

THE WORD

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LIVE-STREAMING APRIL 2020

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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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CORONAVIRUS

Bishop JOHN

I begin by acknowledging my feelings of inadequacy in addressing you amid this crisis. I have been unable to keep up with the ever-changing church and governmental brought together the Orthodox hierarchs and clergy of North America, who have been working together, and sharing ideas and strategies to bring our faithful together and meet their needs. We have recognized our common Orthodox witness as we fight an almost invisible, elusive enemy. For all these things I am grateful.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Corinthians 13).

regulations. Like many, I am feeling a bit overwhelmed by the uncertainty of everything. What I *can* share is how blessed we are to have clergy and faithful who have shown remarkable resilience. They have endeavored to bring Christ to each other, and to maintain the community we know as God's Church and His holy people. I am grateful to Metropolitan JOSEPH and his bishops, who have made tough decisions to balance physical safety with the spiritual needs of our people. This has come at great personal and institutional cost. This crisis has also shown how we are supported by Patriarch JOHN X and the churches of the Patriarchate, and we support him in turn. We have received regular messages from the Patriarch and Holy Synod, as well as held them up in our prayers. This crisis has also

ness as we fight an almost invisible, elusive enemy. For all these things I am grateful.

Like the faithful that I serve, I have chosen to stay at home and limit myself to the same liturgical constraints of those I serve. I am experiencing the same want of community that they are enduring. I have been heartened by the expressions of the faithful who have expressed the pain of not being able to get to church and to have the sacraments. No longer do we take these sacraments for granted. People have shown themselves to be spiritually mature. Many are praying the prayers of the Church daily, reading the Scriptures and Lenten liturgical services at home at their icon corners, and tuning in to online classes, lectures and discussion groups. For all of these I am very grateful.



The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop BASIL

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS

The Right Reverend
Bishop ALEXANDER

The Right Reverend
Bishop JOHN

The Right Reverend
Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend
Bishop NICHOLAS

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Like many of you, I have been in contact with clergy and faithful through the phone and electronic media. In my case, these calls have known no jurisdictional or geographic borders. This has reminded me that we are one in our Orthodoxy. We are one because we share the same faith, and we are one because we have the same Father in heaven, who has established us as His Church. We are one because, at His command, we love each other. **“Love is patient, love is kind.** It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **Love** does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Corinthians 13).

There is no room in St. Paul's teaching about love of posturing, or for seeking the first place. There is only worship of our common Father and our care for each other. As we face the new coronavirus and the COVID-19 disease together, we have been appropriately distracted from those impulses that have sometimes played a role in our lives. We are one Church, and we cannot be Orthodox without each other.

With lots of time these days to watch worship on the computer from all the jurisdictions, I am struck by the richness of our Holy Church. Our Church has adapted to almost every known culture and nation. Each location has offered different languages and traditions. Orthodoxy has embraced each and sanctified them. In this, the expression of God's grace has been deepened and subtly varied. These slight variations offer an even fuller and more beautiful expression of the inexpressible God. God cannot be limited to any one expression; instead, Orthodoxy is deepened by each culture in which the One Church lives, and which it serves. This is particularly helpful for us as we serve in North America, a “melting pot” of peoples from every culture and language of the known world. Together we are strengthened, and our aggregate of cultures and customs offer a fuller encounter with God. In love and cooperation, we are more together than any one of us is alone. The new coronavirus has offered us an opportunity to take a sobering look at who we are and what we are doing. Such self-reflection is the Orthodox way, and this is the right time to do it. For this, too, I am grateful.

Brothers and sisters, I thank God for all things, but particularly today, I thank God for you: for your loyalty to the living God, your steadfast faith, your prayers, your witness, and your love. God is with us, and will see us through this crisis.

CANCELLATIONS

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

A STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SYNOD PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST

DAMASCUS, APRIL 4, 2020

To all our beloved children of the Antioch Church, clergy, monastics, and all faithful:

First of all, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you, and may His peace fill your hearts with the light of His Resurrection, as the anchor of reassurance for tomorrow, abiding in “faith and hope” (1 Corinthians 13:13), in the joy of the redeemed children. May He strengthen you by His love, through which He conquered on the Cross, once and for all, the “last enemy to be destroyed” (1 Cor. 15:26).

We, the hierarchs of the Holy Synod of Antioch, under the primacy of His Beatitude JOHN X, address you today, as pastors of your journey in Christ, walking in the midst of the most serious health issue from the beginning of the Twentieth Century. We lift up our prayers for your well-being, and that of your families, and for the whole world.

Beloved Children . . .

As you know, we have been committed to halting church services, and we have asked you to abide by these general measures taken by the whole world, and to stay at home. Our previous

directives came in the context of our great concern for the physical, mental, and spiritual safety of each of you, as a way to make incarnate our communities' evangelical love, concerned for the safety of each human being in the world, and as a sign of our commitment to the social measures taken by the official authorities for the safety of all.

These unusual measures come in the midst of our holy Lenten journey to Pascha. These measures increase our longing for the Holy Eucharist, and for our common participation in prayers and supplications in our churches. This longing is right, and felt by us as a “mystery” of sonship. However, our Church, whose history testifies to several harsh episodes in which her children and saints were displaced, has remained gathered alive, following the concerns of her people. The Church is present in the prayers of her children, who associate themselves closely with the words of Holy Scripture, and form temples with their kneeling bodies, a holy sacrifice on the Lord's altar.

Therefore, we first invite you to reflect on these feelings, and to abide in the divine joy which no suffering can quench. Do this through intensifying your daily prayers, and the reading of the Bible and of the writings and lives of the Holy Fathers. Do everything that makes your houses “little churches,” filled with entreaties and prayers, while remembering that the “Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). Beloved,

lift up one another to the Lord, and pray for the whole world, for the sick, the wounded, the needy, the displaced, the kidnapped, and all the victims.

Pray for all scientists and physicians, and for all nurses who are working to help people out of this tribulation. Pray for the workers and janitors, for those who keep the security and regulations, and for all those “unknown soldiers” who work for your well-being and safety in society, who endanger their lives in order to provide you with the basic necessities of life. Pray for your shepherds. See Christ in the needy and in all those who are

28:20). In doing this, you are the one gathered Church, longing for the sacrament of the Eucharist, the Church that the Lord desires, and in which He is pleased today. Make out of your time, the time of confinement and staying at home, a desert of repentance and longing to Holy Communion, and an “acceptable time” to work for the Lord and for the neighbor (2 Cor. 6:2). Endure this stage in light of the experience of monastics who went out to the desert in the beginning of Great Lent, in order to focus on prayer and repentance, and to fuel the longing



suffering from these circumstances. Share your bread and your goods with them.

Guard yourself from all fear and panic, remembering that you are the children of the Creator of life, Who said: “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew

for the meeting of the brothers and sisters at the feast of the Risen Christ.

Beloved Children . . .

In addition to the foregoing, and to our prayers for you and for the world, we are following the developments of the pandemic that

threatens human life today. After meeting with each other, through communication and consultation between His Beatitude the Patriarch and Their Eminences the hierarchs, especially in light of the imminence of the Great and Holy Week and the Glorious Pascha, while facing the tragedies and repercussions of this difficult ordeal, we inform you of the decisions and directives we have taken.

Firstly: We emphasize the necessity of strict adherence to the procedures adopted and taken by the official authorities specialized in fighting this pandemic and its spread, including the stay-at-home policies, while experiencing the mystery of the family as the joy of life.

Secondly: We call upon the believers in all the Archdioceses, clergy, monastics and laity, to fully cooperate with the competent official and health authorities, in everything that provides aid and serves the common welfare.

Thirdly: The services and prayers during the Great and Holy Week, and during Palm Sunday and Great Pascha (April 19) are to be held just by the priests and monastics in churches and monasteries, offered for the sake of all the people and for the peace of the whole world. In other words, the services are held behind closed doors, without the participation of any of the believers. If possible, parishes should offer the direct broadcasting of daily prayers through their websites, thus allowing the believers to follow the services in their homes.

Fourthly: We pray, if conditions allow, and by God’s mercy, to celebrate the Paschal service together on the day of the Leave-taking of Pascha (May 27, 2020), when the Paschal service is celebrated in its entirety and with our participation together. We hope that, by that time, we will have triumphed over the pandemic and the normal patterns of our lives will have resumed. To prevent any confusion, the holy, forty-day period of fasting ends at Saturday midnight, April 19.

Fifthly: The parish priests and all believers, along with the parish councils and various church organizations and brotherhood, are called to

collaborate in everything that helps and supports the needy and relieves the suffering of the victims and their families.

Sixthly: The Church prays that the Lord may have compassion for His creation, remove this health distress from our world, strengthen the medical staff, nurses and all paramedic teams in hospitals and society, protect them from all harm, heal every patient, have mercy on all the deceased, and inspire all specialists, physicians, and scientists to work on whatever protects life and our world from all pandemics and evils.

Seventhly: These measures were taken according to what we know of the latest data and developments, with our hope that these days will be shortened and life will soon return to its natural rhythms.

Eighthly: While we accept the diversity of opinions and differing ideas in the approach to these matters, the aforementioned decisions and directives express the official position of the Antiochian Church. Accordingly, every violation of these decisions would constitute an explicit violation of the Church’s position, and the Church authorities are not responsible for any civil consequences of these violations.

Beloved Children . . .

We pray and hope that this worldwide tribulation will end soon, and that it will not cause us any hardship, difficulty, or suffering. We ask you to be strong in the Lord, looking forward to seeing the joy after the storm. We ask you again to look forward to the day in which we will make our contribution to a renewed world, with reassurance, stability, solidarity, joy and splendor, under the Lord’s protection. In this hope, we entrust you to Him. We hope that you will be steadfast in your prayers, so that we can pass through this together, without carrying in us any pain and wound other than our longing for the Savior’s Body and Blood.

أيها الأبناء الأحياء،

إضافةً إلى ما سبق، وإلى صلواتنا من أجلكم ومن أجل العالم، نواكب في هذه الأوقات والظروف ما يطرأ من تطوّرات تتعلّق بالوباء الذي يهدّد الحياة الإنسانية اليوم. وبعد الاجتماع إلى بعضنا، بالتواصل والتشاور فيما بين غبطة البطريرك وجميع السادة المطارنة، خاصةً في ظلّ قرب حلول الأسبوع العظيم المقدّس والفصح المجيد، وأمام ما تُرْخيه هذه المحنة الصعبة من مأسٍ وتداعيات، نعلمكم بما اتخذناه من مقرّراتٍ وتوجيهات:

أولاً: التأكيد على ضرورة الالتزام التام بالإجراءات المتّبعة والتي تدعو إليها السلطات الرسمية والمُختصة بمكافحة الوباء وانتشاره، بما فيها البقاء في المنازل، مختبرين سر العائلة كفرح للحياة.

ثانياً: دعوة المؤمنين في جميع الأبرشيات، إكليروساً ورهباناً وعلمانيين، إلى التعاون التام مع الجهات المختصة، الرسمية والصحية، في كلّ ما يقدّم العون ويخدم أمن المجتمع الصحيّ وسلامه الاجتماعي.

ثالثاً: تُقام الخدم والصلوات أثناء الأسبوع العظيم المقدّس ويوميّ الشعانين والفصح المجيد (19 نيسان) من قبل الكهنة والرهبان فقط في الكنائس والأديار، من أجل جميع الشعب وسلام العالم أجمع. أي تُقام والأبواب مُغلقة، دونَ مشاركةٍ أيّ من المؤمنين. مع تفعيل إمكانية البث المباشر للصلوات اليومية عبر المواقع الإلكترونية التابعة للكنيسة، ومتابعة المؤمنين لها من منازلهم.

