

# THE WORD

الكلمة

June 2020  
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THE PENTECOST





# THE WORD

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Letters to the editor are welcome and should include the author's full name and parish. Submissions for "Communities in Action" must be approved by the local pastor. Both may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All submissions e-mailed and provided as a Microsoft Word text or editable PDF. Please do not embed artwork into the word documents. All art work must be high resolution: at least 300dpi.

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# Getting the Church Back to Full-time Work

Bishop JOHN

**T**he Zoom meeting of all the clergy with Metropolitan JOSEPH on May 7, 2020, was for me a much-needed encouragement. Not only was the Metropolitan in touch with the real pain of the clergy and faithful of this Archdiocese, but he was able to witness to the hope and strength of our faith.

God is indeed raised from the dead, and drawing alongside us, His children, in our suffering, in this time of confusion and isolation. He also was able to thank the clergy for their forbearance, creativity, and flexibility. It was great to meet with the clergy, and not only to share information and guidelines on how to reopen our churches. It was also an opportunity to thank God and each other for our work and blessings. The meeting was wonderful, and the clergy are united solidly behind our Metropolitan and bishops.

It was also for me a great blessing to scan the faces of the many clergy who have shared in the corporate ministry of our Archdiocese. These are men who encourage me as they witness to Christ through their efforts, despite the many obstacles which we face. Each could have made decisions to avoid their high calling, but have chosen to serve God and His people. Every priest I meet is a marvel, a gift, and a witness.

I could not help but see in my mind's eye the clergy families and communities that each of the priests and deacons serve, as I gazed at the faces of the priests and deacons. Some of the faces seemed wearied, expressing to me the long struggle already endured. Others seemed joyful to be together, albeit through the now all-too-familiar Zoom forum. Perhaps we all feel some of both those feelings.

I have been hearing a common expectation in my conversations with people: our current isolation should be easier to endure, and less of a temptation. "Perhaps if I only had more faith, I would not feel so anxious, sad, angry, or pained." I suggest that these feelings reflect the natural response to the isolation brought about by the corona virus. Politics aside, this isolation is not natural for people who are created by God as social beings. We need touch and intimacy. Our social distancing makes intimacy difficult. Our feelings are very much part of our humanity. God creates us to be one with Him and with each other. I do not believe that feeling anxious, sad, angry, or pained is in itself sinful. These feelings, however, can lead to an isolation from God and each other which would be sinful. Sin is a separation from God. A sin is something that misses the mark of what God has created us to be and to do. It is a distortion of what his good, and holy, and natural. *Natural* means that which God created something to be, not what it is in the fallen state of the world.

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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When we focus too much on feelings, we can see its absurdity. We can be so anxious about Covid-19, its ramifications for health, social relations, and economics, that we feel paralyzed and cannot function. We can then be angry that we feel that way. Simultaneously, we can feel sad or pained that we are so angry. Feeling pained, we cannot bring ourselves to be civil with each other, feed the kids, or pray. We can self-isolate from God and each other. This self-isolation is indeed sinful and should be confessed. Then there is the sin of making the ones we love miserable.

While we all may reflect this cycle in one respect or another, and to one degree or another, we are not without hope. Even with these feeling myself, I can identify the cycle in others and help them out. In so doing, I can be reminded of the truth of my preaching. Even in my hypocrisy (and despite it), I can grow and heal. This is good news.

The Archdiocese, her clergy and parishes are mobilized and want to serve God's people prophetically, authentically, traditionally, and safely. We have made difficult choices. We have tightened our fiscal belts and all our departments are serving with smaller budgets. During the current crises, even *The WORD* magazine will temporarily go to bi-monthly publishing, starting in September. I have every confidence, however, that our faithful will return the Church to full service and beyond, soon. I believe that the people, knowing the needs of ministry, will be generous, and that the people and clergy together will continue to be creative. Together, we will present to the world the glorious good news about God, and from God, and support each other in our common ministry, Christ's own ministry.

## ERRATA

The "Go Forth" article on page 22 of the May 2020 issue did not credit The Last Supper icon to Niko Chocheli. Niko teaches drawing, painting, and art history in his art studio in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Thank you for sharing your beautiful work with *The WORD* magazine.



Greek Orthodox Patriarchate  
of Antioch and All the East

Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate  
of Antioch and All the East

# SEVEN YEARS SINCE THE KIDNAPPING OF THE BISHOPS OF ALEPPO



*Beloved Brethren and Spiritual Children:  
Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!*

Brothers, we address you with the paschal greeting, sharing your prayers in your home corners, and bending with you the knees of the heart before Christ, Who was crucified for our sake, Who rose from the dead, and made us rise by His divine Light, wiping away from our souls the dust of bitter times, and the ashes of desolation and despair. The radiance of Pascha, however, stands incomplete on account of the sorrowful case of our two brothers, the Bishops of Aleppo, Metropolitans PAUL Yazigi and YOUHANNA Ibrahim, kidnapped since April 22, 2013. Today, we address you heart-to-heart, and we address the whole world as well, to say that the Christians of this East, along with its other groups, are still paying, with their lives and their fate, taxes to terrorism and violence: displacement, kidnapping, murder, and many a tribulation. Despite all this, they remain faithful to their pledge of love for Jesus Christ, as the Lord Who redeemed them on the Cross and implanted them in this East two thousand years ago, to proclaim the joy of His Gospel.



From the moment of the kidnapping to this day, the thousands of attempts and many efforts to obtain any information on the fate of the two bishops have remained fruitless. This has been the situation despite stacks of data, clues, analyses, and inquiries that often complicate and entangle perspectives.

asking governments, organizations, political influencers, and powerful personalities to engage in this case on many global platforms. These were only some of our efforts, among many others. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who provided help and promises, offering their efforts and contributions in the humanitarian, media,



We have seen 2,557 days pass since the event, and we have never spared the least effort to bring this cause to a happy ending, and ultimately to what we seek above all: the release of the two bishops, when we shall have them among us once more. We have not held back from knocking on any local, regional, or even international doors,

diplomatic, security, or political spheres, whether on official or personal levels. The role of these people shed a light of hope in the black, sorrowful night, while the negligence and silence of the international community had overwhelmed this significant humanitarian and crucial cause, undermining any attempt to find solutions.

Today, having set before our eyes the image of the two bishops, our brothers who are in constant prayer for all of us, we ask all the faithful, wherever they are, to pray for them this particular week. We ask them to pray for the two bishops and for every kidnapped, missing, or displaced person. We ask them to pray for any person who has been trapped in some dire situation, but who then found in the Cross of Christ hope and consolation, and was strengthened by His glorious and victorious Resurrection.

The human being in this East is of no lesser value than others. This present pandemic that has been ravaging the globe – may God relieve us of it – is a clear proof that, in all circumstances, above any considerations of race, religion, or nation, we all share in a common humanity; we are all in the same boat, in this East and the whole world.

If only people could be aware of this. If only the politicians and those who deal with world affairs could realize that human beings are made of the same nature and share the same dignity, regardless of the differences in country, homeland, language, civilization and religion. Despite its bitterness, the pandemic came to tell us that we share a common existence and one human brotherhood in this wide world. If only this were crystal clear to the eyes of the heart, and to the perception of those who violate their brother's dignity. They do so unaware that this denigration will be turned against them and that their own dignity will be demeaned in the end. First and foremost, we all ought to stand for the true human dignity; we must be aware that our fellow human being's dignity, life and existence, are part of our own heart, existence, and being.

As Christians of the Levant, we are deeply rooted since times of old. Our roots will never wither. Out of these roots grow the great oasis that is the Christian Antiochian presence in the East and in all the world, an oasis flourishing and fragrant with the Christian witness to the Most Glorified Lord Jesus Christ, and with love for the neighbor from all walks of life. History has been teaching us all the way that we do not need protection from anyone; neither do we seek anyone's protection. We are an original component of this East, with all its meanderings and juxtapositions.

Considering our role, the logic of minority versus majority falls apart. It is replaced by the logic of meeting and dialogue, as well as the pioneering role of Christians and others. We are not, and will never be, a card to be played by anyone. We are rather a message of existence and authenticity, a bridge of communication and encounter between the East and the West, between Christianity and other religions.

We pray today for our two bishop brothers and for every kidnapped person, bearing in mind that we will spare no effort to advocate for this cause and bring it to the desired outcome, much awaited by every Christian heart, every descendant of the Levant, and every well-intentioned person. Saying this, we confirm that the path of the Cross ended with the dawn of Resurrection.

Today we pray to Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Resurrection and the Master of Life, that He may roll away the tombstone by His Cross and delight our eyes with the Light of the Resurrection. We pray for the peace of the world suffering from the pandemic. We pray for this East in all its countries, which seeks the dawn of Resurrection from the Golgotha of the Cross. We pray for our children in Aleppo, to whom we particularly extend the peace of Pascha, asking the Lord of the Resurrection to revive hope in their hearts and ours.

With you, brothers, our souls bow in prayer, our hearts are lit as oil lamps in the corners of our homes before the Lord Christ Who is risen from the tomb. We pray for world peace and for the return of all the kidnapped, while we illuminate our hearts and souls with paschal hope, singing:

“Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life.”

Damascus, April 22, 2020

**His Beatitude John X**

Patriarch of Antioch and All the East of the Greek Orthodox Church

**His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II**

Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and  
Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac  
Orthodox Church

## بطيركية أنطاكية وسائر المشرق للروم الأرثوذكس

## بطيركية أنطاكية وسائر المشرق للسريان الأرثوذكس

### سبع سنوات على اختطاف مطراني حلب

أيها الإخوة والأبناء الروحانيون الأعزاء،

المسيح قام، حقاً قام.

بسلام الفصح نتوجه إليكم مشاركين إياكم صلواتكم في زوايا البيوت وحانين وإياكم ركبة القلب أمام المسيح المصلوب من أجلنا والقائم من بين الأموات والمقيم إيانا في نوره الإلهي والنافع عن النفوس ركام الأزمنة المرة ورماد القنوط واليأس. وفي غمرة بهاء الفصح غصة ملف أخوينا مطراني حلب يوحنا إبراهيم وبولس يازجي المخطوفين منذ 22 نيسان 2013. نخاطبكم اليوم من القلب إلى القلب ونخاطب وإياكم العالم أجمع لنقول إن مسيحيي هذا الشرق لا زالوا ومع غيرهم من مكوناته يدفعون من حياتهم ومصيرهم ضرائب الإرهاب والعنف تهجيراً وخطفاً وقتلاً ومحنناً شتى بالرغم من كل ذلك بقوا على عهد محبة ليسوع المسيح رباً افتداهم على الصليب وزرعهم في هذا الشرق منذ ألفي عام حملةً لفرح إنجيله.

من لحظة الخطف وإلى يومنا هذا لم تسفر آلاف المحاولات والجهود في الكشف عن مصير المطرانين. كل ذلك وسط كم هائل من المعطيات والخيوط والتحليلات والتساؤلات التي غالباً ما أسهمت الى زيادة الملف غموضاً وتعقيداً.

2557 يوماً مضى ونحن لم نأل جهداً في سبيل إيصال الملف الى خواتيم سعيدة أحبها على قلبنا يبقى تحرير المطرانين وعودتهما سالمين آمنين بيننا. لم نترك باباً محلياً كان أو إقليمياً أو حتى دولياً إلا وطرقناه من حكومات ومنظمات وحشدنا العديد من الجهات والشخصيات الفاعلة والمؤثرة بهدف إدراج القضية على شتى المنابر العالمية وغيرها الكثير الكثير من الجهود والمساعدة. نشكر من القلب كل من ساعد ووعد وقدم أي جهد أو مساهمة إن كان على الصعيد الإنساني أو الإعلامي أو الدبلوماسي أو الأمني أو السياسي بصفة رسمية كانت أو حتى شخصية لما قد يبعث الدور الذي لعبوه من بصيص أمل وسط الظلمة والظلام المطبق والمحزن في حين كان تعامي المجتمع الدولي وصمته قد ألقيا بظلالهما على هكذا قضية إنسانية ومصيرية ملحقين الضرر بمسيرة البحث عن حلول.

إذ ترتسم أمامنا اليوم صورة أخوينا المطرانين وهما في صلاة دائمة من أجلنا جميعاً، نطلب من كل مؤمنينا حيث هم الصلاة من أجلهما في هذا الأسبوع تحديداً. نطلب الصلاة من أجلهما ومن أجل كل مظلوم مخطوف ومفقود ومهجر وكل من ضاقت به الدينا فوجد رجاءه في صليب المسيح وعزاه وقوته في قيامته المجيدة الطافرة.

الإنسان المشرقي ليس أبخس ثمناً من غيره. ولعل الوباء الحاضر، والذي اكتسح ويكتسح أسفاً هذه البشرية ونصلي من أجل أن يرتفع عنا، هو أوضح برهان أننا جميعاً أولاً وأخيراً، من كل الأعراق والأديان والانتماءات إخوة في الإنسانية وركاب قارب واحد. ويا ليت الإنسان قد وعى ذلك ويا ليت الساسة ومن يتعاطون الشأن العالمي قد وعوا أن طينة الإنسان وكرامته هي هي مهما اختلفت البلد واختلفت الأرض والديار واللغة والحضارة والدين. حل الوباء الحاصل على رغم



مرارته ليقول إننا نتقاسم على هذه البسيطة وجوداً واحداً وأخوة إنسانية واحدة ويا ليت هذا كان جلياً وواضحاً أمام عين قلب وباصرة الإنسان الذي يمتن كرامة أخيه غير مدرك أن الويل سيرجع وسينقلب عليه وأن كرامته هو ستنتقص أولاً وأخيراً. الأولى بنا جميعاً أن ندافع معاً وأولاً وأخيراً عن الكرامة الإنسانية الحق ونعي أن كرامة أخينا الإنسان وحياته وكل وجوده هو جزء من قلبنا ووجودنا وبعض من كيانتنا.

نحن كمسيحيين في هذا الشرق جذرُ ضارب في التاريخ لم يقربه يباسٌ ولن يقربَه يباس. ومن هذا الجذر يخرج الدَّوح الكبير حضوراً مسيحياً أنطاكياً في الشرق وفي كل العالم مزهراً فواحاً بعبير الشهادة المسيحية للمسيح يسوع له المجد والمحبة للأخ من كل الأطياف. دروس التاريخ علمتنا أننا لا نحتاج حماية من أحد، ولا نريد الحماية من أحد. نحن مكُونُ أصيل من هذا الشرق بكل منعرجاته وبكل إشراقاته. أمام دورنا يسقط منطق الأقلية والأكثرية ليعلو منطق اللقيا والحوار ومنطق الدور الريادي الذي كان للمسيحيين ولغيرهم. نحن لسنا ورقة بيد أحد ولن نكون ورقة لا بل رسالة وجود وأصالة وجسر تواصل وتلاقٍ بين الشرق والغرب وبين المسيحية وغيرها من الأديان.

