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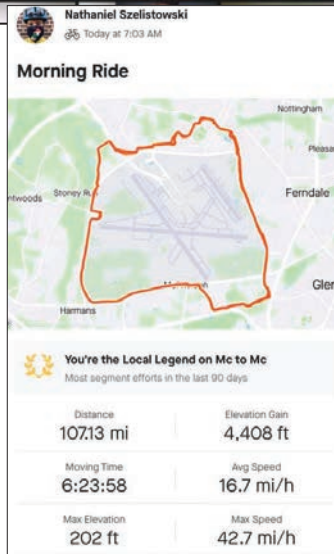
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THE WORD



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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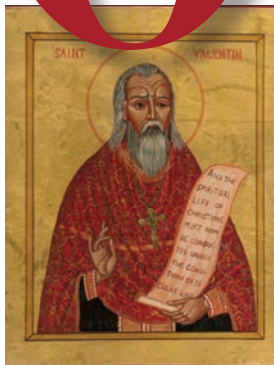
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IF YOU LOVE, YOU WILL SEND OUT VALENTINES

Bishop JOHN

**JESUS
LOVES
YOU**



while the priest was awaiting martyrdom, he sent letters about Jesus Christ and God's love to those whom he cared about. The priest Valentine wanted those that he had not had a chance to witness about Christ, to have Jesus in their lives and share in God's Kingdom. The letters he sent out expressing His love for God and God's love expressed in Valentine's life came to be known as valentines. To this day, people exchange valen-

On February 14, around the year 270 A.D., Valentine, a holy priest in Rome in the days of Emperor Claudius II, was executed. There are several differing accounts of his life and the circumstances of his martyrdom, but all the accounts agree that

while the priest was awaiting martyrdom, he sent letters about Jesus Christ and God's love to those whom he cared about. The priest Valentine wanted those that he had not had a chance to witness about Christ, to have Jesus in their lives and share in God's Kingdom. The letters he sent out expressing His love for God and God's love expressed in Valentine's life came to be known as valentines. To this day, people exchange valen-

Fr. Dan Daly, in his retirement wrote a book for his extended family outlining the family's Christian Heritage over many generations. He shared the witness and faith of their common ancestors pointing out how Christ lived in the lives of those family members. Fr. Dan also shared how Christ has been alive in his own life in the hope that his extended family too would come to share in God's love. He spoke straightforwardly about the challenges and evils of our modern times, outlining their sources. He challenged them directly to make the effort to come to know God and His Church. He wrote this book for them because he loves them.

We cannot expect our children to know of their Christian heritage unless we explicitly share it with them. We need to let them see us pray, make Christ and His Church our priority and let

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

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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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them in on our intimate relationship with God. We cannot rely on schools or genetics to convey our faith to our families.

In these days of COVID-19, governments, parishes, and families are debating about how to keep safe. A major component of these discussions is discerning how to worship and how much of a priority worship is. Metropolitan JOSEPH has called upon everyone to be wise and deliberate, making worship as safe as possible. He has even provided on the Archdiocese Web Site worship materials that can be used at home. In addition, he has encouraged all the parishes to live-stream. Everyone's circumstances are different, but everything we do today carries some risk, including staying at home and having all your food delivered. Yet what is clear to me is that worship is our priority because it is who we are. Orthodox Christians are God's worshipping community who gather to pray for the world, share God's life in our witness, celebrate the Resurrection of Christ and call all people to repent and share in joy of the Resurrection celebration. Taking turns getting to Church or participating virtually might be what we need to do, but we need to worship. No relationship can be stagnant; it is always growing closer or more distant. Worshipping God is the only reasonable relationship between a God and His creation.

I have received other books like Fr. Dan's written by people wanting to share their accumulated Godly wisdom and values. Such books are treasures, especially when they pass on to the next generation the Christian Heritage that is our faith. It is a blessing for the writers to recognize our spiritual heritages, articulate them and share them. I believe it also to be each of our responsibilities. We were baptized to share the Truth that is Jesus Christ by baptizing all nations. This baptism includes nurturing the faith in those we baptize, sponsor in baptism, love, and care for.

You can begin your valentines as a handwritten letter to someone you care about. Share your love for God and what God has done for you. Then you can research your spiritual or familial heritage, reflect on it, and write your own book. I have been writing valentines for over 20 years. They warm the hearts of the writer and recipients. Happy writing.

THE DEPARTMENT OF CHARITABLE OUTREACH "COVID-19 ASSISTANCE"

As the Coronavirus continues to rage across North America and the world more and more people are experiencing difficulty in feeding and supporting themselves and their families. For some of our parishes the needs are greater than resources available. Therefore, as we did earlier last year, FFHP&CO has identified funds to assist our local parishes to help parishioners in need as a direct result of the pandemic.

We request that each pastor announce that assistance is available so that those struggling to provide the basic needs for their families may request confidential assistance. Any person in need should make a request of the pastor. Pastor's need not provide the Department recipient's name or any other personal information. The task of determining the legitimacy of each request is left to our God-entrusted pastors.

Please note that, distribution requests remain dependent on the availability of funds in the Program. All requests should be directed to *Anne Bourjaily Thomas* at athomas@antiochian.org. Distributions will be made on a rolling basis as long as funds are available.

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York
Metropolitan of
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

January 6, 2021

Beloved Hierarchs, Clergy, and Faithful of our God-protected Archdiocese:

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them, and said, ... "Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me" (Matthew 18:1-3,5).

To receive Christ—that is the purpose of the Christian life. And in this passage Christ Himself discloses a very specific way in which this purpose can be accomplished: Accept a child in His name, and you will receive Him!

Mindful of this powerful promise, our Archdiocese, through the Children's Relief Fund (CRF), provides a way for any one of us to accept a child in Christ's name. From the time of its establishment in the 1980s, the CRF has enabled sponsors to alleviate the suffering of needy Lebanese and Palestinian children, as well as Syrian children who are now residing as refugees in Lebanon.

Over the years, donors have provided more than four million dollars to alleviate deprivation and to enable students to further their education in preparation for a more promising future. Our primary emphasis has been on providing tuition grants that will support the continuity and quality of a student's educational program, especially in emergency situations in which families can no longer make tuition payments. Another emphasis has been on providing equipment and other resources required for cutting-edge instruction. To this end, we have recently approved an expenditure of nearly \$100,000 for purchase of desktop and laptop computers and related "hardware" for Orthodox high schools in Lebanon.

But to continue this noble work, we need your help, especially in these times when the effects of the worldwide COVID pandemic, coupled with various kinds economic and political instability, have had a particularly harsh impact on children. For as little as \$400 a year (only \$1.10 a day), you will be matched with a child whose name, address, and brief biography you will receive. Your sponsored child will correspond with you, creating a special bond with you. You will learn how your generosity is working to improve their situation in the present and to instill hope for their future.

CRF workers, both in the US and "on the ground" in Lebanon and Palestine, are thoroughly committed to efficiency and transparency. In the past we have experienced certain administrative difficulties and therefore have recently implemented changes needed to remedy any such "glitches," whether here or abroad. Moreover, we will continually re-assess CRF procedures to improve administration even further. This represents the renewal of our pledge that 100% of your donation will go to your sponsored child; none of your donation will be used for administrative expenses. As an expression of trustworthiness, the Archdiocesan Department of Charities will provide you with pertinent details through periodic reports on the CRF's financial activity.

To be sure, the Church provides us with so many resources for receiving Christ into our lives, but one of the most worthy and concrete means of doing so is through the CRF. Please consider becoming a sponsor. Remember Christ's clear promise that "whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me"!

With fervent prayers that this new year will bring us an abundance of heavenly and earthly blessings, I remain,

Yours in the service of Christ,

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

“HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE,” OR, WHAT’S IN A WORD?

Fr. Daniel Daly

“HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE.” FEW WORDS HAVE FOUND SUCH AN IMPORTANT PLACE IN THE PRAYER LIFE AND MUSIC OF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. GABRIEL’S MESSAGE TO MARY PROCLAIMED AN EVENT THAT WOULD CHANGE THE WORLD FOREVER. THE INCARNATION OF GOD WAS AT HAND. MOST CHRISTIANS ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE WORDS OF THE LATIN HYMN *AVE MARIA*. NOT SO FAMILIAR IS THE ORIGINAL GREEK TEXT... ΧΑΙΡΕ, ΚΕΧΑΡΙΤΩΜΕΝΗ, Ὁ ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΜΕΤΑ ΣΟΥ. ALTHOUGH THERE IS MORE TO GABRIEL’S WORDS TO MARY, IN THIS ARTICLE I WILL LIMIT MY REMARKS TO THESE OPENING WORDS.

Shakespeare once wrote “What’s in a word?” When we read the greeting of Gabriel to Mary, Shakespeare’s question has given us something to think about. What do these words mean? How should they be translated in English? Given the many new English (American) translations of the New Testament, there is good reason to raise these questions. Historically, the well-known English Bibles, the Wycliffe and the Douay Rheims, translated the words as “Hail Mary, *full of grace*, the Lord is with thee”. Other old versions translate κεχαριτωμένη as “found favor with.” Its use in Ephesians 1:6, however, is translated as *grace* in almost all English Bibles.

Things have changed. Although some of the newer versions have stayed with the traditional translations, in some of the more recent English versions, one finds translations that are questionable. For example:

Good morning! You’re beautiful with God’s beauty,
Beautiful inside and out! God be with you.”

(The Message)

“Congratulations, favored lady! The Lord is with you!”

(Living Bible)

“Be happy! God has blessed you more than other women. The Lord is with you!

(Worldwide English Translation)

“Shalom, favored one! Adonai is with you.”

(Tree of Life Version)

Clearly, liberties have been taken with the text. St. Luke’s words are no longer being translated, they are being interpreted, possibly to make the message more “meaningful.” Unfortunately, these translations are questionable and misleading.

HAIL, OR REJOICE?

Questions regarding the meaning of the text are not new. More than eighty years ago, the French scholar Stanislas Lyonette, S.J., believed that the word *Hail* did not accurately translate the Greek text. He believed that *rejoice*, rather than *hail*, would be the better translation of the Greek word Χαῖρε. His research has revealed that there is much more to Gabriel’s words than a simple greeting.² He opens up many new insights.

In his work *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, John McHugh notes, “Before 1939 nearly all writers took the word Χαῖρε to be simply an

(The material in this article is taken primarily from John McHugh’s *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* [Doubleday and Co. Inc., Garden City, N.Y.], 1975.)¹



everyday greeting devoid of doctrinal significance, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *shalom* or the Aramaic *Shelam* (Peace!).⁷³ In the non-biblical Greek-speaking world, the common greeting would have been Χαῖρε. *But this is not true in the gospels.* Gabriel's greeting of Χαῖρε was not the greeting used by Jesus or his Apostles.

Jesus and the Apostles used the common Jewish greeting *Shalom*, or "peace." Jesus greeted his Apostles after the resurrection with the words "peace be to you", using the Greek word Εἰρήνη (*Eirene/peace*). In Luke 10:5, the disciples are told to say, "Peace to this house." *It is very significant that Χαῖρε appears only in Gabriel's greeting to Mary.* If one wished to express the Greek equivalent of *Shalom*, the word Εἰρήνη (*Eirene/peace*) would be used – not Χαῖρε.

McHugh asks, "If Luke's only concern in 1:28 was to express a conventional greeting from Gabriel to Mary, why did he choose to write this greeting using the Greek Χαῖρε not Εἰρήνη (*Eirene/peace*),

the Greek equivalent of *Shalom*?"⁷⁴ In order to understand better the significance of Χαῖρε, Lyonnet examined the occurrences of the word Χαῖρε in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. Lyonnet's research revealed three very significant things. First Χαῖρε was not used as a normal greeting. Secondly, it was only used to address a figure known as the *Daughter of Zion*. Thirdly and very significantly, this greeting of the Daughter of Zion always referred to the salvation of Israel. In the Gospels, Χαῖρε is used only for Mary.

This raises the question, Do the references to the Daughter of Zion and the salvation of Israel also have something to do with Mary? McHugh notes "In the books translated from the Hebrew.... Χαῖρε is never once found as the equivalent of the ordinary, everyday greeting *Shalom*. *Shalom* as a greeting is invariably rendered into Greek by the word Εἰρήνη meaning "peace". In these same books (i.e., those translated from the Hebrew as distinct from

those originally written in Greek), the imperative form Χαῖρε, far from be a conventional greeting, *always refers to the joy attendant on the deliverance of Israel*; wherever it occurs, it is a translation meaning “rejoice greatly!” “This is exactly the message of the angel in Luke 1:28–33.”⁵

Of equal importance, we read that “with the exception of Lam[entations] 4:21, the imperative Χαῖρε in the Greek Old Testament is always addressed to ‘the Daughter of Zion’ and is always an invitation to ‘rejoice greatly’⁶ because “the Lord is with her” as king and savior....” These associations are found in the prophetic writings of the prophets Isaiah, Zephaniah, Joel, Zechariah and Micah. As will be shown below, these prophetic calls to rejoice will be the proclamation that the Daughter of Zion is important in the whole mystery of the salvation, not only of Jerusalem but of all creation, both man and the world.

