ware), who wrote, “The Greek *mysterion* is linked with the verb *myo*, meaning ‘to close the eyes or mouth.’”³ When we are not talking and stand in silence, we are free to listen. Like the Theotokos, whenever we stand in silence or sit in stillness and close our eyes, we are free to listen to God.

It was both a joy and an honor to be ordained to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN on the Feast of Saint Patrick at Saint Patrick Orthodox Church in Virginia on Sunday, March 17, 2019. The choir sang: “Ye holy Martyrs, who fought the good fight and hath received thy crowns: entreat ye the Lord, that he will have mercy on our souls. Glory to thee, O Christ our God: the Apostles’ boast, the Martyrs’ joy, whose preaching was the consubstantial Trinity. O Isaiah, dance thy joy, for a virgin was with child and hath borne a Son, Emmanuel, both God and Man, and Orient is His name, Whom magnifying, we call the Virgin blessed.”⁴ Bishop JOHN added the Prayers of Ordination:

O Lord our God, who by Thy foreknowledge dost send down the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon those who are ordained, by Thine inscrutable power, to be Thy servitors and to administer Thy spotless mysteries: Do Thou, the same Master, preserve also this man, whom Thou hast been pleased to ordain, through me, by the laying-on of hands, to the service of the Diaconate, in all soberness of life, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. Vouchsafe unto him the grace which Thou didst grant unto Stephen, Thy first Martyr, whom, also, Thou didst call to be the first in the work of Thy ministry; and make him worthy to administer after Thy pleasure the degree which

it both seemeth good to thee to confer upon him. For they who minister well prepare for themselves a good degree. And manifest him as wholly Thy servant. For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen.

O God our Savior, who by Thine incorruptible voice didst appoint unto Thine Apostles the law of the Diaconate, and didst manifest the first Martyr, Stephen, to be of the same; and didst proclaim him the first who should exercise the office of a deacon, as it is written in Thy Holy Gospel, “Whosoever desireth to be first among you, let him be your servant”: Do Thou, O Master of all, fill also this Thy servant, who Thou hast graciously permitted to enter upon the ministry of a deacon, with all faith, and love, and power, and holiness, through the inspiration of Thy Holy and Life-Giving Spirit; for not through the laying-on of my hands, but through the visitation of Thy rich bounties, is grace bestowed upon Thy worthy ones; that he, being devoid of all sin, may stand blameless before thee in the awesome Day of Thy Judgment, and receive the unfailing reward of Thy promise. For Thou art our God, and unto thee are due all glory, honor, and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen.⁵

The Feast of Saint Patrick forever will hold a special place in my heart. As an infant, I was baptized at Saint Patrick Catholic Church in Chesterton, Indiana, very soon after birth. Little did I know I would receive the Holy Chrism as an Orthodox convert fifty-six years later and be ordained as a deacon sixty-two years later at Saint Patrick Orthodox Church in Bealeton, Virginia.

Whenever I ponder my life today, I recall with fondness a pivotal time in the faith journey leading me home. The most life-changing and lifelong-learning course taken at the University of Notre Dame more than four decades ago was called Theology and Community Service. This seminar, team-taught by Father Don McNeill and Sister Vivian Whitehead, brought about a dozen students into a local nursing home both to learn from the elderly and to try to minister to them. The main theme of this course is summarized best by this short passage

1. Adrian Fortescue, *The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), p. 280.
2. Ibid., p. 374.
3. Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), p. 15.
4. "The Ordination of a Deacon," Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, ww1.antiochian.org/1102195079.
5. "The Ordination of a Deacon," Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, ww1.antiochian.org/1102195079.
6. Henri J. M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, and Douglas A. Morrison, *Compassion* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), p. 4.
7. Sister Vivian Whitehead, October 12, 1978, Theology and Community Service, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, Journal Comment.
8. "The Prayers to Be Said While Vesting," Saint Patrick Orthodox Church Sacristy, from Dom Gaspar Lefebvre, *The Saint Andrew Daily Missal* (Great Falls, MT: St. Bonaventure Publications, 1999), p. 946.
9. "The Ordination of a Deacon," Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, ww1.antiochian.org/1102195079.
10. Joseph J. Allen, ed., *And He Leads Them*, p. 244 (emphasis in original).

from a now-published manuscript serving as our primary textbook for the class: "Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human."⁶

Each student visited two nursing home residents. We would see each of them weekly during the school semester for forty-five minutes. I visited Iris and Joe (not his real name) at a South Bend, Indiana, nursing home. I still recall vividly the strong smell of decay as I walked through the front door to begin my first two visits. I walked into Joe's room first as he sat on the edge of his bed in a dark and gloomy room. I vividly recall his litany of complaints against the nursing home and its staff. Joe hated living at the institution; the staff treated the residents "like dirt"; and the food was garbage, the meals so disgusting he would not feed them "to the pigs." Generally optimistic, even overly so, nothing I could say helped break the gloom and doom of our short conversation.

After this somewhat depressing visit, I walked down the hallway and entered Iris' brightly-lit room. A cheerful woman, Iris loved the Lord and enjoyed talking about Jesus. I especially recall a life-size glass dog she enjoyed as if it were a real pet. After listening to Joe's harangue, I sheepishly asked Iris about her experiences at the nursing home and expected the worst. Unlike Joe, however, Iris loved living in the nursing home. The nurses and orderlies treated the residents "like kings and queens." Every meal was like "a feast." Iris shared a turning point in her life many years back. When hit with hard times as a young woman, at a point of near despair, doing dishes at the kitchen sink, Iris prayed and received the insight, "There's always darkness before the dawn." She laughed at her sadness at the time and overcame it, and instead felt immense joy. Since that religious experience many years earlier, Iris' life was transformed towards the good, and her life and outlook were never the same.