نصلي اليوم من أجل أخويننا المطرانين ومن أجل كل مخطوف آخر ونضع نصب أعيننا أننا لن نألو جهداً في مواصلة جهودنا بتحريك هذا الملف والوصول به إلى الخواتم المرجوة التي يترقبها قلب كل مسيحي ومشرقي وقلب كل ذي إرادة حسنة. وإذ نقول هذا، نوكد أن درب الصليب انتهى إلى فجر قيامة.

صلاتنا اليوم إلى رب القيامة وسيد الحياة يسوع المسيح أن يزيح بصليبه حجر القبر ويكلل أبصارنا بنور القيامة. صلاتنا من أجل سلام العالم الذي يئن تحت وطأة الوباء. وصلاتنا من أجل هذا الشرق بكل بلدانه والذي يتلمس فجر القيامة من على جلجلة الصليب. صلاتنا من أجل أبنائنا في حلب. نتوجه إليهم بشكل خاص بسلام الفصح سائلين رب القيامة أن يقيم الرجاء في قلوبهم وقلوبنا.

نحن وإياكم أيها الأخوة ركبة النفس ونشعل زيت القلب في زوايا البيوت أمام الرب المسيح الناهض من القبر. نصلي من أجل سلام العالم ومن أجل عودة المخطوفين ونضيء قلوبنا ونفوسنا بالرجاء الفصحي مرمنين:

"المسيح قام من بين الأموات ووطئ الموت بالموت ووهب الحياة للذين في القبور".

دمشق، 22 نيسان 2020.

يوحنا العاشر

بطريرك أنطاكية وسائر المشرق للروم  
الأرثوذكس

إغناطيوس أفرام الثاني

بطريرك أنطاكية وسائر المشرق للسريان  
الأرثوذكس والرئيس الأعلى للكنيسة  
السريانية الأرثوذكسية في العالم

# A QUARANTINE OPPORTUNITY

# THE WAY OF THE

# WARRIOR SAINT

Fr. Chris Salamy

I TOTALLY LOVED THE CORONAVIRUS QUARANTINE. I MAY BE THE ONLY PERSON ON THE PLANET WHO DID, BUT I LOVED IT. I KNOW MANY PEOPLE GOT SICK AND SOME PEOPLE DIED. I DIDN'T LIKE THAT PART, BUT I MADE THE CONSCIOUS DECISION TO LOOK AT THE QUARANTINE AS AN OPPORTUNITY, RATHER THAN SOMETHING SIMPLY TO ENDURE.



Quarantine offered us many opportunities, the greatest of which was the chance to reclaim time. You may be thinking: "What is he talking about? Reclaim time? I had nothing but time during quarantine." That's precisely my point.

Most people had an abundance of time, as they were stuck at home binging on Netflix, Facebook, and Tik Tok. Our usual frenetic pace came to a screeching halt, and few people knew how to handle it. Instead of making the most of the time, many of us took mini sabbaticals with little progress to show for it.

Time, quite frankly, has become our new lord. I know that as Orthodox Christians we say that Jesus is our Lord, but if you're anything like me, you actually serve time more than Jesus. Perhaps more apropos, the apparent lack of time is our new master. Prior to being stuffed into quarantine, people ran around at breakneck speed trying to get it all done. The obligations, commitments, appointments, meetings, masterminds, travels, e-mails and paperwork were enough to keep any professional on his knees. If you maintain your home, groceries, dry-cleaning, laundry, making breakfast and lunch (at the same time), school, homework, driving children to activities and playdates, errands and paying bills merely scratches the surface of all the hard work you

put in. Notice that neither of these lists includes the myriad of distractions constantly vying for our time via cell phones: Facebook, YouTube, Messenger, IG, Snap, Swip Swap, Etsy, Pinterest, Ebates, WhatsApp, Viber, Tik Tok, texts, e-mails (with multiple addresses) and the occasional phone call. It's enough to drive any sane person to the edge.

Most people in America today have more to accomplish than is humanly possible. We have allowed our lives to become overwhelmed with so-called priorities and can function no better than automata. What's worse: we brag about it. Come on, you know you do. I call them busy battles. Think about it for a moment. When you speak to someone on the phone and they ask, "How are you?" what is your typical response? You can say it, I already know. Most of us respond to that question with some variant of, "I'm good, just really busy." And then it gets even worse: the busy battles began. "O honey, you think you're busy ... let me tell you how busy I am." We wear busy-ness as a badge of honor.

Enter quarantine. Like a bolt of lightning, our world came to a halt. Unless designated as an essential worker, we were instructed by our bishops and civil authorities to stay home. Stop everything. Don't go to work. Don't go to the store unless it's necessary. No Starbucks, no dinners out, no travel, no parties. Even no church. All of our previous appointments, meetings, travels, confessions, weddings and baptisms were postponed to a future date. For many of us, the rescheduling of those commitments is still to be determined.





It is possible to look at the quarantine as though we were being cursed. It felt like somehow God was doing this to us because of our sins. Perhaps like Noah's age, God was sorry that He made us (Genesis 6:6).

I have to confess, for the first few days I felt exactly like that, as though God were so mad that His wrath was pouring out upon us. Then two things hit me: first, God doesn't do that. God is our loving father, not a vengeful despot. Second, maybe quarantine is an opportunity and a blessing. There, I said it. Quarantine could be viewed as an opportunity. Could we use quarantine as an opportunity to reclaim our time? Could we reexamine our lives and the chaos that we'd allowed to

take over? Could we take active steps during the forced hiatus to make a plan, so that when we exit quarantine we are better off than when we went in? You bet we could.

To do this, we turn to Holy Scripture. The Apostle Paul offers wisdom and guidance for us in Ephesians, Chapter 5: "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil" (5:15–16). In a context much more severe than our current situation, St. Paul is imploring his Ephesian Christians not to waste their time. While much of his flock was constantly under threat of death – not by disease, but martyrdom – he was instructing them to make their minutes count.

**Quarantine could be viewed as an opportunity. Could we use quarantine as an opportunity to reclaim our time? Could we reexamine our lives and the chaos that we'd allowed to take over? Could we take active steps during the forced hiatus to make a plan, so that when we exit quarantine we are better off than when we went in? You bet we could.**

It's as if he were saying, "Don't waste your days, people! Today could be your last day, so make it count." In the chaos that was their day, the Apostle was encouraging them to use whatever little time they might have had left to live a Christ-like life, witnessing to the truth of the Gospel.

He powerfully concludes his point here with verse 17: "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Simply put, Paul is saying that to waste your time on the mundane and non-essential tasks before you is foolishness. They serve nothing more than to quench a thirst for busy-ness. Instead, walk as a wise man and understand the Lord's will. And then go do it.

The natural follow-up question would be, "So what is the will of the Lord?" In some real sense, that question rests at the heart of the Orthodox Faith. To understand the will of the Lord and do it is what we have all been called to. (See, for example Matthew 7:24.) From the moment of our baptism, we are commissioned by Christ through the Epistle and Gospel readings to walk in a new life, and to teach others to do likewise. So again I ask, what is that new life that we are supposed to walk in?

Far better men and women than I have written eloquently on the will of the Lord. As a simple man, I prefer to explain it as following our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; to do what he did; to live how he lived; to "walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us" (Ephesians 5:2).

In Phoenix, we made up a word to express the Christ-like life: *crucifixional*. We are all called to live *crucifixional* lives. So what do we mean by this word? We mean to sacrifice ourselves, our egos, our desires, for the sake of something better, for the sake of others. We started a program we call "The Way of the Warrior Saint" to address precisely how to do that. (To see more of what that means, visit [www.warriorsaints.org](http://www.warriorsaints.org).) We know that if we live a Crucifixional life, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too will find the Gates of Paradise opened when death comes for us. Death inevitably will come for us, whether through coronavirus or not.

So are there practical tools that we can use – beginning this very moment – to help us emulate Christ and heed the Apostle's call of Ephesians 5? Are there steps we can take to stop wasting time with all of the mundane requests that are thrown at us in our daily lives? To use our language in Phoenix:

can we become Warrior Saints? Absolutely.

Living a *crucifixional* life begins by knowing what is important. Not what others think is important, but what truly matters to you as you strive to emulate Christ. That means you need one priority in life. It may seem to you that having one priority is an impossibility. In a world where so many things vie for our time, we must have a multitude of priorities, no? Interestingly enough, the word 'priority' entered the English language at some point in the Fifteenth Century. It meant *that which is prior* or *that which is first*. Logically, you know only one thing can be first. In the 1900's, however, we made the term also plural, thinking that if we spoke of more than one priority, multiple things could be the most important in our lives. Thinking back to the chaos of your busy life prior to quarantine: did that work? Did having multiple priorities produce the success and peace that God's will is calling us to? I'm pretty sure if you're honest with yourself you know it did not.

**Our first practical point on the Way of the Warrior Saint is to establish what is the one thing that should serve as the priority in your life.** If you had one big thing, what would it be? I cannot tell you what that priority is. You must find it. There are many tools, formulas and programs to help you establish what your priority should be. I can tell you that prayer and quiet time for reflection are a great place to start.

Having one priority doesn't mean that you ignore the responsibilities that you have in your homes, jobs, communities, or society at large. Rather, it means that in every moment of your life, you are striving to fulfill your one priority. For example, the priority in my life is to live *crucifixionally*, in everything that I do. So whether I'm teaching Bible studies, serving liturgy, exercising, eating, spending time with my bride and children, running errands, or writing articles for *The Word* magazine, everything I do is considered in terms of sacrificing my own desires, needs, wants, ego, for the sake of another person. Your first task is to find out what your priority is, and then do it.

Focusing on your priority can often be a daunting task. This is true because we must dedicate a lot of time to it. As your pre-quarantine self knows, a lot of people and obligations are vying for your time. If left unchecked, you will find your post-quarantine life to be just as chaotic as your pre-quarantine



life. We know how that made us feel, however.

So how can focus on our one thing? We can repeatedly use the second most important word in the English language. **That's the next practical point on the Way of the Warrior Saint. For Orthodox Christians, the most important words we should utter are, "Lord, have mercy." Every prayer and every liturgical service we have testifies to this. After Lord have mercy, however, the second most important thing we have to say is "No."**

Every "Yes" we give means that we have to say no to at least ten other things. Contrary to the fallacies of multi-tasking and the "more-ism" of Western society, to really make the most of our time walking as wise men and women, we must protect our time. If you don't protect your time, people and obligations will steal it. Time is so precious, and I implore you to use it to accomplish your one priority in life.

My favorite book is the Bible. The second is *Essentialism*, by Greg McKeown. I have read it fifteen times. In the opening chapters, McKeown exposes three fallacies we readily accept that lead us into the chaos of a pre-quarantine existence. Those fallacies are *I have to; everything is important; and I can do both*. If you really think about them, you will quickly see how crazy they actually are. Instead, McKeown encourages us to change them to the following: *I choose to; very few things are important; and I can do anything, but I can't do everything*. In order to make this shift, we have to become adept at saying "No."

Saying No to people is difficult; believe me, as a priest, I get it. Priests can be the very worst at it. We say yes to everything because many of us carry a savior complex. We often fall into the trap of believing that inherent to our ministry is the need to save people. Certainly a noble calling, but one that over the years I've recognized is totally false. Once, during Holy Thursday matins, it dawned on me that only Jesus went to the Cross to save mankind. It may seem silly, but as I hung the icon of the crucified Messiah on the Cross after the procession I noticed that He was alone. I had been mistakenly functioning as though Jesus and Fr. Chris had gone to the Cross. When I made my prostration before the icon prior to returning to the altar, it dawned on me: Jesus Christ alone is the Savior.

From that very moment, my ministry took on a new face. Rather than trying to save my flock from everything, I realized that my purpose was to teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that He would

save them. Not only did I no longer feel the need to say Yes to every single request; it was probably in their best interest for me to decline politely. For heaven's sake, I'm not even qualified or trained to do some of the things they asked of me! "No" quickly became the most powerful word in my vocabulary.

A perfect example of this is wedding receptions. Most of our weddings are done on Saturdays. One particular reception was held at one of the finest resorts in town. It was an amazing night! The food was fabulous, the band was awesome, and the company at our table was even "awesomer. Throughout the night, however, we were screaming over the volume of the band to talk to one another. Champagne toasts at the speeches. Greeting what seemed like a million people took most of the evening. My khouria and I drove home later than we wanted to. My sermon the next day sucked. I hate to use that word, but it did. I was tired. My head was swimming. And my energy level was at an all-time low. It was not my best effort.

That was not OK, because my "job" is to preach the Gospel to my people. In the prayer of ordination to the priesthood, as the bishop lays his hand on the candidate's head, he invokes the Holy Spirit to come down and change this deacon into a priest. And then the bishop gives the new priest a job description with four tasks: 1. To proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom; 2. To minister the word of truth; 3. To serve the Divine Liturgy; and 4. To administer the sacraments. In that order! (See the Red Service book, pages 234–5 for the full text.) So, my first two responsibilities as a pastor are to preach the Gospel to my people. And on that particular Sunday I did so terribly because I was out too late the night before.

I immediately decided that I was going to start saying No to any and all requests for my time on Saturday evening after Vespers. It is my responsibility to preach on Sundays so I have to make that time count. I can't do that if I'm beat up from the night before. Believe me, this wasn't easy. I love my people and I love being with them. Even my khouria laid into me saying, "Your people love you and love having you with them at their special occasions. You can't stop going." She's right, to be sure, but my priority is to be *crucifixional*. That means I had to sacrifice my desire to join in Saturday night festivities in order to be the best I can be on Sunday mornings. So I had to start saying No. It's just that simple.

For you to be able to fulfill your priority and not waste time, you, too, have to learn to say No. To 95 percent of the requests you get. Yep, 95 percent. Remember, not everything is truly important. Only 5 percent of opportunities that come your way are really worth saying Yes to. You have to decline all the rest, politely. I understand that doing so may make you uncomfortable. We feel a strong pull from our sense of obligation; or we don't want to hurt someone's feelings; or worse, we fall into the trap of thinking we can do everything. I promise you, however: with a little practice, you become better at saying No. People will even respect you more because of it.

**Finally, to walk as wise men and women, making the most of the time, we have to be free from distractions. Knowing our priority and saying No to 95 percent of requests for our time is essential, but there is another monster we have to confront: notifications. This leads to the third point on the Way of the Warrior Saint.**

Notifications are everywhere. The majority of them follow us around in our back pockets and purses. Our cell phones push constant noise at

and come back to writing. Thus, four e-mails can wipe out an entire hour of productive work on one's priority. And which of us has only four e-mails to deal with!