رابعاً: نُصلّي لكي تسمح الظروف، وبرحمات الله، أن نحتفل معاً بالخدمة الفصحية في يوم وداع الفصح في 27 أيار 2020، حيث تُنمّ الخدمة الفصحية بكاملها وبمشاركتنا جميعاً، علّنا نكون قد انتصرنا على الوباء وعادت دورة الحياة إلى طبيعتها. ومنعاً لأيّ التباس فإن الصوم الأربعيني المقدس ينتهي الساعة الثانية عشرة من منتصف ليل السبت/ فجر الأحد 19 نيسان.

خامساً: تُجنّد الرعاة ودعوة جميع المؤمنين ومجالس الرعايا والهيئات الكنسية والجمعيات والأخويات إلى التعاضد والتآزر في كلّ ما يُعين ويدعم المحتاجين ويخفّف المعاناة عن المصابين وعائلاتهم.

سادساً: نُصلّي الكنيسة لكي يتحرّن الربّ على خليقته، ويرفع عن عالمنا هذه المحنة الصحيّة، ويقوّي الفرق الطبيّة والتمريضية والمُسعّفة والخادمة في المستشفيات والمجتمع، ويحفظها من كلّ مكروه، ويشفّي كلّ مريض، ويرحم كلّ فقيد، ويُلهم جميع المُختصّين والأطباء والعلماء إلى ما يحمي الحياة والكون ويحفظهما من الأوبئة والشرور.

سابعاً: اتُّخذت هذه الإجراءات وفقاً للمعطيات والتطورات الأخيرة، مع رجائنا أن تقصّر هذه الأيام وتعود الحياة إلى دورتها الطبيعية.

ثامناً: مع قبولنا لتنوّع الآراء واختلاف الأفكار في مقاربة هذه الشؤن، فإن ما سبق ذكره من مقرّرات وتوجيهات يعبر عن الموقف الرسميّ للكنيسة الأنطاكية. وعليه، فإن كل مخالفة له تشكل مخالفة صريحة لموقف الكنيسة لا تُسأل السلطاتُ الكنسية عن تبعاتها المدنية.

أيها الأبناء الأحياء،

ونحن ننضّر ونرجو أن تعبر هذه المحنة عن العالم أجمع، وألا تُصيبنا من جرائها أيّة صعوبة وشدة ومعاناة. نشدّدكم بالربّ شاخصين معكم إلى فرح ما بعد هذه العاصفة، إلى يوم مساهمتنا بعالم جديد يُبزغ علينا فجرًا من الاطمئنان والاستقرار والتعاضد والفرح والبهاء في كنف حماية ربنا. فعلى هذا الرجاء ندعكم في حمايته راجين أن تثبتوا في صلواتكم، لكي نعبّر معاً هذه المرحلة دون أن تترك فينا ألاماً وجرحاً غير الشوقِ إلى جسد المخلّص ودمه.

بيان صادر عن المجمع المقدس

لبطيركية أنطاكية وسائر المشرق للروم الأرثوذكس

دمشق، 4 نيسان 2020

إلى جميع أبناء كنيستنا الأنطاكيّة الأحياء، إكليروساً ورهباناً وشعباً مؤمناً،

لتحفظكم، أولاً، نعمة ربّنا يسوع المسيح، وليحلّ سلامه في قلوبكم ضياءً من فجر قيامته، واطمئناناً به إلى الغد الآتي، و"ثباتاً في الإيمان والرجاء" (١ كورنثوس ١٣: ١٣)، وفرح الأبناء المُفتّدين، وليسلكم ويقويكم بمحبّته التي بها، على الصليب، "هُزَم آخر عدوّ" لحياتنا فيه إلى الأبد (١ كورنثوس ١٥: ٢٦).

نتوجّه إليكم اليوم، نحن آباء المجمع الأنطاكيّ المقدّس، بإمامة غبطة البطريرك يوحنا العاشر، كرعاة لمسيرتكم في المسيح، وسطّ ما يجمع عالمنا إلى أشدّ معاناة صحيّة يشهدها منذ بداية القرن العشرين. نتوجّه إليكم حاملين إياكم بالصلاة والدعاء، ومعكم كلّ فردٍ من أفراد عائلاتكم، والعالم أجمع.

أيها الأبناء الأحياء،

تعلمون أنّه قد سبق وألزمّتنا هذه الظروف بتعليق الخدم الكنسية ودعوتكم إلى التقيدّ بالإجراءات العامّة المتّخذة في العالم أجمع وملازمة منازلكم. وقد أتت توجيهاتنا السابقة في سياق حرصنا الشديد على السلامة الجسدية والنفسية والروحية لكلّ واحدٍ منكم، وتجسيد محبّتنا الإنجيلية، كجماعة، لكلّ أخ لنا في العالم حفظاً على سلامته، والتزامنا في مجتمعاتنا بما تتّخذه السلطات الرسميّة من إجراءات صوناً لجميع مكوّناتها.

إنّ ما تُشعّرنا به هذه الإجراءات غير المُعتادة، التي أتت وسط مسيرة صومنا المقدّس نحو الفصح، من حاجة وشوقٍ إلى قدساتٍ ربّنا وإلى تشاركتنا معاً التضرّع والصلوات في كنائسنا، لهو حقّ يحركه ما غرسه الربّ فينا من "سرّ" الأبناء. إلا أن كنيستنا، التي شهدت في تاريخها مراحل صعبة شرّدت أبنائها وقدّيسيها، بقيت وتبقى مجتمعةً حيّةً متحرّكةً مع هموم شعبها وحاضرةً في صلوات أبنائها الذين يُقيمون في عشرة الكتاب المقدّس ويكوّنون بهيكلهم الساجدة ذبيحةً حيّةً على مذبح الربّ أينما وُجدوا.

لذلك، فإنّ أوّل ما ندعوكم إليه هو معالجة هذه المشاعر، والثبات في الفرح الإلهي الذي لا تحجبه المعاناة، بتكثيف صلواتكم اليومية وانكبابكم على قراءة الكتاب المقدّس وكتابات الأباء القديسين وسيّرهم وعلى كلّ ما يجعل من بيوتكم كنائس صغيرة تنبض القلوبُ فيها بالأدعية، متذكرين أن "ملكوتُ الله في داخلكم" (لوقا ١٧: ٢١). ارفعوا، يا أحبة، بعضكم بعضاً إلى الربّ، وارفعوا العالم معكم بمرّضاه ومُصابيه وفقرائه ومشركيه ومخطوفيه وضحاياها. ارفعوا علماءه وأطبّاءه وممرضيه المنكبيّن على إيجاد ما يخلّصه من محنه. ارفعوا العمال والذين يحافظون على النظافة العامة والساهرين على حفظ الأمن والانضباط وكل الجنود المجهولين الذين يعملون من أجل راحتكم وسلامة المجتمع معرّضين أنفسهم للخطر من أجل سلامتكم وتأمين لوازم الحياة الأساسية لكم. اذكروا رعاتكم. التفتوا إلى المساكين الذين يعانون من صعوبة هذه الظروف، وشاركوهم خبزكم وخيراتكم. حصّنوا ذواتكم من كلّ خوفٍ وهلع لأنكم أبناء من أوجد الحياة، وهو القائل: "ثقوا، لا تخافوا أنا معكم طول الأيام" (متى ٢٨: ٢٠). كونوا بذلك الكنيسة الواحدة المُجتمعة التائقة إلى سرّ الشكر، التي يريدُها الربّ، وتُفرّخه اليوم. واجعلوا من وقتكم هذا، وقت الحَجَر الإلزامي والبقاء في المنازل، صحراء تويّة وتوقٍ إلى كلّ شريكة، "وقتاً مقبولاً" يُعمل فيه للربّ والقريب (٢ كورنثوس ٦: ٢). اختبروا هذه المرحلة على ضوء خبرة الرهبان الذين كانوا يخرجون إلى الصحراء مع بدء الصوم وينصرفون إلى الصلاة والتوبة، لتأجيج الشوق إلى لقيا الإخوة في المسيح القائم.

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

April 10, 2020

Beloved Faithful in Christ,

Greetings to all of you in the Name of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ!

By the grace of God, we have come to the completion of the forty-day fast. Our ascetical labors this year have been without the consolations of the Lenten services or the gathering of the faithful to receive the Holy Eucharist. We have made these difficult decisions to protect our vulnerable brothers and sisters as well as our health care workers by reducing opportunities for this novel virus to spread unchecked. I know that this has been as immensely difficult for all of you as it has been for me. We all long for that day when we will gather again in our churches to receive the Heavenly Bread and the Cup of Life as the people of God.

We hoped that we would be able to return to a normal liturgical life during Holy Week and Pascha. Unfortunately, after much prayer and deliberation, in coordination with our Mother Church of Antioch and the other Orthodox jurisdictions comprising the Assembly of Bishops as well as with the advice of the civil authorities and public health officials, we have determined that the time is not yet here. While we are heartbroken to extend the restrictions of our services to clergy, servers and chanters during this most holy time of the year, we take heart knowing that we are all sharing this burden together.

We give thanks to God that we are beginning to hear of hopeful signs in this fight. We even hear of plans for a return to normal life, or, as they say, a *new normal*. Beloved in Christ, I want us to reflect this Holy Week – in the quiet prayerfulness of our little home churches – on what we should consider *normal*. So much of what our fallen humanity considers normal was transformed by the Passion and Resurrection of our Savior. How can we continue to strive for power, wealth, or lusts of the flesh when we look on the Cross of our Crucified Master? How can we willingly enslave ourselves to sin when Christ has broken our bonds asunder and raised up our fallen nature by His Resurrection?

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

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Let our thirst for a return to normal life not be for a return to what is natural to our fallen human state, but for a life full of grace and holiness. Let our *new normal* include this increased life of prayer in our homes. Let it continue to include a willingness to sacrifice our needs for the needs of our neighbor, a greater sense of responsibility to our wider community, a deepened feeling of gratitude for our many blessings, a heightened concern for the elderly and vulnerable, and an increased respect for our health care workers and first responders. When we are able to return triumphantly to our churches – as the crowds joined Christ triumphantly entering Jerusalem – let our desire for the Holy Eucharist today be a reminder for all our days never to take it for granted. Let our every reception going forward be with greater love for God and our neighbor, forgiveness for all who have offended us, prayerful preparation, genuine repentance, and true *thanksgiving*.

Beloved in Christ, I offer my gratitude to all of you for your cooperation during these trying times. We have heard many times this week that, although there are signs of hope, the time to let up on the social-distancing measures has not yet arrived. Likewise, our time of fervent prayer for our deliverance from this pandemic is still vitally necessary. We need all of our homes to be churches during this Holy Week, and we need all your prayers to be offered up continually as sweet-smelling incense. Do not let up, my dear spiritual children!

This year we will anticipate the glorious Resurrection on the third day as the disciples did – from within our homes with the doors being shut. Just as the Resurrected Christ came to them in the Upper Room to reveal His victory over sin and death, may He also reveal Himself mystically in all our homes and instill in our hearts the joy of His presence and the firm assurance that He has overcome world.

