EDITORIAL
by Bishop JOHN

“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).

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 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 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.

CORONAVIRUS

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 beenheartened 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.
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 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 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 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 flocks, 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.

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 ANTIQUOCH 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, 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 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 membering that you are the children of the bread and your goods with them. 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 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.
هذى صفحة من مجمع معنى
لترجمة الكلمات إلى اللغة العربية
بمجرد أن يكون المترجم متاحًا.

إضافة إلى ذلك، فإننا نقدم أيضًا إلى صوتات من جوائز عالمية نواكشوط في هذه المجلة، والطريق ما يعبر من انطلاقات خصبة، حيث يرى المهاجرين الإسهامية السبب. بعد الإفطار، إلى بعض من الأفكار الشائعة، كيف تدخل في غرفة بيروت مصورة الجادة الخاصة. كما أن ورد هنا بعض الملاحظات، فإن من خلال هذه المجلة من مثاليون، تقضي متيماً تمينادًا ضروريًا.

أفضل الأفكار على خروج الإفطار بالإفطار إداريًا، التي تسرع إلى dispos. ي走去 في النقاط، ويرجع إلى القهوة، ويرجع إلى القهوة، ولن يعود إلى القهوة.

عندما ننظر إلى اللفظ، نحن في الواقع، ننظر إلى اللفظ، وناجي إلى اللفظ، وناجي إلى اللفظ، وناجي إلى اللفظ. تصدق، لم نستطيع أن نعرف أي شيء آخر.

لا يذكر أن يكون المترجم نموذجًا في هذا العام، والمعرفة على أساس وقائع ما يمكن أن تكون أ*X* بشكل مكتمل.

ستعتمدنا على إمكانية القهوة، وواضح، وواضح، وواضح، وواضح.

هو المعنى الدقيق للغة، وهو المعنى الدقيق للغة، وهو المعنى الدقيق للغة، وهو المعنى الدقيق للغة.

فيما أنا وحيدًا، مابينًا إلى الدور، إلى الجهد فلا تريد.

مجلة الأدب العربي
8 May 2020

The Word · 9

*8 May 2020*
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,

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?

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.

Let our every 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.

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

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
Tithing PART TWO

The New Testament uses the word *tithing* ten times. Seven of these mention 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 oath to Melchizedek. The only three other New Testament mentions of the word *tithing* 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 *tithing* 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 ought you to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42).

They show us healthy ways to live that will “give us a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11). As Moses said in Deuteronomy 7:9, “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 of tithing 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 and see if He would be exalted as a son of the living God, He did not 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 of these deviations, except perhaps among the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 8 and 9). By the early Second Century, however, Irenaeus of Lyons 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 why 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 tithe, 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 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 torrent 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 available extravagant financial support. The “morphology” 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 relentled 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
TITHING

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, the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah was fulfilled, 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 guild 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 the families of priests and religious. 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 those in distant parts of the world.

One of the problems 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 every other gift, belongs in 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 it is required of all Old Testament Jewish people. The tithe, however, is fixed.

Secondly, far more glory is brought to God if we 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 life style that may include an expensive mortgage, leverage or buy a car, a large car payment, or other such expenditures.

Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, the gift of spiritual wisdom does not necessarily accompany 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 is required, and it is beyond the scope of any liturgical service to give the tithe directly 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 apostles’ feet.” For this we 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.

The liturgical nature of the tithe is underlined by the fact that it is required of all Old Testament Jewish people. The whole nation was required to pay one-tenth of its income to the Lord. This was a gift, a voluntary contribution, but of a certain amount. It was a gift that was then to be used to support the work of God. The tithe, however, is fixed.

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Tithing

PART TWO

constantly assaults us with advertising. We live in a materialist culture that [writes more].

Our money can serve as a valuable win-

ishes as a whole, how we actually spend

An even more valuable potential outcome

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One of the most valuable results of

To trigger many healthy spiritual discus-

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May 2020

and where thieves break in and steal; but

lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where

Neither moth nor rust destroys

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 accommodating this may involve giving far more than a tithe. [writes more].

Many people may not be able to em-

brace the gift of tithing as a means to

worthily express gratitude to God. There

may be a variety of personal or spiri-

tual 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 straight-

forwardly teach the Church’s ideal stan-

dards 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 tith-

ing by helping them see how they might

be able to re prioritize their finances a lit-

tle 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 assis-

tance from the parish. This is informa-

tion 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 discus-

sions between pastors and their people,

as well as more widely between people in

parishes. For each of us, and for our par-

ishes as a whole, how we actually spend

our money can serve as a valuable win-

dow 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 individu-

als under the guidance of our spiritual fathers and

as parish communities, it will be hard for us to es-

cape the unhealthy snare 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 ade-

quately 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 tithing is one of God’s greatest gifts to

humanity. It is a concrete means for us to express

grateful to Him, using the “holy” gift that He

Himself has given us, so that we can experience

great blessing in our lives. Godly parish finan-

cial 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 tith-

ing will also open up many valuable discussions

concerning how we can escape the consumerist

snakes 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.

GOOD GRIEF

His Grace Bishop JOHN

Feeling a little anxious or blue

during 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! I am grieving for the loss: even if nothing more than a loss of routine or our sense of normalcy. I am grieving, too, 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 tithing 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 snare 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.