I am terrible at ignoring the notifications, I'm sure you struggle with it, too. That's by design, by the way. The entire concept of our cell phones is to create habits so that we stay constantly connected to our devices. I don't know about you, but I'm tired of being a slave to other people's to-do lists! So when I allocate time to focus on my priority, I turn all notifications off. As I am writing this article, my e-mail app is closed. So even if e-mails are coming in, I can't see them. Furthermore, you might consider turning off all "push" notifications on your phone permanently. For example, my e-mail and social media apps are all set to fetch on my phone. That means that I cannot see what you send me via e-mail or Facebook until I choose to look at them. By doing so, I have now given my priority a chance. Instead of making your to-do list important in my life, I have made my priority exactly that: a priority.

My last suggestion is to put your cell phone on silent and physically out of sight. Some of us mistakenly believe that if it is on vibrate or upside down, we won't see all of the notifications. The problem is, now that we have become habituated to our cell phones, the mere sight of it is a trigger to pick it up and see who wants what. So when you're focusing on your priority or are at dinner with family or friends, put your phone on silent and put it in another room. At the very least put it in your pocket or purse. Your priority and your loved ones deserve you being fully present!

Making the most of the time is essential to living a *crucifixional* life. We have been called by the will of the Lord to walk wisely, because the days we live in are filled with evil. Our hopes are that you will use the coronavirus quarantine as an opportunity to find your priority and then dedicate your entire life to see it come to fruition.

Fr. Chris Salamy, Pastor

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us. Every time someone wants to connect with us through a text, e-mail, phone call, or message app we hear that delightful little sound that announces their presence. Is it delightful? Perhaps it's more nefarious. Depending on which study you read, the prevailing thought in the academy of efficiency is that each e-mail we attend to while working on a project costs anywhere from 6 to 17 minutes to get back into rhythm. That means if we are writing a *Word* magazine article and an e-mail comes in, it will take me a quarter of an hour to deal with it



# ORTHODOX CHAPLAINCY AT THE FRONT LINES CHRIST IN OUR MIDST!

Sarah Byrne-Martelli and Fr. Adrian Budica

A YOUNG WIFE KEEPS VIGIL AT THE BEDSIDE OF HER DYING HUSBAND. THEY MET AT CHURCH; HE WAS THE DRUMMER FOR THE GOSPEL BAND, AND SHE WAS THE SINGER. SHE PLAYS THEIR FAVORITE WORSHIP SONG IN HIS EAR ON HER PHONE, HOPING HE CAN HEAR IT ONE LAST TIME; HE SQUEEZES HER HAND DURING THE CHORUS OF “HALLELUJAH” AND SHE BURSTS INTO TEARS.

**A** daughter wrestles with the decision to sign a “Do Not Resuscitate” order for her elderly father, who is dying from complications of COVID-19. The patient, a faithful Christian originally from Haiti, lost his son three months ago. His wife is quarantined with the virus, and the patient’s daughter has a new cancer diagnosis and is frozen in grief.

A dying patient who has been somnolent for days finally opens his eyes, looks at the chaplain after hearing the Lord’s Prayer, and says, clear as a bell: “Amen. Thank you.” The chaplain shares this story with his spouse, over the phone. In this time of limited visitation in the hospital and increasing isolation, the chaplain has become the eyes and ears of family members yearning to be present with their loved ones.

As health care chaplains, we encounter moments like these on a daily basis. We are called to bear witness to a great deal of suffering, grief, and death. We are called to show compassion, as we are given strength from God, the source of life and love.

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the ways in which chaplains deliver care. Our normal practices for assessing and supporting the spiritual needs of patients, families, and staff have changed. The halls are quiet. There are a limited number visitors. Our visits are shorter, provided over the phone, or in person, while wearing full protective equipment. Now, more than ever, we are called to be creative and to reflect deeply: How may we continue to provide a compassionate presence? How do we care for those who are dying alone? How do

we best support their families? How do we reach out to staff who are overwhelmed with stress and grief?

Sarah notes, “The hospital is much quieter. There are no surgeries except for emergency ones, and very few people come to the emergency department, as well, for fear of contracting the virus. There are very few visitors, and we only allow visits from the family members of patients at the end of life, and they are limited to one person at a time, for one-hour visits.” As a member of the Interprofessional Palliative Care team, she rounds every day with fellow clinicians, collaborating and sharing insight into the needs, hopes, and worries of their patients. She adds, “More than ever, we are paying attention to the importance of holistic, patient- and family-centered care. And it’s hard, and there is so much grief. There is only so much we can do.” Her team provides care for seriously ill patients, including those with COVID. As such, she has focused much of her time and energy on counseling family members over the phone, delivering difficult news and grief support, and leading conversations about goals of care and decision-making.

Fr. Adrian notes, “We have received extensive training in communication, including body language, recognizing emotions in the face, in gesture, posture, and non-verbal interaction. And now most of it is gone. We do some visits by phone or video conference. Even for those in person, most of the connection is in the eyes, as we are all wearing masks and other protective equipment. But there is still so much one’s eyes can say.” Chaplains are finding new ways to listen carefully and actively, conveying connection and care.

Many hospital units have been emptied of

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Fr. Adrian Budica, an ordained priest in the Antiochian Orthodox Church, is a CPE Educator with Association of Clinical Pastoral Education. He has undergraduate and graduate degrees in divinity and in theology (Th.M.) in Romania and in the United States, at St. Vladimir's Seminary. In his sacerdotal ministry, he serves as an assistant priest at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, NY. He is the Director of Field Education at St. Vladimir Seminary, and also teaches at Bridgeport Hospital as a CPE Educator (since 2015), where he is the Director of Spiritual Care and Education Department. In addition to his supervisory, chaplaincy and priestly roles, Fr. Adrian is passionate about music, the dialogue between spirituality and the behavioral sciences, particularly analytical psychology, and bridging the two worlds of Orthodox Christianity and professional spiritual care, especially in clinical settings.

“regular” patients to make enough room for COVID positive patients. Some hospitals were ordered by the state to double their bed capacity; as such, they created clinical units in all possible spaces, including previous outpatient units, schools, or even field hospitals in large tents nearby. For medical staff, there is a profound sense of grief. There is much less time to process the dying of patients, and memorialize them. It almost feels that once a room is empty, the bed has a new patient immediately. Many nurses have been redeployed to different units or “pop-up ICUs,” and they are facing a great deal of death and loss.

Chaplains have sought to address the spiritual and emotional needs of the medical staff creatively. We have been leading staff support initiatives, from virtual Resilience Rounds, to “Tea for the Soul,” and setting up “Serenity Spaces” with snacks, music, battery-operated candles, and printed blessings that provide a moment of solace. Fr. Adrian's department provides a “Blessing of the Hands” of medical staff, with appropriate social distancing, that is always well-received. We pray with staff if they request it, we check in, and we acknowledge how hard they are working. Here, the role of relationships – of simply “showing up” – is paramount. Even just a small, “How are you holding up? What do you need right now?” goes a long way.

Over the course of the pandemic, we have moved through Lent, through Holy Week, and into the season of Pascha. Through all this, our faith in God, in Christ's trampling down death by death, has sustained us. We are constantly mindful of joyful sorrow, of bright sadness. This work would be unsustainable without the nourishment of a life of faith. We remember every day, every moment, that God is with us.

Sarah often prays for the “peace that surpasses understanding,” that only God can provide. She notes, “So much is beyond our understanding that I don't dwell upon the question of ‘Why?’ I never have. Instead, the question is ‘How?’ How do we respond and care for each other? How do we put one foot in front of the other, and be present, and be gentle with one another?” We do this with prayer, with patience, and with gratitude for our many blessings.

Fr. Adrian offers the story of Elder Sophrony:

On the second day of Pascha [Monday of Bright Week], in either 1930 or 1931, an educated Russian hermit monk, he was an engineer, came to visit me in my cell at the

Monastery of St. Panteleimon. “Fr. Sophrony, how will we be saved?” I loved this person. He was a very gentle and sweet person, but also very clever. I prepared him a cup of tea, gave it to him, and told him, “Stand on the edge of the abyss and when you feel that it is beyond your strength, break off and have a cup of tea.”

He notes that the “abyss” is often in front of our eyes, especially in the hospital. It is normal that we might feel overwhelmed at the sight. We are encouraged by Fr. Sophrony's kind words that normalize this response, as well as his encouragement for taking time for ourselves. In doing so, we acknowledge that God is the source of all hope, all love, all compassion. Now more than ever, we need Christ to remind us that it is by His power only that we breathe, we serve, we exist.

Even the Prophet Elias, known for his fiery actions and passion for proclaiming God, had moments of utter despair. After bringing fire from heaven in front of thousands of people, proving the true God, he finds himself a fugitive from Ahab and Jezebel thirsty for revenge: “But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, ‘It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers’” (1 Kings 19:4). And what does God do? He provides a good sleep and food for Elias through an angel – enough that he is able to travel forty days and forty nights to Horeb, where God reveals Himself to him. Sleep, nourishment, endless cups of tea (or coffee!), and connections with our colleagues sustain us, as well.

We remind ourselves that Christ is in our midst. Our faith gives us strength and courage to pursue this ministry, to hold space and be present with all those who seek our care. When we are weary, Christ assures us that His Cross is light, that it elevates all who lift it, and all who will accept it. He says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me . . . and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” We are thankful to serve as chaplains in health care, guided by our faith in God, who is the Great Physician.

*Board Certified Chaplains provide spiritual, pastoral, and emotional care to patients, families, and staff within health care organizations.*

Sarah Byrne-Martelli and Fr. Adrian Budica

LIVING THE LITURGY — A PRACTICAL REFLECTION

# OFFERING OURSELVES TO OTHERS MAY HAVE A COST

PART 10 OF 10

WE'VE DONE A LOT IN OUR EXPLORATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY. TO SUMMARIZE, WE'VE LOOKED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE DIVINE LITURGY AND WHAT IT MEANS TO STAND BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD; HOW WE ARE TAUGHT THE WORD OF GOD; WHAT IT MEANS TO LAY ASIDE OUR EARTHLY CARES; WHAT WE BELIEVE; WHAT WE OFFER; HOW WE MIGHT DARE TO CALL GOD "FATHER"; AND WHAT UNITES OUR COMMUNITY. FINALLY, WE'VE HAD AS AN OVERARCHING THEME THAT WE ARE CALLED TO OFFER OURSELVES TO OTHERS, MODELED AFTER CHRIST'S SELF-OFFERING ON THE CROSS. WE ARE SENT BACK INTO THE WORLD TO ENACT THIS IN OUR LIVES.



This month we celebrate the Great Feast of Pentecost: our celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire, and the birth of the Church. Throughout the hymnography of the feast, the Holy Spirit is described as calling "all to one unity," as light which is "lighting the world,"

and as "a fire divided for the distribution of gifts." When we are chrismated, we receive this same Holy Spirit, uniting us to the community of the Church so that we might share this awesome gift as a light to the world. This can only be done by us offering ourselves to others.

Simply put, this means that in our daily life we have to look for opportunities to offer ourselves to

others. These opportunities are often uncomfortable. They are a denial of our own desires, in a society that doesn't teach us or encourage us to deny ourselves what we want. Burger King tells us to "have it your way." Our phones are called iPhones, and our tablets are iPads. We don't even need other people for pictures – we buy sticks to make taking "selfies" easier, so we avoid the need for another person. We're taught to pass the blame, never taking ownership for our own actions. We base our self-confidence on how many "likes" our last status received. We watch TV shows that are supposedly "reality TV," and mirror that in real life. (For the record, it's all scripted.) The more time we spend thinking and acting like this, the more we believe our own press releases, and think we're entitled to have everything we want, to have it all our way, and all on our terms. This doesn't work out too well if we're trying to offer ourselves to others.

To begin breaking this down, let's look at the following pairings of words: compassion vs. consideration, faithfulness vs. loyalty, and "truth" vs. truth.



Two of these categories use two words that we see as synonyms and one uses the same word twice. That is intentional. There is a difference between them that we often fail to see. It's important that we understand those differences to properly begin breaking down the mindset we are constantly encouraged to adopt.

As people striving to offer ourselves, we are called to be compassionate, while the world teaches us to be considerate. Consideration, as the world teaches it, means that we are only concerned with the needs of others in so far as their needs don't interfere with what we want. Conversely, we are told, "Do whatever makes you happy," as long as that jives with what makes others happy as well.

hear in Psalm 146: "Put not your faith in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation." When we are blindly loyal, even as our friends or family make decisions that might be detrimental to their lives, we are not putting our trust in God.

How do we know what is the right thing to do? This brings us to our final category: "truth" vs. truth. The world teaches us that truth is subjective. I am the one who determines what is truth. We hear quotes from celebrities like "I know my truth," and "the only truth I know is my own." But is that right? When we make these statements, we become the standard-bearers of truth – putting ourselves in primacy over the Gospel. We travel down a slippery slope. What stops us from teaching that

## **"...compassion vs. consideration, faithfulness vs. loyalty, and "truth" vs. truth."**

This leads to a polite and considerate society, right? Look around. Are people polite? Do people seem considerate? Go to your local grocery store parking lot and watch people in the parking lot. Are there two cars fighting over the same space? Quite likely. By contrast, compassion means that we are willing to go the extra mile for people, not simply taking their needs into consideration, but placing them before our own. It can be as simple as yielding the "prime parking spot" to another car in the grocery store parking lot ... even if one got there first.

Next, we are called to be faithful, while the world preaches blind loyalty. We are taught that loyalty means we stand by someone no matter what. It's more important to back up our friend, even when we don't agree with him or her, than it is to stand up for what is the right thing to do. Being a disciple means that one acts with faithfulness to God, rather than blind loyalty. Faithfulness means that we follow God, standing up for what is right, even when that might be difficult. For example, if a friend is making decisions that are doing damage to his or her life or the life of the family, loyalty would dictate that we "support them through it," which often just means turning a blind eye and never addressing it. Faithfulness would mean telling our friend what he or she needs to hear, always with love and compassion, even at the risk of our friend's anger. As we

Jesus preferred mint chocolate chip ice cream, instead of holy bread? Does that mean we'll have ice cream after communion? What stops us from criticizing Christ for not being "Christ-like" enough? I mean, when you think about it, what we often hear described as "Christ-like" is not always what we hear in the Gospel. When we ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do," overturning the tables of the money-changers in the Temple doesn't really cross my mind, but it's in Scripture. When we place ourselves in a position of primacy over the Gospel, things can get ridiculous.

In the Entrance Hymn of Pentecost, we sing: "Be Thou exalted, O Lord, in Thy strength; we shall praise and sing of Thy mighty acts." As disciples of Christ, Christ is our reference. In the Gospel of John, He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." We are bound by the truth that is Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose mighty acts lead us along a path of self-offering. This path can only be followed by offering ourselves to others as He offered Himself on the Cross.