With great love and fervent prayers for all as we bow down and worship the life-giving and saving Passion of our Lord, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

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An Enlivening Spiritual Discipline

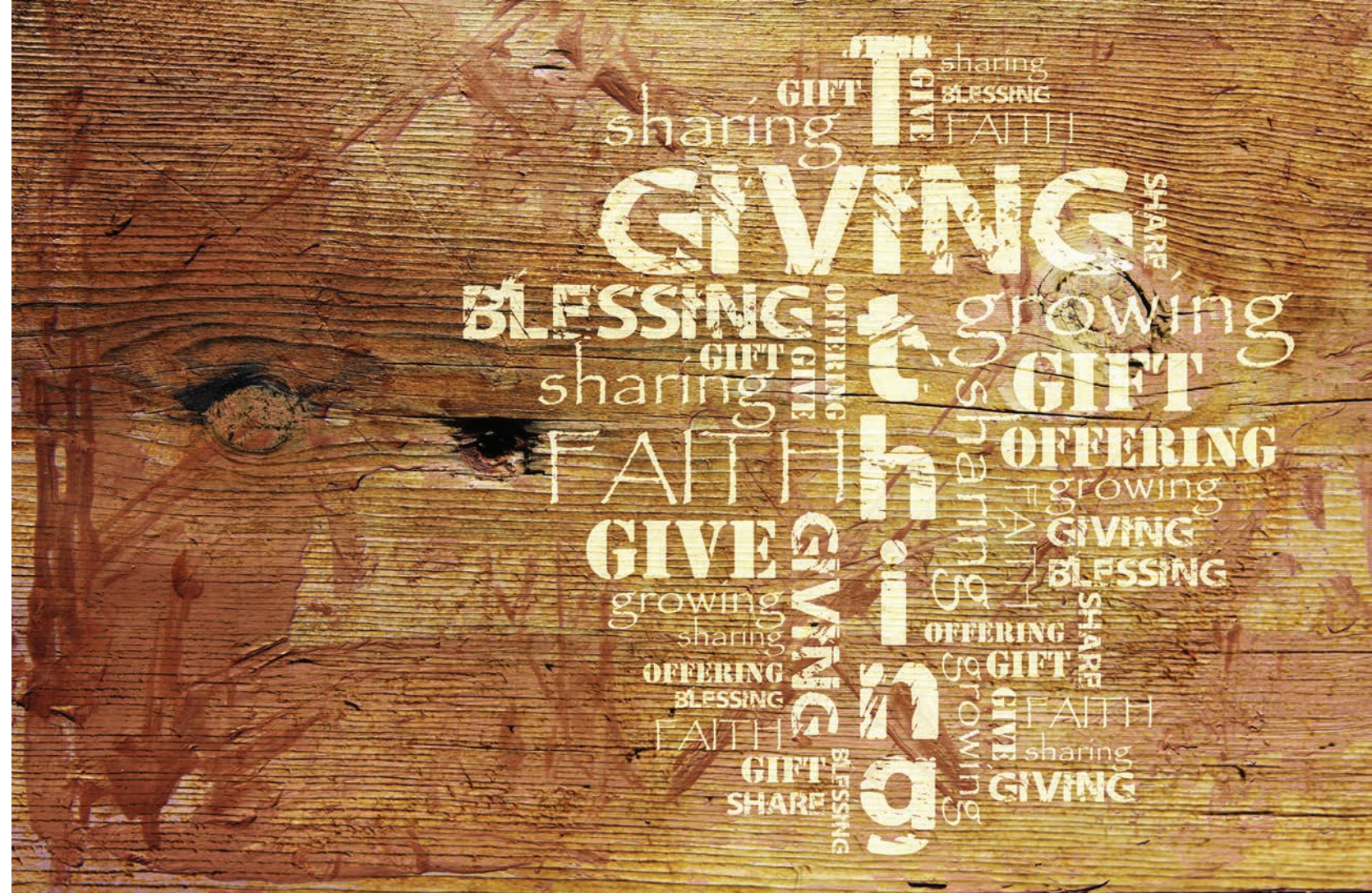
Andy Geleris

The New Testament uses the word *tithe* ten times. Seven of these mentions occur within a space of just eight verses at the beginning of Hebrews 7. These verses demonstrate the superiority of Christ’s priesthood to the Levitical priesthood because of Abram’s tithe to Melchizedek. The only three other New Testament mentions of the word *tithe* occur in the Gospels in connection with the Pharisees. In the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Pharisee justifies his personal righteousness by saying, “I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess” (Luke 18:12). The other two mentions of the word *tithe* occur in Matthew and Luke. In these two, almost identical passages, Jesus criticizes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42).

I have occasionally heard the objection that tithing is an Old Testament legalism that no longer pertains to Christians. I fear that this objection is based at least in part on misunderstanding the purpose of God’s commandments. As Paul makes clear in Galatians 3, obedience to the commandments is not the basis of our salvation or our righteousness. This is the mistake the Pharisees made. When obeyed with faith, however, God’s commandments offer a pathway of great blessing in our lives. They show us healthy

ways to live that will “give us a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11). As Moses said in Deuteronomy, “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments . . . that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you . . .” (Deuteronomy 28:1–2). Moses then lists a long list of the blessings that result from obedience to God’s commandments. God’s desire to bless us through the commandment to tithe is so extraordinarily great that He stakes His reputation on it. Moses clearly taught, “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test” (Deuteronomy 6:16). When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness to throw Himself down from the highest point of the Temple, Jesus based His refusal to do this by quoting this same verse from Deuteronomy, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test” (Luke 4:12). So, it is clearly forbidden by Scripture to test God. There is, however, one huge exception, and this has to do with tithing. Note that in the passage from Malachi that I have quoted concerning God’s blessing on tithing, that God emphatically invites us to “test” Him to see if He will bless us (Malachi 3:10). There are indeed some Old Testament commandments that the New Testament explicitly abrogates, such as circumcision and various dietary restrictions. The tithe, however, was never abrogated. We are entirely free to ignore it, as we are free to ignore all of God’s commandments. However, those who are wise will view it as an opportunity for blessing that God continues to leave open for us.

Jesus declared as much explicitly to His disciples. Note that when He condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees to His disciples, He did not condemn their tithing, but their neglect of more important matters. Indeed, He explicitly says that



they should not have left the commandment to tithe “undone.” (Matthew 23:23). One of the reasons that tithing is mentioned so infrequently in the New Testament is because it was clearly the accepted practice of the people of God, especially Jewish converts to Christ, at that time. For example, in Acts we read that everyone in the Church apparently gave far more than a tithe. “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common . . . for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:32, 34–35). We also read of the Macedonians that “that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality” (2 Corinthians 8:2).

Tithing was not mentioned in many of Paul’s letters because the primary issues he addressed were deviations from standard Christian practice. Apparently tithing and generosity never became

one of these deviations, except perhaps among the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 8 and 9). By the early Second Century, however, Irenaeus of Lyon did have to respond to a concern about whether tithing was an Old Testament legalism that Christians should ignore. In *Against Heresies*, he wrote, “And for this reason they [the Jews] had indeed the tithes of their goods consecrated Him, but those who have received liberty set aside all their possessions for the Lord’s purposes . . .” In other words, from a New Testament perspective ten percent was the Old Testament standard, but under the New Covenant it is only the starting point. In their pursuit of hypocritical righteousness, the Pharisees were fastidious tithers, but Jesus says to us as His disciples, “unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). Tithing is for Christians only the first step along the process of growing in financial spirituality, of learning to become like God in our generosity. It is like attending kindergarten on the road to earning a Ph.D. in theology.

In this second part, I want to address some

practical matters concerning the tithe and parish finances. It is an absolutely essential element of any discussion of personal tithing to include an encouragement to parishes to align their own financial priorities with those of the kingdom of God. Apostolic succession, beautiful churches, theological purity, historical bona fides, and liturgical rigor are worthless “sounding brass and clanging cymbals” (1 Corinthians 13:1) unless parish finances clearly manifest God’s priorities for loving our own people and the world around us. Unfortunately, one of the major reasons many serious Christians do not presently tithe to their local parishes is that they are troubled by how their parishes spend money. When I once asked a friend of mine whom I have known for several years if he tithed, he somewhat sheepishly replied that he did not. He explained that for many years he had been a Protestant pastor who not only regularly tithed but taught his entire congregation to do so. As the result of many years of study he became convinced of the truth of the Orthodox tradition, and of his need to join it. He therefore gladly sacrificed his satisfying Protestant pastoral ministry in order to become an Orthodox layman, and took up a secular job. For the first few years in Orthodoxy he continued to tithe to his parish. However, he then became frustrated at his parish’s financial priorities. Instead of caring for poor people, even fellow parishioners with significant needs, the parish financially prioritized acquiring new icons and saving money in order to one day build a beautiful new temple. He ultimately felt morally obligated to stop tithing to this parish and to give elsewhere.

Unfortunately, this story is not an isolated anecdote. God’s priorities for parish finances are powerfully addressed by the prophet Isaiah and several homilies of John Chrysostom. In Isaiah 58, God answers a complaint from His people that He is not answering their prayers.

Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins. For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’ Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I” (Isaiah 58:1–3, 6–9).

I deeply appreciate the truth that the aesthetics of our temples and of our worship are important. I have often heard the powerful story of how Russia became Orthodox because of the beauty of the worship at St. Sophia in Constantinople. As Dostoevsky has said, and Solzhenitsyn and many others have reiterated, beauty is one of the most spiritually valuable and attractive things to draw us to the kingdom of God. In Homily 50 on the Gospel of Matthew, however, John Chrysostom also says that the aesthetic beauty God really longs for us to display is not of “golden chalices, but of golden hearts.” These “golden hearts” can’t be found in the catalogues of liturgical supply houses. They are “acquired” by the generous acts of giving by our people and parishes to poor people. Regarding beautifying temples, Chrysostom also says, “I am not forbidding you to supply these adornments . . . [However,] no one has ever been accused for not providing ornaments, but for those who neglect their neighbor a hell awaits with an inextinguishable fire and torment in the company of the demons. Do not, therefore,

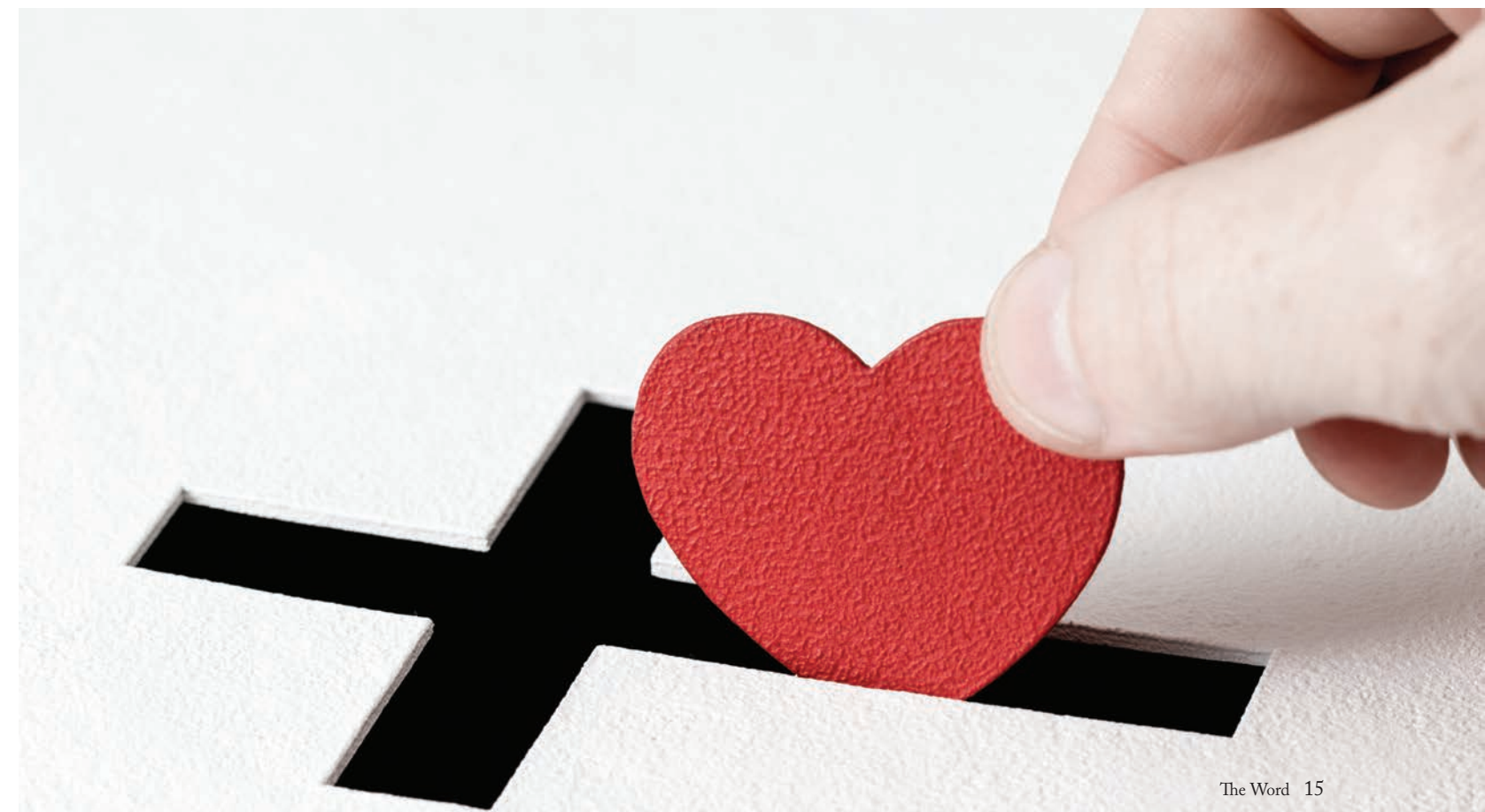
adorn the church and ignore your afflicted brother, for he is the most precious temple of all.”