THE PROPHETS CALL TO REJOICE

As we look at the writings of the prophets, we are reading poetry. Through images and allusions, poetry takes language to a higher level. It is what gives beauty to language. Imagery is not restricted to the poets and prophets. We use it in our everyday speech. Saying that our friend Robert is a “diamond in the rough” says in a short phrase what might take a paragraph to say in simple prose. The poetic license of one of the prophets or St. Luke gives them the opportunity to say things and create an image of Mary that they would find difficult to express in any other way. If it can be said that an icon is theology in color, we might also say that prophetic poetry is color expressed in words. One icon of Mary would be insufficient to express all that the prophets have foretold of her.

In Isaiah’s prophecy about the “New Jerusalem” we find the most emphatic use of the imperative Χαῖρε: “Be glad, Jerusalem and gather together within her, all of you that love her;

Rejoice with joy (Xapete Xapa) all you that grieve over her.... You will see, and your hearts will rejoice” (Isaiah, 66:10, 14). Salvation is at hand. “Behold, The Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.’ And they shall be called the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called sought out, a city not

forsaken” (Isaiah 62:11–12).

The prophets Zephaniah, Joel and Zechariah are also clear about the reason for the rejoicing. The deliverance of Israel is at hand! “The king of Israel is Lord in the midst of thee.” Other than the prophecy of Micah, the oldest of these prophecies is in Zephaniah. In Chapter 3, we find the call to rejoice addressed to the Daughter of Zion. The redeeming Lord, the King of Israel, is in her midst. The imagery here is broad, also addressing Jerusalem in a personal way.

Rejoice (Χαῖρε) O Daughter of Zion! Cry aloud, O Daughter of Jerusalem!

Be glad, and be delighted with all thy heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem!

The Lord has taken away thy wrongdoings, He has redeemed thee from the hand of thy enemies!

The king of Israel is Lord in the midst of thee, Thou shalt no longer see evil.

At that time the Lord will say to Jerusalem: Take heart, Zion,

Do not let thy hands grow feeble!

The Lord thy God is within thee, a Mighty One will save thee.

He will bring thee gladness,

And will renew thee in his affection,

And he will be glad over thee with joy as on a feast day.

(Zephaniah 3:11–15)

The Prophet Joel, writing after the return of the exiles from Babylon in 539 B.C., speaks not of the Daughter of Zion but of the children of Zion. The occasion, however, is still one of rejoicing because of what the Lord has done. “Take heart, O land, rejoice (Χαῖρε) and be glad, For the Lord has done great things.... And you children of Zion rejoice and be glad in the Lord your God” (Joel 2:21).

The ninth chapter of Zechariah (written in 520–518 B.C.) is most interesting. It is here we find the theme of the Daughter of Zion and the Messiah in the same verse. We do not ordinarily think of Mary on Palm Sunday, but this text suggests that we might do so. “Rejoice (Χαῖρε) , O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you; triumphant and victorious is He, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.” (Zechariah 9:9). If Jesus is the King coming into the city, the Daughter of Zion would seem

to be the antitype of this Old Testament figure *in the New Testament*.

Given the connection between the prophet's call on the Daughter of Zion to rejoice, we cannot be surprised that Hughes concludes that *rejoice* is "a more satisfactory *interpretation* of Gabriel's words to Mary in Lk 1:28 than is given by the customary rendering 'Hail.' Of interest to an Orthodox reader is Lyonnet's remark that "this is the interpretation given by all the Greek exegetes and Fathers, from Origen to the Byzantine period."⁷ An important example of this interpretation is the use by St. John of Damascus in the Ninth Ode of the Paschal Canon and in the Megalinarion of the liturgy for Easter Day. Here Χαῖρε is clearly associated with great joy and salvation. This suggests that Χαῖρε is better translated as rejoice.

The Angel spake to her that is full of grace,
(κεχαριτωμένη) saying:

O pure Virgin, rejoice! (Χαῖρε) I say also rejoice (Χαῖρε)

For thy Son is risen from the tomb on the third day.

Shine, shine a new Jerusalem;
for the glory of the Lord hath risen upon thee.

Rejoice and exult O Zion, and thou O pure one, Theotokos

At the resurrection of thy Son.⁸

In the Vespers for the Feast of the Annunciation the fathers of the Church, the word Χαῖρε is used repeatedly, not so much as a greeting, but as call to rejoice.

Coming to reveal to thee that counsel which
was determined from before eternity,

Gabriel saluted thee, crying out:

"Rejoice, holy earth never sown; bush unburnt,

rejoice thou; O rejoice, thou ladder raised on high, which Jacob saw of old;

rejoice, thou depth unfathomed and unexplored;

rejoice, thou bridge which leadest up to the highest Heaven;

rejoice, divine vessel of the Manna;

rejoice, complete destruction of the curse;
recall of Adam to God,

rejoice: With thee is the Lord Most High."

Translating Χαῖρε as *rejoice* rather than *hail* is the only rendering that does justice to the Old Testament background of the word. Gabriel is announcing the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament using the words of the prophets, "Rejoice, O Lady full of grace, do not fear, the Lord is with thee."⁹

THE DAUGHTER OF ZION

As noted above, Χαῖρε, the proclamation of joy, is associated both with the theme of salvation and the figure of the Daughter of Zion, but who is the Daughter of Zion? And to what does Zion refer? The term *Zion* has a long and complex history. It referred to a number of places in the environs of Jerusalem over a number of centuries. At first it was used in a topographical sense. Later it was used in a poetic sense. Scholars believe that it referred to the site of the Jebusite city conquered by King David. Some scholars believe that it referred to a specific place north of the Temple, where the refugees from the north lived after the defeat of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C.¹⁰ The saving message of the prophets would have significant meaning to refugees living in very difficult circumstances. Later, *Zion* would be used to refer to Jerusalem itself as the religious capitol of the nation. In the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews, *Zion* even refers to the Heavenly Jerusalem. "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22).

The term "*daughter of*..." came from the northern kingdom. It originally meant a town or village dependent upon an older community. Today we often use the term referring to parish churches as being "daughter parishes" of the parish from which they originated. The term was brought by the refugees from the north. It fittingly described the refugee community living as a daughter community of Jerusalem or Zion. McHugh believes that "such was the origin of the expression 'Daughter of Zion.'"¹¹

Eventually the term took on wider meaning. The prophets used the term as a synonym for the "poor, the righteous, the remnant among the People of God." The words *Zion* and *Daughter of Zion* became interchangeable. The term "Daughter of Zion" first appears in the Prophet Micah (737–696 B.C.).¹² Micah's message may have been addressed to the destitute refugees in this northern corner of the city.

1. McHugh presents the research of Stanislas Lyonnet, S.J., in *Biblica* (1939), pp. 131–41, and the further observations by the Swedish Lutheran exegete, Harald Sahlin. McHugh also discusses the critical observations of various Protestant scholars. In this article it is only possible to summarize McHugh's work.
2. Cf. *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, p. 38.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Greek Orthodox Holy Week & Easter Services, compiled by Father George L. Papadeas (Daytona Beach, Florida, 1979), p. 475.
9. McHugh, p. 43.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 44. See also p. 51. "One of the greatest English Old Testament scholars of the last century, H. Wheeler Robinson, coined a technical term which is of first importance for the understanding of the Bible: 'corporate personality'.... in which the individual person became the living embodiment of the character and personality of his forefathers; he in turn would 'live on' in his children and descendants."
17. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

In Chapters 4 to 6, Micah paints an interesting picture of the Daughter of Zion. She is the personification of Jerusalem. She is like a woman in labor. She shall go forth from the city to Babylon (4:10). There is a plan of God at work which the enemy does not realize. She will not be defeated. "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; For I will make your horn iron, And I will make your hooves bronze; You shall beat in pieces many peoples" (4:13). Micah then speaks of Bethlehem and the one who will come forth to rule Israel. We are very familiar with this text that speaks of the coming Messiah. Less quoted is verse 3. The *woman who is in labor* will now "bring forth" (5:3). Then there shall be a return of the people to Israel. This will be the remnant of Jacob (4:7).

The association of the Daughter of Zion with the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem is an image that will be fulfilled with the birth of Christ. In the prophetic use of the term Daughter of Zion, it denotes the people, not an individual. McHugh suggests that in Luke's text, Mary might personify the Daughter of Zion. She would be the embodiment and personification of the remnant of Israel.¹³ If we accept the validity of Lyonnet's interpretation of Χαῖρε, with all the imagery that goes along with it in the Septuagint, Mary as the New Testament image of the Daughter of Zion is revealed as a person of profound importance. She is the one called to rejoice because she is the fulfillment of the daughter of Zion. She is the one who now hears the message of redemption, not just as something that lies in the distant future, but in the present life of this young woman. She is the embodiment of the remnant of Israel. She is herself the new Jerusalem upon whom the glory of the Lord has risen. By associating Mary with the ancient prophecies, St. Luke makes of her a *corporate personality* embodying the people redeemed by God. As said above, one icon of Mary cannot contain or express all that is said about her. In the hymnography of the church the best verbal image of Mary is the Akathist of St. Romanos.

I would not wish to minimize the importance of the expression "full of grace" (κεχαριτωμένη) which follows the opening words of Gabriel's greeting. Regrettably, it is not possible to speak of the expression in any adequate way in this short article. McHugh notes that the only other use of the word occurs in Ephesians 1:6. Here it is translated as "that grace freely bestowed on us in the Beloved One."¹⁴ Mary's

grace was singular in that she would bring forth the Author of grace.

A final, brief observation should be made regarding the expression "The Lord is with Thee." *This expression is only used in the Old Testament when God is assuring someone that He will be with certain people who had a very special mission from God (e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Jeremiah)*. In using these words to Mary, Gabriel is telling her that she too will have an important destiny, and the Lord will be with her.¹⁵ Mary's reaction to the message is like that of the Old Testament figures who heard these same words: she was afraid, and she wondered what this greeting might portend.

CONCLUSION

Did St. Luke intend to represent Mary as the antitype of the Daughter of Zion? The Swedish theologian Harald Sahlin argued that "in the Hebrew source used by Luke Mary was envisaged almost as an allegorical figure, certainly as a living symbol of the Daughter of Zion." Now while Lyonnet in 1939 did not expressly make this identification, and though Sahlin is careful to state that Luke himself did not perceive that his source was presenting Mary as the Daughter of Zion, *almost all who have subscribed to their basic ideas have taken it that the evangelist both perceived and intended the typological reference, and meant his readers to see Mary as personifying the Daughter of Zion in the day of eschatological salvation*. In this form, the interpretation has been accepted almost unanimously among Catholic writers. Those who have followed the arguments of Lyonnet and Sahlin have concluded that Luke saw Mary, the historical person, as embodying in fact the whole corporate personhood of Israel.¹⁶ Her positive response to Gabriel became the response of humanity to the divine plan of salvation. "Mary held in her hands the destiny of Israel, and of the world. Only when Mary utters her *Fiat* does the angel depart from her."¹⁷

I have found this interpretation convincing. For those who follow the *sola Scriptura* approach to the Bible, these insights offer a deeper understanding of who Mary was.