Gregory Abdalah, D. Min.

# HEALING, HEALTH, AND HOLINESS

Bishop ANTHONY (Michaels)

SOMETIMES GOD HEALS BY A MIRACLE. MOST OF THE TIME HE HEALS THROUGH THE EXPERTISE OF MEDICAL DOCTORS. IN THIS WAY, HE GRANTS TO HUMAN BEINGS THE PRIVILEGE OF USING REASON TO COOPERATE IN HIS WORK OF HEALING. AT TIMES, WE ARE NOT HEALED IN THIS LIFE. WE HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL WE PASS INTO ETERNAL LIFE TO BE COMPLETELY HEALED. BUT THE POINT IS, GOD HEALS ALL OF THE TIME. BECAUSE CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS AND ROSE AGAIN ON THE THIRD DAY, ILLNESS AND DEATH BECOME A PASSAGEWAY FOR ETERNAL LIFE. WE GO FROM LIFE TO LIFE.

**W**e read in Psalm 41: “Blessed is he who considers the poor! The Lord delivers him in the day of trouble; the Lord protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land . . . The Lord sustains him on his sickbed; in his illnesses thou healest all his infirmities.” Here we see that God heals those who consider other people, especially those in need. Jesus said, “The poor you have always with you” (Matthew 26:11). Then in Psalm 112, we read: “Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments! . . . His righteousness endures forever . . . The Lord is gracious, merciful, and righteous. It is well with the man who deals generously and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice . . . He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.” So, we see that if we’re outgoing, and we’re giving to others, and we’re not self-absorbed, thinking about ourselves, then healing comes to our souls even without our thinking of it. God is generous and giving. If we are generous and giving, we will be a healing to others. We could say healing is from God; healing is what I receive; and healing is what I give.

We may not make tremendous spiritual prog-

ress in our lives, all the time. If we have a charitable heart, however, believing that all things are given to us so that we can share them; if we bear the burden of others and endure the weight of their demands on us; and if we love others as St. Paul instructs us in Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians, then our health has a purpose. I’m not just healthy for me; I’m healthy for everyone. So, I could put it this way: I’m healthy not for *me*, I’m healthy for *we*. The sweetness of giving to others takes away the soreness and the sourness of our own sickness.

It’s interesting that the word *hospitable* comes from *hospital*, which I believe is an old French word. *Hospitable* means “the welcoming of guests”! In this sense, it’s the welcoming of those who are in most need of care, the sick. Jesus said in Matthew 25, “I was sick and you visited me” (v. 36). The first thing we can say about sickness is that hospitality is a part of our health. The purpose of our health is to do God’s will. Being healthy and serving Christ is a way for me to show that Jesus Christ is alive today and is working in the world through my presence. If my relationship with other people is blessed, then I will be patient, humble, and thankful. These three great qualities will be healing to other people.

The best medicine for others is the sweetness of our compassion for them. It used to be that when a

medicine was particularly difficult to take, we added a sweetener to it, especially for little ones and children. They would not know that they were taking the medicine, because they'd only be tasting the sweetness. We are healthy in order to love God and praise God. Therefore, healing is ongoing. We are always being healed. We are taking the cure. We are not completely cured, but we are getting better all the time.

In the world, healing is understood scientifically as an effect of medicine on the body. In the Church, however, healing is more than a return to physical health. It is an experience of wholeness and wholeness. This, of course, includes physical healing, but, it is much more than that. "Getting better" is becoming holy. It is not only our bodies that are healed, but our thoughts and feelings.

Now, for the other, and more theological, part: God did not create sickness. "God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living" (Wisdom 1:13). Wisdom also says, "But through the devil's envy death entered the world" (2:24). Sickness leads to death. It is not natural to be sick or to die. That's not the way God wanted things to be. "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail until the revealing of the children of God" (Romans 8:22). The whole world is sick because of sin; the world needs to be healed. Therefore, Christ comes to remedy this sickness. Actually, Christ is on a "search and rescue" mission: he had to search for Adam, who was lost. Christ found him in Hades.

This is so beautifully revealed at the services of Holy Thursday, Holy Friday and Holy Saturday. Drowning in sin and sickness, we found that Christ was our lifeguard. He jumped into the rushing waves, rescued us, and brought us to shore.

It is the misuse of freedom that brings in sin and sickness; first, as has been said, it is the devil and the demons who rebelled against God. Then it is human persons who use their freedom in the wrong way. Although God is not the cause or source of sickness, and does not desire it, He can use it to bring about good. This is beautifully said in St. Basil's

Liturgy: "Preserve the good in goodness, and make the evil good by thy goodness."

Jesus is our example of turning suffering into salvation. The Cross He bore became the crown we wear! "With His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Similarly, people who are chronically sick for no apparent reason, because they were born into a world infected by the germ of sin, can be witnesses to Christ's victory over sin and death. If they carry their cross of illness in a godly way, with patience and trust and humility, they "complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Colossians 1:24). They hear what Christ said to St. Paul: "My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Sometimes we are not healed physically, so that in our suffering we become a medicine to heal others.

### *The Mechanism of Health*

We were made to be connected to God, to receive the uncreated energy of God. Health is a condition, not an event. When Adam thought mistakenly that he could run his own life, run on his own power, he cut himself off from the divine source of power,

from the Holy Spirit, and he was forced to use up all his energy, everything he had. Any electronic device needs a constant source of power, and battery power always runs down. Adam also needed a constant supply of divine energy to replenish the energy he lost. He became sick, sick and tired, and used up. God wanted to co-operate with Adam to help him, but it didn't work out. Adam tried to run his own life in this way.

This is the sickness of sin that he passed on to all of us. Adam substituted clarity for confusion. Not knowing the right thing to do, he didn't know what to do.

There is a beautiful scripture in 1st Thessalonians 5:23: "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." When St. Paul identifies spirit, soul, and body, he means to say that our soul has two aspects. One element of the soul is what we can call spiritual intuition, or apprehension; a heightened

**"God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living"**

(Wisdom 1:13)



spiritual awareness. The other part of the soul is what we would call our reasoning powers, which we use to apply scientific methods and to give informative explanations. So, by using both the words *spirit* and *soul*, St. Paul is trying to clarify the powers of the soul.

When man rebelled against God, when he rejected God's will and wanted to follow his own desires, he created a disharmony in his spirit, soul, and body. Ideally, with his spirit (or, we could say, his *conscience*, his *intuition of goodness*, his *sense of moral right and wrong*), being open to God, he was able to receive the Holy Spirit's energy. The Holy Spirit is the Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, the One who is "everywhere present and fillest all things." This Holy Spirit unites himself to our conscience. The purity, clarity, innocence, and beauty of our soul reflects the beauty of the Holy Spirit. This beautiful purity makes us healthy.

When a person's conscience is pure and when his consciousness, or his reasoning power, is clear, he has a moral purity and intellectual clarity. He then makes good choices because he has a sound mind. He isn't driven to extremes. He has self-restraint. He's not a slave to what he wants; he's thankful for what he has. He satisfies his needs; he is not dominated by his wants. With the reasoning part of his soul, he is aware of God's will. His body is made ready to act in a goodly way.

This hierarchy, of spirit, soul, and body, has been disturbed. Man, being cut off from God and hesitating in making choices, is attracted to the easiest thing he believes would make him happy. We all know that the most immediate thing is a sensual thing; something man understands and can pick up with his senses. Sensual pleasure becomes the first thing that offers temporary comfort. Instead of his spirit or his conscience directing his consciousness, or his reasonable soul, and then his soul expressing itself through the body, the body becomes a source of satisfaction for the soul. The soul seeks comfort from the things of this world, rather than from the Comforter who is the Holy Spirit. Man seeks fulfillment by filling himself

with things. The whole hierarchy of spirit, soul, and body becomes an anarchy of body, soul, and spirit. The conscience is compromised by the search for pleasurable things. If man believes he gets comfort from the world, he no longer seeks the Holy Spirit who is the Comforter.

This state of confusion is what the Orthodox Church generally calls the state of sin. We inherit a human nature which is inverted, upside down and misdirected. Many of the holy fathers have escribed this condition in detail. God ought to be primary for me, and all things secondary, as Jesus said: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33). Instead, we seek things first and then God second. We have a difficult time being attracted to spiritual things. This is what it means to be sick, to be in ill health. People try to find the perfect kingdom of God in an imperfect world. We cannot get from the Earth, what only Heaven can give.

Under these conditions, people have a difficult time when they go to church. Having become unfamiliar with spiritual things, they find it very difficult to adapt to God's heavenly presence.

The spiritual life, directed by the Holy Spirit, is in, some sense, a strengthening exercise. By keeping a spiritual discipline, we recover our health.

How do we reorder our lives? This is what the spiritual life answers. It helps us put first things first. It directs us to put God first and then to order all the other areas of our lives in the light of God's commandments.

How do we describe modern thinking? Reality is understood to be that which can be weighed, measured, predicted, controlled, anticipated, verified, and experimented upon. This is a purely secular world view, a completely materialistic view of life, a biological narrowing of what human nature is. We believe we came about either as a result of an accident, or of a coincidence of natural forces that are blindly, and I would say brutally, colliding in meaningless motion. There is no specific plan for life. Life is temporary. It is up to me to find my own fulfillment and happiness while I can.

People try to find the perfect kingdom of God in an imperfect world. We cannot get from the Earth, what only Heaven can give.

This way of thinking, obviously, is very different from the Church's view of human nature. For us, health has to do with Jesus Christ. At His Incarnation, human nature is healed. At His Crucifixion, human nature is victorious. At His Resurrection, human nature is renewed. And we walk in the newness of life, as St. Paul said in his Letter to the Romans. My happiness is in my obedience to Christ and my thankfulness to God for reordering my human nature, for giving me health through the services and sacraments of the Church. I can begin to become healthy. The "course correction" I receive by following a spiritual direction gives me a healthy condition.

Without a real spiritual direction, people experience a certain restlessness and uncertainty about their lives. In their quiet moments, when distractions are out of the way, they sense that something isn't right. Why is that? It is because the spiritual dimension has been lost. A person's conscience is separated from consciousness. As a result, it is difficult to make moral choices.

We have to know *why* we're here. We want to know *what* we should be doing with our lives. The *who* I am has to come before the *what* I do. Some people are confused between the *who* and the *what*.

Getting better in the spiritual life is harmonizing who I am with what I do. St. Isaac of Syria explained the process of getting better. He said that we have to begin by being penitent, which leads to being purified. Purification leads to perfectibility. Perfectibility, in this sense, means being holy and being healthy. When we repent, we turn our mind and our heart away from a focus on sensual things and direct them towards spiritual things. Then, we want to pray. Fasting strengthens prayer. Prayer becomes a conversation with God. This is a process, I'm saying it in a very simplified way, but this is the ongoing work of repentance.

This is where real happiness comes from. Conversing with God in prayer and being with God, I am thankful to God. Thankfulness is my therapy. My therapy is my return to healthfulness.

Being spiritually healthy makes me happy. This is what the Church does for us through the sacraments and through the training that we get in prayer and fasting. This self-discipline shows us that we are children of God and disciples of Christ.

In the world today, discipline and restraint are not always seen to be good. Freedom to do whatever you want in an unconstrained way seems more attractive. This, however, is a misdirection of affection, a misfire of desire.

The Church can be described as a hospital, as a place of hospitality, of caring for curing. If a person goes in for an operation, even after it is successful, they may have to go through rehabilitation. They may have to walk on treadmills, pedal exercise bikes, and do strength training. After rehab, when they go home, there is a protocol that they must follow: they have to change their diet, and eat what's good for them and not always what pleases them. The surgeon's work is done. The speech therapist, the occupational therapist, or the physical therapist are assigned to help, but the person in recovery has to do the work.

The Church can be described as a hospital, as a place of hospitality, of caring for curing.

Our spiritual health is in the hands of the Good Physician who is Jesus Christ. Our medications can be given to us in the Sacraments. Our therapists are our saints and pastors. Our rehabilitation is dependent on the inspiration they give us.

Healing is a process, not merely an event. Going from illness to health is not something that happens immediately; I do not go from being frail to being robust. Be obedient to the spiritual protocols. Remember: before perfection comes penitence and purification. These protocols of health are the commandments of Christ in the New Testament. We become stronger and stronger. We experience spiritual power. We can make the changes that are necessary. We calm the emotional storms in our lives and bring inner tranquility to our lives. No matter what you're going through, God will get you through. God bless you, and may God keep you, because God loves you.

Bishop ANTHONY (Michaels)



# The St. Stephen's Course Antiochian House of Studies

Michael Pagani



**M**y journey through the St. Stephen's course offered by the Antiochian House of Studies program began with my desire to learn more about the faith to which I had converted nine years ago.

From a "convert" perspective, Orthodoxy, specifically Antiochian Orthodoxy, was a mystery, like a closely guarded secret for most of my Christian life. By attending Liturgy, participating in the liturgical life of the Church, listening to homilies and attending Catechesis, I found a fundamental truth that was lacking in both the Catholic and Protestant churches I had attended prior to becoming Orthodox. If not for the faith and example of Christian living exhibited by my "cradle Orthodox" wife, I do not know if I would have found the "the true faith, worshipping the undivided

Trinity." It soon became clear, however, that what my heart knew as the true apostolic succession to Christ Himself, my mind was yearning to understand. After a lifetime of using apologetics for arguments with friends and foes in the Protestant and Catholic worlds, I was ready to learn what is behind the theology and practices of the one, true Church.

Mine was a transitional class between the original St. Stephen's Diploma Program in Orthodox Theology, and the recently implemented program by the new administration of the Antiochian House of Studies (AHOS). The original format was conceived by Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba) and implemented by V. Rev. Joseph J. Allen. It was established in 1980 by a group of visionaries who created a world-class curriculum in theological study. These extraordinary Antiochian Orthodox men of God, known for both their academic acumen and pastoral





ministry, designed a three-year program of theological study and spiritual formation, with the option of continuing on to a master's program. A unique feature of this program was that the degree was awarded by both the Antiochian House of Studies and the University of Balamand. The latter was founded by Patriarch Ignatius IV, and is presently under the direction of His Beatitude JOHN X. Rather than being influenced by Western, secular, scholastic philosophy and standards, this program emerged from the heart of Antiochian Orthodoxy, whose headquarters are in Syria and Lebanon.