In Homily 20 on 2 Corinthians 9, Chrysostom says that it is entirely good and proper to reverence the altar in a temple because it receives the Body of Christ during the Liturgy. We may find, however, in close proximity to our parish, altars worthy of even greater reverence. These are the altars that Mother Teresa referred to as “Jesus Himself in the distressing disguise of the poor.” Chrysostom comments about what happens at these respective altars. At the parish altar “the Priest stands invoking the Spirit (by the *epiclesis*).” At the altar of the poor person “you too invoke the Spirit, not by speech, but by deeds” of charity.

Building and adorning beautiful temples is not wrong, but they should be *secondary* parish financial goals and not *primary* ones. A clear sign that it is God’s time for us to build will be the providential provision by God of abundant funds. No capital campaigns, matching gift programs, or thermometers in the narthex will be required. If funds are not readily available, perhaps it is a sign from God that it is not yet the right time to build.

Three temple structures were built in the Old Testament. Each of them had immediately avail-

able extravagant financial support. The “methodology” of “fundraising” for the first of these temple structures, the tabernacle in the wilderness, is particularly instructive. It is one of the most amazing fundraising miracles in the history of the people of God. In Exodus 35, Moses asked for contributions to build a tabernacle for God in the wilderness. The resulting outpouring of donations was so abundant that Moses actually had to “command” the people to stop giving (Exodus 36:6). To understand why this fundraising miracle happened, we need to recall the context in which it occurred. Moses came coming down from Mt. Sinai after forty days with God to find Aaron and the people worshiping a golden calf they had just made (Exodus 32). God was so angry at this apostasy that He threatened to destroy the people, but Moses prayed, “Yet now, if You will forgive their sin – but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written” (Exodus 32:32). In response to Moses’ prayer, God relented and did not destroy the people. Therefore, when in Exodus 35 Moses asked for donations for the tabernacle, he was not doing so simply as the leader of the people, but as one who had literally offered his own life, indeed, his eternal destiny, on their



behalf. Their gratitude expressed itself in overwhelming generosity.

This story illustrates the fact that by far the most effective fundraising technique ever invented is for the people of God to know themselves deeply loved by their priest and other parish leaders. Indeed, any other fundraising technique besides love for the faithful represents worldly financial manipulation. This is why the fundraising techniques that we often import from worldly non-profit organizations are so spiritually unhealthy. Funds for the second Old Testament Temple were largely supplied by King David, whom God had prospered with great wealth. His generosity led many others also to give generously. Perhaps the clearest example of God's providence in funding temple construction is the third Old Testament Temple, the post-exilic Temple built in the Fifth Century, B.C. The money for this project came entirely from a foreign leader, who was not even part of the people of God, Cyrus, King of Persia. Ezra recorded the details. "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah'" (Ezra 1:1-2).

My suggestion for the prioritization of parish funds is as follows: 1. Support financially the priest and provide for adequate facilities; 2. Set aside money to help protect the parish against unexpected financial emergencies; 3. Assist people in our own communities, such as the needy poor, retired priests and other elderly members of our community, and even help finance the educational needs of our young people; 4. Fund Orthodox schools, colleges, seminaries, and missionary organizations; 5. Help needy poor

people who live geographically close to our parish, as well as also those in distant parts of the world. Establishing these or similar financial priorities will please God and make it much easier for our faithful to tithe.

One of the topics that sometimes comes up in discussions of tithing is whether the tithe should be given to the parish, or just generally to charity. I have four reasons why I strongly believe that the tithe, and indeed perhaps most Christian charitable donations, should be given to one's local parish. First, the definite specification that we should give a certain amount, ten percent, has a liturgical quality to it. I can't think of an explanation as to why God picked ten percent as the number to give. Why wasn't it seven percent or twelve percent? I do think that it is worth noting that the ten percent is a fixed percentage. When we participate in various liturgical services, we say the words that the Holy Spirit has given to the Church, not our individual prayers. In the same way the tithe is a sacrifice prescribed by God of a certain amount of our income, not a matter of individual choice. At times God may bring individual needy people across our paths. These may be the hungry, thirsty, naked, strangers, sick, and imprisoned described in Matthew 25. How much we give in such situations is a matter God leaves entirely to our personal discernment of His will. The tithe, however, is fixed.

The liturgical nature of the tithe is underlined by the fact that the clear Old Testament commandment was to give the tithe to the Temple. The New Testament practice appears to continue this tradition. In Acts 4, we learn that the common practice in the early Church was for offerings to be laid "at the apostle's feet." For us this would be the same as bringing them to the parish. In the early centuries of the Church it was customary for offerings to be brought to the church and given to the deacons before the start of the Liturgy. These offerings were then brought back to the altar area and blessed. After the Liturgy they would be distributed as appropriate.

Secondly, far more glory is brought to God if needy recipients receive help from the hands of the Church rather than my hands. Let them offer thanks to God, rather than to me. Let them praise His name, not mine. The same would be true of gifts to charitable organizations such as FOCUS,

IOCC, OCMC, or seminaries.

Thirdly, personal gifts, both to individuals and charities, often create awkward or even unhealthy interpersonal dynamics. With regard to helping needy individuals who are known to us, few people, even among priests, have the spiritual and emotional maturity to receive personal gifts without it warping relationships. The hearts of donors, too, can also easily be corrupted. On several occasions I have witnessed serious problems arise in relationships as a result of personal gifts. With regard to giving to organizations, sometimes charities feel inclined to invite wealthier people to join their Boards in the hopes that they will then personally contribute to the organization. Some organizations even explicitly request that their Board members make annual contributions. I recognize that such requests are a "best practice" of worldly non-profits, but I don't understand why it has any relevance to a Christian organization. It would be far better for charitable organizations to try to find the wisest and most spiritual potential Board members to help lead their organizations, regardless of whether they had the financial capacity to support the organization financially.

Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, the gift of spiritual wisdom does not necessarily accompany either the gift of wealth or a heart of generosity. Even if it did, the conciliar wisdom of a parish community will usually far exceed that of any individual. Sometimes truly exceptional discernment may be required to know if the financial need of a particular individual or charitable organization may be the precise means God might be using to direct them in His will. In such situations helping out just because there is a need, even for a cause that we deeply believe in, may entirely short circuit this work of God. Financial difficulties may be the means by which God calls a person or a charitable organization to a season of deeper prayer and purification, so that they can then serve more effectively. They might be God's way to direct a person to move to a different location, look for a different job, get more training or schooling, or even to go to seminary. They may be the means by which He leads a charitable organization to consider changes in how they do their ministry, or the people whom they serve. God may even want them to close down! It is a truly frightening prospect to consider the possibility

that giving just because there is a need may, therefore, inadvertently, cause people or organizations that we love seriously to miss the will of God.

Those who take the potential consequences of their giving seriously will long for the discernment available through the wisdom of a godly parish community. On the other hand, by participating together with others in the parish, we may become aware of people or organizations to whom God would have us give, but who were otherwise completely unknown to us because they were outside our network of relationships. If many people started tithing to parishes the amount of money available to parishes would dramatically increase. This would then allow them to flourish in their local communities and also to become primary financial supporters of our Archdioceses, Orthodox seminaries, schools, charities, and missionary organizations. Instead of fundraising campaigns, these other organizations would spend their time talking to parish priests and parish councils. This would have the enormously important secondary benefit of significantly strengthening the relationship between our parish faithful and these organizations. Occasionally the question arises as to whether one should tithe on one's gross or after-tax income. My personal practice has been to tithe on my gross income because of my conviction that my desire to honor God with my money is even more important than my legal obligation to pay taxes. Once a person has established a certain lifestyle that may include an expensive mortgage, leveraged investments, or a large car payment, it may be difficult to have enough disposable income to tithe, let alone to give more than a tithe. Therefore it is crucial that we teach our children at an early age about God's blessing on tithing. Starting out their working careers budgeting to give at least a tithe will enable them to organize their entire financial lives in a spiritual way.

All the blessings of God that I mentioned in association with tithing are multiplied to an even greater extent for those who choose to give to God even more than a tenth. Jesus made it clear on many occasions, including in the parable of the wealthy man who had to keep building bigger barns, that accumulating material wealth in this life is foolish if one is not "rich toward God" (Luke 12:31). He also said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy

and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:19–21). For many wealthy people accomplishing this may involve giving far more than a tithe.

Many people may not be able to embrace the gift of tithing as a means to worthily express gratitude to God. There may be a variety of personal or spiritual reasons that make this impossible. This does not mean, however, that we should not teach tithing for the sake of those who are able. This is the same way we treat fasting, one of God’s other great spiritual gifts to us. While we straightforwardly teach the Church’s ideal standards for fasting, we often simultaneously make pastoral accommodations for those who are not able to fast according to these standards. Spiritual fathers can help parishioners grow toward the goal of tithing by helping them see how they might be able to reprioritize their finances a little bit at a time. Perhaps they could give one percent this year, two percent the next year, three percent the following year, and so on, until the goal of tithing is achieved. An even more valuable potential outcome of such discussion is that the pastor may learn about the needs of individuals or families facing serious financial distress who might benefit from financial assistance from the parish. This is information that he might never have discovered unless discussions about tithing caused them to emerge.

One of the most valuable results of teaching about tithing is that it is likely to trigger many healthy spiritual discussions between pastors and their people, as well as more widely between people in parishes. For each of us, and for our parishes as a whole, how we actually spend our money can serve as a valuable window into the true spiritual state of our heart. We live in a materialist culture that constantly assaults us with advertising

messages that try to persuade us of the lie that, if we just had more “stuff,” we would be happy. This is the lure of mammon that Jesus warned us was the greatest competitor for the love of God in our hearts. Even if we do not watch television, the peer-pressure influence of friends and colleagues can easily lead us toward worldly perspectives on money. Unless we frequently and intentionally examine our spending priorities, both as individuals under the guidance of our spiritual fathers and as parish communities, it will be hard for us to escape the unhealthy snares of our culture that tend to draw us away from truly loving God and our neighbor with our money. Those of us not able to tithe, for whatever reason, can use the knowledge of this weakness as an opportunity to grow in that mother of all virtues, humility. We can also gain a deeper appreciation of God’s generous love and kindness toward us in spite of our inability to adequately express our thanksgiving to Him with a tithe. Thus, if we tithe there is a great blessing, and if we fail to tithe, there may be an even greater blessing. The tithe is one of God’s greatest gifts to humanity. It is a concrete means for us to express gratitude to Him, using the “holy” gift that He Himself has given us, so that we can experience great blessing in our lives. Godly parish financial priorities are extremely important to make this possible and in order to demonstrate to our own people and the world around us what God is like in His love for the poor. Teaching about tithing will also open up many valuable discussions concerning how we can escape the consumerist snares of our culture in order to grow in our love of God and our neighbor. These are the kinds of reasons Jesus’ “person-centric” approach led Him to frequently talk about financial matters. I deeply hope that in their deep love for the faithful in our churches, our bishops, priests, and other Church leaders will begin to imitate Jesus’ example.

