

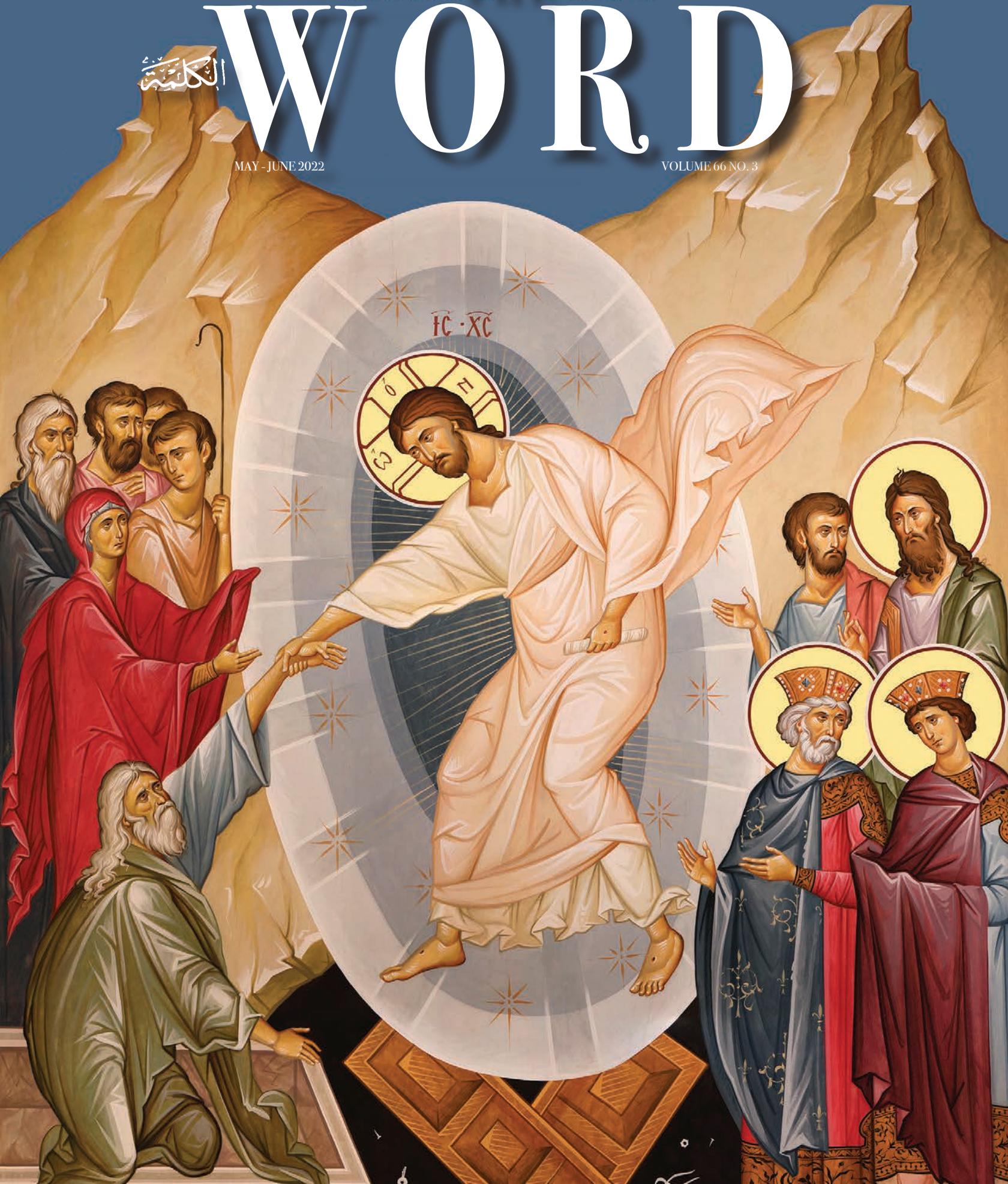
ВОСКРЕСЕНИЕ ХРИСТОСА

# WORD

الكلمة

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# THE WORD

الكلمة

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# CHRIST IS RISEN!



**T**here are wars throughout the world, as has been the case throughout all of recorded history. All war is horrific. In war, human beings act in ways totally inconsistent with our vocations to bring heavenly order to the disorder of a fallen world. The world is full of diseases and we have seen a devastating pandemic, as has been the case many times throughout recorded history. What is different today is the instant communication of these horrors, and a media that treats everything as a catastrophe, including the weather (to boost ratings and increase the price of commercial time). The result for us is a population exhausted to the point of burnout from hearing the alarm of catastrophe 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We have depleted our energies, compromised our immune systems, isolated ourselves, and come close to losing our humanity.

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Bishop BASIL

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Yet we are reminded that Christ is Risen! Humanity is restored! Death is destroyed! Heaven is at hand. The cost of our sins is paid by Christ, and He stands with us in our catastrophes, even when we suffer and die. He joins us to Himself and shares His life and death with us.

The winter in New England seems to keep coming back, but today I saw two ducks in the wetland of our New England chancery, making their annual migration home for the summer. The daffodils have broken through the ground, offerings signs of hope. People are mostly shedding their masks, and, at least for now, things are starting to feel like normal.

I know that the world is not at peace, and not without disease. I also know that we Christians are called into service by the real catastrophes of our time. In order to respond, however, we need to battle the numbness that comes from two-and-a-half years of frustration, fear, and pain. We need to accept responsibility for what is ours and stop judging others. It is time to reconnect to the people and activities that restore our energy and allow us to serve. We need to forgive each other and start again. Let's work at our friendships and relationships.

Pascha is our annual reset. It focuses on the historical event of the Resurrection, and the Resurrected One who never ceases to affect us. Pascha offers the lens that explains and gives meaning to the world and each of our lives. Christ died and rose again for me. Christ died and rose for you. Because of Resurrection, we can overcome the numbness of this world. We can be restored to health. We can clear our fogginess and regain our health.

Overcoming burnout is no easy task. Every area of our lives has been disrupted and needs to be carefully restored to balance. We need to regain the attitude of thanksgiving and hope that comes from our unity with Christ and in Him. This takes praying, worshiping, confessing, and Christian fellowship. Do this in spite of thinking that you have no energy left to do it. We know that these efforts are restorative and have helped us in the past, yet we have neglected them. We also need gently to care for our wounded, exhausted bodies. Let's lose the Covid-19 pounds that the average person has put on and change our exhausted brain chemistries by the healthy, physical activities that our bodies need. We ought to feed our overworked and numb brains that have been held hostage by fearful and extreme news and messages.

Modern science reports that it takes ninety days to reset our brain chemistry, so we can break free of bad habits and addictions. The Church prescribes forty days of fasting and fifty days of celebration to focus on the Resurrected Christ. Let's reset our focus from the world and ourselves to Christ. We will then be in a better position to help others and ourselves.

*Christ Is Risen.*

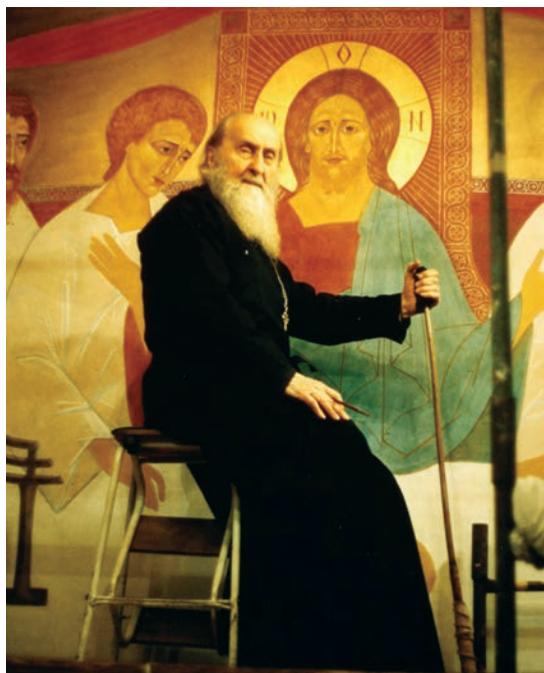
Bishop JOHN

# THE TRANSFIGURATION OF MARRIAGE

THROUGH ST. SOPHRONY'S THREE STAGES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Christina Marie Hanegraaff

In the Gospel of Matthew, the Pharisees present a ridiculous kinsman-redeemer scenario in which one woman marries seven brothers, one after the other, and then dies. Thinking to outwit Jesus, they ask to whom she is married in the Resurrection. Christ masterfully turns the question back on them and reveals an utter profundity. “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the Resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:29–30). The Pharisees fundamentally misunderstood the salvific *telos*, or end-design, of marriage. In doing so, they put an undue pressure on the woman, while also belittling what happens between a couple in the drama of marriage. Fr. Nikolai Sakharov, a nephew of St. Sophrony, echoes Christ’s answer to the Pharisees when he suggests that marriage is a spiritual journey toward something greater. His suggestion of applying St. Sophrony’s concept of the “three stages of the spiritual life” to the journey of a married couple is significant as it brings marriage into a proper perspective – and thereby unveils a greater *telos* and



expectation of a marital relationship.