In addition to a rigorous course of study that meets the requirements of the University, a Directed Praxis program applies the course work in a practical manner to a parish or community ministry. This facilitates a two-pronged approach to our spiritual formation. The first is the formation of the mind through study, and the second is the formation of the body through the action of service within the Church. Each semester or unit was designed to build on a solid theological foundation, while deepening the student's faith and spiritual life. The program is taken at home, rather than at a seminary. Each unit requires the student to assemble the required reading material, spend time in prayer and quiet reflection, and then study the equivalent of nine college-credit hours over a three-month period. A course ends with the submission of a final paper intended to demonstrate mastery of the course's learning objectives. The beauty of this discipline is that it provides laity with the opportunity for an experience of spiritual study and practice that is usually reserved for monastics or seminary students, who are single and can retreat for a period of time from daily life. This is a precious gift for Orthodox men and women who are in the world with families, jobs, and mortgages, and would not otherwise have this opportunity.

Whether a convert or cradle Orthodox, learning our history and grand traditions in depth reveals the wisdom of worship practiced during the glory of the Byzantine Empire. To learn about the destruction and persecution of the Church from Egypt to Moscow, which has beset her over two millennia, can bring sorrow to the soul. Within this story of sadness, however, we see the inspirational examples saints and martyrs who responded with devotion and faith. This made me pause to reflect on the depth of our witness to God through the practice of

Orthodoxy. This rich treasure of faith and wisdom could be found not only in our history, but also in our theology and canonical law. We find ourselves moving ever nearer to God while deepening our understanding of the truth, as it is revealed to us in this scholarly and ecclesial endeavor. I would highly recommend this program to those who wish to dive more deeply into the Orthodox faith.

To say that this "old-school" system of distant learning contained challenges for the students, their families, and the instructor would be an understatement. Or that a program administration rooted in the old-world style of education did not conflict with a modern world of electronic communication and financial transactions would also be untrue. The grace of *economia* was required of both students and administrators. For the students, grace was required because of the nature of a life that is fully engaged in the world. To set aside the required six to ten hours of reading a week, along with note-taking and research, was not easy. On the other hand, the time required by instructors and administrators to teach students and to be fully engaged in their pastoral ministries cannot be easy.

Keeping track of hard-copy papers and paper checks on paper ledgers proved to be an arduous and slow process. This was not a primary school education, but an advanced learning program, which requires proficiency in communication. The old-school, scholarly standards of grammar, composition, and notation, required by the study of theology, are generally not emphasized in schools today. Neither are university graduates required to master them, as in the past. In fact, many graduate students cannot read cursive English or Greek. This makes research of original manuscript nearly impossible. I can only imagine that reading volumes of papers at the end of each semester is also difficult and time-consuming on the administrative end. The administration left me, at times, in limbo regarding my course of studies. The old-school style of administration, which tracks everything on paper, including paper checks and return envelopes provided by the students to insure that one could learn one's final grade, left gaps in my record-keeping. Accounting practices more in keeping with contemporary standards could have reduced my anxiety over meeting my obligations during the first two years of the three-year program. Of course, with the help of *economia*, everything eventually was completed in good

order. Another downside is the limited interaction with my professors. I needed to read and complete a significant amount of course work in order to ask an intelligent question. Otherwise, I can imagine their response would be, “Did you read the book?” I also would have enjoyed getting to know fellow classmates and instructors prior to the residency program at the end of summer each year.

The upside of this process of learning offered by the old-school course of study was the day-to-day spiritual formation of each student. I found that, as I was following the liturgical cycle, each hour of prayer became permeated with the subject I was studying at the time. This was mostly an internal process, because the external response of others showed in the eyes of everyone around me, as they would glaze over if I tried to explain the nuance of topics like transubstantiation and consubstantiation. I saw the same response when I spoke about the theology and spiritual life reflected in our liturgical cycle of prayer and worship. To learn and practice as we studied helped me to participate further in my church life, and do so with greater focus and intensity. The degree of contemplation, reflection, practice of humility, and mental clarity grew as I stepped daily from one passage of required reading to the next prayer offered by the Church Fathers’ writings.

What I perceived to be the providence of God appeared after my second residency program at Antiochian Village. I was informed that the St. Stephen’s course was going to be changed, and that a new format and accounting system was being instituted for the entire program. At this point in my studies, and with issues arising from the curriculum and day-to-day operations, I was open to the modernization of the administrative and program format, as the Antiochian House of Studies began the process of accreditation by the Association of Theological School (ATS). After a year of following

the new format, I can say that the program has definitely improved on all levels. The core of the program remains intact, with the original intent still fully realized. Now, however, there are online lectures, deadlines on required reading, and conferences that included my classmates and instructors. My tendency to procrastinate was completely eliminated, and the communication with the instructors improved. The best part about the new format is that all administration issues (payment, records, course requirement and grades) are now efficiently handled through an online portal.

My class, however, was caught up in the “transition,” which changed the required eight-semester program to a seven-semester program, with the option of a bridge program to the master’s program. Instead of a regular, nine-hour credit program for each semester, however, we were faced with a twelve-hour credit load for the last semester. This is not what future classes will face, but the unique challenge for my class was well worth it. The original, old-school qualities still exist in the new format, with the personal qualities of a more interactive faculty and student body added.

In conclusion, this unique educational experience has made me realize how much I did not know about our ancient faith. It has motivated me to learn more about its past, present and future. It has also opened my eyes and heart to seek greater movement toward *theoria* through the sacraments, asceticism and hesychastic life. The good news is that this program is available to all Antiochian Orthodox Christian. It is not restricted only to those who seek ordination, but for the laity to serve the Church more fully. For more information about the program, please contact the Antiochian House of Studies (A.H.O.S) at [www.tahos.org](http://www.tahos.org).

Michael Pagani



# THE HYMNOGRAPHY OF ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS

Gregory Abdalah, D.Min.



Icon Of St. John of Damascus done by the hand of Niko Chocheli

It is hard to believe that the canon as we know it was not developed and used in Church services until the early Ninth Century. The canon (*katavasia*) which is sung at each and every Orthros service – whether daily Orthros, Festal Orthros or Sunday/Resurrectional

Orthros – is a central element of that service for two reasons. First, it falls in the “middle” of the service, generally speaking. Second, it reflects upon the major theme of that day over a series of odes (eight in total) with each of these odes looking at that theme through the lens of biblical stories – or canticles – which we read interspersed before the singing of the *irmos* of each ode.<sup>1</sup> In modern practice, we typically only sing the *irmos* of each ode, missing out on the hymnography of the remaining *troparia* which speak directly to the present feast.

Vital to the development and spread of the canon was St. John of Damascus. While the canon is generally understood to have been “invented” by St. Andrew of Crete – composer of the Great Canon – “it was in [John] Damascene that it found its most eloquent and powerful expression.”<sup>2</sup> John is credited with writing a number of canons, including

the daily canons found in the *Octoechos*, and canons for the feasts of Transfiguration, Christmas, Epiphany, Pentecost, Ascension, Annunciation, Thomas Sunday, Dormition, and the Great Paschal Canon which is considered his greatest work.<sup>3</sup> There are two canons given for the great feasts of Christmas and Epiphany.

The first canon is credited to St. Cosmas the Melodist,<sup>4</sup> whom it is believed entered into the monastic life with St. John,<sup>5</sup> while the second canon is attributed to St. John. One would expect that for the greatest feast, Pascha, there would also be two canons, however this is not the case. After hearing St. John’s canon for Pascha, St. Cosmas said, “You, brother John . . . have included everything, have left out nothing . . . Let your canon have the first place . . . and be chanted in all the churches of Christ, and let mine remain in a dark corner.”<sup>6</sup> His canons are written in a poetic manner, either iambic verse or free rhythmic verse with the first letter of each *troparion* coming together to form an acrostic.

Understood to be the first systematic theologian, St. John wrote the same theology in his Hymnography – and not only in his canons – that is found in his writings and homilies. Much of the *Octoechos*



– containing hymns for each day of the week in each mode – is also attributed to St. John,<sup>7</sup> in addition to various hymns sung throughout Great Lent and Holy Week<sup>8</sup> and, of course, his *idiomela* (model hymns) sung at the funeral service. Fr. Ephrem Lash states, “If you want to learn Orthodox theology, you will find it in the *Paraklitiki*, the *Triodion* and the *Pentecostarion*.”<sup>9</sup>

Much like his writings, St. John’s Hymnography was not innovative, as he admits to saying “nothing of [his] own . . .” It is evident that within his canons for Pascha and Pentecost, the language and thoughts that he has so eloquently woven together are often influenced by other theologians, specifically the *Homilies* of St. Gregory the Theologian and the biblical *Commentaries* of St. John Chrysostom. “In his poetry one sees the philosopher and theologian who has disciplined himself to brevity and preciseness. Although abounding in doctrinal formulations, such as the dogma of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and so on, his poetry is always eloquent and full of warmth and power.”<sup>10</sup> Let us now turn to what he actually said through his Hymnography, looking specifically at the canon of Pentecost.<sup>11</sup>

#### THE CANON OF PENTECOST

Anyone looking at the canons composed by St. John would be inattentive if they failed to notice first the acrostic formed by them. The acrostic formed by this canon is described as “particularly elaborate,” bringing together the first letter from each line of each *troparion*, forming the following statement on the feast of Pentecost:

Only-begotten of God, from the heart of the  
 Father you sent to  
 Those upon earth once again another Advocate,  
 Spirit divine,  
 Bringing, in tongues made of fire, of the pure,  
 immaterial Godhead,  
 Sign of your nature and grace for those who are  
 minstrels of praise.

This acrostic calls to mind not only key elements from the feast of Pentecost – for example “tongues of fire” – but also affirms St. John’s Christology in that he refers to Christ as the “Only-begotten of God,” and also his Trinitarian theology in the way he speaks of the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, borrowing the term *advocate* from the Gospel of John (15:26).<sup>12</sup>

#### Ode 1. Irmos.

The slow of tongue, covered in divine darkness,  
 Proclaimed the law written by God;  
 For shaking the dust from his mind’s eye,  
 He sees the One Who Is, and is initiated  
 Into knowledge of the Spirit, praising with songs  
 inspired.

#### Troparia

The revered and august mouth spoke,  
 ‘For you my friends there will be no parting.  
 For I, once seated with him on my Father’s lofty  
 throne,  
 Will pour out the copious grace of the Spirit  
 To shine on those who yearn.’  
 The firm Definition, most precise Word,  
 Brings calm perfection to the heart;  
 For, his work accomplished, Christ gladdened his  
 friends,

With a mighty wind and tongues of fire,  
 Apportioning the Spirit, as he had promised.

In this Ode, St. John begins by speaking of being “covered in divine darkness.” This darkness is what traps us all. It is the darkness from which we must emerge in order to know God. By “shaking the dust from [our] mind’s eye,” we begin the process of coming out of this darkness and being “initiated into knowledge of the Spirit.” It is only after being initiated into this knowledge, however, that we are able to come out of the darkness. St. John thus gives us the model of the way by which we are able to be saved.

When the *irmos* is partnered with the two following *troparia*, we see that the entirety of the First Ode is dealing primarily with Christ, bringing the Christology of St. John to the forefront. By speaking of Christ’s friends, St. John affirms the humanity of Christ, friendship being a very human phenomenon. At the same time, St. John has Christ speaking of sitting on His “Father’s lofty throne,” affirming the divine nature of Christ. These notions come directly out of St. John’s tome *On Heresies*, specifically his sections dealing with *The Manichaeans* and *The Monothelites*.

We also glean an affirmation of St. John’s Trinitarian theology by having Christ say, “For I [Christ], once seated with him [God the Father] on my Father’s lofty throne, will pour out the copious grace of the Spirit.” Thus, from the outset of this Canon, St. John has affirmed both his Christology and Trinitarian theology.

*Ode 3. Irmos.*

Only the prayer of Anna, the prophetess  
Of old, who brought a broken spirit  
To the Mighty One and God of knowledge,  
Broke the fetters of a childless womb  
And the harsh insult of one with many children.

*Troparia*

Inapprehensible is the Godhead;  
For it revealed the unlettered to be orators,  
Bridling the mouths of sophists in abundance with  
a word,  
And raising from deep night  
Unnumbered peoples by the Spirit's lightning flash.  
From the unbegotten Light proceeded  
The imperishable Splendour, illuminating with  
almighty operation,  
Whose fiery sound in Sion now reveals  
To the nations the consubstantial beacon  
Of the Father's authority through the Son.

In the first *troparion* we see something interesting. St. John writes that the grace of the Spirit "revealed the unlettered to be orators, bridling the mouths of sophists in abundance with a word, and raising from deep night unnumbered peoples." The inclusion of these two lines is important, demonstrating the power of the Holy Spirit. "The unlettered" and "unnumbered peoples" are not educated, unlike the sophists, and would not normally be considered to be orators. With the Holy Spirit, the mouths of the sophists are described as "bridled" like a horse's mouth, while those who are uneducated are seen to be orators. Thus the Holy Spirit turns things upside down, and strengthens ordinary people to do extraordinary things. He calls us to be more than we are, so that we are able to reveal "to the nations the consubstantial beacon" that is Jesus Christ.

Further, we again see the Trinitarian theology of St. John, as he reminds us that Christ speaks with the authority of the Father and, with that authority, continually sends us the grace of the Holy Spirit. The incomprehensibility of the Trinity is also mentioned, describing for us the mystery of the Trinity. Fr. Ephrem Lash attributed this idea to the writings of St. Dionysius,<sup>13</sup> showing again for us that St. John is disseminating and systematizing the writings of the Fathers who came before him.

*Ode 4. Irmos.*

Monarch of monarchs, Alone from the Alone,  
Word issuing from the Father who has no cause,  
As Benefactor you have unerringly sent out  
To the Apostles your Spirit, equal in strength,  
As they sing, 'Glory to your might, O Lord!'

*Troparia*

Having by a word mixed the divine bath of rebirth  
With a compounded nature,  
You rain down upon me a stream from your  
immaculate,  
Pierced side, O Word of God,  
Sealing me with the fervour of the Spirit.  
All things bend the knee to the Advocate,  
To the Offspring of the Father, to the  
consubstantial Father;  
For they know unerringly in three Persons  
One, unapproachable, timeless Essence;  
For the grace of the Spirit has caused light to shine.  
As many as are worshippers of the Essence with  
Triple Light,  
All be consecrated to the Godhead.  
For, as our Benefactor, Christ perfects  
supernaturally  
And lights a fiery torch for our salvation,  
Furnishing all the grace of the Spirit.

We hear throughout the *irmos* St. John's reiteration of his Christology – affirming the timeless begetting of the Son. He speaks of Christ as "Monarch of Monarchs" and "Alone from the Alone" showing His divinity, but later speaks about the pierced side and the "compounded nature" of Christ – both human and divine.

Throughout the *irmos*, we continue to see St. John's Trinitarian theology, beginning with the *irmos's* mention of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In addition, he frequently mentions the essence of the Godhead, describing it as "Triple Light." The most concise delineation of this theology comes in the first two lines of the second *troparion*: "All things bend the knee to the Advocate, to the Offspring of the Father, to the consubstantial Father." He ends this *troparion* by again affirming that it is through the Holy Spirit that we are able to come to this knowledge.