Fr. Daniel Daly

“HE TOOK PETER, AND US, BY THE HAND”

(A homily on Matthew 14: 22–34, given at St. Matthew Orthodox Church, August 9, 2020)

Fr. Andrew Harmon

ABOUT A HUNDRED YEARS AGO IN EUROPE, A VERY DESPONDENT AND DEPRESSED MAN WENT TO SEE A PSYCHIATRIST, SEEKING HELP AND ADVICE ON HOW TO COME OUT OF HIS DEEP FUNK. THE PSYCHIATRIST SAID, “THERE IS SOMETHING I OFTEN ADVISE PATIENTS IN YOUR SITUATION TO DO. IT MAY NOT TOTALLY CURE YOUR DEPRESSION, BUT IT WILL HELP! HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE GREAT CLOWN GRIMALDI?” THE PATIENT REPLIED, “OH, YES, OF COURSE!” THE PSYCHIATRIST THEN SAID, “GRIMALDI IS SO FUNNY, SO ENTERTAINING, SO HILARIOUS, THAT YOU SHOULD GO TO THE CIRCUS AND BE CHEERED UP BY HIM.” “IT WON’T WORK, DOCTOR,” ANSWERED THE DEPRESSED MAN. “WHY NOT?” ASKED THE DOCTOR. “BECAUSE,” REPLIED THE PATIENT, “BECAUSE, DOCTOR, YOU SEE – I AM GRIMALDI!”¹

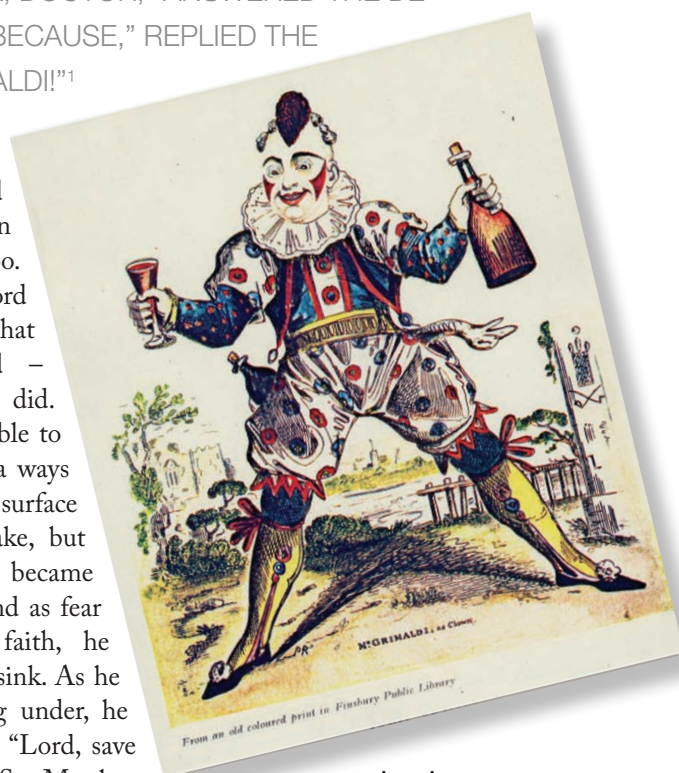
I guess poor Grimaldi stayed depressed! Despair and depression are most unpleasant conditions to go through. The Twelve Disciples had a lot of it in today’s Gospel reading from Matthew 14. They were sailing at night across the Sea of Galilee, when one of the sudden bad storms common to that big lake began. They were having a very rough time and were in danger of their little fishing boat sinking. You might be thinking, “Well, even if it was a bad storm, why would they be so despondent and worried? With Jesus along, it all should be fine!” But – Jesus was not along! He had stayed back on the other side of the lake for private prayer. It looked like they were on their own this time. Jesus wasn’t there and the storm was rough. As St. Matthew (an eyewitness, as he was on board) wrote in verse 24 of our reading, “The wind was against them.”

Then suddenly Christ arrived, walking right on the water towards them. His presence and his words must have greatly cheered them. In verse 27, he says, “Take heart, it is I! Have no fear!”

St. Peter, that most impulsive man, got so ex-

cited that he wanted to walk on water, too. The Lord agreed that he could – and he did. He was able to walk for a ways on the surface of the lake, but then he became afraid. And as fear replaced faith, he began to sink. As he was going under, he cried out, “Lord, save me.” As St. Matthew writes in verse 31, “Jesus immediately reached out His hand and caught him.” He pulled Peter out of the water and put him back in the boat. And then He miraculously calmed the storm. All was well!

Storms happen in our lives. We, as a church, had





a real bad one almost three years ago. On a Saturday morning, in November, 2017, we stood in our churchyard and watched our beloved St. Matthew's temple go up in smoke. As the clouds of smoke billowed up, we felt like Peter

going down in the waves. Lots of despair, lots of questions: What are we going to do? Will this be the end of our church family? How can we ever recover? The despair didn't last, however, because just as the Lord reached out His hand to Peter going down, so He reached out His hand to us. He took us by the hand after our fire and He has never let go. He led us along, step by step, until, finally, we are where we are today: in our beautiful new church for liturgy for the first time. It hasn't been easy and it sure hasn't been quick!

There were lots of dead ends. We were stumped many times. We wondered often, how to go about it, how to keep us all united. Obviously, too, the question was, How to pay for it? Plus there were hundreds and hundreds of decisions to make, and not all of them easy ones. Yet the Lord, through all of this, just kept pulling us along with His hand.

He has led us a long way! Most of you were there at our first postfire liturgy on the Sunday eight days after the disaster. We had our service in the viewing room at Yurch Funeral Home, the first of many services in many different buildings in the years to come. I think that day we were all still very shell-shocked, but we all talked about how we would somehow get to the other side of it all. So we have – and here we are today. The Lord led us by the hand

for two years and nine months, and our boat is fully under sail again! Of course, we still need Him to keep guiding us and pulling us along! Let us keep following Him as He leads us.

Before I close, I would like to apply today's Gospel lesson to our own individual and family lives, too. In our own lives, we sometimes feel like Peter, going down into the depths of the sea. We often face really big problems: money crises, bad health, marriages going bad, being out of work, being stressed out, and so forth. Our own problems may remind us of the despair we felt as a church when we watched our church burn. You may have such big problems that they seem worse than a church fire.

Remember: if the Lord stayed with St. Matthew's in our darkest hour, He will stay with you in your dark times, too. The Lord took Peter by the hand and pulled him up. The Lord took St. Matthew Church by the hand and pulled us up. And the Lord will take you by the hand and pull you up and lead you through.

Grab on hard to His hand, hold on tight. Walk with Him, talk with Him all the time, obey Him, worship Him. Let Him pull you out of the waves. Don't despair. He is with you.

One of the most famous books of all time is *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. You've probably read it, and even if you haven't, you probably know the gist of the story. Robinson Crusoe, a British sailor, is the only survivor of a shipwreck way out in the Pacific. He is stranded on a tiny little island all by himself (or so he thinks at first!). Talk about depression! He was really down and out, and had to struggle hard just to survive.

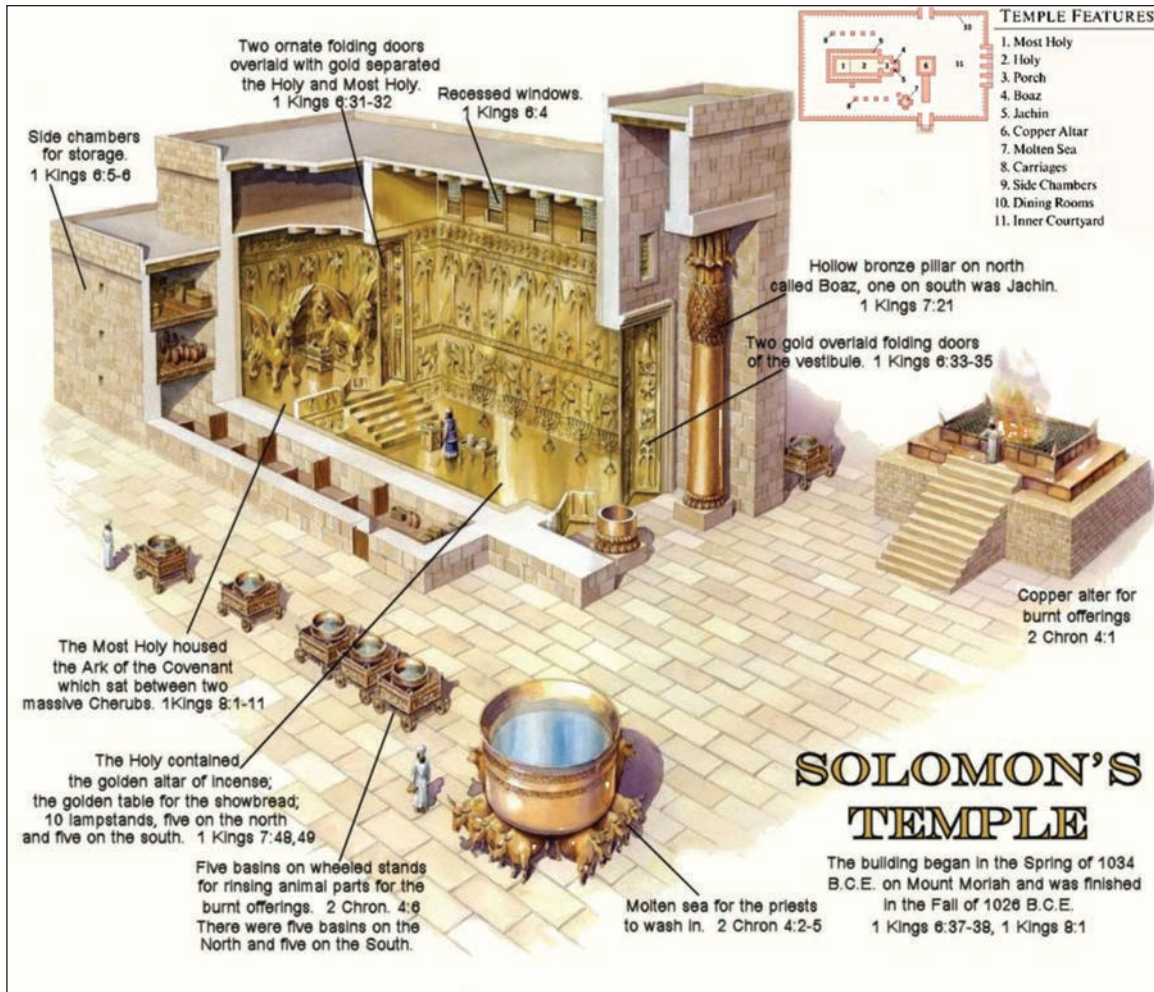
He did have a Bible with him and one morning, when he was very depressed, he opened it up. "One morning, being very sad, I opened the Bible upon these words of Christ – 'I will never leave you or forsake you.' Immediately it occurred to me that these words were to me." And Crusoe was comforted and strengthened to carry on with the Lord's help.

The Lord is with you, too. He will not leave you, or forsake you, or forget you. He will take you by the hand and deliver you. He did that for the Holy Apostle Peter. He did it for our parish. And He will certainly do it for you!

All praise, glory, and honor be to our Lord Jesus Christ!

Fr. Andrew Harmon

1. Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (Penguin, 1982), p. 53.



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OF TEMPLES AND MEN

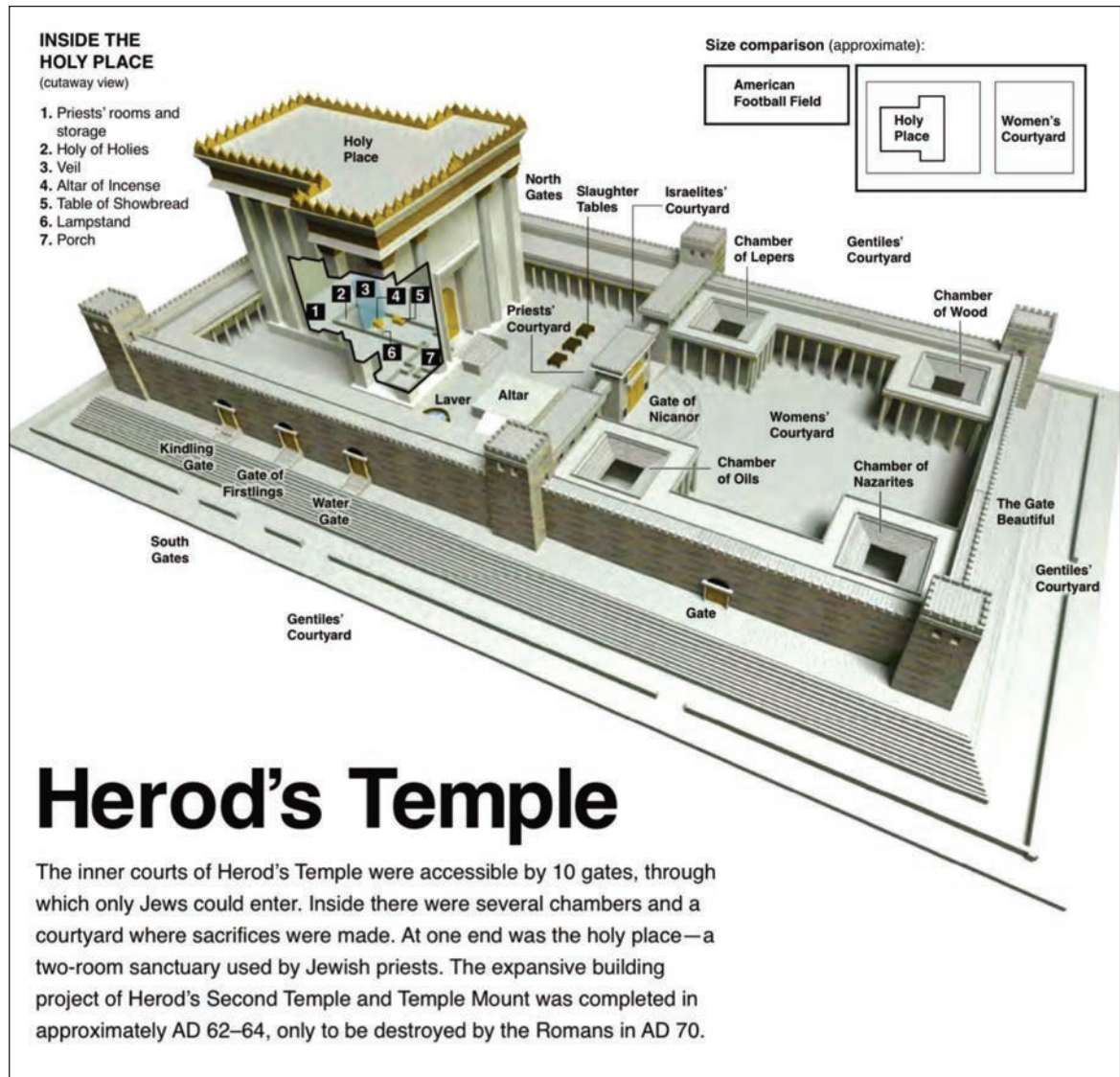
THE TEMPLE OF GOD'S GLORY IN JERUSALEM

Dr. Aristeides Papadakis

The temple of Solomon, that magnificent construction, was built on earth according to the heavenly pattern revealed to David (1 Chronicles 28:11-12, 18-19) – just as the tent had been erected according to the pattern revealed to Moses on Sinai (Exodus 25:9, 40; Numbers 8:4). When it was consecrated, “the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God” (2 Chronicles 5:14); it was nevertheless desecrated and destroyed by the Babylonians in 587/586 B.C. “Nebu’zaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon ... burned the house of the Lord, and the king’s house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. ... And the pillars of bronze that were in the house of

the Lord, and the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of the Lord, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried the bronze to Babylon. And they took away the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the dishes for incense and all the vessels of bronze used in the temple service, the firepans also, and the bowls. What was of gold the captain of the guard took away as gold, and what was of silver, as silver (2 Kings 25:8-15).