What are Fr. Sophrony’s stages and how do they put marriage into a proper perspective? The three stages of the spiritual life might be likened to a mountain-top experience, sustenance in the wilderness, and transfiguration. **The first stage of the spiritual life is when God’s uncreated grace fills someone so brilliantly that the image of God radiates throughout their entire being.** One might think

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of the Prophet Moses when he came down from Mount Tabor, from which the expression “mountain-top experience” comes. If we stick with Moses as an example, an illustration of the **second stage might be the journey through the wilderness, in which God reminds him of that event by providing daily sustenance of manna, quail, and water from a rock. The third can be likened to that transfigurative event in which Moses encountered Christ face-to-face (Matthew 17)**. This encounter did not take place until well after Moses' death, although the saints might encounter this in their lifetime.

The first stage gives us a view of the third, of our end goal as Christians: union with God. As Zacharias Zacharou summarizes St. Sophrony, the “visitation of the first grace awakens in us the hypostatic principle ... [a] potential that God has planted in our nature” (Zacharou, p. 188). This is the potential to walk with God as Adam and Eve did in the garden. At that point they were saturated with God's uncreated grace, such that they could be in His presence and not be destroyed by His Holiness. St. Aemilianos speaks of something similar, when he discusses the goal of life as “a return to the spiritual paradise, the Church of Christ ... [but also] a movement, a progression, a journey which will end in heaven, in eternity” (Ford, p. 227). Our end design, then, is again to be grafted into the vine where we were once intended to grow, in synergy with the master vintner – Jesus Christ. We will be face-to-face with Christ, as Moses was on the Mount of Transfiguration. We will join, by grace, what St. Sophrony terms the Trinitarian *perichoresis* (Sakharov), a dance in which the continual self-less life of Christ brings us into closer communion with Him, His Church and His Creation.

This self-less dance provides a proper perspective to marriage, what Alfred Siewers calls a “transfigurative aesthetic” (Siewers, p. 354). Marriage is not a means of objectification or self-satisfaction. It is not individualistic (Siewers). Rather, the goal of marriage is to aid each individual in achieving union with God. This *telos* brings a proper orientation: a couple's goal is not just to love one another as they would want to be loved, but to love as Christ loves them (John 13:34). The goal, through this self-emptying, self-sacrificial love, is also to be transformed into His image. The couple, if engaged in this self-emptying dance, mirrors the Trinity and the “boundaries between heaven and earth

are broken” (Meyendorff, p. 23). This transfiguration heightens the stakes, in that it points to a reality that is simultaneously in front of the couple and beyond them (Meyendorff) while at the same time existing within the couple if they are joined by sacrament to Christ and His Church. The Kingdom of God starts within their hearts. We do not know what that reality looks like in Heaven, but we know from Christ's retort that it is much more than the carnal imaginations of the Pharisees.

Speaking of the Pharisees, this reality contrasts with their story because, through Christ's incarnation, He reveals that marriage is not an end in itself, but a means to an end: a heavenly life. No spouse can take the full weight of the passions in place of God. Nor can a partner just be a mere means to propagate a lineage. With God at the helm, however, a marriage can be a profound way to reorient those desires towards Him, thereby creating a spiritual lineage of far greater importance than a sheer physical bloodline. In fact, many Orthodox believe that an everlasting connection is forged when a couple partakes of the Eucharist together. For it is then that the couple is joined sacramentally, through God's uncreated grace, to the Church and “the witness of the Saints” (Meyendorff). This bond strengthens the couple in their struggle to holiness in this life and beyond. As Meyendorff writes: “Christian marriage is not only an earthly sexual union, but an eternal bond which will continue when our bodies will be ‘spiritual’ and when Christ will be ‘all in all’” (p. 15). This proper recognition of the design of marriage, then, gives us our guiding star, the brilliance of which propels us onward through stormy waters to what St. Sophrony calls “the second stage of the spiritual life.”

What immediately comes to mind when thinking of the second stage of marriage is a quote from Netflix's “The Crown” in Season 2, Episode 4. After a rocky start to their marriage, Elizabeth II tells Prince Philip something the Queen Mother said to her: “The first ten years of marriage are just an overture. There's often a crisis at ten years, but then you work it out and settle in and it's only then that it really gets into its stride” (0:56:25-40). Though Elizabeth II does not have an Orthodox understanding of the hypostatic principle which we seek to attain, she has a point. The process of marriage is much harder work than most people think, or want to believe, it to be. Rather than a commitment that one can casually enter and just as easily leave, it is a

process, as someone has said, of “bumping and rubbing against each other until all the rough edges are removed.” The second stage of the spiritual life is just that – a struggle – the hard work of properly reorienting our desires. It is a couple working out salvation in each other, through the grace of God. A process with such a significant end goal is no easy feat and, as such, cannot be done alone.

This is precisely the reason we need the Divine Liturgy, where the attendant witness of the Saints and the church community are a part of the salvific journey of the married couple. Again, this is why Meyendorff suggests that Orthodox marriage be done always sacramentally in concert with the Eucharist. For it is Christ who joins the couple with each other and the community around them – the prayers of the latter invite God’s uncreated grace to work in the couple. This is the other aspect of the second spiritual stage: these moments of connection with God and others where His uncreated grace fills the faithful through sacramental means and strengthens them so “their hearts can open, and God can work in them.” The faithful are nourished by these small moments of grace, if they receive them, and can persevere just like Moses and the faithful Israelites who were sated through the mana, quail, and water in the wilderness. Father Deacon Stephen Muse uniquely describes this kind of selfless transaction as a dia-Logos prayer, by which a couple and community is invited to ask God to “love the world through us ... allow us to love the world through Him, and to allow us to receive His love through the world.” It is a typology of the kind of prayer and community we will have when we are all in the paradisiacal vineyard of the new heavens and earth. Marriage, as intended, is indeed a communal affair. As Alexander Schmemmann writes in *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, “as long as we visualize marriage as the concern of those alone who are being married, as something that happens to them and not the whole Church, and, therefore, to the world itself, we shall never understand the truly sacramental meaning of marriage” (p. 82).

So, again, the expectation of marriage from an Orthodox perspective should not be that it is easy or that one will always be happy. Rather, it should be a microcosm of Christ and His bride. The couple should expect to be engaged in continual acts of self-emptying and self-sacrifice, as they endeavor

to help one another pursue Christ and be fruitful members of their Church community. If the Master suffers, why would the servants not? (John 15:20). As Elder Aimilianos writes, “The reason marriage ... came after the Fall was so that Adam and Eve might remember their fall and expulsion from Paradise and seek to return there” (Ford, p. 227). This suffering, however, brings true freedom for the couple in coworking with God in his regeneration and deification. They are “God’s fellow workers” (1 Corinthians 3:9), as are we all, working together synergistically toward the goal of salvation, which is *theosis*. As Vladimir Lossky states, “The port of salvation is not the goal; it is the possibility for the shipwrecked to resume his journey whose sole goal is union with God” (Hanegraaff, p. xxxiii). The couple in Heaven, then, are connected in a way that is unique to them; however, they don’t belong solely to each other, but to Christ and His Church in the vineyard of eternity (Meyendorff, 1975). How they are bound is something that even Saint Paul declares in Ephesians 5:13 “a profound mystery” and why the Church does not recommend re-marriage past three times (in fact, it will not re-marry a fourth). But perhaps it is this close working out of a married couple’s salvation together that makes their bond so unbreakable and connects them ever so tightly in eternity. As to what happens in heaven if this bond is shared between multiple spouses, perhaps that will not even be a concern when we are face-to-face with our Lord and brought into the joy of His everlasting communion.