I began writing extensively in a journal throughout my semester-long nursing home visits and continued this practice for many years, completing

close to two dozen lengthy journals during a little more than a decade. The focus of this course was compassion. Answering one of my journal entries, Sister Vivian describes compassion with concrete clarity: "God is compassion – We try to be compassionate, realizing that the actual power of our compassion is because our God is compassionate. Jesus came to tell us, by who He was and the way He lived, that our God is compassionate. We come in the 20th Century to say, by who we are and the way we live, that our God is compassionate."⁷

This God of empathy calls each of us to a special vocation. "Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience" (1 Timothy 3:8–9, NKJV). At the Western Rite Vicariate Conference, Bishop JOHN asked us to name some of the most notable deacons in Church History: Saint Laurence recognized the poor as "the treasures of the Church" and suggested his captors "turn me over, I am done"; Saint Athanasius "was a deacon at the First Ecumenical Council"; Saint Ephrem "wrote hymns" and "did not want to become a priest"; and Saint Stephen was "the first martyr." The holy diaconate began when the Twelve Apostles selected Stephen and six companions after declaring, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3, KJV). The first deacons ministered to the neglected Greek widows and served tables (Acts 6:1–2, KJV).

At his ordination, called to embrace fully the ministry of service and the virtue of compassion, the deacon receives the stole, the dalmatic, and the gospel book. At Saint Patrick Orthodox Church, the clergy say special prayers while dressing with each of the sacred vestments in preparing to serve at the Holy Altar during Mass. The holy stole worn by priests and deacons is kissed and then placed around the neck with this solemn prayer, "Give me again, O Lord, the stole of immortality, which I lost by the transgression of my first parents, and although I am unworthy to come unto Thy Holy Sacrament, grant that I may attain everlasting felicity."⁸ Truly none of us is worthy to stand on such holy ground by the Holy Altar surrounded by the saints and the heavenly hosts.

The icon of Saint John the Baptist graces every Orthodox Church. Until the public ministry of

Jesus, Saint John was the most popular preacher of his day. Some wondered if he was the Messiah. “John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose” (John 1:26–27, KJV). Surely in the mud and grime of the walkways by the Jordan River, travelled by man and beast alike, one’s sandals or shoes would be filthy. Within the households of the day, perhaps one of the lowest chores for a servant would be removing and cleaning the master’s filthy footwear. Compared to Christ, Saint John the Baptist became the lowest of the slaves. “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30, KJV). The deacon is called to embrace this holy humility.

The Ordination of the Deacon concludes with these bold and powerful proclamations from the Bishop and the congregation:

HE IS WORTHY!

MUSTAHEK!

AXIOS!⁹

These declarations deeply touch yet also trouble my heart. A few of us are called into the clergy, yet only God is worthy. Only through His infinite grace and abundant blessing could we possibly be called worthy. Within our Western Rite Divine Liturgy, before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, we confess our utter unworthiness to accept such a miraculous, wonder-full gift with the words similarly spoken to Jesus by a faithful Roman soldier in Capernaum: “The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed” (Matthew 8:8, KJV). I am not worthy, but with God’s Word, I accept the call to the holy diaconate with joyful humility.

I have felt a deep and abiding call to the priesthood since fourth grade:

My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;

Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;

And in Your book were all written
The days that were ordained *for me*,
When as yet there was not one of them

(Psalm 139:15–16, KJV).

As I reflect on my past pastoral ministry experiences and discern God’s call in my life, these words of His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice-blessed memory are most inspiring: “Priesthood is not a job; it is a *vocation*. Priesthood is not a profession; it is a covenant between the priest and his parish.”¹⁰ Just as the incarnate Christ was fully God and fully man, both God and bondservant, so too are we called to bring the light of Jesus our God into the hearts of hurting people, uniting the divine with the human. The priest’s mission is to lead His people to Jesus Christ. As Metropolitan PHILIP directed his priests, “You were ordained in order to bring Christ to people and people to Christ.”¹¹

With much joy, I came home into the Orthodox Church late in life. Passing sixty years of age, I may no longer be eligible for priestly ordination, and this emptiness becomes God’s will for my life. Yet the dream still lives in my heart. Although my calling may not be humanely possible, “with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37, KJV). So I continue to “watch and pray” with hope, trusting the continued power and presence of God’s will for my life. “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope” (Jeremiah 29:11, NRSV).

If God wants me to become an Orthodox priest, He will open the door. In the meantime, trusting God fully and seeking His will, serving as an Orthodox deacon during the Divine Liturgy at the best church in the world brings an abundance of joy to my heart. His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH during the Feast of Saint Laurence challenged his deacons to “listen only to the Word of God in your life and follow it.” Filled with Jesus as the Truth and the truth of the Word of God, we quiet our still hearts and strive to worship our Triune God with awe and wonder. “For that stillness of the soul from the world naturally arouses a slight stirring of thoughts in the soul, that by them it may be lifted to God and remain in wonder.”¹² This instruction to the deacons from Metropolitan JOSEPH applies to all Orthodox Christians: “Read Scripture as if it flows from your whole heart, your whole being. Let it sanctify you and other people.”¹³ Those of us called into the holy diaconate enthusiastically embrace this clarion call.

11. Joseph J. Allen, ed., *Orthodox Synthesis: The Unity of Theological Thought* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981), p. 95.

12. Saint Isaac of Nineveh, *On Ascetic Life*, translated by Mary Hansbury (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989), 43.

13. His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, Western Rite Vicariate Conference, 10 August 2018, St. Peter Orthodox Church, Fort Worth, TX, Lecture.

ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

ORDINATIONS

ASTON, Herman Nicholas, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on November 7, 2021, at St. Paul Church, Brier, Washington. He is assigned to Holy Cross Church, Yakima, Washington.

FERNANDEZ, Deacon Thomas, to the holy priesthood by Bishop NICHOLAS on August 7, 2021, at Christ the Good Shepherd Mission, Concord, North Carolina. Fr. Thomas is assigned as the Pastor of that parish.