The Second Temple, rebuilt when the people were allowed to return from the Babylonian captivity, was eventually renovated extensively by Herod the Great (73-4 B.C.). It is of that stunning temple that the disciples remarked, “Look, Teacher,



what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" (Mark 13:1). Later Rabbis said, "Whoever has never seen the temple of Herod has never seen a beautiful building" (Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 51b). As a matter of fact, the Emperor Titus himself stated that he would prefer not to destroy the Temple, as it constituted "the ornament of the Empire." Nevertheless, in 70 A.D. Titus gave order for the Roman army to thoroughly demolish the entire city and temple (Josephus, *Wars* 6.4.3; 7.1).

THE TEMPLE OF HOLY WISDOM IN CONSTANTINOPLE

The historian Cyril Mango once suggested that the world-famous *Hagia Sophia* – the Church of the Holy Wisdom – built by the Emperor Justinian, was the bridge that linked the early Christian period to the Byzantine Middle Ages.¹ That it marked the end of the ancient world there is little doubt. A new era in the development of Christian architec-

ture was to follow. Indeed, the emperor was widely recognized as a great builder. He is said to have built several dozen churches in Constantinople itself, not to mention other equally important projects elsewhere. Some of these buildings on a large scale are well-documented, even highly praised. The Transfiguration in the apse of the monastery of St. Catherine's on Sinai, say, is an example, as are the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna.

The church that the emperor built in the middle of Constantinople, as the city's main cathedral, undoubtedly ranks among his great achievements, second only to what he was able to realize in the area of Roman law, which until recently had influenced much of Europe. As we should expect, the exterior of the building (dedicated on December 2, 537) is impressive, even monumental, as it dominates the city's skyline. To paraphrase Edward Gibbon, it was the residence as well as the workmanship of the



Deity. As for the overall structure itself, we need only add, surprisingly, that it is not a circular building, but a central dome placed on a somewhat large square ground. It is not at any rate a “domed basilica,” even if it is described frequently in this way. The church that best fits this description is St. Irene, which is *Hagia Sophia*’s next-door neighbor.

Arguably, in contrast to its façade, it is the interior that is all-important, even overwhelming. The Nika riots which caused the previous *Hagia Sophia* to collapse in flames (532) was in fact a traditional rectangular basilica that had served its purpose. This became obvious and before long its replacement began in earnest, though it turned out to be substantially different in shape. It took five years for its completion. Its main architects were Anthimos of Tralles and Isidore of Miletus. Not surprisingly, neither architect failed to heed Justinian’s suggestions. Both were doubtless fully aware of his fame as builder of not only fortresses and monasteries, but of palaces and bridges, baths and churches. It seems rules were ignored at every stage to accommodate the emperor’s own ideas.

What at once amazes visitors above all is the presence of pure light that encloses the entire building. This was in part due to the incomparable dome that reaches 183 feet above the ground. It surpassed the ancient Roman Pantheon by 40 feet. Surprisingly, the typical visitor was often convinced that

the dome was suspended from above without anyone’s assistance. Actually, the light was diffused by the dome’s countless windows resting at its base. It is significant that the dome is high, broad, and heavy. Yet it manages to transfer its considerable weight onto four pendentives and a number of huge columns. Moreover, the columns are able to provide a further explosion of light with their multicolored marble. As the great Peter Brown recently insisted, these same columns slowly come alive “like a meadow in full flower.”² Indeed, the columns, we should remember, are twice as high if compared with other well-known contemporary churches.

Looked at broadly, this was fearless architecture altogether. Its vast, impressive floor space under a single dome was remarkable enough, even daring. To conclude cautiously, we need only emphasize that the architectural strength of the dome lay in part with its windows, that have the ability to fill the interior with light. It goes without saying that structures of this type increasingly became symbols of heaven and in time were adorned with the image of the Christ Pantocrator. To this day this remains typical of such buildings. Scripture insists, of course, “that he who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

It remains to draw attention to the Byzantine mosaics that survive within the space of this building. Two are especially noteworthy and deserve mention.



The first is the huge mosaic of the Panagia enthroned with the Christ-Child. It can be described as delicate and awesome. It was praised at length by Patriarch Photios, who was in attendance at its dedication (Ninth Century.) The other is also a mosaic of the Deesis and is, in its simple, silent beauty, no less extraordinary (Thirteenth Century.)

That such art could exist, and flourish, is a marvel in the life of a late and exhausted Byzantine Empire. Both are accessible through the upper gallery.

On the May 29, 1453, the Byzantine Empire collapsed and the Church of the Holy Wisdom, as we should expect, became a mosque. After the long Ottoman period (the familiar *Tourkokratia*), the building was transformed into a museum (1934). By order of Mustafa Kemal of Turkey, the mosque of the Haya Sophia was closed. Clearly, its one hundredth anniversary as a museum will become a reality in 2037. That it is to an unusual degree appropriate, even timely, that this should be honored is obvious. The Emperor Justinian would indeed be very proud. We need to recall that at its dedication, he shouted for all to hear, "Solomon, I have surpassed you." Evidently, his supreme self-confidence had yet to leave him.

"KNOW YE NOT...?": THE CHALLENGE OF BECOMING TEMPLES

In defiance of the countless calls and interventions coming from the United Nations Committee on Antiquities, from numerous governments

and cultural and religious agencies, the Turkish authorities have remained inflexible in their decision to re-convert *Hagia Sophia* into a mosque. On Friday July 24, 2020, President Erdogan spoke triumphantly about "Hagia Sophia breaking away from its chains of captivity." Shortly thereafter, the Muslim prayer service was conducted in the *Hagia Sophia*, now covered in turquoise carpets, with its ancient mosaics obscured by white drapes. The call to prayer, ringing out from the minarets, had drawn in an excited crowd in the hundreds of thousands. In the words of the new sultan, "This was the greatest dream of our youth. It was the yearning of our people and it has been accomplished."

Solomon is forever remembered for his wisdom and for erecting the Temple in Jerusalem. Justinian will be remembered as the emperor who built Holy Wisdom, one of the most important buildings in European history, and part of the precious triptych that also includes the Parthenon in Athens and St. Peter's in Rome. For better or worse, Mehmed II, Kemal Mustafa Atatürk, and now Recep Tayyip Erdogan have also etched their names into humanity's memory of *Hagia Sophia*.

We do, as we must, lament the vicissitudes of our times, the destruction, abuse, or neglect of the cultural patrimony that Christianity has offered the world over two millennia. But we should heed the admonishment of the Prophet Jeremiah, which also applies to us: "Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!'" (Jeremiah 7:4). The Wisdom and Glory of God is not something we can ever *possess*, entombed in stone and gold, in order to boast of it, make our name great, and be deceived into feeling righteous and secure. It is also not in buildings and carvings and images, no matter how exquisite, that God's Holy Wisdom and Glory resides. "Know ye not," writes the Apostle, "that *you* are the temple of God and that God's Spirit dwells in *you*?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). Indeed, it is *us* that God has fashioned as "icons of his ineffable Glory," unto "comeliness and beauty," as we chant in the Funeral service.

Perhaps divine providence has placed before us a much greater challenge, by directing us to the *one thing needful*

Dr. Aristeides Papadakis

1. Cyril A. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 55.
2. Peter Brown in *The New York Review of Books*, December 20, 2018, p. 54.



THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Michael Pagani, M.Th.

CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD, TRAMPLING DOWN DEATH BY DEATH, AND UPON THOSE IN THE TOMB BESTOWING LIFE. WE SING THIS ON PASCHA TO REJOICE IN THE RADIANT AND TRIUMPHAL FEAST OF CHRIST'S HOLY RESURRECTION. IN THIS FEAST WE HAIL THE DESTRUCTION OF SATAN'S HOLD OVER OUR BODY, MIND, AND SOUL. ON THIS FEAST OF FEASTS, WE PARTAKE IN THE GLORY AND LIGHT OF THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM. WE PROCLAIM VICTORY OVER THE SUFFERING AND THE DARKNESS OF OUR BROKEN WORLD. WHY THEN IS THE WORLD STILL SICK AND SUFFERING, WHEN CHRIST IS RISEN, AND THE ANGELS REJOICE? WHY DO WE STILL BATTLE DEMONIC FORCES, WHEN CHRIST IS RISEN, AND THE DEMONS ARE FALLEN? WHY DO WE STILL ENDURE UNJUST PAIN AND DEATH, WHEN CHRIST IS RISEN, AND LIFE REIGNS? WHY DO WE GROW OLD, SUFFER, AND DIE, WHEN CHRIST IS RISEN, AND NOT ONE DEAD REMAINS IN THE GRAVE?

Being Orthodox does not exempt us from these difficult questions. Trying to reconcile “why bad things happen to good people” with our proclamation of the Resurrection can lead us to question the mercy and goodness of God. When we experience sickness firsthand, whether our own, or that of our loved ones, we can fall into despair and wonder if Christ even cares for us. Does he care or hear our prayers? This is why it is important to understand the providence of God. We do not rely on “fate,” nor do we believe in a divine destiny chosen for us before we were even born. God’s providence is for us to be saved, but one of the greatest gifts is free will, so we need to choose to accept God’s providence.

In the words of St. John Chrysostom, “Christ never draws anyone to Himself by force and violence. He wishes all men to be saved, but forces no one.” In His perfect state of goodness and light, Christ’s presence has been part of every visible and invisible aspect of this world. St. Gregory Palamas tells us “God is wholly and entirely present in both His essence and in His energies.”¹ Maximus the

will with His divine will. When our hearts and minds are aligned with that of God, we enter into a state of *theoria*. This is the illumination by God’s light, and sharing in it, that brings us to salvation. An Orthodox Christian in a state of *theoria* is one in God’s light; in unceasing prayer. We must choose to be in God’s healing light and the loving presence of Christ. This is a union of our faith with the wisdom of God and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

It is our free choice to turn towards God, or away from Him. Sadly, our sinful choices have spawned sickness, despair, suffering, and death. We Christians must accept that our faith, or lack of faith, combined with our actions, determine our relationship with God. Grace is everywhere and abounds without limit, but it is our willingness to align with this boundless Grace, or turn away from Him, that determines God’s presence in our lives.

Vladimir Lossky (1903–1958) described faith as a “participatory adherence to the presence of Him Who reveals Himself.” The word *participatory* is an adjective indicating action, a movement towards

“Christ never draws anyone to Himself by force and violence. He wishes all men to be saved, but forces no one.”

St. John Chrysostom

Confessor wrote that the term *will* in regard to God is synonymous with *energy*, meaning a manifestation of “real existence.”² Christ’s divine energies permeate our world, and His presence resides in all things, seen and unseen. His presence is in all that is good and right, to which we can turn, rather than to the darkness and evil from the Fall. God’s energies have not changed since His Creation, nor are they subject to change, unlike those of mankind. God gave Adam the freedom to remain aligned with the goodness and light of God, or to reject God and align with the evil and darkness of the Devil. Adam chose to turn away from God.

The Orthodox term for the alignment of man’s will and God’s will is *synergia*. This freedom of will comes with our capacity to reason and discern truth. The perfect example of this alignment is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He is fully man and fully God with no separation. Christ aligned His human

God, rather than merely reasoned thoughts about Him. We are always either moving closer to God, or further from Him. The closer we move to God, the more we experience healing and light. The farther we move from the grace of God, the more our lives become burdened with sickness and darkness.

The Old Testament describes this fluctuation of movement toward God in anthropomorphic terms. In Psalms 142, we read: “In Thy righteousness shalt Thou bring my soul out of affliction, and in Thy mercy shalt Thou utterly destroy mine enemies.” Here, the providence of God seems to bring about both salvation and destruction. David’s desire to move closer to God brings his energies into “up-righteousness,” and separates him from the actions of his enemies, who are subject to the repercussions of their own actions. It is our choice to work with God or not, so we are responsible for the consequences.