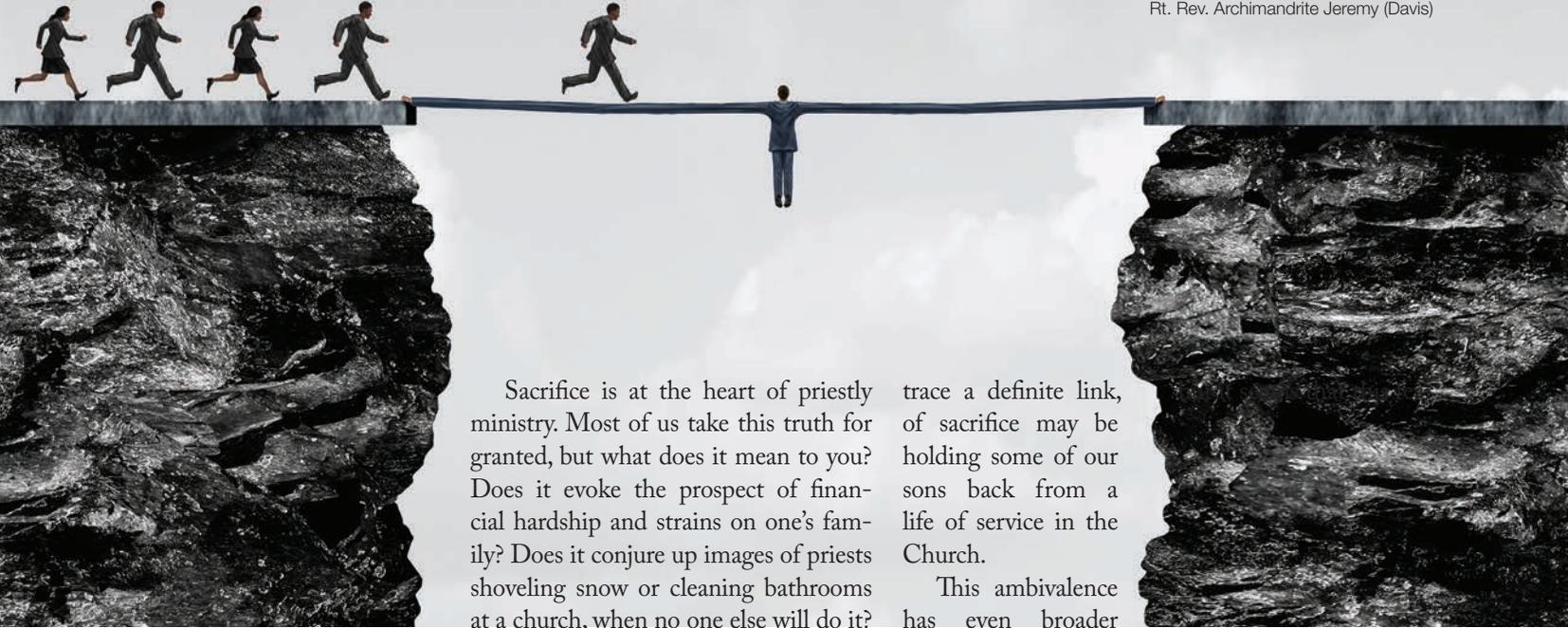
Here we seem to hold in tension two realities, the spiritual aspect of marriage that stays and the physical aspect that gets left out in eternity. It is a profound mystery. What brings clarity, however, is that sacramental marriage is transfigurative – something is transformed. So perhaps there is not any tension after all, but something new altogether. Indeed, without the transfigurative potential of reaching into eternity in hypostatic union with Christ, marriage is limited to a mere analogy (Siewers, p. 365). It may be a beautiful analogy, but one without sacramental power. The Pharisees’ concept of marriage indeed misapprehends “the Scriptures [and] the power of God” (Matthew 22: 29). In their formulations there was no means of transfiguring marriage, and that makes all the difference.

Christina Marie Hanegraaff

Christina is currently finishing her Master of Theology Pastoral Care and Counseling degree at Antiochian House of Studies. Upon graduation, she hopes to use her pastoral care and counseling skills in her work in the inner city of Charlotte, North Carolina. She is hoping to continue her studies at UNCW where she will obtain a Master’s degree in public administration. These degrees, in addition to her work at Shelter Health Services and the St. Hermione Home, will prepare her to be a leader in the non-profit and human services world as a committed Orthodox Christian.

# EMBRACING THE SACRIFICE OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Jeremy (Davis)



Sacrifice is at the heart of priestly ministry. Most of us take this truth for granted, but what does it mean to you? Does it evoke the prospect of financial hardship and strains on one's family? Does it conjure up images of priests shoveling snow or cleaning bathrooms at a church, when no one else will do it?

Does it bring up the fearful possibility of personal attacks and rejection by those one serves?

In America today we have an ambivalent attitude toward the idea of sacrifice, to say the least. We honor the sacrifices of first-responders, soldiers, clergy, and others as heroic examples of self-denial for the sake of others. We like to think of ourselves as such self-sacrificing heroes (at least, in our best moments). Yet we often fear the toll of serious sacrifices on our lives and take pains to avoid them. No parent raises a child with the goal of sending him off to sacrifice; on the contrary, most steer their children toward easier paths in order to avoid such an outcome.

This ambivalence toward sacrifice may be leading some young men away from a calling to the priesthood. I have heard on occasion that many Orthodox parents discourage their sons from pursuing a calling to ministry, for fear that they will suffer in this vocation. At the same time, among our archdiocesan clergy, the number of priests raised in American Orthodox homes seems to be disproportionately low compared to those who either converted or immigrated from overseas. Why is it that the vast majority of boys growing up in the churches of our archdiocese seem to avoid this vocation? It would be hard to

trace a definite link, of sacrifice may be holding some of our sons back from a life of service in the Church.

This ambivalence has even broader ramifications. Sacri-

fice is at the heart of the entire Christian life, and not just for those the priesthood. In the New Testament, all Christians are taught to make sacrifices regularly through worship, prayer, obedience to God, giving to the poor, and the like (e.g., Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15–16). I'm afraid most of us simply ignore these parts of the Bible, because the idea of sacrifice is so difficult for us to accept into our lives. Thus we short-change ourselves by neglecting these aspects of the Faith. This reluctance is tragic and so unnecessary, since the suffering-centered, fear-inducing modern idea of sacrifice we take for granted is such a distortion of the offerings God desires from us.

In the Bible, sacrifices are almost always occasions of joy and gratitude – not fear and reluctance – as we hear in these verses from the Psalms: “I went around and sacrificed in His tabernacle a sacrifice of shouting; I will sing and play the harp for the Lord,” and, “Let them sacrifice to Him a sacrifice of praise, and let them proclaim His works with great joy” (26:6; 106:22 [27:6; 107:22]). Sacrifices were often accompanied by feasting and celebration, as in Deuteronomy 27:7: “There [in the Promised Land] you will sacrifice a sacrifice of a peace offering to the Lord

your God and eat and be filled and rejoice in the presence of the Lord your God.” (See also Genesis 31:54 and 3 Kings 8:61–65). Even when sacrifices were a result of sorrow for sin, they were accompanied by hope of a renewed and restored relationship with God.

We have lost sight of this joy of sacrifice as a result of focusing on its cost. Sacrifices have always carried a cost. In biblical times, when sacrifices were primarily gifts of food to God, people went to great expense to offer a cow or a sheep – a prized commodity at a time when most people couldn’t afford to eat meat except on special occasions. They also invested a lot of effort and time travelling to the Temple in Jerusalem, which was the only place where sacrifice could be offered. Yet biblical people offered these sacrifices gladly, embracing them as a way to demonstrate love and loyalty to God, and thus to seek a closer relationship with Him.

Today, however, we shrink back from offering the spiritual sacrifices of Christian life, those more comprehensive gifts of time, work, money, love, and self-denying obedience that God desires from us. These are even more costly than Old Testament sacrifices, requiring the dedication of one’s whole self as an offering to God. Focusing on this cost, we shy away from these sacrifices as burdens, but this is shortsighted. To an even greater degree than Old Testament offerings, these Christian sacrifices bring benefits incomparably greater than their costs. They open our lives to God’s healing presence. They usher us into communion with Him, friendship with God that fills our lives with joy, peace, meaning, and fulfillment. These benefits have no end; they continue past death into eternity. As St. Paul says, “The momentary lightness of our affliction is working for us an exceedingly, extravagantly eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Now, let us return to the priesthood. From ancient times to today, sacrifice has been inseparable from priestly ministry. In the Old Testament, the priests’ primary job was to offer sacrifices (food offerings) to God at the temple; they would receive gifts of meat, grain, oil, and wine from the people and then offer these on the altar, where the fire would turn the offerings into a smoke that ascended to heaven. These gifts were an expression of hospitality toward God, expressing the same warm and inviting message as an extravagant dinner offered to an honored guest.