Andy Geleris
St. Andrew Church, Riverside, California

GOOD GRIEF

His Grace Bishop JOHN

Feeling a little anxious or blue these days with all the changes in our lives? Good grief! What if I told you that “good grief” is the healthiest response I can think of? The expression *good grief* always makes me think first of Charlie Brown, and brings a smile to my face. But that’s not how I’m using the expression *good grief* today. I mean that any change in routine is experienced as a loss, even if nothing more than a loss of routine or our sense of normalcy. “Social distancing,” completing coursework over social media, working from home, not going to the gym, being locked out of restaurants and stores – these are all new experiences for us. I’m amazed at how well we have adapted. It is a sign of our resiliency. Despite well-crafted coping behaviors, however, some of us are climbing the walls. We want to break the law and play frisbee or something. *Good grief* or *grieving* for me is a healthy response; it’s part of a process that leads us to solve problems, to accept that which we can’t change, to adapt to new situations, and to survive. It offers more than survival: perhaps we can reframe what is happening as an opportunity to *grow* spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, and perhaps even physiologically. I’m not saying that God has sent this to us, but we can choose to use the time well. Grieving is the normal response to loss, and every change in our lives necessarily involves a loss. Grief here is normal and healthy. We just don’t want to get stuck in it.

This is where I want to talk about the opportunities that are presented to us. Locked in the house, or isolated at work, offers us a chance to quiet down.



Once we allow ourselves some silence, we can embrace our situation and discover God who has been waiting for us inside all along. We can let Him in, talk to Him, pray, read Scriptures, and really take some time to listen. We can discover and understand the mystical worlds of me, of God, and of God and me! These are worlds that are as complex as the galaxies, and no farther away than where we are right now.

Like Deacon Marek and Orthodox Christian Fellowship, many of our clergy and parish leadership are taking advantage of your time at home to reach out and connect. They are using the often-disparaged social media outlets to do holy work, live-stream worship and make individual contacts. There are support groups, chat rooms, Bible studies, community virtual worship, websites, spiritual resources and many other efforts going on, keeping the web very busy. It may be a good use of time to pay attention to some of these messages, listen to God inside, and be a better Orthodox Christian for it. To recap, I’m suggesting that we unplug, visit God, and then plug in and visit God with all our Orthodox comrades who are fighting the good fight together. This is a real fight, and we are all in it together.

His Grace Bishop JOHN
From the Orthodox Christian Fellowship Blog

WORSHIP AS WITNESS

THE DOXOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN MISSION

E. T. John Kerstetter

THE CHRISTIAN MISSION IS INCORPORATED INTO GOD'S MISSION; [THEREFORE], THE FINAL GOAL OF OUR MISSION SURELY CANNOT BE DIFFERENT FROM HIS. AND THIS PURPOSE, AS THE BIBLE [CLARIFIES], IS THE "RECAPITULATION ... OF ALL THINGS" (EPH 1:10) IN CHRIST AND OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE *DIVINE GLORY, THE ETERNAL, FINAL GLORY OF GOD.*¹

At the foundation of Christian mission is the *worship* of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "Doxology," or "a word about the glory (of God)," is likewise our missiological goal as Christians. To be clear, however, this "word" is in no way "theoretical" or "conceptual" in its subject matter: the goal of Christian mission is not *a study* of the glory of God. Rather, the Christian doxology is *a personal participation in* the glory of God, by virtue of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, and our acquisition of spiritual grace through the sacramental life of the Church. This grace deifies us and elevates our nature to its intended end: man was *made* to worship.²

Moreover, man is called to become a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). How does the Church understand this mystical participation? And how is man able to enter into the eternal life that is shared by the persons of the Holy Trinity? As the Christian faithful have confessed, and as our Fathers in the faith have taught us, unequivocally and confidently: we *enter into* the life of Christ through the divine Mysteries of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We are glorified in our baptism, in the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in our receiving of the Body and Blood of our Lord in his Holy Eucharist, with a glory that transcends our natural faculties. We are promised, by virtue of the preaching of the hope of the Christian faith, that one day, when Christ returns in glory,

we will be physically resurrected. Our bodies will be fully restored to their former glory *and* to a glory even greater than we can possibly imagine. We will be made incorruptible; we will be given bodies which can partake of the uncreated and gracious energies of the Godhead and participate in them. Truly, it is a mystery too great for human words (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:4).

What, then, does this divine proposition – the revelation of the gift of the glory of God to his creation – have to do with Christian mission? The mission of the Church of Jesus Christ is at least a message of repentance and personal salvation, but it is more. Indeed, the Christian mission *is* to preach the Word of truth, to convert the heathen, to incorporate the believer into the life of the Church, to provide for the physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of the faithful, to disciple, and to equip for ministry. However, the Christian mission is *even more comprehensive* than this. The Christian mission is, first and foremost, *to glorify God*. For this reason, historically, the mission of the Church has not been thought of as anything other than *the life of the Church of Jesus Christ*. By this we mean, the Church in her worship, in her preaching and teaching of the Holy Scriptures, and in her administering of the Holy Mysteries, is necessarily missional. These things – liturgy, Scripture, sacrament – are all *essentially missional* concepts. The worship of the Holy Trinity is simultaneously the goal and the means of mission.³ The worship of the true God *is itself a revelation of* (a witness to) the God who is worshiped.

This missiological principle, "worship as witness," has *always* been at the heart of Orthodox Christian evangelism.⁴ Unfortunately, it has not always been at the forefront of our missiological theory and practice. This is an important point to understand: *doxology* as a *missiological principle* is not a novel concept in the history of Christian mission. That is to say: it is the faith and the mission *of the Apostles* in which we participate. There is a continuity of apostolic missiology that is discernible from the pages of Scripture: the mission of Christ our God *becomes* the mission of his Apostles. There is a continuity of apostolic mission that is traceable through the many centuries among the nations: the lives of the all-venerable and Equals-to-the-Apostles (St. Thecla, St. Nina of Georgia, Ss. Cyril and Methodius, St. Innocent of Alaska, St. Nicholas of Japan, and others) are an exemplary testimony. Even in modern times, Orthodox engaged in mission *continue* to use the doxological tools of liturgy, Scripture, and sacrament to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet the spiritual needs of their contemporary audiences.

In recent times, a particular adage has come, if not to *define* the ethos of Orthodox mission, then at least to *express* it on a popular level: "Come and see." It is succinct enough, which gives it a certain appeal, and it states very well the doxological principle of our mission: "We have *seen* the True Light! We have *received* the Heavenly Spirit! We have *found* the True Faith, *worshipping* the Undivided Trinity, who has saved us!" However, its widespread usage reveals that it has been and can be misinterpreted, both inside and outside Orthodox circles. Taken at its worst, "Come and see," could mean, "This is where *I worship*, and this is what *I do*. If you want to know what *this* (that is, the worship of the Orthodox Church) entails, then take the initiative, and *you* come to *me*." This would be anything but the sort of "missional charisma" that is found in the Apostles themselves, but this can be a very real, very present mindset operative among the faithful. We tend to become *comfortable* in our social clubs, in our immediate circle of friends, and in our domestic lives (oftentimes to a fault), and regrettably, this comfort, even *insularity*, can follow us into our religious communities.

On the other hand, at its very best, "Come and see" is *not just* an *adage of mission*, but a *spiritual disposition* which catalyzes a real, person-to-person

evangelism. "Come and see," can be, "Come *with me* to see." Our task as Orthodox Christian missionaries entails a great deal of effort on our part and a great deal of faith in our "God who gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:7). Our mission is one of going and coming, and hopefully, going and bringing. We must take Christ to the world – in prayer, in sanctity of life, in liturgy, Scripture, and sacrament – while fully understanding that it is in the life of the Church, most palpably in the divine service of the Holy Eucharist, that Christ reveals himself *to us* and *to the world*. Our mission is nothing less than the revelation of the glory of God to the nations, "to make disciples ... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Our mission is nothing less than the worship of the Holy Trinity. "God is the Lord and has revealed himself to us; blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord!"

E. T. John Kerstetter

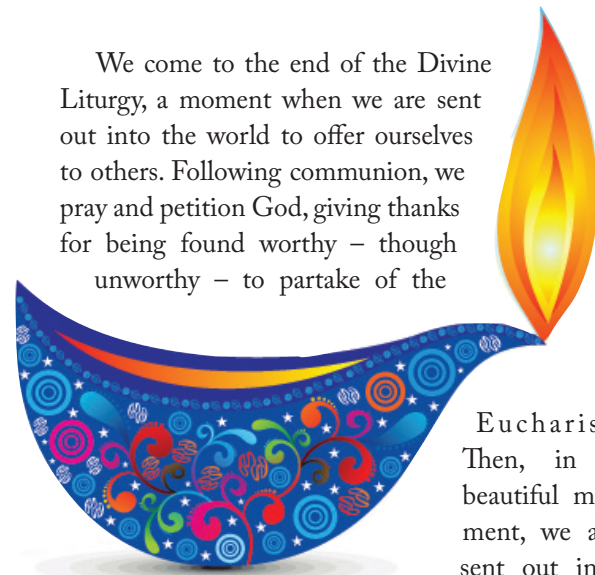
John is completing his program at the Antiochian House of Studies.

1. His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), p. 46, emphasis added.
2. St. Irenaeus of Lyons observed, "The glory of God is man fully alive, and the life of man consists in beholding God," in *Ad-versus Heresies*, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, ANF1, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885). God glories in the resurrection of man. In response, man gives glory to God in worship, which is his true calling and vocation.
3. Dr. James J. Stamoolis adds to this point: "*Right praise of God [ortho-doxology, sic.] is one of the ways that the ultimate aim of mission, the glory of God, is accomplished.* Thus, the worship of God is an ... aim of mission. Even as such, it is not really an aim within itself, since ... the goals are the founding of churches and the conversion of those who do not know the Christ. The liturgy results from the accomplishment of the intermediate aims of mission. ... [The] spread of the gospel should also signify the extension of the praise of God. ... 'In each country, the Church is called to glorify God with her own voice... and [to] add their contribution to the common doxological hymn.' The nations have a contribution to make to the universal praise of God (in *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1986, p. 101, emphasis added).
4. See the work of Fr. Ion Bria, a Romanian priest and contemporary Orthodox missiologist, for a wealth of scholarship on the missiological nature of the Liturgy: "The Liturgy after the Liturgy," in *Martyria Mission, The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1980), pp. 66-71; *Go Forth in Peace, Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986); and *The Liturgy after the Liturgy, Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996).

GO FORTH!

PART 9 OF 10

We come to the end of the Divine Liturgy, a moment when we are sent out into the world to offer ourselves to others. Following communion, we pray and petition God, giving thanks for being found worthy – though unworthy – to partake of the



Eucharist. Then, in a beautiful moment, we are sent out into the world with the words, “Let us go forth in peace.” You might ask how these words mean that we are being sent out into the world. There is no “commissioning” there. In fact, there is! Christ, when sending His disciples out into the world just before His Ascension, sends them with the words, “Go forth.” They are sent to “make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all that [Christ] commanded” In this same way, we are sent out into the world to bring God to the world and to bring the world to God, something often called “the Liturgy after the Liturgy.” This sounds nice, but it isn’t an easy thing to do.