The Ten Commandments, given to Moses by God in the book of Exodus, provide guidelines to turn away from evil and towards God. They are not a rule to satisfy the judgement of a legalistic God. They are wise guidance to live correctly. Our faith, reasoned actions, and active participation in spiritual growth, merge our mortal energies with the energies of God: truth, light, and love. When we stray outside the guidance given by or the teaching of the Church, we are making choices that results in sickness and death and move us away from God. However, our God is a merciful God, whose love for us remains steadfast. We can choose to confess, repent, and be granted mercy, forgiveness, and salvation.

Our earthly body is intricately connected to our soul and can be healed.³ St. Athanasius of Alexandria said, “For there is nothing that can exist which is not dependent upon the Logos.”⁴ The providence of God does not bring healing only to the physical body, or riches only to the faithful. Instead, it tends to the healing of the soul, and the riches stored in heaven. Even with perfect awareness and perfect unceasing prayer, we will suffer sickness, pain, disappointment, and death, because of the nature of the fallen world and our mortal bodies. On the other hand, we can only achieve salvation through our immortal bodies (spiritual bodies). Our “physical body” (1 Corinthians 15:44) possesses its own nature of corruption and destiny.⁵

If we are healed by Christ by turning to Him, can He still use illness to teach us? Isaac the Syrian says that sickness sometimes can be an unexpected tool of divine instruction: “God brings illnesses for the health of the soul.”⁶ He also explains, “Be vigilant over yourself and consider the multitude of remedies that the true Physician sends to you for the health of your inner man.”⁷

So what really constitutes healing in both secular medicine and the ministry of healing within the Church?

The answer is found in God’s gift of free will and in His providence. St. Isaac the Syrian states, “If we love virtue, then it is impossible that

the body not suffer from illness.”⁸ St. John of Damascus stated: “It is true that Christ has eliminated the necessity of sin, has put an end to the devil’s tyranny, and has removed the sting of death. But He has not ended sin, nor the actions of demons, nor physical death, nor in general the consequences of sin, for He did not want to violate the freedom of the human will which is the cause of these things.”⁹

The present state of man from the standpoint of the end of all things (the *eschaton*) is explained in 1 Corinthians 15:42–45: “As for the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption, it is sown in dishonor, is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown in a natural body it is raised in a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.”¹⁰

The connection between the spiritual body and the natural body of this life is demonstrated by the energies that resonate with, and influence, the healing process at every level of spiritual growth. The natural body speaks to the Holy Spirit in both thanksgiving and petitionary prayer. St. Athanasius states that “Christ having delivered the temple of His body to death, offered one sacrifice for all men to make them innocent and free from original guilt, and also to show Himself victorious over death and to create the first fruits of the General Resurrection with His own incorruptible body.”¹¹

The triumph of the physical (natural) body over death are what St. Paul tells us are the “fruits of the Spirit.” We have spoken of these attributes as the manifestation of a holy life. The physical actions, health, and peaceful state of being that permeates the Body of Christ is reflected in each person to the degree that they progress towards *theoria*. Christ makes it possible for us to triumph in a nature corrupted by sin.¹² This is the path we must follow in this life. To live as close to the source of

1. *Triads* 1, 3, and 10, p. 129.
2. John Meyendorff, “St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality” (SVS Press, 1974), p. 41
3. St. Maximus, *Ambigua*, Patrologia Graeca (P.G.), 91, 1088C.
4. *Oratio XXIII*, P.G., XXXVI
5. St. John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, II.12; St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Catechesis*, XXV.53–68 and 124–146.
6. St. Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetic Discourse*, p. 5.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
9. St. John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, IV.19.
10. *The Orthodox Study Bible*, NKJV (St. Athanasius Academy, 1982), p. 402.
11. St. Athanasius, *De incarnatione verbi* 30; P.G., 25, col. 148.
12. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (St. Vladimir’s Press, 1976), p. 100.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
14. *Adversus Macedonianos*, “*De spiritu Sancto*,” 1317, Vol. 13, P.G., XLV, A.
15. St. John Chrysostom, “Homily on the demons,” I.5; St. Basil, “Homily on God is not the cause of suffering,” p. 5.
16. Zacharias, *Remember Thy First Love* (Mount Thabor Publishing, 2016), p. 167.

The Ten Commandments, given to Moses by God in the book of Exodus, provide guidelines to turn away from evil and towards God. They are not a rule to satisfy the judgement of a legalistic God. They are wise guidance to live correctly.

17. The Orthodox Bible (NKJV) (St. Athanasius Academy, 1982), p. 229.
18. St. John Chrysostom, "Homilies on the demons," p. I. 5.
19. St. John Chrysostom, "Homilies on 2 Timothy," p. X.
20. St. John Chrysostom, "Homily on the parable of the debtor," p. V.
21. Hierotheos, "The Science of Spiritual Medicine," (Theotokos Monastery, 2010), p. 195.

incorruptibility as we can; to move to purify ourselves at each stage; to be infused with His light; to sit in the silent prayer of *theoria*. The battle is not easy to fight, because we are constantly faced with the thought of our sins and the forces of darkness. However, the healing light and knowledge of the Holy Spirit will surround us if we pray as the Holy Theotokos does: "Thy will be done."

The Holy Spirit also grants us the spiritual gifts of healing and miracles to combat the natural world, but does not make us immune to suffering and temptation. Our natural body is still subject to the forces of this fallen world. Therefore it is not immune to our biological weakness or our own volition. We are not powerless in this dispensation, because "the Godhead is manifested in the energies of this world. The Father appears as the possessor of the attributes, which is manifested, the Son as the manifestation of the Father, the Holy Spirit as He who manifests."¹³ St. Gregory of Nyssa declares: "The source of Power is the Father; the Power of the Father is the Son; the Spirit of the Power is the Holy Spirit."¹⁴

Healing and forgiveness are available at all levels in this world. The devil is powerless to harm those who have reached *theoria*. St. John Chrysostom states: "If the soul is in good health, bodily illnesses can in no way harm a man. Illness, then, is only evil in appearance."¹⁵

The external and internal conflicts of illness, passions, and persecution serve as tools toward our ultimate healing and deification. Father Sophrony states: "We have said that grace is first given to us by God because He wants us to overcome the world by abandoning its ways. But the second period has an even higher aim: to eradicate the world from within ourselves and to bring our spiritual life to perfection."¹⁶ John 6:45 states, "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me."¹⁷

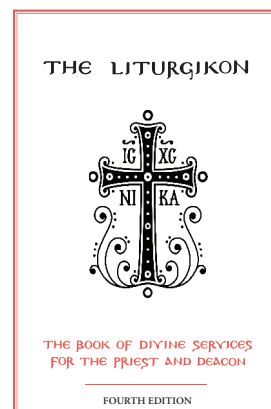
Even in illness, disease, and attacks from demons, God can teach us how to grow closer to Him. He provides us with the means to sustain balance of body and mind. St. John Chrysostom tells us that: "There is evil, which properly speaking, is not evil, even though it bears that name such as illness, and other things of that sort. If they were truly evil, they would not be able to become for us the source of a multitude of blessings."¹⁸

Illness, both physical and mental, is not evil, but can be a temptation that would turn us away from God and others. It can cause separation, despair, and anger, by restraining our created energies in a loop of self-reflection. St. John Chrysostom tells us: "As a consequence of Adamic sin and effect of sin perpetuated in a fallen world, together with demonic activity, illnesses manifest the misery of humanity separated from God. In the corruption and suffering of the body, one experiences the weakness of one's earthly being, the ephemeral character of one's existence in this world and generally speaking one's fragility, inadequacy, contingency and personal limits which reflects the illness of our entire fallen state."¹⁹ The most revealing passage from St. John Chrysostom is: "Afflictions, illness, ill health and the pains that our bodies experience ... are counted for the remission of our trespasses."²⁰

Every time we pray for healing of others and for ourselves, we ask for mercy and forgiveness of sins through the incarnate God, Jesus Christ. His wisdom gives us the salve of health and allows us to desire a virtuous life through our suffering and tribulations. St. Gregory Palamas says: "Misfortunes help the faithful to put right sins, to become trained and experienced, to apprehend the wretchedness of this life, and to desire fervently and seek diligently the eternal adoption as sons, redemption and truly new life and blessedness."²¹

Our discernment of what needs to be healed for the sake of sustaining our continued physical and mental participation in the world is what remains to bring us closer to God. We should not wish for illness or tribulation, and when they affect us (which they will), we should not blame God. We should thank Him for the opportunity to struggle with our sins, and grow from them, and seek repentance and forgiveness.

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ALMSGIVING

THE THIRD PILLAR OF ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY



Dr. Andrew Geleris, MD, and William Morrison

PRAYER, FASTING, AND ALMSGIVING ARE THE THREE PILLARS OF ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY. JESUS DEVOTED THE MIDDLE THIRD OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, MATTHEW CHAPTER 6, TO DISCUSSING THIS TRIAD. THEY ARE ALSO THE PREEMINENT FOCUS OF GREAT LENT.

Nurturing the faithful in our practice of the first two of these spiritual disciplines, prayer and fasting, has produced dramatic growth in American Orthodoxy since St. Herman first brought the faith to North America over two hundred years ago. Our geographic footprint has expanded across the continent. Endogenous growth, conversions from other Christian traditions, and immigration have filled many of our parishes. More recently, sacramental participation has increased from infrequent to weekly communion, and many traditional liturgical materials have been translated into English and are being used in many parishes. The

availability of many valuable patristic and monastic writings has exploded.

The third spiritual pillar, almsgiving, however, has received considerably less attention than prayer and fasting. By means of this article, we would promote an increase in the practice of this vital, life-giving, spiritual discipline. Practicing almsgiving, while maintaining our attention to prayer and fasting, will undoubtedly deepen the piety of our people and increase the effectiveness of our Church's witness to our spiritually starving culture. The resulting Spirit-filled Orthodoxy has the potential to fulfill our calling to become the hope of the world, the answer to every spiritual, financial, social, and economic problem that troubles our society.

LOOKING AT MONEY THE WAY JESUS DOES

First we will consider the completely different spiritual paradigm that Jesus used in discussing money, compared to the way we typically think of it. Then we will show how integrally almsgiving is woven into the tapestry of God's entire salvation economy. Finally, we will offer some practical suggestions for growing in the discipline of almsgiving.

Many parishes rarely teach about almsgiving, or even encourage reflection on it. Few retreats focus on this topic. This is not because of a lack of spiritual care on the part of pastors. On the contrary, it occurs precisely because they care so deeply. Pastors love their flocks so much that they instinctively recoil from adding to the financial burdens of any of their people, especially those who are poor. Sometimes, they also fear that talking about finances might compromise the spiritual integrity of their ministry: some parishioners might begin to question whether financial discussions are really covert fundraising efforts. Finally, the absence of a contemporary "theology of money," and the lack of significant training about finances in seminary and clergy conferences, often leads to the natural conclusion that financial discussions are fundamentally "less spiritual" than talking about topics like *love* or *forgiveness*. Many clergy and Orthodox institutional leaders therefore end up having a deeply ambivalent attitude to the topic of money. On the one hand, adequate financial resources are essential to fund vitally important spiritual ministries. On the other hand, they intensely dislike talking about such an unspiritual topic.

Jesus had no such ambivalence. Indeed, it sometimes appears that He considered teaching about money among the most profoundly spiritual ministries He had. When Jesus presented all three spiritual pillars in Matthew 6, over half of the chapter concerned financial matters: 10 verses address prayer, 3 fasting, and 14 finances. This financial emphasis is typical of the fact that throughout the Gospels Jesus taught far more frequently and extensively about money than any other single subject, including the topics we consider so spiritual, such as love, obedience, forgiveness, and sexual purity. He told more parables directly addressing financial issues than any other single subject, and many others employed significant financial metaphors. Even the

current liturgical consciousness of the Church emphasizes the importance of financial issues. In any calendar year approximately twenty percent of Sunday Gospel readings address significant financial topics.

This astonishing, indeed breathtaking, divergence between the frequency with which we talk about financial issues and that with which Jesus did flows out of our dramatically different spiritual paradigms. On those occasions when we, reluctantly, *do* talk about money in church, it is usually in the context of inviting people to prayerfully consider giving on behalf of some very worthy cause. These may include supporting the yearly parish budget, repairing a leaky roof, providing scholarships for young people to attend camp or even seminary, acquiring a new icon, constructing new facilities, or even helping the poor. While all of these causes are spiritually important, because our efforts are primarily focused on raising money for the purposes of ministry, these financial discussions are "money-centric" or "ministry-centric."