GILBERT, Reader Gaelan Anthony, to the subdiaconate and diaconate by Bishop BASIL on October 24, 2021, at St. George Cathedral, Wichita, Kansas. Deacon Anthony is a second-year seminarian at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary.

IRVING, James, to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN on October 24, 2021, at St. Michael Church, Cotuit, Massachusetts. Deacon James is attached to that parish.

IVINS, Theophan, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on November 14, 2021, at Holy Myrrh-bearers Church, Bonners Ferry, Idaho. He is assigned to that parish.

ROBERTS, Dn. Adam Finian, to the holy priesthood by Bishop JOHN on October 7, 2021, at Holy Apostles Church, Bowling Green, Kentucky. Fr. Adam is assigned Pastor of St. Paul Church, Katy, Texas.

THORNBURG, Aaron (Dn. Joseph), by Metropolitan JOSEPH to the holy diaconate on October 31, 2021, at St. Anthony Church, Bergenfield, New Jersey. Dn. Joseph is a second-year seminarian.

WILCOX, James, to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN on November 21, 2021, at St. Mary Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is attached to that parish.

WILSON, Deacon Andrew, to the priesthood by Bishop BASIL on October 24th, 2021, at St. George Cathedral, Wichita, Kansas. Father Andrew will serve as second Priest of the Church of St. John the Forerunner, Cedar Park, Texas.

APPOINTMENTS

DAVIS, The Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Jeremy, as *Protosyngellos* of our Archdiocese. He succeeds V. Rev. Fr. Timothy Ferguson, who faithfully served in this role for many years, up to his retirement from active ministry this year. Before Fr. Timothy, this role was ably exercised for a long time by

Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Paul Doyle, and before him by Fr. Ellis Khoury. We are grateful to Frs. Timothy, Paul, and Ellis for their loving service. This is an extremely important administrative office in the Archdiocese. As Dean of the clergy, the *Protosyngellos* serves as liaison between the Metropolitan and the clergy, regarding clergy matters. Fr. Jeremy is also an assistant to the Metropolitan in the administration of the Archdiocese and, as *Protosyngellos*, an ex officio member of the Board of Trustees. Fr. Jeremy will speak for the Metropolitan and can deal with matters coming to the Archdiocese from the clergy or from a parish, parish council, or an archdiocesan department.

SAMORE, Peter, as Director of the Department of Communications. Filling a long-time need for the Antiochian Archdiocese, His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH has announced the creation of a Department of Communications and hired a director to ensure cohesive messaging, coordinate internal and external communications channels, and boost efficiency to promote the outreach of Archdiocesan clergy, departments and organizations. "Subdeacon Peter Samore brings almost twenty years of expertise, skills, and direction in communications, journalism, and public relations to fulfill the necessities of this position," His Eminence said. "I am delighted that Peter will serve as the Department's Director on a full-time basis. I encourage our clergy and laity to consult him to make sure that our Church is heard with one voice."

Peter's career in news media has allowed him to share thousands of stories, including a **television story with Sayidna JOSEPH in 2015** on the war in Syria. He is a veteran of radio, television, Internet publishing and social media. Simultaneously with his secular career, Peter has served as an editor and writer for Antiochian.org and its social media platforms, and a contributor to *The WORD* magazine, where he serves as an editorial board member. He is a lifelong member of the Antiochian Archdiocese. Perhaps the largest of all his duties, since 2004, has been his publication of the divine services for every weekend, great and patronal feasts, Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha that appear in the **Online Liturgical Guide**. Every church of the Archdiocese uses these texts, as well as churches in other archdioceses. Peter will continue to produce services for the Department of Liturgics.

*"DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME:
PRIESTHOOD WITHIN THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY"*

SECOND ANNUAL PACIFIC NORTHWEST DEANERY RETREAT

Deacon Joseph Frangipani



It was a cold day, a beautiful day. Frost curled on pine trees and fire roared in the tiny stove. Clergy of the Antiochian Archdiocese's Pacific Northwest Deanery – from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Utah and Idaho – gathered here at St. John the Fore-runner Monastery in Goldendale, Washington, for their second annual deanery retreat.

It was very good to be here.

From September 21–23, 2021, clergy benefited from instruction, nourishing fellowship, prayer, and meals at the monastery. Fr. Matthew Howell, Pastor of St. Herman Church in Wasilla, Alaska, led the first instructional session, which began Tuesday evening after dinner, vespers, and compline. His

subject was "Priesthood as the Fulfillment of the Icon of the Mystical Supper."

Drawing from Old and New Testament patterns, Fr. Matthew described the Church's therapeutic method as uniting God and man through divine communion, through the Eucharist and Mysteries. Linking theology with spiritual fatherhood, he emphasized the role of the bishop as shepherd, leading us into deeper communion with Paradise Himself, Jesus Christ. The Divine Liturgy is an icon of the life of Christ.

The second session began Wednesday morning with Fr. Paul Truebenbach, Pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul Church of Salt Lake City, Utah. In that





session, “Preserving Order in the Apostolic Ministry through Obedience,” Fr. Paul cited St. Ignatius of Antioch, who tells us to take God as our pattern and example, so that “there be a whole symphony of minds in concert,” taking “the tone all together from God,” and singing “aloud to the Father with one voice through Jesus Christ, so that He may hear you and know by your good works that you are indeed members of His Son’s Body.”

On Thursday morning, September 23, our clergy joined the monastic community celebrating the Divine Liturgy. It really was a mystical encounter with the Living God. After breakfast, Fr. Michael Shanbour, Pastor of Three Holy Hierarchs Church in Wenatchee, Washington, presented the

third and final session, entitled “Leading People to Be Heavenly Minded While Dealing with Earthly Problems.” For the saints, what we call life is death, and our so-called death leads to life. Fr. Michael taught that the person who lives in the Church isn’t afraid to look squarely at the fact of death. He has prepared himself through repentance, and through the Divine Liturgy lives the life to come even now.