Let’s dig in a little deeper to see what it really means. In the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, Christ begins with a story about ten bridesmaids who were waiting to escort the bridegroom to the wedding feast. They would carry oil lamps with them to escort him. Five of them were wise and five were foolish; five of them had enough oil for their lamps, while five did not. The five who did not have enough oil asked the five who did to share. The latter didn’t share because, if they did, they wouldn’t have enough themselves, and then no one would

have enough oil. While the five foolish bridesmaids were out getting more oil, the bridegroom came and the five wise bridesmaids escorted him into the wedding. When the five foolish ones came to the door, they weren’t allowed into the feast. They hadn’t entered with the bridegroom, so it was assumed that they were not invited guests.

Matthew goes on to tell us a story about a man who calls three of his stewards together and gives one five talents, another three, and another one. The first two stewards did business with their talents and multiplied them, while the third simply buried his talent in the ground, offering nothing back to the master but what he had been given. The two who multiplied their talents were greeted with joy into the master’s kingdom, while the servant who hid his talent was sent into “the outer darkness,” where “men will weep and gnash their teeth.”

These two parables serve as images of the Kingdom of God and what happens if we are not prepared for God’s judgment – the coming of the bridegroom – and if we squander the gifts that God has given us. The chapter ends with the following passage, which we read at the beginning of Great Lent. Christ explains things to His disciples clearly, teaching what is expected of us. It’s like having the answers before we’ve taken the exam. He says:

“When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me

drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.’ And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

All of the practice of self-offering that we do during the course of Divine Liturgy is to prepare us for these moments when we are sent out into the world to serve others. We serve as the mediator between the world and God, bringing God to the world and the world to God. As disciples, we are called to seek out opportunities to live this out, to express our discipleship through our self-offering. In this way, the entirety of the Great Commission is encapsulated in each and every Divine Liturgy.

Let’s revisit this passage from the end of the Gospel of

Matthew. Christ commissions the disciples with the words: “Go forth and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” The three main elements here are the commission to baptize and to teach, and the promise that Christ will be with them. As I noted in an earlier article, baptism is our calling. This same calling is present liturgically with the invitation, “Come, let us worship.” We are then taught through the hymns of the day, the readings prescribed that day, the sermon, the creed, and the prayers of the anaphora. Christ is then made manifest to us through our reception of the Eucharist, uniting us to be the Body of Christ. Finally, after we have received all of that, we are sent out into the world with the words, “Let us go forth in peace.” Just as the disciples who were taught and fed by Christ became the first Apostles, we are sent out into the world with our own apostolic mission of self-offering, having been taught and fed by our Lord.

Gregory Abdalah, D.Min.



THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

A MODEL FOR MINISTRY

Gregory Abdalah, D.Min.



Traditional hand written icon by Khourieh Randa Al Khoury Azar.

This is a weird time in our lives – certainly one of the most unsettling I’ve experienced in my lifetime. I struggle with how to deal with it. We are not built for isolation, though we have been becoming more and more isolated over the last few decades. When it felt as though it were imposed upon us, we didn’t know what to do. Many people reacted in a way that showed great care for others. Our health-

care workers and medical professionals have been amazing and continue to be so. Grocery store workers, postal service employees, UPS and FedEx employees, and truck drivers kept working so our shelves could be stocked with the things we need. They exemplified what we at St. George in Phoenix call “crucifixional” living, the offering of oneself for the sake of the other. This is the life we are all called to live, the life of a Warrior Saint,

modeled on Christ’s self-offering in His voluntary and life-giving crucifixion.

We get a glimpse of what this might mean for us in the Gospel of St. John (4:5–42), the Samaritan Woman’s encounter with Christ. We are all familiar with the story. Christ comes to the city of Sychar and sits near Jacob’s well. A woman of Samaria comes to draw water and Christ says to her, “Give me a drink.” She questions why He would be asking her for water, since she’s a Samaritan and He’s a Jew, and the two groups didn’t get along. Christ then begins to reveal Himself to the woman, offering her “living water.” When she replies by questioning His authority, Christ explains to her the result of listening to Him, by following His path, by receiving His living water. This sparks a discussion with her about her life, to which she replies “Are you a prophet?” Christ tells her what true worship of God is, bringing His revelation to her to full fruition. When she goes back, she then tells others about her encounter with Christ. We hear in the text of the Samaritans coming to see Christ for themselves, and exclaiming, “It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard ourselves, and we know that this is indeed Christ the Savior of the world.”

You might be asking yourself: What does this have to do with me? Well, the simple answer is that you’re called to be *crucifixional*, to offer yourself for the sake of other. In our baptism, we say we put on Christ, becoming sons and daughters of God by adoption. We want to jump immediately to the good part: we assume that this has to do with resurrection somehow, and that coming out of the baptismal waters is a visual metaphor for that. This is a misunderstanding of the Epistle reading for the baptismal service. In St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, He says: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (6:4). In other words, putting on Christ means that we put on His voluntary and life-giving death, that we crucify ourselves for the

sake of others, and in so doing walk in a new life. We put on Christ’s life, who in His person brings together three Old Testament figures: prophet, priest, and king.

We see this clearly in His encounter with the Samaritan Woman. She questions His authority, and He reveals Himself as the King who offers Himself. He tells her about her own life, and she asks if He is a prophet. Finally, He enlightens her about true worship, revealing Himself as Priest, the one who makes the offering. Having been changed by this encounter, the woman follows the apostolic path we are all called to follow, telling others about her encounter, and inviting them to see Christ. This encounter models for us the way how we might participate in Christ’s priesthood of offering ourselves, especially as we begin to emerge from the Covid-19 crisis.

Having been baptized into Christ means that we are baptized into His death, His self-offering. “Putting on Christ” means that, each day, we are called to find opportunities to offer ourselves for others – to be *crucifixional*. First, find your opportunities to encounter Christ and take them. When your church re-opens, go back to church. Don’t just stay home and live-stream since it’s offered, and it’s easier to watch liturgy in your PJ’s. Go back and become more involved than you were before. If you used to come late, start coming on time. You got to see how cool the entire liturgy is while live-streaming it; it’s even cooler when we’re all together. Next, find new ways to offer yourselves to others. It may be as simple as continuing family game nights that were started during the quarantine. It may be more profound. Find new ways. Just as the Samaritan Woman shared her encounter with Christ with those around her, get out and share the joy that *crucifixional* living brings.

We don’t know exactly what the world will be like when we emerge from this Covid-19 crisis, but no matter how the world is, we know what we are called to be: *crucifixional*.

Gregory Abdalah, D.Min.



FIGHTING THE RIGHT WAR

PROTECTING THE LIVES OF OUR UNBORN CHILDREN

Chris Humphrey, Ph.D.

It is a commonplace among military historians that the Allied armies of the First and Second World Wars prepared in each case to fight the last war. The steady advance of troops towards the enemy made sense, before the First World War and the Maxim machine gun put an end to that. Trench warfare made sense, before the mechanized *blitzkrieg*, or “lightning war,” of the Second World War made lines of trenches useless.

The same is true when we think of great evils, of moral conflicts in which many, many lives are lost. If you want to depict a really wicked enemy in some piece of fiction, someone whom everyone knows they should hate, you make him a Nazi, a relic of the past. In the Twentieth Century, Nazism and Communism both offered alternative views of human beings and societies, and justified atrocious crimes against humanity on grounds of an over-

arching theory (a master race in the first instance, or a “new man” created by dialectical materialism in the second). These were the only serious social-political contenders against the European Christian view of man and society. Nazism killed about 6 million Jews, as well as others, and the Communist system under Stalin killed somewhere between 20 and 40 million people, while the Chinese Communist government killed about 65 million of its own people in the last century, and continues, for example, to run concentration camps, and to murder prisoners of conscience for organ transplants today.

These great evils have been *nationalist* ideologies. What of today, however? Are there Nazis anymore? Is there a comparable, great moral evil, at least in scale?

To look for popular, dehumanizing, *nationalist*

ideologies today, however, is to try to fight the last war. Over the last fifty years, the contender for the minds and hearts of the developed world has not been a replacement political ideology, but *secularism* (an attempt to “disinfect” society of religion). Not surprisingly, the rejection of God and of a Christian view of humankind in public expression has opened the door to a “cafeteria” paganism and subjectivism. So Supreme Court Justice Kennedy, in the 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision, wrote infamously that, “at the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe and of the mystery of human life.” Here is subjectivism in a nutshell.

In casting off the “shackles of religion,” secularism leads not merely to ignorant *nonsense*, but to *dehumanization*. Where are the victims, comparable to those of Nazism and Communism? It may be a surprise to learn that *more individual human beings have been killed in abortion than in any other way, in all of history*, and most of that killing has taken place in the last fifty years. (The bulk of that killing has taken place in China and India. Together they are responsible for 24 to 25 million abortions a year.)

Abortion, like genocide and other crimes, has been around a long time. The modern novelty has been technology. Mass killing by the Nazis was made possible by the railroad and road transport, and followed the example of the earlier Armenian genocide. The atom bomb dropped on Japanese cities was a technological marvel. Suction machines were first used to destroy unborn children *in utero* in Communist Russia in 1922, and spread to the West. Currently in the U.S. there are about a million abortions a year. Entrepreneurial abortionists have been able for decades to perform a series of such suction abortions in rapid succession. Now chemical abortion promises to make the self-induced abortion common, and more difficult to trace.

Note that our “enemy” in the new moral “war” is not a particular religion or ideology. As Orthodox Christians, we celebrate the unique conception of Jesus Christ, “incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,” at the Feast of the Annunciation, on March 25. We also celebrate the conception of the Most Holy Theotokos on December 9, and that of St. John the Baptist on September 23. We are predisposed by our faith to see things properly. We could make secular arguments, of course. We

could argue that every individual human being began his or her existence in this world at his or her conception. Conception is the only neat point at which life can be said to begin.¹ (Here we have not a *potential life*, but a new *life with potential*.) If our imaginations have a hard time recognizing the very early individual life, at the blastocyst stage, say, as a new member of the human family, that is *a problem of our imagination*, not in reality. (The human being is never just a depersonalized “clump of cells.”) We could mention that the human heart starts beating about sixteen days after conception, about the time when mom is beginning to suspect she’s pregnant. We could say all these things, and we would be right: here is another one of us.

Still, being right is usually not enough to overcome the secularist mindset, in which the defenseless victim is an embarrassment or an inconvenience. “And who is my neighbor?” our interlocutor asks. “I don’t want to think about this silent, little thing in ontological no-man’s-land. I see what I want to see, and my will rules.” This is less a problem of the head than of the heart. It is not surprising that since 1977 the General Social Survey has found that public support for abortion on demand has hovered at around 40 percent. If education about pregnancy and abortion were enough to convince people, that number would have dropped.

We cannot fight the last war – Nazism and Communism as ideologies are dead. We can, however, look at how courageous men (and women) have stood up to evil, and be encouraged to emulate them. During the Nazi occupation of Greece, the Orthodox Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Damaskinos, signed a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, who was collaborating with the Nazis. The letter was a courageous defense of the Greek Jews who were being rounded up and deported to Poland to be exterminated. When the Germans continued with the deportations, His Beatitude called the Police Chief of Athens, Angelos Evert, to his office and told him, “I have taken up my cross. I spoke to the Lord, and made up my mind to save as many Jewish souls as possible.”