*Ode 5. Irmos.*

O light-formed children of the Church,  
Receive the Spirit's fire-breathing dew,

A redeeming purification of offences;  
For now a law has gone out from Sion,  
The torch-tongue-formed grace of the Spirit.

*Troparia*

As he was well-pleased, of his own authority  
The un-mastered Spirit comes down from the  
Father,

Making the Apostles wise with tongues,  
Might of the Father, one in form, setting the seal  
Upon the life-bearing word, which the Saviour  
spoke.

God the Word, all-sovereign, healed the minds  
Of the Apostles of sin, and made ready  
An immaculate dwelling for himself;  
Now the light of the Spirit dwells in them,  
Equal in strength and consubstantial.

The Fifth Ode recalls our baptism and chris-  
mation, speaking of the “Seal [of] the life-bearing  
word, which the Saviour spoke.” When we are bap-  
tized, we receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit, sealed  
by Holy Chrism, bringing us out of darkness so that  
we might become “light-formed children of the  
Church,” and so that we could spread this through-  
out the world like the Apostles. Furthermore, we are  
healed from sins through the Spirit and made to be-  
come dwellings of God in Three-Lights (to borrow  
terminology from the Fourth Ode). This reminds of  
the life we are all called to live, following the “life-  
bearing word, which the Saviour spoke.”

*Ode 6. Irmos.*

As pardon and salvation for us,  
Christ, our Master, you shone from the Virgin,  
That like the prophet Jonas from the belly  
Of the sea beast, you might snatch from corruption  
The whole fallen race of Adam.

*Troparia*

Almighty, renew a cherished, a right Spirit  
Within us, to hold it eternally,  
Who is ever united and proceeding from the  
Father,

Purging hateful matter, burning  
Defilements and filth of minds.

For the Apostles who awaited your coming  
In Sion you establish with fiery wind  
A longed for dignity, O Spirit,  
Knowledge of the Word begotten of the Father,  
Swiftly exposing the harsh chatter of the nations’  
cajoleries.

As all sixth odes do, we are reminded of the sav-  
ing of Jonah from the whale. Unlike many canons,  
however, in this canon St. John has not used this  
solely as a prefiguring of Christ’s Resurrection, but  
rather of our redemption through the Resurrection  
of the Incarnate Word. The idea that we need to be  
redeemed from sin is further explored in the follow-  
ing *troparia*, where we hear that we can be purged  
of our “hateful matter, burning defilements and filth  
of minds” to make room for the Holy Spirit and “a  
longed for dignity.” It is through our own receiving  
the Holy Spirit that we are strengthened to live out  
that calling expressed in the Fifth Ode.

*Ode 7.*

Harmonious melody of instruments decreed  
Reverence to the lifeless idol wrought of gold.

But the Advocate’s life-bearing grace  
Inspires with reverence to cry, ‘Only Trinity,  
Equal in strength, without beginning, blessed are  
you!’

*Troparia*

Fools did not recognise the voice spoken of  
In prophecy, called it drunkenness wrought of wine,  
When the strange sayings of the Apostles were  
heard.

We, the devout, inspired by God, cry out to you,  
‘Renewer of the universe, blessed are you!’

The seer Joel, inspired by God, thundered an oracle  
Of the divine Word, who said,  
‘Those on whom I pour my Spirit  
Will cry out together, “Nature,  
Shining-with-threefold-splendour, blessed are  
you!”’

The third hour was blessed with grace,  
To indicate that we should worship  
Three Persons in singleness of authority;  
But now on the one Lord of days,  
Son, Father, Spirit, blessed are you!

There is an interesting play between the *irmos* and  
the first *troparion* in this ode. St. John speaks against  
the idols as being “wrought of gold” and “lifeless,”  
while he comments on the foolishness of thinking  
that the Apostles were in a drunken state “wrought  
with wine” after receiving the Holy Spirit. In both  
cases, the true believers are bound to praise the true  
Godhead. St. John moves from this to further spell  
out his Trinitarian Theology, saying: “We should  
worship Three Persons in singleness of authority ...

1. The Biblical Canticles are as follows: Ode 1 – Exodus 15:1–9; Ode 3 – 1 Samuel 2:1–10; Ode 4 – Habakkuk 3:1–9; Isaiah 26:9–20; Ode 6 – Jonah 2:2–9; Ode 7 – Daniel 3:26–56; Ode 8 – Daniel 3:57–88; Ode 9 – Luke 1:46–55; 68–79.
2. Constantine Cavarinos, “The Sacred Poetry of St. John of Damascus,” in Nomi-kos Vaporis, ed., *Three Byzantine Sacred Poets: Studies of St. Romanos elodos, St. John of Damascus, Saint Symeon the New Theologian* (Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1979), p. 38.
3. *Ibid.*
4. It is widely accepted that St. John’s father adopted St. Cosmas and they were raised as brothers (Cavarinos, p. 35).
5. Andrew Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 256.
6. Cavarinos, p. 45.
7. That said, there is evidence which would suggest that his canons for each day and in all eight modes were his contribution to the *Octoechos* already existing at that time, and that he brought it all together.
8. Louth, pp. 252–253; Cavarinos, pp. 37–39.
9. Ephrem Lash, “Songs of the Fathers,” May 9, 2007 (<https://web.archive.org/>



web/20160305063629/  
http://anastasis.org.uk/)

10. Cavarnos, p. 40.

11. Ephrem Lash, "Canon of Pentecost." April 18, 2007 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160305063629/http://anastasis.org.uk/>). We use the translation of Fr. Ephrem Lash, as it is the most complete in English and maintains the essence of the poetry of St. John.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. It is the custom in many Arabic-speaking churches that this hymn is sung as the bride walks down the aisle at her wedding, the exception being the period between Pascha and Ascension.

15. Louth, p. 252.

Son, Father, Spirit, blessed are you!" Being bound by this praise, we are also bound to follow the Word, spoken with authority, strengthened by the Spirit.

#### Ode 8.

The triple radiant type of Godhead's source  
Looses the bonds and turns the flame to dew;  
Youths give praise; while all created nature  
Blesses the only Saviour and Creator  
Of all as Benefactor.

#### Troparia

Coming to rest in appearance like-fiery-tongues,  
The Spirit, caused remembrance of the mortal-  
saving words

Which Christ, heard-as-from-the-Father, spoke  
To the Apostles. Creation, once estranged,  
Now reconciled, sings of you as blessed.

As Saviour, coming of his own authority,  
Light shining of itself and provider of light,  
You sent to the Apostles, bringing himself  
As a precious wind. While to your servants  
You distribute the Spirit so earnestly prayed for.

The spirit-filled mouth of Prophets sang  
Of your sojourning, high Lord, in bodily form.  
And your Spirit proceeding from the Father's  
bosom,  
Uncreated-cofashioning-cothroned,  
You send to believers for the worship of the  
incarnation.

In the *irmos* of this Eighth Ode we see again St. John's Trinitarian theology, but this time in a slightly different way. Rather than again stating that there is a Trinity, St. John speaks of the power of the Trinity, and that all of creation is bound to it, and bound to worship it. He continues these ideas throughout this ode in each *troparion*, saying it in a different way, but each time speaking of the praising of the Godhead by the created realm. The further explication of the Christology of St. John reminds us also that Christ teaches with the authority of the Father. Receiving the Holy Spirit, we are reminded of the path we are called to follow: that of the Incarnate Word.

#### Ode 9.<sup>14</sup>

Hail, Queen, glory of virgins and mothers;  
For every mouth fluent and eloquent  
With oratory has not the strength to sing you  
worthily;  
But every mind is dizzy when it seeks to  
understand

Your giving birth; therefore with one accord we  
glorify you.

#### Troparia

It is right to sing of the Maiden who produced life;  
For she alone concealed in the vortex of her womb  
The Word, who heals the ailing nature of mortals.

Now seated on the couch at the right hand  
Of the Father, he has sent the grace of the Spirit.

On as many as the grace which flows from God  
has breathed,

Resplendent, dazzling, transformed

With a strange, most glorious transformation,  
We have come to know the Essence of equal might,  
indivisible,

Wise, of triple radiance; and we give It glory.

In the *irmos* of this Ninth Ode, we see St. John's Mariology clearly explicated for the first time, and with it his Christology. St. John reaffirms the Theotokos as the Mother of God, that through her we are given strength, and the wonder with which we behold her childbearing. In the two *troparia* that follow, the themes previously discussed are reiterated and brought to a close, much like the conclusion of a work of prose.

#### CONCLUSION

Like much of St. John's other work, his Hymnography is informed by the writings of those who came before him, and speaks to the situation in which he lived. This was seen in his work as a theologian in his refutation of heresies and his *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, written in dialogue with Islam. This work is infused throughout his poetic hymnography. As well known as he has become through his theological discourses, he was most widely known through his hymnography. "Everyone in the world touched by Byzantium knows John's great Easter canon, 'The Day of Resurrection' . . . And any singer knows many more pieces attributed to John . . . Such was his fame as a liturgical poet that within a few centuries of his death he was thought of as *the* liturgical poet."<sup>15</sup> The traditions and teachings of the Church have been preserved and continue to be taught through the hymnography of St. John of Damascus, so that we might be brought out of darkness and into Light.

Gregory Abdalah, D.Min.



Chris Humphrey, Ph.D.

New York State had just legalized abortion right up to birth – and celebrated it! The Governor of Virginia had said publicly that children who were born with disabilities could be left to die, if their parents wished. Abortion was being promoted as “healthcare” – that is a lie. We seemed to be seeing a shameless return to pagan ethics among the elite. In contrast, the early Church rejected abortion and infanticide, and rescued children left exposed by their parents to die. In Pittsburgh, many of us who were Orthodox knew we had to do *something*. So we gathered together from several jurisdictions to plan for a maternity home for women who face unexpected pregnancies.. “Zoe for Life! – Pittsburgh,” an affiliate of the original Zoe for Life! in Cleveland, was drawn together by two local priests, Fr. Jason DelVitto of St. George, Bridgeville (Antiochian) and Fr. Michael Zak of St. Nicholas, Homestead (American Carpatho-Russian Archdiocese). We traveled to Cleveland to see what they had done, and the Zoe team visited Pittsburgh. We brainstormed what we could do in response to the

deepening acceptance of abortion and infanticide in America.

When I was young, and a little more impulsive and hard-headed, I would probably have rushed ahead and encouraged others to re-invent the wheel: create an Orthodox pregnancy medical center! (Zoe for Life! in Cleveland has been around for years, and is exactly that: with an ultrasound machine, they can show women their unborn children, and help them choose life. They got into the business of saving lives early, so to speak.) I’m an old man now, however, and I’ve learned a thing or two. We want to meet *unmet* needs. We want to *know the people we hope to serve*, and have as few illusions about them as possible. There’s no question that it *feels good to do good*, but we want not just to enjoy our activity, but to see *good results*. The goal of helping people is *not the helping itself*, but seeing people *thrive*, seeing them get to the point that they can take care of themselves. Even better, it is having them join us in “the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church,” worshipping the God who came to save us all.

So we sought advice as well from a number of local evangelical Protestant helping ministries and a state-funded maternity home, Genesis House. We knew that local pregnancy medical centers, Choices Pregnancy Services, Women's Choice Network, and the Women's Clinic, were doing a great job. (The ra-



tios of abortions to live births for Allegheny County residents have fallen 26% from 2010 to 2018, partly because of advertising of these centers by Vision for Life – Pittsburgh, of which I am the Executive Director.) We saw no need to set up a competing ministry. We knew that zealous local Roman Catholics had started “Mary’s Place,” a maternity home for single women. We learned that Light of Life Ministry, an evangelical Protestant group, had an apartment building which housed single, pregnant women, and also subsidized housing for other women in apartments around the city; the women all attend a four-day-a-week, Light of Life program to prepare them for life with their babies after birth. What could *we* do that would really help?

To know whom we might serve, the first thing we could do was look at the statistics on abortion in Pennsylvania. While the numbers are sobering, the trends are encouraging. So there were 30,364 abortions in Pennsylvania in 2018, though the numbers have been going down for years. (This is largely because of pregnancy help, not increased contracep-

tion, or state laws that restrict abortion.) In 2018, about 60 percent of women who had abortions had one or more children already. About 43 percent were black women. Just under half of abortion patients had one or more abortions before. For the first time ever, women 25 to 29 years old outnumbered the women 20 to 24 as abortion patients. So the typical abortion patient is older and has at least one child, and may have already had one abortion or more.

Abortion is slowly dying in America. The trends are clear. Fewer women are getting them. The ratio of abortions to live births in 2017 across the country was lower than that in the early 1970s. Not only is the average age of Pennsylvania women who are having abortions going up, but the number of first-time abortions is declining *faster* than that of “repeat” abortions.

The stigma of unmarried pregnancy and motherhood has largely disappeared (except among ethnic communities, as the founders of Zoe for Life! were told). Our friends in maternity care point out that women who are pregnant and need housing oftentimes have burned their bridges with their families and others; otherwise they would not turn elsewhere for housing. Partners may have disappeared. Oftentimes these women come from rough backgrounds, and need structure, and clear guidance. They may be refugees from the opioid epidemic, and need to be drug-tested regularly. This is just reality.

In our conversations, we found that there was a real need in Pittsburgh for a maternity home that would take in women with one child or more already. (In a phone call with the Executive Director of Genesis House, she said that she could place two women who have children with us right then; I told her to call us back in a year – which may be optimistic.) This need was confirmed by messages on the National Maternity Housing Coalition’s Facebook page, where centers were asking others, even in distant states, if they could take women with other children.

The need for maternity housing for women with other children is another aspect of the problem of homelessness. Most women do not want abortions. They face difficult domestic and financial situations. The boyfriend (or even her husband) may say, “It’s me or the baby.” Some women convince themselves that having an abortion is the “loving thing to do” because they have older children. When her own



parents have turned a cold shoulder, and she and the boyfriend have called it quits, it can seem like she has no choice. Our friends in the pregnancy medical centers do what they can to show her that she is carrying another person – her baby – made in the image of God, but it is still hard without being able to offer practical help.

Hence, “Zoe Home” in Pittsburgh! Please pray with us for an Orthodox maternity home for women with one or more children. We are in the process of incorporating and securing 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, creating a website, and putting together a communications plan so that Orthodox Christians within a few hundred miles will know about us, and can help us. Fr. Michael Zak has agreed to be the chaplain. We are looking at several neighborhoods for a home large enough to accommodate three or four women with children, and a house mother. We also would like to have space for a small chapel. We are told that the home has to be located on a bus line. We are not sure yet how we will handle childcare. Perhaps if the mothers are working or in school, we will work out an arrangement with a local daycare facility. There is much that is unknown, and much to be done. Please pray that God will guide us, open doors, and supply the needs.