The sisters of St. John Monastery provide the best possible atmosphere: not merely a quiet place to retreat from the world, but also a ladder to ascend into Heaven. The Gospel account of the Transfiguration of Christ reads, “Jesus took Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them” (Mark 9:2). In prayer, the soul climbs up unceasingly, and the further up it goes, the higher it longs to go.

It was truly a blessing to embark on such a journey together. Through the prayers and hospitality of the Monastery sisterhood, the effort of our Dean, Fr. Michael Habib, and the leadership of our beloved Metropolitan JOSEPH, our second annual retreat was beautiful and encouraging.

Deacon Joseph Frangipani
Prophet Elijah Mission of Ellensburg, Washington



DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE
HOSTED BY: ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER (LOS ALTOS HILLS, CA)
JUNE 29 - JULY 3, 2022 ~ SANTA CLARA MARRIOTT

The Orthodox Church of the Redeemer looks forward to welcoming you to the 70th Parish Life Conference!

We encourage you to visit the PLC website and look at the complete schedule of planned activities. Here are several highlights on what you can expect at the PLC!

- Sunday Hierarchical Divine Liturgy & Daily Divine Services
- Brunch with His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH
- Pilgrimage to Holy Virgin Cathedral & Veneration of St John Maximovich in SF
- Keynote Addresses and Workshops
- The Order of St Ignatius Reception
- Dinner and Dance with Middle Eastern and American Music
- Bible Bowl & Bible Bowl Dessert Social
- Young Adult Activities
- Teen Soyo
- Kids Club
- And much more!

Online Registration

Online Registration
[Hotel Reservations](#)

Downloads

[Event Registration](#)
[Souvenir Journal Form](#)
[Vendor Form](#)
[Minor Participation Form](#)
[Kid's Club Medical Form](#)

[PLC Schedule](#)

Deadlines

Hotel Reservation
June 17, 2022

Souvenir Journal:
May 1, 2022

Vendor:
May 31, 2022

Early Event Package:
May 31, 2022

Online Registration
Deactivation
June 26, 2022

Creative Festivals: **April 15, 2022**
Oratorical: **June 15, 2022**
Bible Bowl: **June 15, 2022**



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CHURCH IN THE TIME OF COVID

Written in July 2020, after 4 months of lockdown.

Valerie Yova



“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

– Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

It was certainly the strangest of times, at least the strangest in my lifetime.

The last time our church worshipped together as a family in any way that felt “normal” was March 22, 2020. Although I am not a “writer,” (do not write for a living) I have felt compelled to share some observations from the perspective of one who works in the church full-time in both music and administration.

Back in January of 2020, I shared with my priest that I was feeling a bit burned out and did not know if I “had another Great Lent in me.” I

reached my ten-year anniversary as Music Director in my parish that month. It had been a long, challenging, fulfilling road. We had worked really hard the first five years, I and my innately gifted team of singers, and we became a family. The singers were good sports, accepted the challenges I put before them, and learned a *lot* of new music. I sensed in 2015 that we were reaching a peak of some sort. The choir was young enough, I knew, that eventually work, or marriage, or both could carry them away from us. So, in addition to dealing with the challenges of my mother’s rapidly declining health, in 2016 I started preparations for our choir to make a recording. We pushed hard to get it finished by February 2017 – the 30th anniversary of our parish. During the rehearsal and recording process, my mother died. Then a wave of unpredictable loss hit. Our priest’s 33-year-old son died of cancer. Four months later, my 61-year-old sister died suddenly

and unexpectedly. That year, two of our singers relocated and one had to take a leave for health reasons. The following year, two more singers were struggling with health issues. In a choir of sixteen, losing four to five singers is significant. Then several beloved founders of our parish died.

God is good, and some wonderful new singers came along. There is always a learning curve, however, and it takes time for all to adjust. Those who remained in the choir had had the wind knocked out of their sails. I stopped pushing as hard, and we coasted for several years on the work we had done for the previous seven years. I started to feel complacent. As 2020 approached, I knew I needed

forward towards the Nativity season.

As the year came to a close, however, the early start of Great Lent seemed to be looming large, and our numbers were still reduced from the previous year. Hence my lament to my priest that I was concerned about burnout, and that I was looking at ways to simplify the music for Great Lent and Holy Week, to put less pressure on the singers.

Then, as we were just getting started with Great Lent, *wham!* Suddenly we were catapulted into a totally new reality. We watched what was happening on the East Coast in shock and horror. The fact that all three of the largest Orthodox archdiocesan headquarters were in the New York – New Jersey area meant that our hierarchs were right in the middle of the nightmare of a virus we should have seen coming, but which took all of us completely off guard.

We can debate ‘til the cows come home whether or not our leaders reacted too hastily by closing down their churches. We will be debating that for years, and hindsight is 20/20. In the moment, decisions had to be made based on the little information available. Most of us were obedient to our leaders. On the Sunday of the Cross, only halfway through Great Lent, many of us marked the beginning of live-streaming services with a bare bones crew of clergy and singers.

Whether I *wanted* to or not, I now had to reinvent myself in both of my capacities in liturgical music and parish administration. I had no choice.

Communication within the parish has always been very important to me. Suddenly it was weighted with urgency and heightened responsibility. From the very beginning of the stay-at-home orders, I was determined to keep our music comforting, familiar, and as beautiful as possible for our parish family listening from home. It did not make sense to me suddenly to do all new music, or to just chant everything. We used the music we were used to, and made it work. It meant putting a lot of responsibility on the same few singers each week (who were basically quarantined when not at church). It also meant being forced to tell all of the other singers that they had to stay home. And it meant telling an entire parish family, including most of the clergy and servers, that they had to worship in front of computer screens.