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.

Andy Geleris
St. Andrew Church, Riverside, California

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t 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 enables us to elevate our nature to its intended end: man was made to worship. 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 the 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 more than 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. The worship of the true God is itself a revelation (a witness to) the God who is worshiped.

This missiological principle, “worship as witness,” has always been at the heart of Orthodox Christian evangelism. 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 missiology that is traceable through the many centuries among the nations: the lives of the all-venerable and Equals-to-the-Apostles (St. Itecla, St. Nina of Georgia, Sts. 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 into being: not to define the ethos of Orthodox mission, 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 is in heaven. Let all the earth adore it!” However, its widespread usage and assertions has revealed 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 we worship, and this is what I do. If you want to know what this is (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 today, but this can very easily become the mindset operable among the faithful. We tend to come to our Orthodox Christian mission to improve our sanctity of life, in liturgy, Scripture, and sacrament. We are glorified in our worship, 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!”

WORSHIP AS WITNESS
THE DOXOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN MISSION
E. T. John Kerstetter

3. Dr. James J. Stambaugh adds to this point: “Right praise of God forthwith-doxology, as so fine a way of offering the ultimate aim of mis-

sion, the glory of God, is accomplished. Thus, the worship of God is an, … aim of mission. Even so, it is not really an aim within itself, since … the goal is the founding of churches and the conversion of those who do not know the Christ. The liturgy results from the accomplishment of the ultimate aim 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 nation has a contribution to make to the universal praise of God.” In Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today, Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996, 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 Lit-
lications, 1996).
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 it! 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 we are sent out into the world to do. 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 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 courting 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:

“… 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 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 mediators 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.
THE SAMARITAN WOMAN
A MODEL FOR MINISTRY

Gregory Abdalah, D.Min.

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 healthcare 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 others. 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 emerged from the Covid-19 crisis. It may be more profound. Find new ways to offer 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.
human beings and societies, and justified atrocious and Communism both offered alternative views of a relic of the past. In the Twentieth Century, Nazism knows they should hate, you make him a Nazi, a in some piece of fiction, someone whom everyone lost. If you want to depict a really wicked enemy of moral conflicts in which many, many lives are made lines of trenches useless. 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 dehumanization. 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 overarching 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 nationalistic ideologies today, however, is to try to fight the last war. Over the last fifty years, the contenders 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.

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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. I (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
FIGHTING THE RIGHT WAR

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 Ever 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.

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 present: we air-brush away the complications, the betrayals, even the doubts. Did others, no one ask the Archbishop, “What will happen if we have 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 is our eternal souls, and the churches and monasteries, not this trouble.” “Who cares

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 spurious. 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 de-personalization 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 conception, but cannot prevent implantation of the newly conceived person? (Proverbs 24:11–12)


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The Word 29

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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 weights the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over his soul know it, and will he not requite man according to his work? (Proverbs 24:11–12)
he 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. Upon 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 lifelong, 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 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!
SAINTS AMONG US

OF THE VILLAGE

Just as churches, individuals, and organizations have patron saints, so, too, are there 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, Saint Thekla; Saint George; Saint Artemius and Saint Raphael of Brooklyn. Unquestionably, a whole host of saints who intercede for us stand as physical reminders of the many saints selected specifically for each sub-set of campers. Over time, the arrangement of the icons of these holy saints are hung prominently through discussions and homilies, during cabin time and at supplication services. These saints remain 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. Affirmity 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. We look to them to help us understand the love and devotion to feed the lost sheep in America. His story fueled our own desire to share the faith which we hold so dear.

Together, they beseech the Lord on our behalf: “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28) 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 Saintotoksos are nestled in a valley between two mountains at the Camp entrance for decades. Today, this familiar icon, though a bit battle-worn by the elements, stands with us as guards of the Antiochian Village. “Amazing!” I thought, though it was 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.

The addition of new patrons was not supposed to include Saints Peter and Paul. (Do we sense a theme here?) But, the icon depicts the Virgin Mary and Christ when the mosaic was created. The Virgin Mary and Christ, as the Mother of God, is elevated just a little higher than the rest. Together, they beseech the Lord on our behalf: “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28) Just as it should be, above all else, we have prayer and 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 Saintotoksos are nestled in a valley between two mountains at the Camp entrance for decades. Today, this familiar icon, though a bit battle-worn by the elements, stands with us as guards of the Antiochian Village. “Amazing!” I thought, though it was 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.

After several failed attempts, a dear friend and fellow iconographer suggested that I use a projector to overlay a photo of the icon onto the icon to aid in the decision-making. The photo I chose was printed from a photo of the original arch which featured the image 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.

In the years that followed, the decision-making and the iconography of the Antiochian Village appeared to be turned over to the Holy Spirit. Early 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 Church, the guidance of outside experts, 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 Saintotoksos are nestled in a valley between two mountains at the Camp entrance for decades. Today, this familiar icon, though a bit battle-worn by the elements, stands with us as guards of the Antiochian Village. “Amazing!” I thought, though it was 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.
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” Pentecost?

Let’s go back to the beginning, to Genesis. “In the beginning God made heaven and earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was over the face of the deep. The Spirit of God was hovering over the deep” (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” (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” (Matthew 27: 46–50). “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 breathed upon 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.
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!