In the Church, all of us form a “royal priesthood”

together, and our lives form a temple in which much more significant sacrifices are offered (1 Peter 2:5, 9). As a people of priests, we are all called to offer God gifts of friendship and welcome, directing to Him the same kind of regard we show in human relationships. By offering Him loving obedience, we show that His desires and wishes are more important to us than our own, as we do with our closest friends and family. By offering our money and care to the poor, we demonstrate compassion for God’s beloved children, just as we might care for our friends’ children as an extension of our love for their parents. By making time for God in worship and prayer each day, we show that we want Him in our lives, just as we intentionally make time for our friends and family in order to keep them close.

With regard to human relationships, the love in our hearts eclipses the cost in time, money, and effort. The same can be true of the sacrifices we offer to God. In fact, this is what God really wants from us: not mere duty and drudgery or some kind of holy masochism, but a deep and abiding love that elevates us above worldly concerns into communion with the Holy Trinity. As St. Paul says simply and beautifully, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Within the royal priesthood of the Church, those of us who are called to ordained ministry as priests lead the community in this holy offering of our lives. We must not only teach this path of salvation in words, but must also model it in our lives, making even bolder and more intense gestures of commitment toward God, as examples for our flocks. The costs of the priesthood are great, yet if we are open to it, the grace of the Holy Spirit will fill our hearts with a holy love that makes these costs easy to bear. Our Lord Himself promised that He will bear the yoke with us, making it light: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us embrace the costs of Christian faith joyfully. Let us reach out to God with extravagant displays of love and loyalty. And when one of our sons receives that nudge in his heart calling him to the Lord’s service, let us encourage him to seek God’s will without reservation, offering himself to the One who reciprocates all our gifts with incomparably better blessings.

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# THE MARTYRS' BLOOD AGAINST THE DEMON HORDES:

A REFLECTION ON THE  
AKOLOUTHIS OF THE THREE MARTYRS  
OF VILNIUS

Archpriest Andrew Stephen Damick



THE SCRIPTURES AND ALL THE LITURGICAL SERVICES OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH INCLUDE THE THEME OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE, BUT IT IS PARTICULARLY PROMINENT IN THE LITURGICAL SERVICES FOR THE MARTYRED SAINTS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE *APOLYTIKION* USED GENERALLY FOR MARTYRS SAYS THAT THE MARTYRS “CAST DOWN THE TYRANTS AND WHOLLY DESTROYED THE DEMONS’ STRENGTHLESS PRESUMPTION.”

**W**hy is this so? It is because the death of a martyr results from the combat between evil spiritual powers and the martyr himself, a confrontation in much of Christian history between paganism and the gospel of Jesus Christ. In every case, the fallen angels (demons) who animate paganism to kill the martyr think that they thereby defeat him and, by implication, the martyr’s God. It is a futile act on the demons’ part, however, because they are simply repeating what they did with Christ Himself, thinking that killing Him defeats Him, but it is they who are defeated by Christ’s entrance into death (1 Corinthians 2:6–10).

In the *akolouthia* (festal texts) for the Three Martyrs of Vilnius (Ss. Antanas, Eustachijus and Jonas [+1347], celebrated April 14) – we see the same celebration of the victory of martyrs over demons. Further, we see that the martyrs’ blood not only defeats the demons, but elevates the martyrs to reigning alongside Christ. The martyrdom also becomes the

basis for the growth of the Christian Church and the illumination of the world. Thus, in one action we see the kingdom of the demons being destroyed and the kingdom of Christ established and spread:

*Hordes of evil demons were vanquished by the great quantity of the martyrs’ blood, O Bestower of life, and Thy Church hath been fortified thereby, hymning the glory of Thy power (from Ode VI of the Canon).*

## INVERTING DEATH, TURNING DEFEAT TO VICTORY

The historical particulars in the case of Ss. Antanas, Eustachijus and Jonas, are that they were killed by Algirdas, Grand Duke of Lithuania, who demanded that they eat meat during the time of the Great Fast before Pascha. As we know from the hagiography of the martyrs, Algirdas had formerly left paganism, been baptized and married to the Orthodox Christian princess Maria Yaroslavna of Vitebsk, who brought her priest Nestor with her. Nestor baptized the three martyrs himself and other members

of the royal Lithuanian court. When Maria died, however, Algirdas forsook Christ and returned to his pagan ways.

So the demand that the martyrs eat meat was not about merely breaking a fasting rule, but about following Algirdas into his reversion from Christianity back to paganism, to worship with him Perkūnas, the Baltic god of fire and lightning. It seems likely that the meat he gave them to eat would have been sacrificed to Perkūnas, and so eating it would have put them in communion with that god. From the Christian point of view, eating pagan sacrifice is communion with a demon (1 Corinthians 10:20).

Thus, we see that Perkūnas (that is, the demon who used this name) was working through Algirdas by means of pagan sacrifice, confronting and trying to destroy the martyrs and kill off nascent Christianity in Lithuania. This confrontation with the

worship of Perkūnas is illustrated in these hymns:

*Ye did not render worship to material fire, O divinely eloquent ones, and have been delivered from the fire of Gehenna; and, though subjected to fire and torture, O saints, ye did not deny the Master of all, but, rejoicing, strove to preserve the Faith until death.*

*Tested in the fire of torture like gold in a crucible, ye were radiantly tried, O ever-memorable martyrs, and have been shown to be more precious than gold in your nature; for, showing forth the all-radiant beauty of your souls, ye truly offered yourselves to the Master as most precious vessels, not having worshiped fire. Wherefore, pray to the Lord for us all, that He grant remission of sins unto those who honor your memory with love. (From the Sessional Hymns)*



*Refusing to worship fire, and being subjected to fire and torments, O ever memorable ones, ye received heavenly dew, divine rest and everlasting joy; and having utterly consumed the princes of darkness by your endurance of pain, O all-wise martyrs, ye have made the faithful steadfast in true piety. (From the Praises)*

In all three of these hymns, we see how the martyrs refuse to worship fire (which refers to the worship of Perkūnas), and the hymnographer has inverted the image, showing how the martyrs, passing through fire, are delivered from the fire of damnation (Gehenna), and are brought to refinement and to rest by Christ. We see how the demon thinks that he can defeat the martyrs with death, but instead is defeated by them and has to watch them elevated to rest and joy.

The same inversion is seen in other hymns:

*When thy shins and bones were broken, thy thighs unnaturally shattered, and thy nose and ears severed, thou didst rejoice, O ever-memorable and most blessed Eustachijus, cutting off the serpent's head of idolatry. Wherefore, Christ God, the Judge of the contest, hath given thee the crown of victory. (From the Vespers Stichera)*

In this hymn, we see how St. Eustachijus had his bodily members broken and cut off, yet in the end it is “the serpent’s head of idolatry” which is actually cut off, and the martyr is crowned in victory. Likewise, Algirdas tries to shame the martyrs by attempting to force them to be humiliated before his false god, yet it is Algirdas and his false god who are shamed, while the martyrs are crowned:

*O blessed martyrs of great renown, ye wisely put to shame the iniquitous king who unlawfully commanded you to worship and render honor to inanimate and soulless gods, and, having suffered patiently and lawfully, ye fashioned crowns of victory, praying for the world. (From the Aposticha of Vespers)*

#### STANDING WITH THE ANGELS, UNITING HEAVEN AND EARTH

There are more references to this inversion throughout the *akolouthia*, but we will move on to another theme, the elevation of the martyrs to reign alongside Christ. In one of the *apolytikia* for the feast, we sing:

*O valiant and honored athletes who spurned earthly honors and glory, mightily and manfully did ye endure torments for the sake of the Faith, giving yourselves over to death for the Master, the Life of all. Wherefore, with a pillar of cloud from heaven did Christ all-gloriously illumine you. Standing before Him with the angels, pray ye that our souls be saved.*

Another *apolytikion* has similar language, saying that they “received crowns of victory” and are “standing with the angels before the throne of the Master.” Standing before Christ alongside the angels, the three martyrs are now shown to be part of the divine council, the heavenly hosts who serve the Holy Trinity forever. And they shine with His glory, interceding for us:

*Standing with the heavenly hosts before Him Who hath dominion over all, O valiant martyrs, deliver from perils and everlasting torment those who honor you. (From Ode VI of the Canon)*

Because they are now part of the heavenly hosts, they function like the angels, protecting the faithful and bringing them to salvation. And their resurrected souls, now numbered alongside the angels, nonetheless remain connected to earth through their incorrupt bodies:

*The earth containeth your precious bodies, O God-bearers, but heaven holdeth your souls; wherefore, rejoice with the angels, O martyrs, chanting to the Lord the thrice-holy hymn: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord! (From Ode VIII of the Canon)*

The relics of the martyrs that are venerated in the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius thus connect us to them as the martyrs sing the thrice-holy hymn – they in heaven and we on earth. The Church in both places at once is united by their holy relics, and earth is made into heaven by their presence.