When S.S. General Jürgen Stroop, police official for Greece, found out about the letter, he threatened to shoot His Beatitude. The Archbishop (with historical oppression by the Turks in

mind) told the German officer that “according to the traditions of the Greek Orthodox Church, our prelates are hung and not shot. Please respect our traditions!” His Beatitude would not be stopped. Chief Evert issued false identification cards and Archbishop Damaskinos ordered the churches to issue false baptismal certificates to those threatened with deportation. In Athens and the port city of Piraeus, Christians hid Jews in their homes. The result of their work was the rescue of 66 percent of the Jews of Athens.²

The courage of the past often looks simple to us: he saw what was right, and did it. That, however, is what happens when we look back from the

heroes of the past to know what was right, and to do it. If we had been there, we would have known what to do, and have done it, just like them. The Lord Jesus implied just this dynamic when He said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’” In Jesus’ time, the dreadful irony was that those who admired their prophetic predecessors would have been among those who killed them, if they had lived in that day. Our challenge is to see things clearly in *our* day, to do what



present: we air-brush away the complications, the uncertainties, the betrayals, even the doubts. Did no one ask the Archbishop, “What will happen if they don’t shoot you, but take some priests off to Poland to die? What will you do then?” Did others say, “Why are we getting involved in politics? We should just keep our heads down and submit, as Christ did, to the authorities.” “His Kingdom is not of this world. This will all pass.” “Your business is our eternal souls, and the churches and the monasteries, not this trouble.” “Who cares about the Jews? In any case, they can take care of themselves.”

We are tempted to think that it was easy for the

we can in the moral war of *our* day, as the people we admire would have, if they were here now.

“I . . . made up my mind to save as many . . . souls as possible.” We *can* do the same, in our day. With abortion, we are not only saving the lives of the babies: we are preventing a soul-destroying act by the woman. We are already seeing success in America. Pregnancy help centers are the chief reason that abortion numbers have been declining since 1984. At those centers that have ultrasound machines, they can show the pregnant woman the child in her womb. The sonographer shows the woman the flicker of her baby’s beating heart, or the outline of his or her head, or his

or her thumb-sucking. There can be tears. This is often enough, with care and support, for women to change their minds – about 85 percent do so. Truth and love have power, and hearts are opened to life.

Zoe for Life! is one Orthodox organization that is saving as many souls as possible, in Parma, Ohio (near Cleveland), and in Ann Arbor, Michigan. New chapters are starting in Binghamton, New York, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (Go to <http://www.zoeforlife.org> for more information on Zoe.) Zoe for Life! is endorsed by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States, and that is good.

But that is not enough. Like Archbishop Damaskinos, we need to translate our good intentions into action – time, energy, and money, devoted to saving the vulnerable. If there is no Orthodox organization in your area that is doing this, start one. If none is likely to start, work with other Christians to reach women in your community. Look up your local pregnancy medical centers. Meet their executive directors. Donate to the centers. Volunteer with them. Advertise them. (Vision for Life – Pittsburgh, of which I am the Executive Director, has seen a 26 percent drop in ratios of abortions to live births after we started advertising two local pregnancy medical center organizations. Thousands of babies have been born who would not have been, if we had not run our ads.)

Our hierarchs, too, could lead as did Archbishop Damaskinos, in practical, pro-life pregnancy help, at the very least with funding, and with the very public blessing of the centers. Our parish priests could put the names and phone numbers of the centers in their weekly bulletins, for, as the founders of Zoe were told, unmarried Orthodox women will seek an abortion rather than face embarrassment in their local parishes. A member of Zoe for Life! – Pittsburgh tells me that a priest’s daughter in another state became pregnant as a teen and was pressured by members of the parish to have an abortion, but she and her family were pro-life and kept the baby. That baby is now grown up, married, and has a successful career.

Clergy and youth workers in every parish need to have the same open heart, the same courage and forthrightness in the face of this great evil, as had Archbishop Damaskinos when pressured by the Nazis. In terms of sheer numbers, we live in the Age of Abortion. As Orthodox Christians, clergy

and lay, however, we can rise to the challenge and fight the right war. We can do something to “save as many souls as possible.”

Rescue those who are being taken away to death;
hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.
If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,”
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it,
and will he not requite man according to his work? (Proverbs 24:11–12)

Chris Humphrey, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Vision for Life
www.visionforlifepgh.org

1. Some claim that the new, genetically unique individual human being is not a person *before implantation* in the uterus, because he or she is not a yet “person in relation” to his or her mother. (Persons, we are told, must be *in relation*, as are the Persons of the Trinity.) This claim is specious. By this standard, would we say that St. Mary of Egypt ceased to be a *person* after years in the desert? Is the seriously mentally and physically handicapped person, incapable of communication, still a *person*? If it is true that “not one [sparrow] is forgotten before God,” every conceived human being, at whatever stage of life, is known to Him (Luke 12:6). What purpose would this pernicious *depersonalization* serve? Could it be used to justify the use of abortifacients like the IUD, which prevent implantation, or potential abortifacients, like the morning-after pill, which may stop ovulation, but can prevent implantation of the newly conceived person?

2. <https://blog.acton.org/archives/77044-the-greek-orthodox-bishop-who-stood-up-to-the-nazis.html>



Icon handwritten by Khouria Erin Kimmet

SAINTS AMONG US

Khouria Erin Kimmet of Norwood Massachusetts

The summer of 2019 marked a major milestone in the life of the Antiochian Village – forty years of Christ-centered camping, forty years of teaching and shaping young people! This memorable celebration, decades in the making, was capped by the installation of a new icon in the Camp Dining Hall. The icon, entitled, *The Synaxis of the Saints of Antiochian Village*, was created uniquely for the Camp, with hopes of inspiring campers for generations to come. It is not simply an homage to the past, but also an illustration, so to speak, of the very essence and spirit of that Christ-centered life at the Village.

Icons are essential in our lives as Orthodox Christians. They teach us about our faith and help us to know God and His saints. Their mere presence can speak to us and draw us into a deeper relationship with Him. At first glance icons might seem simple and straightforward. Upon further reflection, however, they often reveal layers of meaning, through details such as color, gesture, and composition. As with most icons, the new Camp icon with its many layers has plenty to teach us, but in order to understand these layers better, it is helpful to delve into several related topics.

SAINTS: FRIENDS, INTERCESSORS, PATRONS

The overarching theme of this icon is *saints and intercessory prayer*, so that is the perfect place to start! For Orthodox Christians, the stories of the saints are woven into our daily prayer; their lives serve as examples for us as we live out each day. Have you ever read about a saint and then quite literally fallen in love – a life so extraordinary it moves you to tears? Perhaps you have an affinity for Saint Moses the Black, or Saint Seraphim of Sarov, or Saint Mary of Egypt (honestly, who *doesn't* weep when you read her story each Lent?). Maybe

you've heard their stories at Matins or studied them on your own; perhaps you've gotten to know a saint in Church School or at Camp. As we learn about their lives, their faith, and their sacrifices, we begin to know them, to love them, and to include them in our prayer life. Relationships form, sometimes life-long, and sometimes life-changing. These saints become like old friends: always there for us, always praying for us, always directing us to God. They are our intercessors, our friends. Actually, I liken them to good friends, to my *best* friends, in that they support me, love me unconditionally, and pray for me even when I can't pray for myself.

These saints, who have walked the ground that we walk, who have met the challenges of the day, and who have overcome temptation, not only serve as inspiration for us, but also are at-the-ready to join us in battle. Sometimes we use the term *patron* when speaking about these saints. Perhaps the patron of your church is Saint George; or your baptismal name (and patron saint) is Sophia; or maybe you ask the intercessions of Saint Nektarios (the patron of those with cancer.) One need look no further than the hymns of these great saints to be assured of their fervent prayers for us. "Let us sing praises with gladness of heart to the newly-shining star of Orthodoxy, the newly-built rampart of the Church. Being glorified by the power of the Spirit, he pours forth the abundant grace of healings upon those who cry: 'Rejoice, Father Nektarios.'" "As deliverer of captives and defender of the poor; healer of the infirm, champion of kings; victorious, great-martyr George, intercede with Christ our God, for our souls' salvation." How rich indeed are the hymns of our Church! Let them, then, inspire us to study the lives of the saints and to call upon them in prayer – they are our advocates in times of distress and anguish as well as great triumph and joy!

OF THE VILLAGE

Just as churches, individuals, and organizations have patron saints, so, too, there are patrons at the Antiochian Village, who have been central to camp life since its inception. The earliest patrons were Saint Ignatius, Saint Thekla, and Saints Peter and Paul, followed by Saint Artemius and Saint Raphael of Brooklyn.

Over the years, additional patrons were added; the units (clusters of cabins divided by age and gender) were each assigned a patron saint. This was done to create a more intimate fellowship within the larger camp community. An outdoor shrine was built in each unit to house the icon of the saint or saints selected specifically for each sub-set of campers: Saint Marina; Saints Sophia and her daughters, Faith, Hope and Love; Saint Herman; and The Three Holy Children. These shrines, nestled amongst the cabins, stand as physical reminders that we are not alone. Rather, we are surrounded by God and a whole host of saints who intercede on our behalf. The stories of these holy saints and the lessons of their lives are woven into the fabric of camp life through discussions and homilies, during cabin time and at supplication services. These saints become beloved friends whom the campers long to be with, each and every year!

This, in fact, was *exactly* Metropolitan Philip’s dream for the Antiochian Village more than forty years ago: that it would become a place where *everyone* longed to be; that the Village would stand as a physical “home” in the life of all of the people and organizations of our Archdiocese, a place where they would come together for meetings, fellowship, and prayer. So it was fitting that the choice of patron saints would reflect that desire.

The Camp church is named for Saint Ignatius, the God-bearing martyr and patron of the great philanthropic arm of our God-protected Archdiocese, The Order of Saint Ignatius.

The outdoor chapel is named for Saint Thekla, one of the most popular female saints of the Orthodox in Syria and Lebanon. She is a reminder of our heritage and a beloved friend to the Antiochian Women. She stands as a model of chastity and faith for young women and men alike who strive to live a life of virtue on their way to the Kingdom.

Saints Peter and Paul are the patron saints of Antioch and are, of course, well-loved in our Archdiocese. Their icon, along with that of Saint Thekla, was intended to be on the iconostasis of Saint Ignatius Church, but during the installation it was discovered that there wasn’t room for them. Instead, the icons of these holy saints are hung prominently

on the back wall of the church. These saints remain to this day steadfast intercessors for campers, staff, and all who faithfully ask.

Saint Artemius is a patron saint who, one might say, inserted himself into camp life. When I say that he chose us, that is in fact exactly what happened. After appearing in a dream to iconographer Phil Zimmerman, and after insisting that Phil should paint his icon “for the children,” it was clear that Saint Artemius wanted to become a permanent resident, so to speak, at the Antiochian Village. His young life shines forth as a model of faith and obedience, and has been a true inspiration for generations of campers.

Saint Raphael of Brooklyn is a near-contemporary saint whose relics were brought to rest on the grounds of the Antiochian Village in 1989. Affinity for this saintly bishop and modern-day shepherd spread like wildfire as we learned of his undying love and determination to feed the lost sheep in America. His story fueled our own desire to share the faith which we hold so dear.

Together, these saints form the inner circle around which prayer life is built at the Antiochian Village. We learn about them, get to know them, and ask them, along with the Virgin Mary, to intercede on our behalf. We find inspiration, comfort and yes, even healing, in the lives of the saints and the firm belief that their intercessions are life-changing. Yes, of course, it is through Christ Jesus that we are healed! Yet the Church teaches us time and again that it is often *through* the intercessions of His Mother and all of the saints that we find our way to Him.

CREATING THE CAMP ICON

It goes without saying that deep and lasting relationships have been forged at the Antiochian Village, between campers, staff, volunteers, and yes, perhaps most importantly, with God and His saints! Prayers have been asked, hymns have been sung, miracles have been wrought, and lives have been changed. It’s impossible to quantify the impact, but talk to any AV alum, and you’ll hear it in his voice and see it on her face!