If you know a woman who is considering abortion, tell her about your local pregnancy help center. (If you don’t know of any, you can find a list, including maternity housing, by location at Heartbeat International’s site: [www.heartbeat-services.org/world-wide-directory](http://www.heartbeat-services.org/world-wide-directory).) They will give her a pregnancy test to confirm pregnancy, and oftentimes STD testing and treatment, and accurate information on pregnancy and abortion, as well as options counseling, so she knows that she *has* a choice. If the center is *medical*, and more than seven in ten are, they will give her an ultrasound to establish viability and gestational age. (You may have seen attempts to defame these centers. These false claims are answered at [pregnancycentertruth.com](http://pregnancycentertruth.com).)

We Orthodox have beautiful churches, and invest time, energy and money in surrounding ourselves with icons of saints, and of Christ, the very image of God, whom we can revere at will. This is as it should be. At the same time, we live in the Age of Abortion: more human beings – the image of God – have been destroyed before birth than after, in all of human history, and most of that killing has been done in the last fifty years. In America,

somewhere between 900,000 and 1,000,000 abortions are performed each year. We cannot ignore this destruction, or say to ourselves, “Oh, the problem is too big for me even to think about it.” Your life matters; every life matters. If we don’t want to live in two worlds, if we don’t want our church life to be simply a retreat from reality, we must do *something*. We can’t let preoccupation with career and status (and even the social status of our community) distract us from our calling. We cannot forget Him who became “incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary” *for the salvation of the world*.

It is encouraging that so many Orthodox in Pittsburgh and elsewhere have risen to the challenge. May God move us all to do what we can, wherever we are, to save mothers and babies from abortion. If you can help us in Pittsburgh, please do so. You can write Linda Schnupp, c/o St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, 3230 Washington Pike, Bridgeville, PA 15017. If you have questions, e-mail her at [lschnupp@yahoo.com](mailto:lschnupp@yahoo.com). For more information, or for ideas about what you might do in your community, write me at [christopherhumphrey15@gmail.com](mailto:christopherhumphrey15@gmail.com), or call me at 412-418-6349.

Chris Humphrey, Ph.D.  
Co-Chair, Zoe for Life! – Pittsburgh  
Executive Director, Vision for Life

## CANCELLATIONS

After much prayer and deliberation, we have made some heart-rending decisions that we believe are in the best interests of our flock, despite the pain we have in relaying them. Effective immediately, we are cancelling all Parish Life Conferences, and our summer camping and retreat programs, including family camps. We are cancelling the Clergy Symposium and the meeting of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees. The Bible Bowl, Creative Arts and Oratorical Festival themes will be carried to next summer, in order to honor the work already put in by the participants.

# Food for Hungry People Program

# 2018-2019 Donations

FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE DONATION 2018 - 2019				
AND WORLD FOOD DAY - POUNDS OF FOOD COLLECTED				
	FFHP	2018 WFD	FFHP	2019 WFD
	2018	POUNDS	2019	POUNDS
UPDATED May 1, 2020				
OTTAWA, EASTERN CANADA				
AND UPSTATE NEW YORK				
NOVA SCOTIA				
St Anthony-Halifax	\$0.00	69	\$1,306.00	
UPSTATE NEW YORK				
St George-Albany	\$1,000.00	300	\$0.00	
St Michael-Geneva	\$485.50		\$198.50	
St George-Niagara Falls	\$150.00		\$150.00	
St George-S Glens Falls	\$220.70		\$156.90	
St Elias-Syracuse	\$533.00		\$662.50	
St George-New Hartford	\$562.02		\$0.00	
ONTARIO				
Holy Transfiguration-London	\$200.00		\$100.00	
St Elias Cathedral-Ottawa	\$6,356.00	1,220	\$9,856.00	
St George-Richmond Hill	\$225.00		\$775.00	
St Mary-Mississauga	\$0.00	All Year	\$0.00	All Year
St Ignatius-St Catharines	\$100.00	73	\$85.40	275
Christ the Savior Mission- Waterloo	\$150.00		\$0.00	
QUEBEC				
St Mary-Montreal	\$50.00		\$0.00	
St George-Montreal	\$6,146.00	2500	\$7,214.00	59,546
St Nicholas-Montreal	\$300.00		\$0.00	
St John The Baptist Mission- Laval	\$0.00		\$0.00	
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND				
St Peter & Paul-Charlottetown	\$1,050.00		\$150.00	
TOTAL OTTAWA, EASTERN CANADA				
AND UPSTATE NEW YORK	\$17,530.22	4,158	\$20,654.30	59,821
NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON DC				
CONNECTICUT				
St Nicholas-Bridgeport	\$1,300.00	All Year	\$1,350.00	All Year
St George-Danbury	\$70.00	All Year	\$330.00	All Year
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA				
St George-Washington DC	\$200.00	All Year	\$300.00	All Year
MARYLAND				
St. Peter & Paul-Potomac	\$1,258.00	All Year	\$985.00	All Year
NEW JERSEY				
St Anthony-Bergenfield	\$615.00	325	\$620.00	83
St George-Little Falls	\$150.00		\$832.00	
St Stephen-S Plainfield	\$50.00		\$575.00	
NEW YORK				
St Mary-Brooklyn	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Nicholas Cathedral-Brooklyn	\$1,344.00		\$1,741.60	
St Nicholas Cathedral-Brooklyn	\$1,225.00		\$1,275.00	
St John The Baptist - Levittown	\$0.00		\$1,000.00	
Church of Virgin Mary-Yonkers	\$0.00		\$150.00	
St James-Poughkeepsie	\$0.00	All Year	\$0.00	All Year
St Anthony-Melville	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Ignatius Mission-Florida	\$910.00		\$0.00	
PENNSYLVANIA				
St George-Allentown	\$1,000.00	300	\$1,000.00	300
TOTAL NEW YORK & WASHINGTON DC				
	\$8,022.00	625	\$10,158.60	383
CHARLESTON/OAKLAND & MID-ATLANTIC				
DELAWARE				
St Andrew-Lewes	\$660.65	All Year	\$876.99	All Year
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA				
MARYLAND				
St Mary-Hunt Valley	\$400.00		\$391.60	
Holy Cross-Linthicum	\$0.00		\$200.00	
St James The Apostle- Westminster	\$270.00	113	\$291.00	268
St John The Baptist-Lewisdom	\$0.00		\$110.00	
St Gregory-Silver Spring	\$1,004.00	128	\$1,125.00	111
PENNSYLVANIA				
St George-Altoona	\$172.56		\$0.00	
St Mary-Chambersburg	\$776.05	All Year	\$1,115.38	All Year
St John Evangelist-Beaver Falls	\$1,593.00		\$2,028.50	
St George-Bridgeville	\$785.00	All Year	\$1,119.00	All Year
St Ellen-Brownsville	\$30.00		\$530.00	
St Anthony-Butler	\$160.77		\$30.00	
St Paul-Emmaus	\$65.00		\$20.00	
St Michael-Greensburg	\$1,733.96		\$0.00	
St Mary-Johnstown	\$2,218.00	All Year	\$1,708.00	All Year
St John Chrysostom-York	\$1,600.00		\$1,465.46	
St Michael-Monaca	\$35.00		\$35.00	
St Elias-New Castle	\$2,240.00		\$1,638.00	
St George-New Kensington	\$660.00		\$215.00	
St George Cathedral-Pittsburgh	\$1,633.50		\$2,698.00	
St Philip-Souderton	\$3,089.99	All Year	\$2,050.00	All Year
St George-Upper Darby	\$0.00		\$157.69	520
St Mary-Wilkes-Barre	\$2,015.00	All Year	\$1,800.00	All Year
Holy Ascension Mission-West Chester	\$794.90		\$674.00	
VIRGINIA				
St Patrick-Bedilion	\$470.00	822	\$850.00	1569
St Basil the Great-Hampton	\$325.00		\$498.00	
St Raphael of Brooklyn Mission-Chantilly	\$50.00		\$0.00	
Holy Trinity-Lynchburg	\$1,090.00		\$2,135.00	
WEST VIRGINIA				
St Nicholas-Beckley	\$310.00	All Year	\$520.00	All Year
St George Cathedral-Charleston	\$3,055.00	All Year	\$3,732.00	All Year

FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE DONATION 2018 - 2019				
AND WORLD FOOD DAY - POUNDS OF FOOD COLLECTED				
	FFHP	2018 WFD	FFHP	2019 WFD
	2018	POUNDS	2019	POUNDS
Church of Holy Spirit-Huntington	\$284.00	All Year	\$731.00	All Year
TTL CHARLESTON/OAKLAND & MID-ATLANTIC				
	\$27,511.38	1,061	\$28,622.58	2,486
TOLEDO AND THE MIDWEST				
IOWA				
St George-Cedar Rapids	\$1,047.00	All Year	\$1,200.00	All Year
St Raphael of Brooklyn-Iowa City	\$169.75	All Year	\$245.14	All Year
ILLINOIS				
St Nicholas-Urbana	\$1,650.00	All Year	\$1,000.00	All Year
St George-Cicero	\$260.00	2000	\$1,301.62	4500
All Saints-Chicago	\$3,431.97	12,057	\$3,282.88	
St Elias-Peoria	\$25.00		\$0.00	
St George-Spring Valley	\$2,331.69		\$614.74	
Holy Transfiguration-Warrensburg	\$394.09	207	\$653.08	
St Mary-Palos Heights	\$1,220.00	1,220	\$875.00	
St John of Damascus- Carbondale	\$105.85		\$0.00	
INDIANA				
All Saints-Bloomington	\$892.00	183,575	\$946.00	1,500
St John Chrysostom-Fort Wayne	\$256.00	All Year	\$277.00	All Year
Holy Resurrection-Hobart	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St George-Fishers	\$2,988.95	547	\$1,491.67	
St George-Terre Haute	\$550.00		\$325.00	
St Mary-Goshen	\$254.54		\$344.51	
St Mary of Egypt-Greenwood	\$485.00	412	\$400.00	384
St Ananias Mission-Evansville	\$0.00	300	\$0.00	
KENTUCKY				
St Andrew-Lexington	\$600.00		\$700.00	
St Michael-Louisville	\$2,060.00	91,225	\$2,570.00	93,550
Holy Apostles-Bowling Green	\$484.77		\$338.22	2710
MICHIGAN				
St Mary-Berkeley	\$0.00		\$100.00	
St George-Troy	\$1,090.00		\$380.00	
St George-Flint	\$1,436.58	All Year	\$1,316.00	All Year
St George-Grand Rapids	\$1,300.00	All Year	\$1,400.00	All Year
St Nicholas-Grand Rapids	\$4,309.00	All Year	\$6,383.00	All Year
St Mary-Iron Mountain	\$0.00		\$30.00	
St Simon-Ironwood	\$25.00		\$0.00	
Basilica of St Mary-Livonia	\$240.00		\$525.00	
St James-Williamston	\$280.00	260	\$140.00	266
Holy Cross Mission-Dorr	\$0.00		\$0.00	
Holy Incarnation-Allen Park	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Wilford Mission Station-Holland	\$2,100.00		\$865.00	
MINNESOTA				
St George-West St. Paul	\$815.77		\$845.20	
MISSOURI				
All Saints of North America-Maryland Heights	\$420.69	All Year	\$588.00	All Year
St John The Theologian-Cape Girardeau	\$146.75		\$0.00	
OHIO				
St George-Akron	\$700.00	All Year	\$500.00	All Year
St George-Canton	\$1,020.00		\$925.00	
St Luke The Evangelist Mission-Chagrin Falls	\$2,000.00		\$1,050.00	
St George-Cleveland	\$900.00	All Year	\$1,000.00	All Year
St James-Loveland	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Matthew-N Royalton	\$602.00		\$1,005.50	
St Elias-Sylvania	\$620.00	All Year	\$200.00	All Year
St George Cathedral-Toledo	\$25.00		\$520.00	
St Mark-Youngstown	\$650.00	All Year	\$1,200.00	All Year
St Barnabas-Sunbury	\$500.00	All Year	\$850.00	All Year
ONTARIO				
St Ignatius Antioch-Windsor	\$0.00		\$50.00	
WISCONSIN				
St Elias-La Crosse	\$291.59	180	\$534.58	All Year
St Nicholas-Cedarburg	\$1,085.80	2,100	\$548.93	
St Ignatius-Madison	\$500.00	2,880	\$300.00	2,300
TOTAL TOLEDO AND THE MIDWEST				
	\$40,264.67	286,963	\$36,920.87	105,210
WORCESTER AND NEW ENGLAND				
MASSACHUSETTS				
St Michael-Cohasset	\$280.00		\$452.80	
St Mary-Cambridge	\$1,914.51	All Year	\$979.46	All Year
St John of Damascus-Dedham	\$3,274.91		\$2,789.10	
St George-Lawrence	\$850.00		\$850.00	
St George-Lowell	\$972.00		\$600.00	
St George-Norwood	\$3,847.76		\$3,465.00	
St George-W Roxbury	\$2,395.00	6,500	\$2,381.75	6,500
St George Cathedral-Worcester	\$2,872.96	200,000	\$625.00	200,000
St Stephen- Springfield	\$0.00	243	\$101.00	1230
Emmanuel-Warren	\$0.00		\$0.00	
RHODE ISLAND				
St Mary-Pawtucket	\$130.00	All Year	\$200.00	All Year
TOTAL WORCESTER AND NEW ENGLAND				
	\$16,237.14	206,743	\$12,494.11	207,738
MIAMI AND THE SOUTHEAST				
ALABAMA				
Church of the Annunciation-Birmingham	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Michael-Dothan	\$182.00		\$0.00	
ARKANSAS				
St Nicholas-Springdale	\$0.00		\$250.00	
Holy Trinity-Little Rock	\$1,300.00	300	\$200.00	