#### ESTABLISHING THE CHURCH, ILLUMINING THE WORLD

As we stand alongside the martyrs and celebrate their feasts, we find that their martyrdom establishes the Church and brings to it nourishment and growth. As the protomartyrs of Lithuania, Ss. An-tanas, Eustachijus, and Jonas bring forth the Christian faith out of barrenness:

*Having caused branches of the Orthodox Faith to spring forth from a barren root, O all-blessed ones, ye were shown to be namesakes of the protomartyr; for ye were not daunted by the wrath of the evil and impious prince, who commanded you to renounce Christ. Wherefore, having received crowns of victory, and standing with the angels before the throne of the Master, O all-blessed ones, pray for us who in Orthodox manner honor your holy memory. (Second Apolytikion for the feast)*

Here, they are compared to St. Stephen the Archdeacon and Protomartyr (celebrated December 27). Just as his death led to the growth of the Church in first-century Palestine, so did the death of the Three Martyrs bring about the growth of the Church in Lithuania. They “caused branches of the Orthodox Faith to spring forth from a barren root.” The “barren root” is a society ruled by demons through paganism, but the root can be made fruitful by being watered by the blood of the martyrs and planted not in pagan sacrifice, but in the worship of Christ.

Their martyrdom brings forth the light of the knowledge of Christ:

*With sacred hymns we praise you, O wise and godly athletes Antanas, Jonas and Eustachijus, ye proponents of the Faith, champions of piety, greatly radiant stars of the Church who by grace caused the darkness of falsehood to fade and shone forth the light of true knowledge of God.*

*Giving yourselves over to wounds and torments, O holy ones, ye remained unshakable in your wisdom, and like lamps lighted by the fervor of the Spirit, ye illumine the hearts of the faithful with grace and dispel every ailment and every affliction. Wherefore, every race and generation doth celebrate your holy memory, glorifying the Lord with hymns.*

*With the radiance of your wonders, O martyrs, ye have illumined all creation, driving the gloom of sufferings and tribulations, the enmity of the demons and illnesses away from those who have recourse to you with tears and with faith entreat your aid, O valiant athletes of the Savior, Antanas, Jonas and Eustachijus. Wherefore, with faith we celebrate your holy and luminous solemnity. (From the Stichera of Vespers)*

Again, we could quote many more hymns, but these should suffice to illustrate the point. But how

does martyrdom illumine the world?

*O divine martyrs, ye were heavens declaring the mysteries of God and proclaiming His glory to all; for report of your struggles and faith hath gone forth unto all the ends of the Orthodox Church. Wherefore, the whole Church honoreth the sufferings which ye valiantly endured for Christ, O ever glorious ones. (From the Stichera of Vespers)*

When the martyrs were killed, the news of their courage in the face of torture and death went out and became so well-known that even the great St.

Sergius of Radonezh desired to have relics from their bodies for his veneration. Their martyrdom declared “the mysteries of God” and His glory. What, then, are those mysteries, that glory?

This news of martyrdom shows to the world that not even death can defeat those who are obedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ, just as it could not defeat Christ Himself. Indeed, the gospel is precisely the message that demons, sin, and death have been defeated by Christ.

As Orthodox Christians, those who love the martyrs and declare their works in sacred hymns, this is the mystery that we proclaim, that the hour of glory for Christ is precisely His Cross. Thus, when we participate in Christ’s sufferings as the martyrs did, through repentance, prayer, ascetic struggle, and through participation in the feasts of the martyrs, then we also become bright lamps illumining the world as sons of the light (John 12:23–26).

Archpriest Andrew  
Stephen Damick



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# PENTECOST IN OUR LIVES

Fr. Michael Massouh

WITH THE LEAVE-TAKING OF PASCHA, WE CONCLUDE A MAJOR CYCLE OF SERVICES, BEGINNING WITH THE SUNDAY OF ZACCHAEUS TWENTY WEEKS AGO. THIS PERIOD OF TIME BEGINS WITH PRE-LENT AND LENT, AND MOVES TO THE EVENTS OF HOLY WEEK: CHRIST'S BETRAYAL, TRIAL, CRUCIFIXION, AND ULTIMATE RESURRECTION ON THE THIRD DAY. NEXT COMES THE RISEN LORD'S FORTY DAYS OF TEACHING HIS APOSTLES, HIS ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN, AND HIS SENDING, AS HE PROMISED, OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

During this cycle we fasted, prayed more, worshipped more fervently, read more Scripture and other religious books, and gave alms. Hopefully, we have been touched in our souls and have taken a few steps toward the Kingdom. During this time we heard several beautiful *troparia* (hymns) composed exclusively for this cycle of services. Truly, we have been blessed to participate in these services.

The Feast of Pentecost celebrates the amazing descent of the Holy Spirit that energized the Apostles to preach boldly the Good News to all peoples. Indeed, on that very day Peter, now emboldened with fervor, preaches to the people assembled to celebrate the Jewish Feast of Pentecost and convinces over three thousand to be baptized and to follow Christ.

The phenomenon of the descent of the Holy Spirit was so dramatic that St. Luke could not fully describe it. How do you explain such an event? The usual way is to use metaphors. It was like *such and such*. When I asked a civil-engineering professor, who happened to be in San Francisco in 1989 during the major destructive earthquake, what it was like. Standing at the hotel's outdoor bar, he said, "The earth became like waves of the ocean." The earth moved like waves of the sea. It was the only thing that he could think of, when the ground under his feet – so called *terra firma* – was no longer *firma*. Can you imagine what it would have been like to experience that phenomenon?

Can you imagine what it was like for the Apostles to experience the descent of the powerful Holy Spirit when it came to rest on them? Here is how St. Luke described it: The Apostles were seated in one place "and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled

the whole house where we were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1–4).

Notice that Luke uses metaphors to describe this scene: "as of fire," and "as a rushing mighty wind," things we understand. Was it really fire? Or was it something hot with a mighty force? It was something unique, and it energized the Apostles. My civil-engineering friend promised not to drink as much, the next time he goes to San Francisco.

A mighty wind is like a gale-force wind that most of us have experienced. You know that this kind of wind can be destructive: better batten down the hatches. Clearly, it was a unique experience, and one that gave them the ability to speak in other languages, other tongues.

More importantly for my message is what the descent of the Holy Spirit means for us. How does that energizing power become part of our lives and what responsibilities come to us with it?

We live in a world that has lost its sense of the sacred, and with it the sense of the holy. Every thing has its price and if it does not, it is not worth considering. Our entire daily life is focused on making a living with little or no time to dwell in silence, or to think of God. For these reasons the Holy Spirit is not on our radar screens and clearly not on our cell phones or on Google.

Yet the Holy Spirit is with us at all times. He is everywhere present and fills all things. Indeed, at our baptism through Chrismation we were sealed by the Holy Spirit. The priest anointed each of us with the Holy Chrism on our brow, on our eyes, on

our nostrils, on our lips, on both ears, on our breast, on both hands, on both feet, and between the shoulders, making the sign of the cross each time and saying “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.” We experienced our own Pentecost. Moreover, Christ promised us that He (the Holy Spirit) would be with us to the end of the age. Jesus also promised when He sent the Holy Spirit that He would “guide you into all truth” (John 16:13), and as He says in the Gospel of Luke, “For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12:12).

How do we get in touch with the Holy Spirit already sealed in us? We merely need to acknowledge His presence. We start with the realization that the Holy Spirit has been with us since we were baptized. Moreover, when we attend the Divine Liturgy, the priest begins by calling upon the Holy Spirit to be with us: “O heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of truth who art in all places and fillest all things, Treasury of good things and Giver of Life, come and abide in us and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O gracious Lord.” As we come to the high point of the Liturgy, the priest again calls upon the Holy Spirit at the time of the consecration of the bread and wine, praying, “Again we offer unto thee this reasonable and unbloody service, and beseech thee and supplicate thee: Send down thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here spread forth; and make this bread the precious Body of thy Christ; and that which is in this cup, the precious Blood of thy Christ, changing them by Thy Holy Spirit.” To this the entire congregation responds: “Amen, Amen, Amen.”

We, members of the Body of Christ, are cooperating with the Holy Spirit in this cosmic action. We are part of the community of believers; we are not separated from this community. Clearly, the Holy Spirit is with us at all times. We need to acknowledge this truth. We need, further, to cultivate our inner lives, the life of the holy and sacred.

During the unplanned lockdown under which we have all suffered to one degree or another, many people are beginning to see the limits of science and medicine. They are beginning to seek for something that is always true and never changing. They are beginning to possess doubts about the materialistic, urban life we lead that denies death, God, and the inner dimensions of our lives.