Jesus talked about money within a completely different spiritual paradigm. His intense, single-minded focus in every financial discussion, always and without exception, was on the significance of money for the hearts and souls of the people with whom He spoke. Thus, His financial discussions were entirely "person-centric" or "soul-centric." For example, Jesus did not tell the rich young ruler to distribute all his money to the poor in order to help the poor. It was entirely to remove a significant obstacle in this man's heart that prevented him from finding eternal life. Similarly, in the story of the sheep and goats concerning the Final Judgment in Matthew 25, Jesus did not ask people to give because the poor needed help. He urged people to give for the sake of their own souls, so that they would be included among the saved. Every one of the parables Jesus told about money emphasized the importance of using it righteously, for the sake of one's own personal relationship with God. He never did any kind of fundraising on behalf of the poor or worthy causes.

St. Paul also used this same "person-centric" paradigm. When he asked the Corinthians to contribute to the poor in Jerusalem, he said nothing about how much good these donations would do, or how desperately they were needed. Instead he asked them to give for their own sakes, and for the glory

of God. “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,” St. Paul wrote, “and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.... God loves a cheerful giver.... God is able to bless you abundantly.... your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God” (2 Corinthians 9:6, 7, 8, 11). Likewise, when St. Paul thanked the Philippians for their generous financial support, he said that what most pleased him about this donation was not the gift itself, “but ... the fruit that abounds to your account” (Philippians 4:17).

The reason our priests and other spiritual leaders should strongly consider adopting the “soul-centric” financial perspective of Jesus and St. Paul is that the desire for possessions and personal recognition are often the greatest competitors with the love of God and our neighbor within our hearts. The struggle that the rich young ruler faced often plays out on a smaller scale in each of our hearts. Jesus repeatedly emphasized the important relationship between our money and our hearts. He said, for example, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19–1). He also said, “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24).

Jesus impressed on His disciples the enormous spiritual importance of addressing the relationship between money and the ability of our souls to make spiritual progress. “The lamp of the body is the eye,” He said. “If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness” (Mt 6:22–23). Patristic theology teaches that the eye of the body to which Jesus refers is the *nous*, that part of man which, according to Kallistos Ware, “understands eternal truth about God.” The *nous* is to the body and soul of man as the sun is to the earth. With adequate sunlight, life on earth flourishes; without it, everything dies. In the same way, a clean *nous* is essential for growth in the spiritual life, while a darkened *nous* leads to spiritual death.

Every one of the parables Jesus told about money emphasized the importance of using it righteously, for the sake of one’s own personal relationship with God. He never did any kind of fundraising on behalf of the poor or worthy causes.

This concept has become a foundational precept of Orthodox pastoral theology. It is the basis of our teaching that purification from all kinds of different passions is essential in each person’s journey toward illumination and deification. What is often not appreciated about this teaching, however, is that Jesus proclaimed it as an integral part of an intense and extended discussion of finances. In the verses immediately before this passage, Jesus challenges His disciples to store up heavenly rather than earthly treasures. The verses immediately after consist of an extended encouragement to trust God for financial provision. Therefore, while purification from a variety of different passions is important, Jesus seems to place the highest possible priority on purification from financial passions.

A worthwhile spiritual exercise that would enable us to see the relationship of our money to our personal discipleship is to reflect on the following question: “In what ways do I currently use my money any differently than I would if I were not an Orthodox Christian?” We might consider doing this first as individuals, then in consultation with our spiritual fathers, and even in a small group with fellow parishioners or close friends. The goal is to identify areas of our financial lives that we can surrender to God, humbly praying for His “soul-

centric” healing. Wesley Wilmer wrote about the importance of such reflection: “Scripture consistently reminds us that if Christ is not first in the use of our money, He is not first in our lives. Our use of possessions demonstrates materially our spiritual status.”¹

THE VALUE OF ALMSGIVING

The second topic is the enormous spiritual value of almsgiving. One of the major obstacles to recognizing this value is linguistic. In English *alms* is an antiquated word with an extremely narrow meaning. We often think of almsgiving as giving a few dollars to a homeless man by the side of the road

or to a Lenten parish collection for the poor. Contrast this very constricted understanding of almsgiving to the expansive view we have of prayer and fasting. We view prayer as encompassing a variety of activities such as morning and evening prayers, participating in liturgical services, the Jesus Prayer, and even spiritual reading. We see fasting as including not only dietary restriction, but resisting a variety of sins, such as gossip, envy, and self-indulgence. A similarly expansive view of almsgiving would include not only giving to the poor, but every financial decision individuals and parishes make. It also involves nonfinancial acts of personal service. Indeed, some of the most profound almsgiving acts that anyone can ever accomplish have nothing to do with money.

The justification for expanding our view of almsgiving becomes apparent with a better understanding of this word's meaning. Oxford Professor of Theology David Downs wrote, "The Greek word *eleēmosunē*, often translated as "alms" or "almsgiving" can denote monetary or other material contributions to the poor, or more broadly, *eleēmosunē* can refer to attitudes or actions of mercy, kindness, or compassion."² A footnote to The Wisdom of Sirach 40:24, in The Orthodox Study Bible, says, "Almsgiving can be translated 'merciful giving.'"³ Therefore, it would be far more accurate to translate succinctly the Greek word *eleēmosunē* as *mercy-giving* and to substitute the word *mercy* for alms. Henceforth we will interchangeably use the terms *almsgiving* and *mercy-giving*, as well as the words *alms* and *mercy*.

This interchangeability shows us instantly the prominent, hidden-in-plain-sight place that almsgiving occupies in Orthodox worship, private prayer, and theology. "Lord, have mercy" is by far the most common liturgical prayer of the Orthodox faithful. It should now be clear that we could just as properly render this petition as "Lord, give alms." The faithful also frequently supplicate God to "have mercy," or "give alms," in the Trisagion Hymn, David's penitential Psalm 50 (51), and in their private morning, evening, and pre-communion prayers. Indeed, an appeal for God's mercy/alms constitutes the essence

of the most frequent prayer on the lips and in the hearts of the vast majority of Orthodox Christians, the Jesus Prayer. It should not surprise us that the long-hallowed spiritual discipline of almsgiving is a central element in our Orthodox liturgy and practice.

This centrality reflects the fundamental place almsgiving occupies in the entire Orthodox theology of salvation. One of the most astonishing revelations of the Gospel is that the way God answers our frequent prayers for mercy largely depends on how generously each of us practices "mercy-giving" toward other people. Many poor people in the world's most impoverished countries become

beggars out of desperate financial need. We, who are relatively rich, frequently beg out of desperate spiritual poverty. They hope that generous passersby will give them leftover scraps of food or a little money in order to sustain their earthly lives.

We hope that the Righteous Judge of the universe will mercifully allow us to enter eternal life.

The answers to the hopes of both these sets of beggars are inextricably intertwined. Shortly before the start of Great Lent, the Church urges us to soberly consider the Final Judgment. This is that fearsome day on which each of us discovers our eternal destiny, whether or not God will grant us the mercy we have requested innumerable times throughout our lives. The Gospel reading on this day from Matthew 25 teaches that the sole criterion that determines how God answers these prayers is whether we ourselves have shown mercy to needy people. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." John Chrysostom summarized this revelation of the relationship between rich and poor beggars. "The rich exist for the sake of the poor. The poor exist for the salvation of the rich."

Almsgiving does not save us transactionally, as though it wins us God's favor. This was the mistaken pharisaical way of thinking, against which both Jesus and St. Paul contended. Long before any of us had the slightest inkling of a desire to begin repenting, God had long since finished showing us His infinite and unconditional love. "But God

Almsgiving does not change God; it changes us. It does not cause God to love us more; it expands the capacity of our hearts to experience the love He already has for us.

demonstrates His own love toward us,” St. Paul wrote, “in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Almsgiving does not change God; it changes us. It does not cause God to love us more; it expands the capacity of our hearts to experience the love He already has for us. Increasingly growing into His likeness allows us to achieve the ultimate goal of life, to “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). In theological terms we often call the process by which this occurs *theosis*, or deification. In his oration “On the Love of the Poor,” Gregory of Nyssa clearly stated how efficacious “mercy giving” is for accomplishing this process: “Mercy and good deeds are works God loves; they divinize those who practice them and impress them into the likeness of goodness, that they may become the image of the Primordial Being”

Almsgiving helps us grow in the likeness of two fundamental and complementary aspects of God’s character, His generosity and His mercy. God the Father demonstrated the unfathomable magnitude of His awe-inspiring generosity by sacrificially giving on the world’s behalf the most valuable treasure He could possibly bestow, His only begotten Son (John 3:16). St. Paul described the amazing generosity of Jesus, who “though He was rich, yet for your sake ... became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Not only these deeds, but the stars in the sky, the delicacy and rich color of flowers, majestic mountains, the beauty of sunsets, and many other aspects of nature show that Creation itself overflows with the awe-inspiring generosity of God. If any of us wants to grow more into His likeness, this will necessarily include becoming more generous.

It will also involve becoming more merciful. The Scriptures repeatedly describe God’s merciful concern for the welfare of financially vulnerable people, especially widows and orphans. The combination of the magnitude of His power and glory, and the humility of this concern, provides a stark contrast to the frequently self-indulgent preoccupations of many of the rich and powerful around us. In describing God’s concern for the poor, Moses said, “He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow” (Deuteronomy 10:18). David describes God as “a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows” (Psalm 68:5). Isaiah urged, “Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:17). Hosea says of God, “In you the fatherless finds mercy.” The

Apostle James said, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” (James 1:27). God Himself sternly warned those who do not care for the poor: “You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless” (Exodus 22:22–24).

God’s most definitive statement, however, concerning the priority he places on both generosity and mercy towards the poor occurred at the inauguration of Jesus’ messianic ministry at the synagogue in Nazareth. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Jesus proclaimed the mission statement of His entire Spirit-filled incarnational presence in the world. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18–19).

By enabling us to grow increasingly into God’s likeness, the primary beneficiary of any act of generosity or mercy that we perform is not the needy poor that we help, but we ourselves who do the giving. According to Vladimir Lossky, God’s love engulfs the entire universe, penetrating into its every nook and cranny. The difference between heaven and hell is how each person experiences this love. “The love of God,” wrote Lossky, “will be an intolerable torment for those who have not acquired it within themselves. According to St. Isaac the Syrian, ‘those who find themselves in Gehenna will be chastised with the scourge of love It is not right to say that the sinners in hell are deprived of the love of God. But love acts in two different ways, as suffering in the reprobated, and as joy in the blessed.’”⁴ Archimandrite Sophrony wrote something similar concerning what he learned from St. Silouan the Athonite, “God is love, absolute love embracing every living thing in abundance. God is present in hell, too, as love... Even in hell Divine love will embrace all men, but, while this love is joy and life for them that love God, it is torment for those who hate Him.”⁵

The blessedness of those who love is a reality not only in eternity, but in this life as well. “According

to [Dumitru] Staniloae, divinization is not only an eschatological gift, but it is also something to be achieved during this life, and then continually fulfilled in eternity.”⁶ This explains why the singularly most distinctive characteristic of all profoundly generous people is the ineffable sense of joy that radiates from their presence, or rather, the energies of God within them.

Emphasizing the importance of almsgiving should not diminish the value we place on the disciplines of prayer and fasting. We must never isolate any of these activities from the others. The purification available through prayer and fasting is essential for the sake of giving out of love, rather than for selfish motives. As St. Paul said, “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3). On the other hand, according to St. Isaac the Syrian, the proof that prayer and fasting have purified us is an all-consuming desire for almsgiving. “This will be for you a clear sign of your soul’s limpid purity: when after thoroughly examining yourself, you find that you are full of mercy for all mankind.” He then goes on to describe the value of this desire in achieving *theosis*: “When it (a desire for mercy for all mankind) is continually present, the image of the heavenly Father will be seen in you.”⁷

Becoming a merciful and generous person is a formidable challenge for those of us living in our highly materialistic American culture. When our frequent failures to accomplish this tempt us to despondency, it is worth noting that Jesus’ disciples also faced this temptation on at least one occasion. It prompted them to cry out to Jesus, “Who then can be saved?” We can all find hope and consolation in the answer that He gave to their question: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:25, 26).

Dr. Andrew Geleris, MD, and William Morrison

1. *Revolution in Generosity*, p. 25.
2. *Alms: Charity, Reward, and Atonement in Early Christianity*, p. 7.
3. P. 966.
4. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 234.
5. Saint Silouan the Athonite, *Archimandrite Sophrony* (Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991), pp. 115, 148.
6. Radu Bordeianu, *Dumitru Staniloae: An Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, p. 48.
7. *Homilies*, Appendix A, Chapter V.

CLERGY WIVES MEET ONLINE



On October 16–17, 2020, clergy wives from around the country and the world, and from many Orthodox jurisdictions, gathered virtually to hear His Grace Bishop JOHN (Abdalah) share wisdom with us. The sessions, entitled, “Come Take Ye Light from the Light,” were a consideration of that life-altering proclamation and invitation we all receive on Pascha night. In appreciation of the myrrh-bearing women who rose at first light to go to the empty tomb, we explored response to this proclamation and to the weekly Eothina Gospels, which proclaim the risen Christ to us each week. This virtual opportunity replaced our annual Pan Orthodox Clergy Wives Weekend that has been held at the Antiochian Village since 2009, first planned by the late Khouria Stefanie Yazge in honor and memory of Kh. Joanne Abdalah. We have carried on since Kh. Stefanie’s passing in 2017, and were able to offer an opportunity to gather virtually this year.