# Food for Hungry People Program

FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE DONATION 2018 – 2019 AND WORLD FOOD DAY - POUNDS OF FOOD COLLECTED				
	FFHP	2018 WFD	FFHP	2019 WFD
	2018	POUNDS	2019	POUNDS
<b>FLORIDA</b>				
St George Cathedral-Coral Gables	\$820.00		\$952.79	
St Philip-Dave	\$0.00	558	\$0.00	
St Andrew-Eustis	\$192.57	All Year	\$432.21	All Year
St George-Jacksonville	\$1,265.00	10,000	\$1,187.00	
Our Lady of Regia-Miami	\$150.00		\$120.00	
St Anthony the Great-Melbourne	\$220.05	240	\$453.48	159
St Peter the Apostle Mission- Bonita Springs	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St George-Orlando	\$324.00	35,000	\$219.00	
St Basil-Silver Springs	\$230.00		\$50.00	
St Nicholas-St Petersburg	\$174.00	All Year	\$535.00	All Year
St Mary-W Palm Beach	\$647.00		\$642.00	
Holy Cross-Ormond Beach	\$605.00		\$673.78	
St Paul-Naples	\$671.57	All Year	\$603.50	All Year
St Andrew The Apostle-Pensacola	\$762.00		\$528.85	
St Ignatius-Boca Raton	\$65.00		\$0.00	
<b>GEORGIA</b>				
St Elias-Atlanta	\$3,276.49		\$1,449.94	
St Stephen-Hiram	\$500.00	2,575	\$350.00	2,540
St James Mission- Buford	\$700.00		\$1,150.00	
<b>LOUISIANA</b>				
Archangel Gabriel-Lafayette	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Basil-Metairie	\$100.00		\$1,056.16	
<b>MISSISSIPPI</b>				
St George-Vicksburg	\$100.00		\$100.00	
St Peter-Madison	\$100.00		\$100.00	
<b>NORTH CAROLINA</b>				
St Peter & Paul-Boone	\$0.00		\$0.00	
All Saints-Raleigh	\$2,876.32	1,073	\$2,197.58	1,147
St. Raphael-Fuquay Varina	\$0.00		\$166.75	
<b>SOUTH CAROLINA</b>				
St Catherine-Aiken	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Barnabas-Lexington	\$25.00		\$0.00	
St Nicholas-Myrtle Beach	\$245.00		\$0.00	
Christ the Savior-Anderson	\$0.00	All Year	\$0.00	All Year
<b>TENNESSEE</b>				
Holy Resurrection-Johnson City	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Ignatius-Franklin	\$1,043.00	80,806	\$1,368.00	481
St John-Memphis	\$950.00	All Year	\$180.00	All Year
St Elizabeth-Murfreesboro	\$135.53		\$0.00	
St. Nicholas-Jackson	\$313.33		\$62.74	
<b>TOTAL MIAMI AND THE SOUTHEAST</b>				
	\$17,675.86	130,352	\$15,328.76	4,327
<b>WICHITA AND MID-AMERICA</b>				
<b>COLORADO</b>				
St. Luke- Erie	\$1,284.00	All Year	\$1,714.60	All Year
St Augustine of Hippo-Denver	\$1,033.30		\$0.00	
St Elias-Avada	\$10,050.00		\$11,050.00	
St Mark-Denver	\$0.00		\$100.00	
St Columbia-Lafayette	\$272.00	All Year	\$178.00	All Year
St James-Fort Collins	\$164.55		\$0.00	
St John Chrysostom-Lakewood	\$466.00		\$660.65	
<b>IOWA</b>				
St Thomas-Sioux City	\$175.00	All Year	\$210.00	All Year
<b>KANSAS</b>				
St Michael the Archangel-Wichita	\$164.58		\$0.00	
St Peter & Paul-Topoka	\$155.62		\$350.00	
St George Cathedral-Wichita	\$4,090.00		\$2,100.00	
St Mary-Wichita	\$560.00	All Year	\$1,010.00	All Year
All Saints-Salina	\$0.00	150	\$690.00	
St Mary Magdalene-Manhattan	\$0.00		\$0.00	
Holy Transfiguration - Hillsboro	\$657.17		\$663.83	
St Basil-Kansas City	\$603.72		\$476.00	
Three Hierarchs Mission-Garden City	\$172.79	All Year	\$310.23	All Year
<b>LOUISIANA</b>				
St John the Divine-Lake Charles	\$200.00		\$200.00	
St Nicholas-Shreveport	\$224.00	All Year	\$442.80	All Year
<b>NEW MEXICO</b>				
Holy Trinity-Santa Fe	\$585.63	700	\$805.00	
<b>NEBRASKA</b>				
St George-Keamey	\$50.00	100	\$283.00	
St Mary-Omaha	\$541.86	100	\$713.23	
St Vincent of Lerins-Omaha	\$0.00		\$0.00	
<b>OKLAHOMA</b>				
Church of the Ascension-Norman	\$24.38		\$175.61	
St Elijah-Oklahoma City	\$5,820.79	All Year	\$3,920.92	All Year
St Antony-Tulsa	\$500.00		\$420.00	
St James-Stillwater	\$300.00		\$300.00	
<b>SOUTH DAKOTA</b>				
St. John the Theologian-Rapid City	\$238.00		\$245.00	
<b>TEXAS</b>				
St Elias-Austin	\$298.31	All Year	\$625.00	All Year
St John the Forerunner-Cedar Park	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Michael-Baumont	\$400.00		\$575.00	
St Ephraim the Syrian-San Antonio	\$252.89		\$0.00	
St Constantine & Helen-Carrollton	\$779.86		\$252.33	
St George-El Paso	\$524.53	All Year	\$694.41	All Year
St Peter-Fort Worth	\$805.40		\$1,011.00	
St Joseph-Houston	\$1,350.00	All Year	\$850.00	All Year
St George-Houston	\$2,835.00	All Year	\$2,735.00	All Year
St. Paul- Katy	\$260.00		\$102.85	
St Luke-Abilene	\$347.50		\$0.00	

FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE DONATION 2018 – 2019 AND WORLD FOOD DAY - POUNDS OF FOOD COLLECTED				
	FFHP	2018 WFD	FFHP	2019 WFD
	2018	POUNDS	2019	POUNDS
<b>ST ANTHONY THE GREAT-SPRING</b>				
St Sophia-Dripping Springs	\$100.00		\$268.61	
Our Lady of Walsingham-Mesquite	\$88.69	All Year	\$82.25	All Year
St. Benedict-Wichita Falls	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St. Benedict-Wichita Falls	\$175.33		\$0.00	
St. Holy Martyrs of Sebaste-Sugar Land	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St. Silouan the Athonite-College Station	\$343.86		\$257.79	
Christ the Saviour-Jacksonville	\$0.00	12,500	\$0.00	20,000
St. Thomas Mission - Fredricksburg	\$584.00	All Year	\$647.21	All Year
Holy Cross Mission-Odessa	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Andrew Mission-Woodway	\$341.10		\$661.59	
<b>WYOMING</b>				
Holy Resurrection-Gillette	\$200.00		\$200.00	
<b>TOTAL WICHITA &amp; MID-AMERICA</b>				
	\$38,109.83	13,550	\$35,981.87	20,000
<b>EAGLE RIVER AND THE NORTHWEST</b>				
<b>ALBERTA</b>				
St Philip-Edmonton	\$1,000.00		\$0.00	
Church of the Annunciation-Calgary	\$0.00		\$0.00	
Protection of the Holy Theotokos-Ft Saskatchewan	\$0.00		\$0.00	
<b>ALASKA</b>				
St Herman-Wasilla	\$872.00	305	\$1,909.00	430
All Saints Mission-Homer	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St John Cathedral-Eagle River	\$2,259.00		\$1,634.00	
<b>BRITISH COLUMBIA</b>				
St Joseph the Damascene-New Westminster	\$0.00		\$0.00	
Holy Nativity-Langley	\$0.00		\$0.00	500
<b>IDAHO</b>				
St. John the Baptist - Post Falls	\$50.00		\$441.58	250
St. Ignatius- Twin Falls	\$429.09	All Year	\$578.78	All Year
Holy Transfiguration-Boise	\$0.00		\$0.00	
Holy Myrrhbearing Women Mission-Bonnars Ferry	\$200.00	All Year	\$218.28	All Year
<b>OREGON</b>				
St George-Portland	\$700.00		\$775.00	
<b>SASKATCHEWAN</b>				
St Vincent of Lerins-Saskatoon	\$0.00		\$0.00	
<b>WASHINGTON</b>				
St. Andrew-Kingston	\$65.00		\$525.00	
St Paul-Brier	\$1,400.00		\$1,325.00	
Holy Cross-Yakima	\$1,171.15		\$495.08	
St Nicholas-Spokane	\$0.00		\$92.69	
St Innocent-Everson	\$50.00	All Year	\$367.50	All Year
St Thomas Mission- Shohomah	\$0.00		\$0.00	
Christ the Savior Mission- Spokane Valley	\$0.00		\$50.00	
Three Holy Hierarchs Mission-Wenatchee	\$100.00		\$474.17	
Saint Katherine Mission-Kirkland	\$0.00		\$0.00	
Prophet Elijah Mission-Elensburg	\$219.71		\$345.00	
<b>UTAH</b>				
St Peter & Paul-Salt Lake City	\$100.00		\$0.00	
<b>TOTAL EAGLE RIVER AND THE NORTHWEST</b>				
	\$8,615.91	305	\$9,221.26	1,180
<b>LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST</b>				
<b>ARIZONA</b>				
Holy Resurrection-Tucson	\$2,590.00	359	\$1,397.80	338
St Ignatius-Mesa	\$210.00		\$330.00	
St George Church-Phoenix	\$125.00	All Year	\$1,090.00	All Year
St Paisios - Yuma	\$646.79		\$1,115.52	
<b>CALIFORNIA</b>				
St Peter & Paul-Ben Lomond	\$637.74	All Year	\$397.61	All Year
St Raphael of Brooklyn-Thousand Palms	\$321.00		\$275.63	
St Michael-Whittier	\$825.00	1,012	\$950.00	
St Luke-Garden Grove	\$455.00	All Year	\$550.00	All Year
All Saints Mission-Rohnert Park	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St Athanasius-Santa Barbara	\$20.00	11,000	\$750.00	
St Barnabas-Costa Mesa	\$708.18	All Year	\$1,066.55	All Year
St Mark-Inver	\$370.00	All Year	\$950.00	All Year
Holy Cross-Palmdale	\$0.00	All Year	\$0.00	All Year
St Timothy-Lompoc	\$2,664.00	All Year	\$449.00	All Year
St James-Placencia	\$0.00		\$0.00	
Orthodox Church of the Redeemer-Los Altos Hills	\$350.00		\$275.00	
St Nicholas Cathedral-Los Angeles	\$10,486.00	35,000	\$6,288.00	35,000
St John the Evangelist-Orinda	\$1,500.00		\$949.45	
St Andrew-Riverside	\$100.00	All Year	\$950.00	All Year
St Anthony the Great-San Diego	\$1,033.81		\$1,376.06	
St Athanasius-Sacramento	\$260.00	1594	\$637.06	1925
St. George-San Diego	\$250.00		\$75.00	
St Peter The Apostle-Pomona	\$0.00		\$50.00	
St Nicholas-San Francisco	\$400.00	All Year	\$800.00	All Year
St Stephen-Campbell	\$1,221.99	100	\$1,467.35	400
St Matthew-Torrance	\$447.85		\$322.08	
St Michael-Van Nuys	\$1,873.58	600	\$2,125.00	620
Holy Virgin Mary-W Sacramento	\$0.00		\$300.00	
St Timothy-Fairfield	\$150.00		\$250.00	
St John-San Juan Capistrano	\$0.00		\$0.00	
St George-Upland	\$0.00	All Year	\$0.00	All Year
St James Mission-Modesto	\$533.89		\$660.00	
St Gabriel-Angels Camp	\$268.74		\$251.50	
St. Simon-Santa Clarita	\$25.00		\$1,456.25	
<b>NEVADA</b>				
St Michael-Las Vegas	\$0.00		\$0.00	
<b>TOTAL LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST</b>				
	\$28,454.57	49,665	\$27,025.03	38,283
<b>INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS</b>				
RECORDED THROUGH May 1, 2020	\$8,765.00		\$14,632.32	
<b>TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS:</b>				
	\$211,186.58	703,422	\$210,949.70	439,420

# 2018-2019 Donations

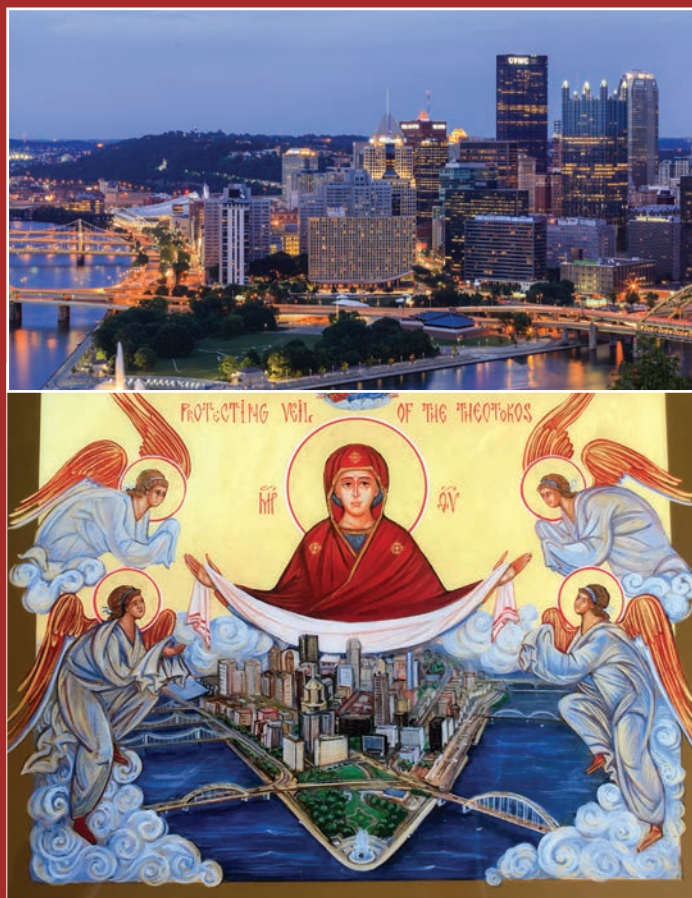


THE WORD  
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# ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA NATIONAL CONVENTION

Pittsburgh, PA, July 18-25, 2021

Christ is Risen!



Icon of the Theotokos, Protectress of Pittsburgh, provided by St. Mary Orthodox Church, Pittsburgh.

Truly He is Risen!

You are invited to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where we are hosting the Biennial Convention, taking place in 2021, July 18-25! We will be at the Wyndham Grand Hotel, in the center of Downtown Pittsburgh, on the banks of the Ohio River, where two mighty rivers converge to form a third. Whether it's culture, sports, nationally archived museums, entertainment, gourmet food, or fries on your sandwich, you will enjoy what our city has to offer. Not only that, we want to share the spirit of Pittsburgh, as it is home to the largest concentration of Orthodox Christianity in North America, with some 80 Churches in the Greater Pittsburgh Area. We are planning for this convention not only to be a source of great memories, but one of spiritual rejuvenation for all ages. Please come to enjoy, to learn, to pray, to laugh, to be silent, to reconnect, and to establish new relationships, not just with other people, but with the Church!