One of the leading Fathers of the Church, St.

Isaac the Syrian, offers us this prayer in Homily 36 of his *Ascetical Homilies*. It may be one we should include in our daily prayer rule.

Make me worthy, O Lord, to know Thee that I might also love Thee, not with the knowledge which springs from the exercise of study ... but make me worthy of that knowledge whereby the mind, in beholding Thee, glorifies Thy nature in divine vision that steals from the mind the awareness of the world. Account me worthy to be lifted above the will's wandering eye which begets imaginings, and to behold Thee in constraint of the bond of the cross .... Implant in me the astringent of Thy love, that being drawn away by fervent love for Thee I may come forth from this world. Awake in me understanding of Thy humility ... which Thou didst put on, through the mediation of the holy Virgin, that with this continual and unflinching recollection, I may accept with delight the lowliness of my nature.

In our current American culture that glamorizes all the vices, that is constantly looking for fulfillment in all the wrong places, that encourages us to dissipate our lives by following the will-of-the-wisp, who is prepared to “accept with delight the lowliness of my nature?” Who is willing not only to know Him through study, but to love Him? Clearly, it is those of us who truly wish to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that we all will seek God in our hearts – our inner life – so that we may find the peace that passes all understanding, and delight in the lowliness of our human nature.

God be with you!



LVOV, UKRAINE - JUNE 06: The internal painting of the church of St. Anne, an illustration of the Pentecost on June 06, 2012 in Lvov, Ukraine. The author - Ivan Protsiv.

# WHY LENT?

Fr. Andrew Harmon

# T

here was a man who had to take a bus to work every day, who lived just a couple of blocks from the bus stop. So he developed the habit of getting up rather late, rushing around his house getting ready – and then, almost at the last minute, walking quickly to get to his bus just in time. One day he overslept a bit. In a panic, he did the bare minimum to get ready for work, and then ran full speed to the bus stop. He came galloping up as the bus was just pulling away, but the driver stopped for him. He got on, greatly relieved, until he realized that he didn't recognize the driver, and that none of his usual bus companions were on board. He realized that he was on the wrong bus, and asked loudly, "By the way, where in the world is this bus going?"<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps our spiritual life and Lenten journey is a little like that poor fellow's experience. It's a lot longer than that man's bus ride to work: it's a forty-day bus ride. As we think about it, we may be saying to ourselves, "Do I even know where I am going? Where is this Lenten bus headed?"

Let me tell you a very brief history of this Lenten bus. The origins of Lent go back to the early days of Christianity, when the believers started setting aside some days to prepare intensely to celebrate the resurrection of Christ at Pascha. It soon expanded into a forty-day time period. (God seems to love that particular number!) The English word *lent* is simply used because this forty-day period is at the time of year when the days are lengthening: *lent* comes from the word *lengthen*. At first, most of the focus of Lent was on the catechumens, as they were commonly baptized at Pascha. So this was the final part of their often three-year catechumen period in preparation for baptism, but the whole Church gradually got on board with the special season. It became for all the Christians a special time to prepare to celebrate the Lord's resurrection by drawing

closer to Him. Thus, the various Lenten disciplines that we know: more prayer, almsgiving, fasting, extra worship services, going to Confession, more Bible reading, and so forth.

Of course, we should strive all year long to deepen our walk with God, but Lent is important because of how weak and sinful we are. We need the help of a certain time set aside, of the structure of the season, and the way that causes us all together to be focused on strengthening our faith at the same time. That reminds us that our life as Christians is a life we live together, not just individually.

All year long, one hopes, we have a slow and steady climb, spiritually. In this bus ride of Lent, however, we hope to climb more quickly and make some real ongoing progress. That can become the starting point for some additional growth after Lent, leading up to the next

## LENT

So the bus is pulling into your bus stop. Get on board. Take the ride seriously. Don't fritter away the forty days by doing nothing, or just taking a minimal approach. Do a lot, be serious. Don't do a half-way Lent this year.

There is a religious denomination going back to the early 1800's with a very simple name: "The Christian Church." There don't seem to be many parishes in our area, but there are lots in Indiana, Kentucky, and some other states. There is a little town in Missouri called "Halfway." It's not much of a place: just one church in the whole town, and that church is part of that "Christian" denomination I just mentioned. So, if on your next vacation you drive through Halfway, Missouri, you will see that church and you will see the sign out front that gives its name: "Halfway Christian Church." There may be some who think that would be the ideal congregation – just made for halfway Christians!<sup>2</sup> If that name fits us, if we are content to be half-

way followers of Christ, then a halfway Lent will work just fine. But don't go just halfway. Go all out this year.

If we are tempted towards a halfway (or even a "quarter-way") Lent, tempted just to slide through one more year, then this morning's epistle lesson is very relevant to us. St. Paul wrote in Romans 13:11: "You know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake up from sleep." Of course, Lent didn't exist yet in St. Paul's time, but his message is perfect for us today. If we are spiritually dozing our way through life, the start of Lent is the perfect time to "wake up from sleep"!

St. John of Gaza, back in the 500's A.D., wrote, "Awaken the Jesus that sleeps inside you." Of course, the Jesus that came to live in you when you were baptized isn't really sleeping! He doesn't need naps. St. John's point was that it is *we*, who are spiritually sleepy, who need to wake up and then turn the Lord loose in our lives. The start of Lent is a good time to do that!

As St. Paul wrote, "It is *full time now* for you to wake up from sleep." Then he went on to write in verse 12, "The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

Lent is a good time to decide: Which side do I want to be on? The side of darkness or the side of light? Don't be content with the darkness of sin that is

still left in your life. As the Apostle Paul said, "Cast it off!" As Christians, we sometimes get way too friendly with our own sins. Paul says we shouldn't be friendly with our sins, but by God's grace throw them out of our lives.

In the early 1900s in Kentucky, there were not many differences between the policies of the Democratic and Republican parties. This led to lots of friendships between the politicians in the two rival parties. It led to very friendly campaigns and some strange behaviors. Two men running against each other for an office would sometimes travel together during the election campaign. They would be seen eating together and sometimes even sharing a hotel room to save money! One time at a debate, one

candidate had a sore throat, so the rival candidate presented both his position and the positions of the other fellow!

In the 1916 governor's race, it was Democrat Augustus Stanley versus Republican Edwin Morrow. They were good friends and traveled together to have friendly in-person debates on the campaign trail. Kentuckians were used to that back then, and so didn't think it too terribly odd. One evening at one of these debates, however, the crowd got upset as they thought Stanley and Morrow crossed the line. In between speeches at the debate, they would pause and drink some whiskey right on stage. That didn't upset the crowd – after all, this was Kentucky, the whiskey state – but when the candidates, getting tipsy, started taking turns guzzling out of the same bottle, the crowd was upset. That was just getting too friendly with each other!<sup>3</sup>

How friendly have we gotten with our sins? Stanley and Morrow were way too friendly with each other! We can get used to our sins, tolerant of our sins, too friendly with our own sinfulness. Lent is upon us. It is time for us to get unfriendly with our sins, to decide we wish God to rid us

**“The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”**

of them. God provides the grace for this to happen and we have our role to play as well. As St. Paul said in Romans 13:12, we should "cast off" the works of darkness in our lives. Lent is a tool, a structure given to us by God through His Church, for us to go to war against our sins in an intense way. Ask God for help, declare war on whatever sins you have – and cast them off!

Father Andrew Harmon, Pastor  
St. Matthew Antiochian Orthodox Church, North Royalton, Ohio

1. Father Anthony Coniaris, *The Message of the Sunday Gospel Readings*, vol. 1, Light & Life Publishing, p. 139.
2. William Least-Heat Moon, *Roads to Quoz: An American Mosey*, Back Bay Books, p. 42.
3. Neal Price, *The Border American States*, W.W. Norton, p. 229.



# GOD WITHIN THE CHAOS

Fr. Peter Kavanaugh

*God does not call us out of chaos; He calls to us from within the chaos to order the world (cf. Genesis 1:28).*

A raging tempest, howling demoniacs, stampeding pigs, and indignant mobs – the gospel reading of the legion of demoniacs is anything but calm and balmy. One storm follows another, and right there in the storm, who do we find? Jesus Christ. Christianity does not offer a life without storms. It offers us a focus in the storm.

“When he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves” (Matthew 8:23).