Over the course of Friday evening and Saturday, across time zones and continents, attendees were able to participate in three sessions with Sayidna JOHN, experience Friday evening Compline and Saturday morning prayers and a Trisagion service to remember those clergy wives now reposed. Time was also made to engage in a lively social gathering via Zoom on both Friday night and Saturday afternoon. Connections were made, existing friendships were enlivened and renewed, and everyone got to re-charge and re-fresh themselves in the company of other women who worship, live, and work in various corners of Christ’s Holy Vineyard.

Through our sessions with Bishop JOHN, which included opportunities for questions and answers, we explored *this light* that shines within us and within all people, that comes from God, and reflect on how best to return that light to Him. On Sunday morning during Orthros, we were reminded that as the Priest proclaims the Eothinon Gospel, he is at the very tomb of Christ, where the myrrh-bearing women found themselves on the first day of the week.

Sayidna reminded us that we are the people of the Resurrection. As we each live and participate in the community to which we have been sent in our own



dom that is found only in God Himself.

In addition to the privilege of these enlightening and encouraging sessions, attendees were able to view a beautifully prepared photo montage of past CWW gatherings that was prepared by Kh. Kellylynn Barberg. They also could watch a series of pre-recorded “Clergy Wife Clips” offering a glimpse into the interests, talents, and expertise of a number of fellow clergy wives. In the absence of taking a walk, engaging in a meal-time conversation, or staying up for a late-night chat, participants were able to get to know a few clergy wives a little better, and to be inspired by what inspires them.

It is our hope that we will be able to return to the Antiochian Village in the future to enjoy one another’s company and to strengthen and renew ourselves as we have before. In the meantime, we are grateful to God, to his Grace Bishop JOHN, to Kh. Luanne and her daughter Christi Barr, who provided technical expertise, and to all the clergy wives who were able to make time to gather in this way. God willing, using a virtual platform in the future, we can continue to meet and get to know clergy wives from across our Archdiocese and country, as well as those who serve with their husbands across the world.

If you are a clergy wife and would like to hear about other opportunities in the future, please email: Khin-theekh@gmail.com.

individual and important ways, we add our prayers, so that each community can become a part of the *royal priesthood* about which St. Paul writes. Our “identity” in the parish should be unique and right-sized for each of us. Sayidna JOHN reminded us that it is in the *being*, more than in the *doing*, that we can embody this light. He reminded us of the courage, steadfastness, and gratitude necessary for the myrrh-bearing women to return to the tomb and properly care for the body of Jesus.

We had an opportunity to hear Sayidna speak about other aspects of our journey as priest wives, but also as children of God. We could ask questions of him and each other as we reflected on the universal human drive to seek righteousness, self-control, and the free-

A LIFE WELL-LIVED IN GOD’S SERVICE

VERY REVEREND

DR. JOSEPH JAMES ALLEN

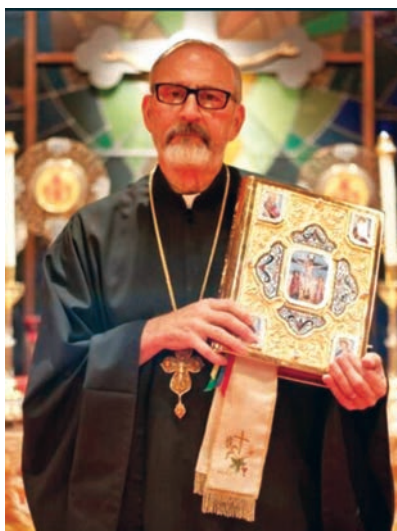
(1943–2020)

Very Rev. George Kevorkian

Father Joseph Allen often remarked, “I have had a very varied ministry.” This was his humble summation of fifty-three years in God’s service as a parish priest, educator, scholar, and author.

Joseph James Allen was born on January 31, 1943, in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. He spent his childhood in Allentown, Pennsylvania’s sixth ward, an immigrant, multi-ethnic, working class neighborhood that included a sizeable Middle Eastern Christian community. This experience was formative for his eventual ministry, helping to shape his openness to people from all backgrounds and ways of life.

Always an athlete, he turned down an offer to play minor league baseball in favor of his priestly calling and was ordained to the priesthood at the age of 24. Fr. Joe was assigned as pastor of St. Anthony Antiochian Orthodox Church in Bergenfield, New Jersey, the country’s first pan-Orthodox Antiochian Orthodox parish that embraced diversity. This began his fifty-three-year ministry, in which he served several generations of parishioners. He comforted them during times of loss and celebrated with them during times of joy ... including hitting a home run at the church picnic baseball game – a surprise for those who did not know about his earlier career option. The secret to Fr. Joseph’s success as a pastor was his humility and humanity; his flock loved him for being not simply empathetic, but relatable, for sharing their joys and sorrows as a married man with two sons, and eventually four grandchildren.



Father Joseph’s influence as a scholar and educator went far beyond his beloved role as a parish priest. After graduating from Kutztown College, he attended St. Vladimir Orthodox Seminary in Yonkers, New York, graduating with a Master of Divinity degree. Subsequently, he earned an additional masters degree from Columbia University’s Union Seminary and a doctorate from General Theological Seminary. As the only Orthodox theologian in the United States with a doctorate in pastoral theology at that time – the theology of caring for the flock of believers – Fr. Joe soon became a beacon of light in his field.

Multiple generations of clergy and laity have been influenced by Fr. Joe’s dedication to education, first through his teaching on the faculties of St. Vladimir’s and Holy Cross seminaries, and later by his roles in creating and leading programs reaching a global audience. His desire to share and educate made him an unlikely trailblazer in distance learning. With the support of Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice-blessed memory, Fr. Joseph led the Antiochian House of Studies and founded the St. Stephen’s correspondence course that eventually reached thousands of students around the world.

As a prolific author, Fr. Joe wrote and edited 13 theological works, in addition to countless articles for a multitude of Christian publications. His works were translated into several languages, including the Italian version of his book, *Inner Way*, which infused pastoral education with modern psychology, and was used to teach at the Vatican.

Recently, Fr. Joe suffered from declining health but continued to innovate in his ministry. When he retired from his parish as Pastor Emeritus in December 2019, he launched a project to organize and publish podcasts of his numerous lectures recorded across his decades of service. Sadly, Fr. Joe died unexpectedly in August at the age of 77. He is survived by his wife Khouria Valerie, by sons Phillip (wife, Raghda) and Joseph (wife, Kristin), and by four grandchildren who plan to honor his focus on education through the Father Joseph Allen Memorial Fund at St. Anthony parish.

Among his many leadership roles, the Very Reverend Doctor Joseph J. Allen served as Chair of the Antiochian Archdiocese Department of Theological and Pastoral Education, Vicar General of the Antiochian Archdiocese, and Chaplain of the Order of St. Ignatius. His contributions and dedication were recognized with the highest awards, including the Antonian Gold Medal of Merit and the Order of St. Raphael of Brooklyn.

On a personal note, I am honored to have known him as my “big brother” in Christ. He was an enthusiastic supporter of my journey to the priesthood and a pastoral mentor on many levels. He never hesitated to help with any request for assistance, and he honored every question no matter how naïve it sounded. He had a remarkable skill at giving feedback (always very direct) while still conveying the great love that he had. The greatest challenge

for all of the priests who have known him will be for us to strive to emulate his model of true pastorship.

There are not enough accolades to honor this humble man of grace, who was great, yet with no awareness or concern for his own standing – a man who welcomed all and lived by the example of faith, hope and love. He has left us a legacy and body of work that will influence many for decades to come. His model of a true Christian life was perhaps best expressed in his own words at his retirement dinner in December, 2019:

We are reminded how lacking our human connections are We are hooked up to everything and connected to no one. We have access to everything over the Internet, but one simply doesn't get human contact through the Internet. That's a fundamental understanding. And yet the connection which God has made with us as Christians through the Christ Child is precisely what we need to be to each other. The world of technology is supposed to free us, but often it is using up all our time instead. People have got to know that there is more to life than just ourselves; and that is where God begins. My unending message is this: serve Him by loving and serving others in His name.

May the Lord grant rest to his servant, the priest Joseph, where the saints repose, and may his memory be eternal!

Very Rev. George Kevorkian

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JOSEPH ELIAS LOUIS

FROM SYRIA TO SILICON VALLEY

Fr. Samer Youssef, D.Min., and Dn. John Dibs, M.Div.



On two summer afternoons in 2020, with COVID-19 restrictions in the air, Joseph (Joe) Louis, a long-time parishioner of Church of the Redeemer Antiochian Orthodox Church in Los Altos Hills, California, shared his life story. Joe's home in the hills of Los Gatos offers a commanding view of Silicon Valley, where Joe has studied and worked since 1964. This unassuming man has contributed his talent and resources to building up the church and has left a legacy to the communities in Silicon Valley.

Joe was born in 1941 in Homs, Syria. His father was an orphan from World War I and worked as a bricklayer. Joe is the seventh of nine children, and sometimes had to miss school to help with his father's work. Joe finished at the top of his class from the government high school, the only sibling in his family to attend high school. While growing up, he was outspoken and defended those around him who were treated unfairly.

When he was 20 years old, an opportunity arose to continue his study in America. Joe was able to obtain a Syrian passport and permission to leave the country to fulfill his dream of becoming a civil engineer. Joe saw the chance to



study in America as mostly for rich families from Syria, but he knew he had to work hard to make it through school. Joe had a great love for his family and his country, but a new opportunity overseas gave him a path forward.

In 1961, Joe left Syria to the United States bound for the University of Montana. He remembers seeing his mother running after the bus in downtown Homs. That was the last time he saw her, as she died before he was able to return to Syria. Joe took his first-ever airplane trip to Washington, D.C., where he joined a few dozen foreign students from around the world for six weeks of intensive instruction in English. One of the students in the group from Syria, Fatehi Taher, became a lifelong friend, and both would go on to finish studies at San Jose State University in California.

From Washington, D.C., Joe boarded a Greyhound bus to his new school. It was winter, and after traveling through several states Joe was dropped off in downtown Bozeman, Montana. Outside it was minus 27 degrees, and he didn't have a winter coat. Furthermore, no one could be reached at the school since it was the Christmas break. He connected with friends of the school, Bart and Helen Nordling, who picked him up and kept him at their home until school started. The Nordlings became lifelong friends, and later visited Joe after he had settled in California. Mr. Nordling owned a local car dealership, helped Joe purchase his first car, and taught him how to drive. Joe remembers leaving Montana at the end of 1963 when JFK was assassinated.

Joe earned his way through college. After transferring to Cal Poly Pomona in Southern California, he ironed shirts in his college dorm for 85 cents an hour. A year later, as a student at San Jose State University, he worked as a cab driver and sometimes slept in his car. Joe attributes his success in getting through this time to the fact that he did not come from a wealthy family. He saw the hand of God protecting him in leaving Syria and arriving in California. Joe graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from San Jose State in 1969.

PROFESSIONAL AND CIVIC LIFE

Joe began his civil engineering career right out of college, working for the City of Saratoga Department of Public Works and the civil engineering firms of Ruth & Going and Cregan & DeAnglo

until 1977. He then formed the partnership of Louis and Dederich, Inc., and in 1981 became the sole proprietor, renaming the company Louis Engineering Corporation. The offices were at First Street in downtown San Jose, right across the street from the old City Hall.

Joe and his engineering firm worked on many prominent construction projects and roadways, including the Almaden Expressway, leading his colleagues and friends to marvel at how his work touched the lives of so many. The firm also completed the civil planning and surveying for Highway 85, a vital freeway that stretches through the heart of Silicon Valley. For his involvement, Joe was given the honor of being on the first drive at the Grand Opening on October 19, 1994, and was awarded a plaque by Caltrans.

Since the 1970s Joe has been involved in land planning and the acquisition and management of residential real estate. In 1982 he founded MJM Land Developer Co., Inc., specializing in residential real estate purchases and land development. Today the firm, run by his children, manages several large apartment complexes. Joe was a valued member of the Tri-County Apartment Association, which had an office in the same building as Louis Engineering. Along with other land and housing owners, the economic recession of the 1990s hit particularly hard, but Joe persevered. He often describes Silicon Valley as a place of opportunity and "pure paradise."

Joe became involved in civic and professional organizations early in his career. He was the founder of the Silicon Valley Engineering Council, president of the California Society of Professional Engineers, and president of the Engineers Club of San Jose. Professional memberships include the American Society of Civil Engineers, American Public Works Association, and National Society of Professional Engineers. In 2007 Joe was honored as a recipient of the Distinguished Alumni of the Charles W. Davidson College of Engineering at San Jose State University.