The weight of that was heartbreaking for our hierarchs, our priests, our parish administrators, and



to find a way to get all of us excited about singing again. I felt a lot of the burden on myself. I felt that I needed to reinvent myself (with God’s help), as I had done several times during my 32 years as a church musician, so that I could bring renewed vigor to the singers.

In the autumn of 2019, I contacted some dear friends and music colleagues in Southern California, and together we organized a workshop for our singers, held at St. Luke’s Antiochian parish in Garden Grove. It was taught by Benedict and Talia Maria Sheehan from St. Tikhon’s Seminary, and it was a huge “shot in the arm” for all of us. What a joy to be in a room with 80 of our fellow church musicians, lifting up our voices in praise, and being taught and encouraged by two such loving, nurturing teachers! It was the boost we needed to move

music directors. *All* of us in the church have carried a burden these past four months. All of us have been put to the test. All of us have grieved for the Great Lent and Pascha that are forever lost in some weird time-warp, sucked into an ecclesiastical Twilight Zone.

There were those of us who had the “privilege” of being at the services, to make sure that the Church kept on *being* the Church, no matter what. We were coping with the pressure that comes with live streaming services through a medium that can preserve one’s every imperfection “forever and ever, Amen.” This medium that could not possibly transmit through cyberspace the mystery and energy that are present when God’s people on earth join the Church Triumphant in the same time and space. We did the best we could, and it filled a need in a very unusual circumstance. It was a blessing to be able to do it, but it was hardly an enviable position to be in, doing the services, “leading” a large, empty, silent room in the “Amens” and “Lord have mercies” that belong to the faithful. At first it was strange, then lonely, then downright depressing, as a two-week shut-down turned into two and a half months. Yet it was filled with God’s grace.

For those watching services from home, you all had your own strangeness and sadness with which to cope. Many of you did your best to create ritual and beauty around your computer screens, lighting candles and gathering your icons around you. It was impressive, and frankly miraculous how deeply some folks were able to enter into those liturgies, almost teleporting themselves spiritually through space and time. You needed those ninety minutes on Sunday mornings to ground yourselves, to give some kind of anchor and reference point to the weeks filled with days that were starting to all feel the same and unending. You needed to *see* at least some of your spiritual family, even if on a screen.

We felt your energy, prayers, appreciation, and support across cyberspace and *loved* reading your comments and greetings to each other on Facebook. You kept us going, and hopefully we kept *you* going. And our all-loving and compassionate God kept us *all* going.

We continue to sail in uncharted waters as the virus does what viruses do, and our government and hierarchs try to figure out the best way forward. It seems entirely possible that 2020 will not be seen as a blip on the screen, but as a turning point that

changed the world. The way we do many things could permanently change in ways we do not yet know. As the trauma that was 2020 begins to fade, perhaps we can hold onto the “best of times,” the blessings that were born of adversity. For each of us, the blessings will be different. For many of us, this will be a time of greater appreciation for our families and closest friends, our parish families, pastors, church singers, music, icons, and church buildings. All of us will respond differently to having extra time on our hands. We will use it for good or for evil, for building spiritual muscles, or for sinking into spiritual atrophy. Whatever choices we make, there will be lessons in them.



If a “Season of Light” finally does follow this “Season of Darkness,” I pray that we will *never* forget the lessons. Especially, I pray that we will never forget what it felt like to be forbidden to worship together.

If this “winter of despair” does *not* turn into a “spring of hope” as quickly as we would like, I pray that the lessons learned will strengthen us for whatever spiritual battles may lie ahead of us. God is with us.

Valerie Yova
Valerie has been the Parish Administrator and Music Director at St. Athanasius (Antiochian) Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara, California since January of 2010.

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

SUMMER BIBLE SCHOOL IN CICERO, ILLINOIS

As the sun rose on that early Monday morning, and the anticipation of waiting for this event filled their hearts, the athletes rose early and excitedly prepared to leave the comfort of their homes. Their rides were ready. With a water bottle in their hands, and their minds set to begin the good fight and to engage in the race of their lifetimes, they set their GPS to arrive at the main arena!

No, we're not talking about the Olympics in Tokyo. We're talking about our children arriving and ready to start the Summer Bible School at Saint George in Cicero with the theme, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

The children, aged 6 to 12, arrived early that Monday morning, full of excitement for what was to come in those four days at the Summer Bible School Olympics at their home of Saint George in Cicero, Illinois. Many of the children had not seen each other for over 15 months, and the excitement built up as they saw the smiling faces of their friends and relatives arriving and checking in for this four-day marathon!

Our Summer Bible School adopted the five rings of the Olympics as the five colored-teams which began their four-day competition on Monday, July 12; on successive days they would learn about Naomi, Ruth, David and Solomon; and study the Bible stories related to each of these



Old Testament figures.

As each day began with Morning Prayers, the first day's morning prayers were preceded by the lighting of the Olympic Torch, the candle to honor the Holy Theotokos in front of the Weeping Icon! As the light was lit from the Holy Altar by our Pastor, V. Rev. Fr. Fouad Saba, passed it to Fr. Andrew (All Saints A.O.C), and to Deacon Saed (St. George), who in turn passed it to the line of Senior and Junior Counselors, until it arrived at our Director, Mrs. Karen Nawas, who lit the

candle in front of the Weeping Icon, thus declaring the Summer Bible School *open!*

The Summer Bible School participants spent four amazing days in fellowship with one another, once again at our home of Saint George Church! The Olympic-inspired theme led to five rings rotating throughout each day, learning about Ruth, Naomi, David and Solomon.

We used every part of our building to incorporate in our program music, art, science, library resources, athletic

Olympic competitions, and dining with one another. The children learned about the fruit of the Spirit and how to apply them in their daily lives. In this light we also were able to thank God for our good health, and to learn about the local Ronald McDonald house which serves people our own age with terminal illnesses. Every child created a card for a patient staying at the Ronald McDonald house, as well as an activity bag for them to help pass the time as they awaited their medical appointments.