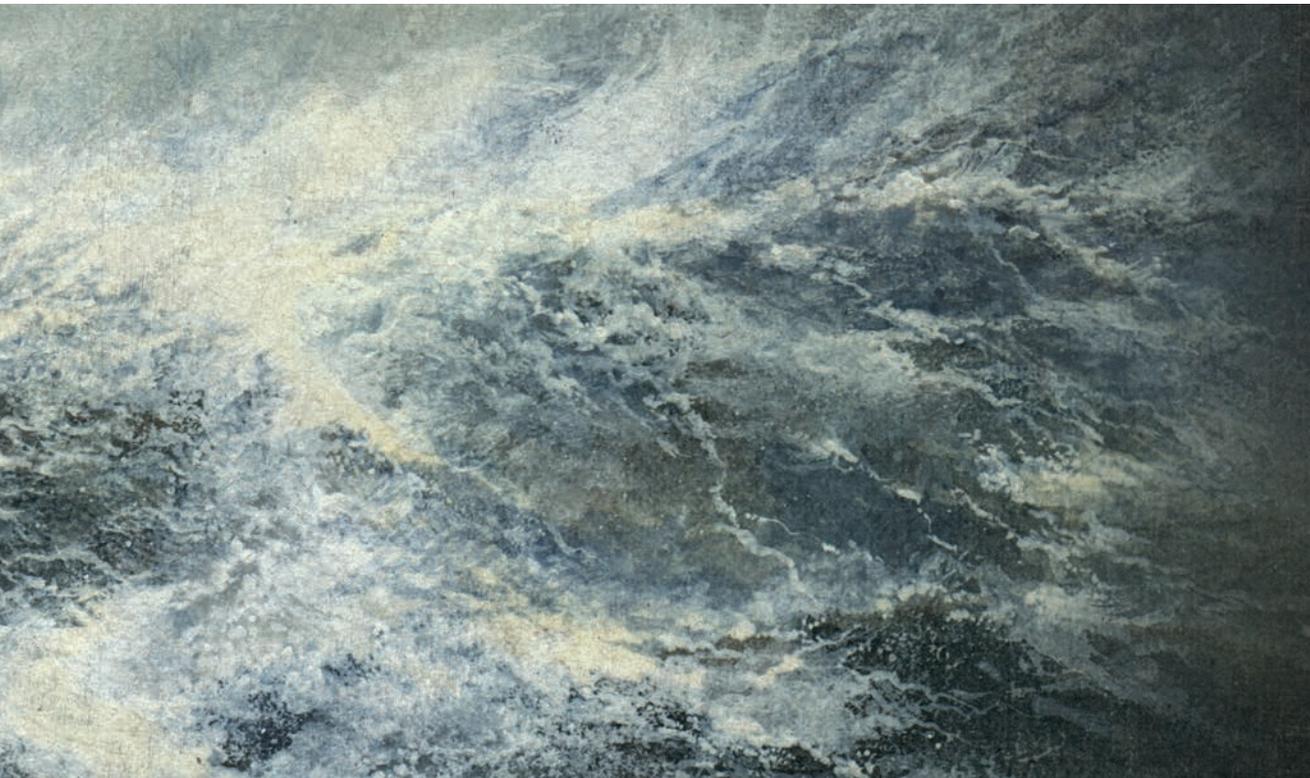
The Jews generally did not take to the sea. The ocean, as a symbol of chaos, appears from the start to the end of Scripture. Genesis describes God molding creation out of a dark, watery chaos. “Darkness was over the surface of the deep.” Genesis 1:2 depicts a desolating, primordial abyss. Noah’s flood, the consequence of sin, ushered in a return of that chaos, when the waters wiped away civilization. King David echoes this sentiment; staring head on at the chaos of life, he prays, “Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck .... I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me” (Psalm 69:1–3).

Chaos is certainly not foreign to us today. In the 80s and 90s, and even into the first decades of the 21st Century, our culture at least believed life was

stable. There were shared norms and expectations. People with different political opinions or world-views could sit down together for lunch. We were optimistic then. Nowadays, it feels like the floor has collapsed under our feet. Several years back, Fr. Seraphim Rose foresaw what he called a growing “cancer of nihilism” in the West, a cancer characterized by a desperate desire to escape: “an escape from boredom, from meaninglessness, and most profoundly from the emptiness that takes possession of the heart that has abandoned God.” As God brought order and life into the chaos, so our life, when we banish God, returns to its former state. In such times, we all identify with King David: “Save me, O God, the waters have come up to my neck.”

The disciples found themselves here, in the midst of this chaos, when they cast out to sea. “There arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm” (Matthew 8:24–27).

Where was God in the chaos? He was right there, smack dab in the storm, and he was waiting. He was waiting for the disciples to take their eyes off the waves. He was waiting for them to refocus – to realign their hearts.



Where are the storms? They are in our heart. The circumstances around us do not matter so much. The wars, the economic instability, our health, none of it comes to that much in the end. We spend the majority of our life wrestling with anxiety or fear about imaginary possibilities. Our thoughts are far greater enemies than the Taliban or the Chinese Communist Party. The real storm is inside us.

“Lord, save us, we perish.” The disciples could have easily drowned. At a time when everything is caving in, and the waves are pouring into your boat, it is tempting to forget everything else and despair. This is a perfect image of the way our fears overwhelm us. The disciples, however, turned to Christ. They shook him violently. “Wake up. Help us.”

“Why are ye fearful?” He awoke. He rebuked the chaos, and a calm followed. We cannot blame God for the chaos in our lives. We must simply learn, in the midst of that chaos, to focus on Christ.

“And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce” (Matthew 8:28).

Right after the first storm came another. How would modern psychiatry diagnose these men? Schizophrenia, multiple personality disorder, bi-polar, whatever the situation, the severity of psychological and spiritual disorders can be devastating. Beneath the disease, these were people, real

men, with parents, beautiful memories, and terrible wounds. They embodied what so many of us today struggle with, in our own conditions, among family members, or loved ones.

Christ shows up here too, in the psychological storm, and he brings peace. Next, the swine foamed at the mouth and charged off the cliff. Then the townspeople showed up and drove the disciples away. The storms keep coming. The rest of history is a long story of trials and struggle. Yet, in all of it, Christ is present, waiting for us to return to Him.

God calls to us within the chaos. Writing about the storms, St. Isaac the Syrian gives us this advice: “Let this be for you a signpost: the strength of the temptations you encounter. The nearer you draw and progress, the more temptations multiply against you.... Without trials God’s providence is not seen, and you cannot obtain boldness before God, nor learn the wisdom of the Spirit, nor can divine longing be established in you.... [At these times] when someone is darkened, he ought to fall on his face in prayer, and not rise up until power come to him from heaven and a light which will support his heart.”

We want life to be smooth sailing. God lets it get rocky instead, so we learn to turn to Him.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

# TRAIN UP A CHILD

Fr. Matthew Snowden

*“Of all holy works, the education of children is the holiest.”* – St. Theophan the Recluse

As parents, we want to prepare our children to tackle challenges throughout their lives with a living faith, a virtuous character, and a solid education. We want them to lead a good life, in every sense of the word.

Learning, character, faith: These are the inseparable purposes of Saint Athanasius Academy, a non-traditional, online, K-12, academic community and ministry of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America ([www.saaot.edu](http://www.saaot.edu)). St. Athanasius was founded in 2019 with 70 course enrollments to give Orthodox homeschoolers and their parents live, online, educational opportunities and support from anywhere in the world, and to do so from within the Orthodox tradition. In our third year (the 2021–2022 academic year) we had 500 course enrollments, and while St. Athanasius continues to place an emphasis on enriching the experience of homeschooling families, because of the pandemic we have brought some of the riches and benefits of homeschooling to families that still have students in public and private schools. We offer a personalized learning environment, designed to help students achieve their educational goals through Orthodox-based online instruction. Our mission is to empower parents to teach at home, confident that they are providing for their child’s educational needs and developing their character in faithfulness to Christ.

Homeschooling families recognize the conundrum of modern education. Both students and teachers are bound by a broken system and most subjects are divorced from divine revelation. At the same time, educating our children in the home can be daunting. St. Athanasius is rethinking existing assumptions and reimagining how homeschooling families can utilize professional instruction and online learning tools. The core idea is to enrich the homeschooling experience of families with live, instructor-led course material, to liberate students

and teachers from a top-down model of education, to open class time for truly human interaction, and, most importantly, to reunite education with divine revelation.