One of those alums is my son, Nick. Years ago, he shared his Christmas list with me; topping the list was a hand-painted icon (hand-written, for those who prefer) of all the saints at the Antiochian Village. “Amazing!” I thought, though it was a pretty tall order on such short notice. The icon would have to wait, but the seed was planted. The following summer, I eagerly shared this idea with Father Anthony Yazge and Deacon Marek Simon,

only to find out that they too had long since had the very same wish! With God’s help, this icon would become a reality.

All icons are created in prayer for the purpose of prayer, and not a decision should be made or step taken without first asking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Creating the Camp icon would be no different. Over the course of three years, much thought and planning (and prayer!) went into the preparation and completion of this unique and holy image. There were many questions to ask and answer. Which patron saints would be included? What would be the composition? How would it illustrate the story of these patron saints and their role in our lives at Camp? How could we possibly sum it all up in a single image? Thanks be to God, these answers do not lie in the hands of any one person; we have centuries of iconographic examples, the teachings of the Fathers, and Holy Tradition to guide our efforts. Just as it should be, above all else, we have prayer and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Slowly but surely, the sketches began to take shape and a composition emerged. If you study the icon carefully, you will find that the setting is quite literally that of the Antiochian Village which makes its home in the hill-country of Western Pennsylvania. And, just as with Camp, the saints and the Theotokos are nestled in a valley between two mountains. (She, of course, as the Mother of our God, is elevated just a little higher than the rest.) Together, they beseech the Lord on our behalf. The Virgin, as our protector and quick help, reverently holds in her hands Saint Ignatius Church, while Saint Artemius, Saint Raphael, Saint Ignatius, and Saint Thekla stand with arms outstretched in prayer and supplication. Their collective focus is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who, flanked by the angelic hosts, blesses us from Heaven above. The stylized trees reach up into the sky and seemingly point “the Way.” The iconic arch of old joins the two scenes together and proclaims the message that has inspired Village-goers for generations: “We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.” The icon of Saints Peter and Paul, while quite small in the scheme of things, is central to the composition, and, along with the cross overhead, stands to direct our attention upward to Christ Almighty. If you look closely, you will even find a deer on the mountain top. While this is an obvious nod to the reality of camp life, it also points us to a verse from Psalm 41: “As the deer longs for the springs of waters, So my soul longs for you, O God.”

Even the smallest of details, which seem so obvious now, came quite slowly. The addition of

that tiny deer was literally a last-minute decision (the inspiration of my husband) which quickly gave the icon a whole new layer of meaning.

There are a few other details where one can feel certain that the Holy Spirit was at work. Early in the planning process, the decision was made that (as beloved as they are) Saints Peter and Paul were not amongst the four main patron saints at the Camp, and so they would not be included in the icon. It was also not part of the plan to include the *original* arch in the icon, but rather to use the newer (and more familiar) one. (It is important to note that the new arch does not feature Saints Peter and Paul.) As the icon was nearing completion, and it was time to paint the arch, it simply wouldn’t come together. After many failed attempts, a dear friend and fellow iconographer suggested that I use a projector to overlay a photo of the arch onto the icon to aid in the decision-making. The photo I had was that of the original arch which featured the icon of Saints Peter and Paul. The minute I saw it, I knew: *This* is exactly how it was meant to be! So that is how the old arch ended up in the icon. I can’t help but smile to think that Saints Peter and Paul had found their way into the icon after all.

Long after the icon was painted, I learned that the original arch, installed in 1978, also was not supposed to include Saints Peter and Paul. (Do we sense a theme here?) The arch, a gift to the Village from the Senior SOYO of our Archdiocese, was intended to include a mosaic of the Virgin Mary and Christ. When the mosaic arrived, it was so heavy that it couldn’t be hung safely on the arch. And so, a line-drawn icon of Saints Peter and Paul (the logo created by the late Father James McLuckie for the 1977 visit of Patriarch Elias IV) was crafted out of metal and installed atop the arch, where it remained at the Camp entrance for decades. Today, this familiar icon, though a bit battle-worn by the elements, hangs in its new home across from the Lodge for all to see.

The Synaxis of the Saints of Antiochian Village now stands as the focal point in the Camp Dining Hall and serves as a reminder to everyone who prays before it that God and His saints are very real in our lives. Just as surely as we see them standing on our beloved campgrounds, they stand with us as guardians and protectors every minute of every day. God is indeed wondrous in His saints!

Khouria Erin Kimmel
Saint George Orthodox Church, Norwood , Massachusetts

RE-CREATION

Deacon Elias Barakat

(This is an English translation of an excerpt from the author’s book in Arabic, “قل اءاج يب عئش لئل.”)

In just four verses, John the Evangelist, assures us of the truth that Jesus is the Creator as described in Genesis.

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:19–22).

John 20:19–25 is read on Bright Monday. In the most striking verse, 22, Jesus says, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” The disciples will receive the Holy Spirit on Pentecost; what, then, is going on here? Is it a “pre-Pentecost”?

Let’s go back to the beginning, to Genesis. “In the beginning God made heaven and earth. The earth was without form,¹ and void; and darkness was over the deep. The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water² (Genesis 1:1–2). The earth was a place of chaos and darkness, and the Spirit of God was hovering over it.

In the Crucifixion, we see the same scenario. “Now it was about the sixth hour [noon], and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened.³ Having said this, He breathed His last” (Luke 23: 44–46). “Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice And Jesus cried out

again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit” (Mathew 27: 46–50).⁴ “And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit” (John 19:30). At this point, the earth was like wilderness, a place of darkness and chaos. The Creator has been crucified, and has given over the spirit, which is hovering over the scene.⁵

“You shall send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be created, and You shall *renew* the face of the earth.... The Lord shall be glad in His works” (Psalms 105: 30–31).

“Then God formed man out of dust from the ground, and breathed in his face the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).

“He breathed⁶ on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

“God has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2).

Dear reader, do you see the parallel? He who created man in the beginning is recreating him again in Resurrection. The church teaches that in Resurrection, the universe has been recreated, and so is man.

What does this mean? Simply that the story of creation is true. What is revealed really happened, and was written as inspired by the Holy Spirit. The way it happened is God’s way, and mysterious. This is our faith.

Deacon Elias Barakat

1. tōhū; form. Meaning to lie waste; a desolation (of surface), i.e. desert; figuratively, confusion, vanity, waste, wilderness, without form, place of chaos (NKJV Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance h8414).
2. It would also mean the earth, since earth was not yet separated from the waters.
3. Mathew 27:45–56; Mark 15:33–41.
4. Also Mark 15: 33–37.
5. To renew the earth – recreating it.
6. “To blow or breathe upon” – This word used only once by the LXX translators in Genesis 2:7, where God breathed on Adam and he became a living soul (NKJV Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance g1720).



ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

ORDAINED

HEFFELFINGER, Stephen, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on February 2, 2020, at St. Simeon Church, Santa Clarita, California. Deacon Stephen is assigned to the church.

SAID, Nicola, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on March 8, 2020, at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Washington, D.C. Deacon Nicholas is assigned to the church.

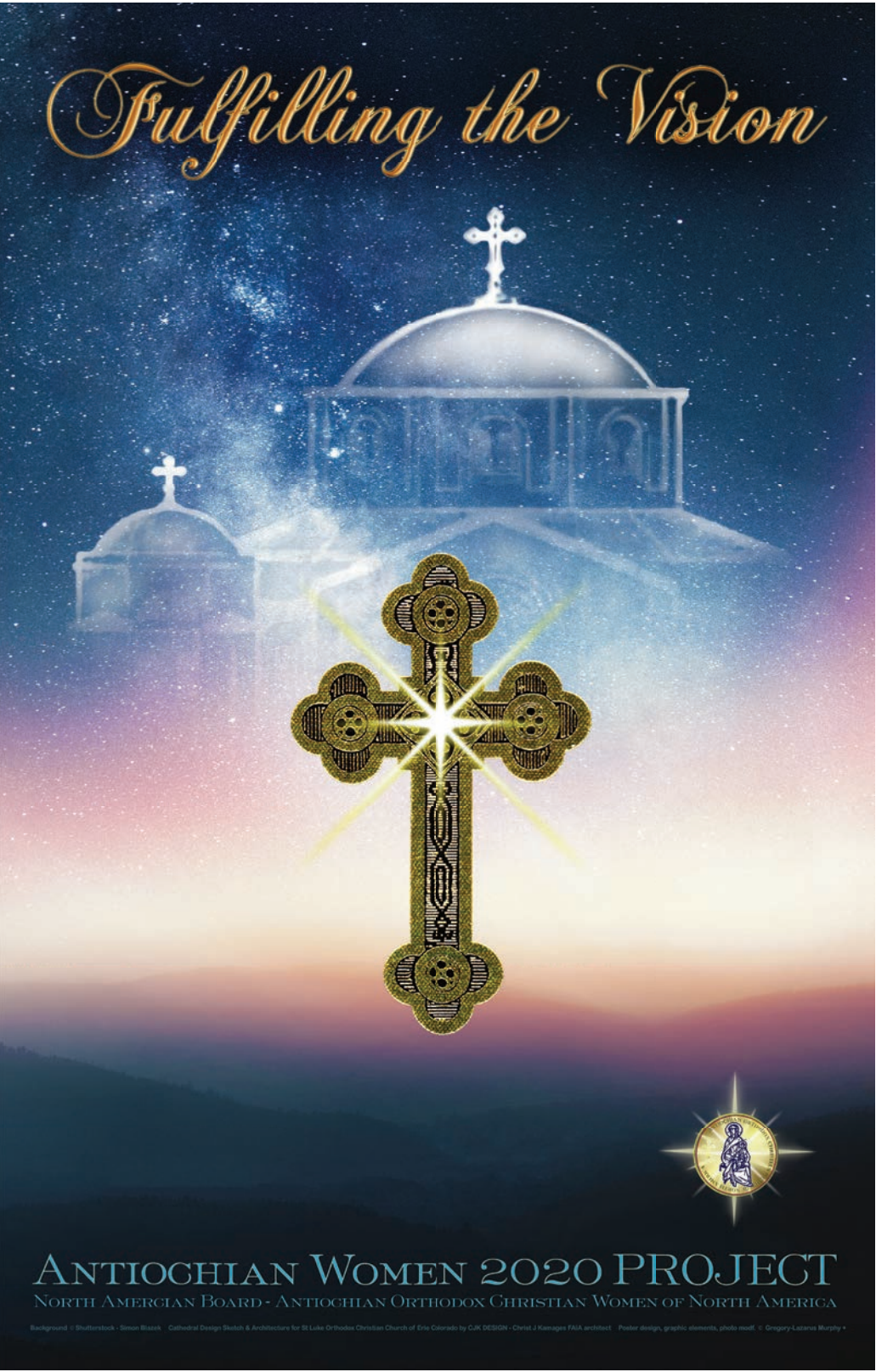
TORRES, Deacon Sera- phim, to the holy priesthood by Metropolitan JOSEPH on March 1, 2020, at St. Ignatius of Antioch Church, Windsor, Ontario. Fr. Seraphim is now the head priest of the church.

DECEASED

CROW, Archpriest Isaac, 67, Pastor of **Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Potomac, Maryland**, on March 26, 2020. He is survived by his wife, Dolly, and their son, Basil.

KINNICK, Archpriest Ber- nard, Pastor Emeritus of St. Nicholas Church, Spokane, Washington, on March 22, 2020. He is survived by his wife, Karen, and daughter.

MOTHER SOPHIA (Roe) of the Monastery of Our Lady and St. Laurence, Tallahassee Creek, Colorado, on Febru- ary 29, 2020. Mother Sophia was 87.



THE WORD
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ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA NATIONAL CONVENTION

Pittsburgh, PA, July 18-25, 2021

Christ is Risen!



Truly He is Risen!

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

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