The last day brought excitement to each of the teams: the five Olympic Rings were given as awards in many areas of competition. As we ended the day with Evening Prayers, the Summer Bible School Olympic candle was extinguished and given to the one Counselor who stood out as most active throughout the week!

We are so grateful to the entire Summer Bible School staff for their dedication and time volunteering. We would also like to thank all the parents and benefactors who made this amazing

experience a priority for their children's Christian education, bringing them each day. We look forward with anticipation to Summer Bible School 2022, but we are even more excited that the children will be starting Sunday School early in September.

For a full gallery of photos and videos, please visit our Church webpage or Facebook, www.stgeorgechi.org.

SAINT JAMES HOUSE, ALASKA

Nestled in the heart of Alaska on the outskirts of the Chugach National Forest, just 30 minutes outside of Anchorage, is St. James House, a ministry of St. John Orthodox Cathedral. The St. James House has traditionally been a place for young adults to grow in their journey towards Christ as they live in community with one another and the wider community. In 2020, we had seven young adults, ranging from 18 to 32 years old, living together in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was successful, fruitful, and encouraging to have the privilege

of living together in community in such an unprecedented time. Coming from all over the USA, this handful of young adults joined together to act as a household under Covid-19 restrictions. Every member participated in the life of the house through community dinners and daily prayers, as well as general comradery. Everyone had a "work of their hands," either through full-time school or full-time work. In fact, two of the residents worked as teachers for the Saint John's Orthodox School. The residents also got out and explored the great wilderness of Alaska together, through back-use cabin camping, cross-country skiing, and skating on wild ice, to name a few of the adventures.

One of the immense blessings of the Saint James House is that it is within a stone's throw of the Cathedral. House members are able to participate closely with the local parish and its people. Though interactions with the local community and church was limited by Covid-19, we are thankful to have been able to keep the Saint James House



Saint James House residents, 2020-2021

running during 2020.

We are now in the process of accepting residents for the September 2021 – August 2022 year. If any single, young adults, 18 years+, are interested, please visit our web page at stjohnalaska.org/st-james-house/ to learn more.

INASMUCH AS YOU DID IT TO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN

St. George, New Kensington, is located in a town that in the late 1800s and early 1900s experienced great commercial and industrial growth, and became a social, religious, ethnic, recreational and entertainment center. The rapid growth in the area was largely a result of the success of the aluminum industry and the location of Alcoa Production Works along the Allegheny River. Alcoa provided jobs for 25 percent of the local community. When, unfortunately, the Alcoa plant was closed in the early 1970s, “New Ken” was faced with a local depression, and to this day our local school district has a poverty level of 86 percent.

As a church community, St.

George also has felt the economic impact faced by the city in which it resides. We have a much smaller congregation compared to the days of our church’s founding. Although smaller in size, we are mighty in our love for New Kensington – our neighbors and our town, and in our outreach and mission focus. We are continually offering new programs to reach out to our neighbors.

Additionally, there are local redevelopment and revitalization programs in full force, and New Kensington is experiencing a rebirth. Storefronts are reopening for the first time in decades! St. George is grateful to play an integral role in lifting up our neighbors and growing our community – both inside and outside our church walls.

The Launch of our Free Monthly Lunch Program

On April 10th, St. George launched its first free brown-bag lunch program, and is continuing the program one day each month. We packed and distributed 125 brown bag lunches to interested New Kensington neighbors. Our volunteers handed out the lunches in our parking lot and delivered

them to local agencies. Neighborhood volunteers from our monthly Food Pantry even joined us and helped to deliver the lunches.

We are grateful for the Food-for-Hungry-People grant that we received from our Antiochian Archdiocese that enabled us to expand our outreach efforts, beginning with the launch of our free lunch program and delivery of holiday meals to local neighbors in need.

Holiday Meals Distributed

The St. George Outreach provided Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners that fed families of four, and offered double dinners for larger families. The local Eat 'N Park provided these turkey dinners, complete with sides and pies. Easter ham dinners were provided by one of our parishioner’s popular local restaurants, Eazer’s Restaurant & Deli. We reached out to families in need via the food pantry, the school district, and Eazer’s knowledge of needy people in the area. We served 20 family meals each holiday.

Food Bank and Monthly Food Pantry

For decades, we have been a





Food Pantry for our local Westmoreland County Food Bank (WCFB). The WCFB truck arrives at 8:00 a.m. on the first Friday of every month and is met by our volunteers, who prepare boxes for pantry recipients. We were fortunate to be able to continue distributing the food during the recent pandemic, with adjustments made to ensure everyone's safety.

We also have our own food bank, stocked with non-perishables donated by parishioners. This food is available for our neighbors who stop at our door for emergency food supplies.

Fresh Express

In a partnership with the United Presbyterian Church in New Kensington, St. George sponsors two Fresh Express distributions each year, so that our food pantry recipients get an additional opportunity for fresh produce. The food again is provided by the WCFB, and our portion of

the food cost is paid for by donations from our parishioners. We distribute the food, rain or shine!

Knead Café

The Knead Café, a Christian non-profit, is a pay-as-you-can / pay-it-forward restaurant in New Kensington. If you can't afford the recommended lunch price, you get a reduced or free meal. If you can afford it, you pay full price or donate more. During the COVID pandemic, the Knead Café offered weekly free Grab

'N Go dinners to the community. The chef cooked the delicious meals, and local sponsors paid for the food supplies. St. George and our Myrrh-Bearing Women (Antiochian Women) sponsored several meals.

Teen SOYO Brown Bag Lunches for NRP

In the city of Pittsburgh, we are blessed to have Father Paul Abernathy's Neighborhood Resilience Project (NRP), with a mission "to support the transformation of neighborhoods from Trauma-Affected Communities to Resilient, Healing and Healthy Communities."