In the area of civic life, Joe has supported K-12 and higher education, and has worked with and contributed to San Jose State University and the Saratoga Education Foundation. He also served on the Sheriff's Advisory Board. In 1989, Joe founded and was first president of the Arab-American Congress of Silicon Valley. In 1995, he established the Arab-American Cultural Center in downtown San

Jose, which provides cultural, educational, and referral services for the community at large. In 2007, Joe was asked to attend a meeting in Washington, D.C., on U.S. policies towards Iraq and Palestine. True to his character, Joe took the opportunity to speak his mind freely and questioned the assumptions prevailing in the government.

CHURCH AND FAMILY LIFE

From the first to fifth grades, Joe attended a Catholic elementary school, and from the sixth to ninth, an Orthodox school, where he served as an altar server. The church provided necessities that his family couldn't always provide. At school, Joe remembers having the task of escorting students who got into trouble to the head of the school for disciplining.

Joe's sense of duty to his home country of Syria led him back in 1972. He wished to see his family, as well as support Syria during a period of tensions in the Middle East. Joe put his engineering education to work as a civilian worker, helping with designing and building airport runways. Joe became a U.S. citizen in 1973, and in 1974 married Najah Hanna in Beirut, Lebanon.

In 1986, Joe traveled to see his family in Syria, and from that point on, visited every year. Most of Joe's family still lives in Homs, a city a hundred miles north of Damascus. On his first visit back, Joe remembers kissing his father's feet in thanks for letting him leave to America. Joe's mother had passed away in 1965, when he had been away at school. Joe's father died in 2010 at the age of 104. Joe and Najah now have four children and six grandchildren.

Over the course of the years living in Silicon Valley Joe has served in various capacities on the Parish Council at Church of the Redeemer. He has chaired the Men's Auxiliary and Church Building committees. Joe was one of the original guarantors for the loan for the original church, and along with those in the parish community, he suffered through the arson attack on the church on April 7, 2002, and its subsequent rebuilding to the glory of God. Joe has generously shared his financial means towards the building of a new parish hall and education building.

Growing up in Syria, Joe was nourished by the church. He considers the Church a vital part of his life, through which he feeds others from the gifts that God has given him.

Fr. Samer Youssef, D.Min., and Dn. John Dibs, M.Div.

ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

ORDINATIONS

McCOY, Timothy (Brad) McCoy to the Holy Diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on October 11, 2020 at St. Ignatius Church, Florida, NY. Dn. Timothy is attached to the said church.

REPOSED

MORRIS, Archpriest John W. (Warren B. Morris, Jr.) January 15, 2021 at his home in Vicksburg, Mississippi. He is survived by his son, Matthew, who had been taking care of him since the passing of Khouria Cheryl Haun Morris this past August; his daughter Elizabeth, her husband Brian, and his granddaughter Maria Sophia.

Fr. John spent nearly 40 years serving proudly as a priest in the Antiochian Archdiocese at Holy Spirit Church in Huntington, West Virginia; St. John Chrysostom Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana; St. George Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Holy Cross Church in Canton, Ohio; St. Nicholas Church in Shreveport, Louisiana; Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste Church in Sugarland, Texas; and St. George Church in Vicksburg where he retired. Fr. John travelled the country doing work with the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue, served as a guest speaker at conventions, and went to the Philippines to train new Orthodox Christian priests.

ROUMIE, Deacon Matthew (Adib) Habib, January 5, 2021, on the Eve of Theophany. Deacon Matthew, was loved and respected by all and will be missed. He leaves behind his precious wife of 51 years Hanni, his children who were his true pride and joy: son Christopher and wife Angela, grandchildren Kayla, Ella and Evan; daughter Christianne and husband Ken, grandchildren Christopher and Hannah; and daughter Pauline and husband David. He is preceded in death by his sister Lily. He also leaves behind three younger siblings George, Violet and Joseph along with cousins, nieces, and nephews around the world.

After retiring as a pharmacist for over 30 years, Deacon Matthew dedicated his life to God and the Church, fulfilling his dream of becoming a deacon only a few short years ago. He was generous, kind, smart, and had a charm and witty sense of humor, keeping his family and friends always smiling and laughing. We hold these memories close in our hearts.

RIZKALLAH, Archdeacon Issa Saleem on January 11, 2021 surrounded by his children. Issa was born in Ramallah, Palestine in 1943 and immigrated to Michigan in 1967 with his bride, Afaf. Together they raised four children and were blessed with 34 years of marriage. Issa and Afaf dedicated their lives to raising their children, teaching them the importance of family, church, and community.

Archdeacon Issa is preceded in death by his wife, Afaf, brother, Jabra and his parents. He leaves behind his children, Nancy (Neil), Saleem (Rebecca), Samer (Sandy) and Ron as well as his brother, Edward and sister Mary (Rizkallah) and many nieces and nephews. He is Cido to Lauren, Zachary, Jesse, Jonah, Aiden, Austin and Andrew.

Issa's second home was St. Mary's Basilica in Livonia. Since 1972, Issa has been serving his church, first as a chanter, then in 1996, was ordained as St. Mary's first deacon. It was a huge milestone in Issa's life as well as St. Mary's history. Then in 2012, Deacon Issa was given the highest honor by Metropolitan Philip to be elevated as an archdeacon. Only a few people in the entire United States hold this title. Archdeacon Issa and Fr. George Shalhoub hold a special bond – rarely do you see one of them without the other...they are truly brothers in Christ. They spent 50 years serving the parishioners of St. Mary Basilica: from officiating weddings, visiting the sick, to supporting parishioners in both celebrations and sadness. Additionally, Issa had special bonds with the entire clergy at St. Mary's, especially Fr. Jim King, who was like a son to Issa.

All who knew Archdeacon Issa knew that his smile would light up a room – he loved his community and was dedicated to helping those in need. Archdeacon Issa loved to laugh, and he loved to make people laugh. He had friends everywhere – he was passionate about

family and dedicated his life to serving the Lord.

AL-KHOURY, Bishop LUKE. In the hope of resurrection and eternal life, it was with great sadness that His Beatitude John X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, announced the repose of Bishop Luke Al-Khoury, who fell asleep in the Lord on the evening of January 5, 2021 in Beirut Hospital. The Bishop served as a Patriarchal Assistant to Patriarch John.

The funeral was held at the St. Nicholas Cathedral in Zahle at 11:00 a.m. local time on Wednesday, January 6, and a funeral service was held at the Patriarchal Cathedral in Damascus at 3 p.m. local time, also on January 6. Condolences will be received on Thursday and Friday, January 7-8, in the hall of the Church of the Holy Cross from 6-8 p.m. local time.

On behalf of his brother hierarchs, the clergy, Archdiocese Board of Trustees, and of all the faithful, His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph offers most sincere prayers and condolences upon the repose of Bishop Luke.

Kids' Food Basket

Thank You Saint Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church

Good food is the foundation of good health, and good health is the foundation of a good future. Thank you for addressing immediate hunger needs and ensuring long-term impact for our community's children. Your support is nourishing thousands of West Michigan kids to reach their full potential. We couldn't do this important work without YOU.

Dear KFB,

Thank you for giving us healthy food. I love the diggers that are on the bags. Those bags inspire me to be healthy and also be the same thing as you. Thanks for helping use alot.

Sincerely,
Iris Groz



Department of Charitable Outreach Food for Hungry People & Charitable Outreach Charitable Grant Program

Our Antiochian churches have, for many years, engaged in charitable outreach programs in their individual communities and **donated to the FFHP&CO Program to respond to world needs. Recognizing that** the Archdiocese will continue to respond to world needs, FFHP&CO **through the Archdiocese Department of Charitable Outreach** recognizes the responsibility to assist churches through a structured process to combat hunger and its related effects in North America.

The Department of Charitable Outreach will accept proposals for funding to assist Antiochian parishes and/or parish organizations establish, strengthen, and expand charitable programs. Applications for funding, including all required documentation and signatures, must be completed in accordance with the procedures below. The Grant Oversight Committee will approve funds for limited, specific purposes but not for general, ongoing sustaining of programs **on an ongoing basis as**

funds are available. Consideration will be given to fund the following:

- Expansion of well-established charitable programs
- Establishment of new charitable initiatives. [Such funding may be granted to new programs to help cover legal expenses incurred in applying for 501c(3) status.]
- Emergency Funding, to be given on a one-time basis.

Decisions of the Committee will be final and cannot be appealed.

Procedures for Funding

The following procedures must be followed by all churches and church organizations applying for funding.

Proposals may be delivered electronically through email to:

athomas@antiochian.org

Optional relevant materials may be submitted to supplement the Grant Application form. Please number additional pages and note attachments on the application form.

Food for Hungry People Program “A Gift from the Heart” Celebrate by Giving

Here is an additional and special way to give to the poor and hungry and your friends at the same time throughout the year.

You can give your gifts to the hungry in honor of a loved one on any occasion such as a birthday, baptism, anniversary, thank you, retirement or any other special event. “A Gift from the Heart” is also a thoughtful memorial.

Please include this coupon along with your donation. We will send a personalized icon card to the person you designate to inform them of the gift you gave in their honor.

Send coupon and check to:
“Food For Hungry People”
c/o Robin Lynn Nicholas
4237 Dundee Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Given by _____

In Honor of _____

Send card to _____

Gift Amount \$ _____ (Please check one)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baptism | <input type="checkbox"/> Anniversary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas | <input type="checkbox"/> Thank you |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Birthday | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

CYCLIST FROM SAINT MARY, HUNT VALLEY, COMES IN FIRST IN IOCC VIRTUAL BIKE RIDE



Saint Mary's Church in Hunt Valley, Maryland, is very proud of our parishioner,

Nate Szelistowski, who came first in the IOCC Virtual Bike Ride on September 26, 2020. Nate joined many other teams and individuals who cycled across the country and (across the globe!), outdoors or indoors, on a standard or stationary bike, to raise funds and awareness for IOCC programs. In addition to riding for IOCC and their work in Lebanon, he showed his solidarity with the people of Lebanon by wearing Lebanon's national colors in the aftermath of the explosion in Beirut on August 4, as well as the Lebanese struggles with Covid-19, hyperinflation, political crises, and instability.

Nate, who is long time member of our parish, and actively involved with our Teen Soyo and Young Adults, has always had a passion for cycling. We are all incredibly grateful for Nate's passion for cycling that enabled him, with much training leading up to race day, to complete the longest ride of the event – 100 miles – and to raise the most money. IOCC was able to raise \$13,580, beating its fundraising goal of \$10,000.

Well done to Nate on his ride and fundraising success, and our deepest thanks for his commitment to help IOCC and their work around the world.

ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH COVID 19 RELIEF DONATION

In September, St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan became one of the first parishes to receive a grant from the Archdiocese's *Food for Hungry People* (FFHP) *Charitable Outreach* program. As announced to the delegates assembled at last year's Archdiocese Convention held here in Grand Rapids, the program that parishioners throughout the Archdiocese have donated to for many years through the familiar coin boxes was making a major change. In addition to sending donations in for distribution, FFHP would now receive local requests to distribute some of the funds received. Our parish applied for grant funds to assist local children and families in West Michigan impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and with great joy, we received the news that the grant had been awarded in the amount of \$10,000. Our parish used this grant to support *Kids' Food Basket*, a local charity that has received nationwide attention for their efforts to feed needy children and families. This need increased greatly during the pandemic and its associated shutdowns, as so many endured furloughs and layoffs. During the pandemic, *Kids' Food Basket* is playing an even more critical role in bringing healthy food to low-income children and families in West Michigan. Through their emergency food response program, they are working diligently to redirect food to families with children living in low food access neighborhoods and are helping community food pantries and food clubs restock their fresh produce. In the past 29 weeks, *Kids' Food Basket* has distributed over 479,909 emergency meals at

70 community distribution sites located in densely populated areas serving low-income families.

"We believe our mission at St. Nicholas is to seek and share Christ's love with everyone in our area, but especially the neediest among us. In the midst of this crisis, we are grateful for the support of *Antiochian Orthodox Charities/Food for Hungry People's* program. It allowed us to contribute to *Kids' Food Basket* in order to help feed some of the most vulnerable people in our community" stated Fr. Michael Nasser.

Involvement in the worthy work of *Kids' Food Basket* is not new for our parish. Over the years, our church school and other ministry groups have supported *Kids' Food Basket* by volunteering, and the parish also awarded the *Gift of St. Nicholas*, our annual community charitable gift, to *Kids' Food Basket* in 2018. Since 2002, KFB has grown from serving daily sack suppers packed with fresh fruits and vegetables to 125 kids each weekday to nourishing 8,800 kids at 52 schools across West Michigan.

Julie VanGessel, Community Development Director at *Kids Food Basket*, expressed her gratitude for the continued partnership of St. Nicholas. "*Kids Food Basket* depends on the contributions of our partners as we battle hunger and the pandemic. We are grateful for the continued support of St. Nicholas." Our parish, in turn, is grateful to our Archdiocese for making possible this support, bringing food to hungry children throughout our area.



The Children's Relief Fund



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Deborah Brown
CRF Administrator
(917) 991-7192
db0253@aol.com or
childrensrelieffund@gmail.com

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

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