Our teen SOYO makes brown bag lunches, and our Missions Organization collects clothes and household items, and regularly delivers them to NRP.

"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40).





GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL?

CHECK OUT ARCH WEEK AT ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE!



We are excited to announce Arch Week, a brand-new program beginning this summer for anyone graduating high school this year! Our mission: “Arch Week invites high school graduates to deepen and strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ and equips them with resources to live as Orthodox Christian young adults.”

Arch Week is a one-week program run by the Antiochian Village Camp, for students who have just graduated high school and are looking to deepen and strengthen their faith as they “bridge the gap” to life after high school. This can be a challenging transition, which is why the program’s goal is to offer recent high-school graduates resources and opportunities to learn and grow in their faith. Participants will grow together through worship, fellowship, service, reflection, and education, while still having the “fun of camp,” with evening programs, activities, sports, and cabin times. The program will take place at the Antiochian Village Conference Center in Bolivar, Pennsylvania, and will include all meals and lodging. Participants will also get to venture up to Camp for a few activities, such as a pool party, the Ropes Course, and even some angle ball!

Arch Week will be led by clergy who will serve in the services, teach lessons, and lead discussions. A dedicated staff team, too, are already coming up with creative activities, discussion topics, and a fun and engaging schedule. There will be several guest speakers to help with topics such as mental health, financial planning, and transitioning to new environments. We will also seek to connect any participants going into college with their OCF chapter, so they can begin building a relationship before starting school.

Arch Week is open to anyone graduating high school this year who wants to grow in his or her faith. This summer we will have two one-week sessions, June 19–25 and July 3–9, held at the Antiochian Village Conference Center. More information can be found at avcamp.org/programs/arch-week.

Participants will still be able to attend our Summer Camp program as counselors-in-training (CITs) or campers, depending on their age. Applications for CIT and registration for Summer Camp are currently open.

If you have any questions about this program, please contact us at office@avcamp.org. We hope you will consider joining us for this new and exciting program!

Fr. Christopher Shadid
Camp Director
Antiochian Village Camp

FORMER EDITOR OF *THE WORD* MAGAZINE HAS A STREET NAMED IN HIS MEMORY

Dr. John Alexander

The parishioners who knew the Very Reverend Paul Schneirla when he served as pastor of St. Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Church on 81st Street and Ridge Boulevard in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, New York, knew him to be a force of nature. On Sunday, October 24, 2021, the iconic priest had a street named in his memory, as parishioners, friends and family members gathered to celebrate the legacy of the trailblazing pastor.

Father Paul helped forge the foundation of the Antiochian Orthodox Church in Bay Ridge as the first pastor of St. Mary's, where he served from the church's inception in 1951 until his retirement in 2002, 52 years. He remained the Pastor Emeritus of the church until his passing on September 20, 2014, at the age of 98. In fact, St. Mary's has only had two pastors at its current location, Father Paul, and upon his retirement, its current pastor, the Very Reverend Michael Ellias.

Father Paul served as a priest of the Antiochian Archdiocese for 71 years. He was Secretary of the Archdiocese and the first Chairman of its Department of Christian Education. He was the Dean of the Atlantic Deanery, and quite possibly closest to his heart, he served as the former editor of *The WORD* magazine.

Father Paul was born on April 11, 1916, in Alaska on the gold-mining property that his family owned. He graduated from the University of Western Ontario in 1937 and did his graduate studies at Columbia University, Union Theological Seminary, and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary.

In 1942, he was ordained to the priesthood after marrying Shirley Dillon Warriner Page, whose family was from New York City and Far Hills, New Jersey. They had three children: Dorothy Page Downie, Peter Christian Schneirla, and William Sutfin Schneirla, Jr., the last of whom died at the age of 6 during Father Paul's first year as Pastor of St. Mary's.

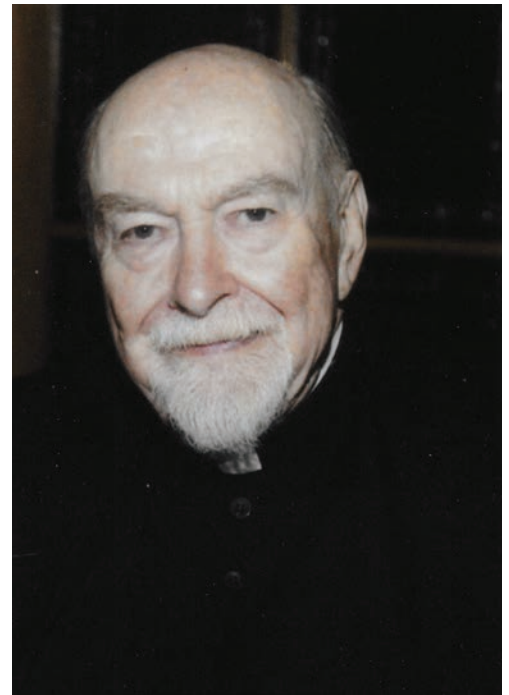
Father Paul was a pioneer convert member of

the clergy, an author, and a renowned theologian with a long list of noteworthy accomplishments. As the Ecumenical Officer for the Antiochian Archdiocese, Father Paul was a charter member of the Orthodox-Anglican, Orthodox-Roman Catholic, and Orthodox-Polish Catholic Theological Dialogues. He had been a General Board Member of the National Council of Churches since the 1940s.

He was also the last surviving member of the original founders of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America.

Among those attending the street-naming ceremony were Father Michael, who gave the invocation; Father Paul's son Peter, and his wife Caroline; Father Paul's daughter Dorothy, and her husband Robert; State Sen. Andrew Gounardes; Honorary Consul of Lebanon, Mr. John Abi Habib; and City Councilmember Justin Brannan, who served as master of ceremonies.

St. Mary's current Pastor, Father Michael, called Father Paul one of the most influential mentors in his life. "Like me, innumerable seminarians and theology students passed through his classes and his parish on their way to ordination and to other vocations of community service," said Father Michael. "He freely shared his incomparable wit, deep wisdom, and broad world experience with generations of ministry candidates. It is an honor to have been assigned to succeed him both as Pastor of St. Mary's and as the Secretary of the Archdiocese."



Father Paul's son Peter was delighted that the street has been co-named in his father's memory. "His arrival in Brooklyn was a case study in the right place, the right time, the right people and the right man. I can think of no one more worthy than my father to be honored in this way," exclaimed Peter Schneirla.

In 2007, the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America, or SCOBA, the predecessor to the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, recognized Father Paul with a resolution that cited his lengthy and extraordinary support for inter-Orthodox development and communication. He also served as the Vicar General of Western Rite Orthodoxy in Northern America from its inception in 1958 until his retirement.

Father Paul's daughter, Dorothy Downie, recalled as prophetic a conversation she had with her father shortly before he died. "Once I asked Father Paul how he wanted to be remembered," explained Downie. "He said that he just wanted to be thought of as someone who tried to do the right thing. I can attest that with his first-rate mind, a first-class temperament, and buoyant sense of humor, he cheerfully gave of himself in the cause of always doing what was right."

Downie continued. "At the end of your life, all you have left is what you've given to other people. With Father Paul, his influence will extend far beyond his own lifetime through the families and friends he so faithfully served."

"Any time someone would ask Father Paul how he was doing, his patented and trademarked response was, 'Never better!' as an expression of his lifelong progress in both the material and spiritual realms," recalled Father Michael. If you were to ask anyone at St. Mary's on Sunday how they felt about

the street being named "Father Paul Schneirla Way," undoubtedly the answer would be, "Never better!"

Dr. John Alexander



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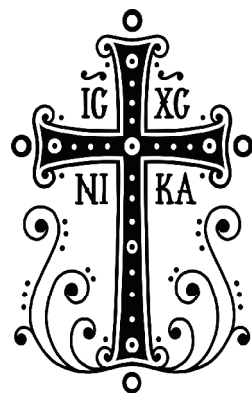
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A THANK-YOU TO KATRINA BITAR

CAMP ST. NICHOLAS CAMP DIRECTOR, 2003–2021



At Camp St. Nicholas, everyone from the staff to the campers, to the counselors, hears the same two messages: “Love your neighbor” and “Never want your own way.” Everything we do at Camp St. Nicholas is rooted in these two statements. Yep – everything! From the way we walk down the hill, to Christian Ed, to how we play Two Towers. We do not have a “spiritual life,” a “school life,” a “work life.” We have one life: one life in Christ.

Coming to camp in the last twenty years, one felt this before one could name it. This is how Katrina selflessly served our camp as the Camp Director, always serving and surrendering to the Lord. She led camp, treating her neighbor as herself, always knowing that none of this was hers, but His. She was called to serve as Director to share the love, strength, and power of the Lord.

When Katrina became the Camp Director in 2003, she pulled together communities and people across the Archdiocese to strengthen the richness of Camp St. Nicholas. Camp St. Nicholas is a place where Katrina’s father, Fr. Elias Bitar of blessed memory, also served. To experience camp is to experience the dream of an Orthodox Christian community.

Katrina’s love for God propelled her to grow and

challenge us all to step into its fullness, to truly offer a life in Christ to the campers, their families, and parishes. Katrina’s experience as a camper and staff member at the Antiochian Village, her time as a parish Youth Director at St. George Church in Phoenix, Arizona, and her M.Div. degree from St. Vladimir’s Seminary were all foundational for the program that she developed here at Camp St. Nicholas.

No one more than Katrina saw the beauty in this community, reflected on her own brokenness, or relied on her faith, always making decisions and choices for campers that were rooted in the Lord. She made herself vulnerable in this work, following the best example: Christ himself.

The Camp St. Nicholas family is eternally grateful for Katrina’s eighteen years of service as our Camp Director. We wish her all of God’s blessings as she continues her ministry as the Director of the YES Program with FOCUS North America.



The Children's Relief Fund



I greet you on behalf of all the children of the **Children's Relief Fund (CRF)**, past and present. We pray that you receive this letter in their gratitude and appreciation for the love and concern you have shown them in our Lord's name. We pray for your continued health and prosperity in this New Year.

This letter brings you our *"2021 New Year Appeal."* The purpose of this program within the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America is to provide funds for the children in need in Lebanon and Palestine, and the children of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

The **CRF**, under the *"Department of Charitable Outreach,"* has been a godsend to hundreds of needy children and their families. We are so proud and privileged to help and support them financially – but more importantly, to show them our love and concern.

We will continue to assist these children, just as we have since the Fund's inception in 1983. We have provided close to **4 million dollars** in aid, but we can't do it alone. Your past participation has brought much joy to so many young suffering innocents. ***100% of your donation goes directly to the sponsored child and no money is used for administrative services.***

You can help change the life of a child by being a sponsor for as little as \$400 a year, just \$7.69 per week, \$1.10 per day. Donations in any amount are always welcome. Once you sponsor a child, we will send you their name, age, address, and a brief biography. Your child will correspond with you, sending you letters and pictures about their life. You will be able to develop a special bond and personal relationship with them.

Your assistance will improve the lives of these children and give them a chance for a better future.

For those of you who are already sponsoring a child, we



offer you our most profound thanks. Please continue your love and support. New sponsors are encouraged to open a window of concern and join this humanitarian effort to lift the burden off these children.

In anticipation of your kind and response, we thank you for your generosity and pray you enjoy the New Year with health, happiness, and prosperity. May God bless you and yours and give you strength in the coming days.

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You may donate through PayPal on our website at:
<http://www.childrenrelieffund.org/donate-now.html>

Please make check payable to:
Children's Relief Fund
P.O. Box 90072
Brooklyn, NY 11209