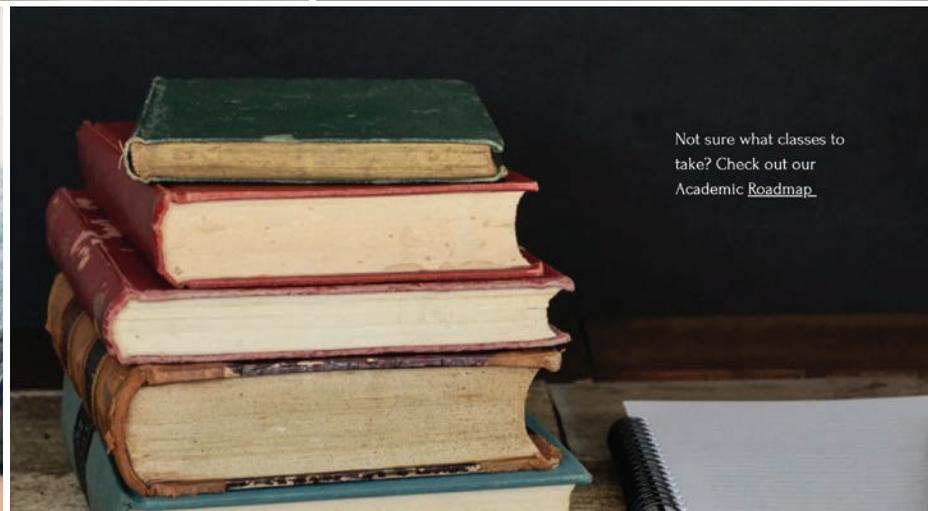
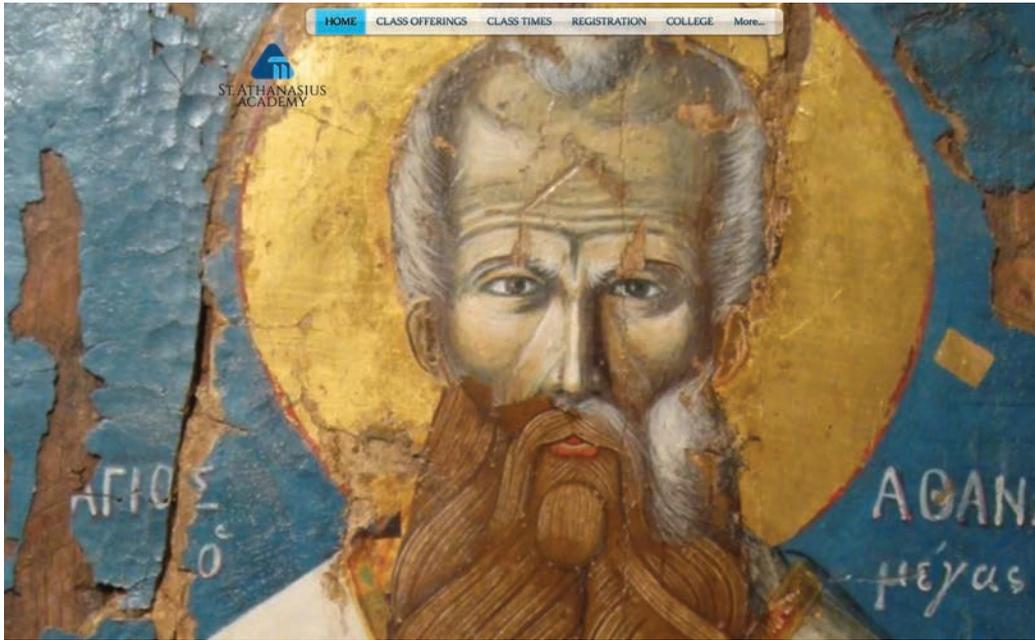
We believe that technology can be used well to make classrooms more human and teachers more important than ever. We believe it provides a way to bring creativity and true human interactivity back to learning, especially in the face of the challenges of recent years. We believe St. Athanasius offers the best of both worlds: individual learning and a classroom environment.

We believe we can produce something positive and future-oriented for our children by making a return to “mastery learning” and an Orthodox ethos. We can give our children a world-class education and form virtuous characters. More than just a solution to this-world problems, St. Athanasius strives to answer a call for every child to become fully alive in the vision of God.

We believe we can do all of this while keeping tuition affordable, so families can use the academy as a complete curriculum option or meet students’ specific needs for credit recovery, extra electives, and specific classes for graduation requirements.

*“We should form our children. And formation, according to the Church, means giving form – the form of Christ.”* – St. Sophrony of Essex

If you are a parent, you recognize that the formation of your child takes time, patience, and faith. It also has timeless value. Truth, goodness, and beauty remain true, good, and beautiful; the human spirit remains God-breathed. We want our children not only to learn skills “for life,” but to learn skills about skills – empathy toward their neighbors, creativity, a sense of wonder about the universe, personal love for Christ, and faithfulness to His Church. These may not gather a crowd of employers at the door when your student turns twenty-one, but over time, these are traits that lead to becoming truly human. Teaching is like giving away the few loaves and fishes one has, trusting that they will multiply in the



giving. St. Athanasius aims to provide students with an education that pursues knowledge of the highest things, provides insights into the things of God and man, forms character, and upholds Orthodox tradition.

The formation of a child also requires a trustworthy community. Unlike many of the secular online learning platforms available to families that elevate the “wisdom” of social media “likes” and computer algorithms, we strive to cultivate our students within the intelligence and wisdom of Orthodox individuals and communities. As one of our parents said, “My children are in an environment with other Orthodox students and teachers from around the country – possibly the world. So they get the experience of a wider Orthodox community.”

As St. Athanasius’s own Administrator (and SAA registered parent), Khouria Kellelynn Barberg said, “Educating children is always a worthy endeavor, yet it is an awesome responsibility – families don’t need to be alone in this. All this is possible in God’s strength and within a community. St Athanasius is that kind of community.”

A good education is essential, but only part of the equation for a good life. A St. Athanasius student should learn to see his or her education not as a meaningless pursuit, nor a selfish endeavor, but as part and parcel of becoming like Christ in a creation that is being redeemed and sanctified by the glory of the vision of God. The ultimate aim of a truly good education is that the student may acquire love for Christ and His Church.

Our tradition teaches us that outside of this vision, one's intellectual and spiritual life is reduced to a beeline toward our passions. The result of this kind of education is that, because we are so eager to arrange for what we want, we close ourselves off from that to which, in fact, God might be giving us or calling us. We become midgets in a world of tiny things.

St. Athanasius is grounded in the Incarnation of the Son of God, which is understood, in part, as a dramatic affirmation of the divine origin of history, humanity, and even the humus beneath our feet. Therefore, even our study of the things of creation is a holy work of wonder, a study of the glory of God. Everything we are given in this life is nothing but a finger pointing out the direction of God's hidden promise which we shall taste in full.

Therefore, St. Athanasius tries to bring to the study of every subject a connection to the dynamics of spiritual growth, especially in the context of a fast-changing society. The spiritual life is not divorced from the intellectual life. It is important to study from within the sanctifying struggle to live life in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in communion with our neighbors.

*"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."*—Proverbs 22:6

Our instructors choose St. Athanasius for the same reasons our students and their families do. They prize having the time and freedom to give full due to big ideas and the glory of God. They want students' lives to be filled with as much goodness, truth, and beauty as possible. They think the arts and sciences speak not simply to the rational part of a person, but to the whole person. They believe heart and soul in helping students become careful readers, analytical thinkers, able writers, curious scientists, humble historians, and logical mathematicians. They believe that all these are implicitly Christian vocations and truly human endeavors that help fulfill a student's purpose and bring glory to God.

We teach with three things in mind. Your student is a unique person created by God for a special purpose: to become like Him. You are the best teacher your student will ever have: you were hand-picked by God for this very purpose. You need a faith-based curriculum that is effective, fits into your lifestyle, and is safe and trustworthy, so you can prepare your student to be all God intends him or her to be.

Our instructor-led classes and guided material makes education easy for busy homeschool families. Engagement with a live instructor, small class sizes, and interactive lessons are just a few of the ways we make learning fun and inspire an ongoing joy of learning. Instructors use multimedia elements like interactive games, audio and video clips, vetted external web links, and off-computer assignments. In addition, time-saving tools for parents and students include online access to grades, recorded classes, instructor-provided material, and a convenient internal messaging system – all completely and safely accessible to both the child and the parent. Parents have access to concrete data and instructor-provided insight into their student's development. This allows them to monitor their child's progress easily and retain control over his or her education.

To educate a child is to hope. To strive to live a truly Orthodox life is also a message of hope to a despairing world. At Saint Athanasius we strive to unite these efforts, believing that true Christian education is hope as an attitude, in which everything stays open before one, an invitation to feast on the riches of God's love and commune in His Presence. Equipping a child to stay open to the vision of God is what we do when we educate a child.

When we educate with hope it is a question of expressing an unlimited faith in the Giver of all good things, that every object of our study may be an object of faith, hope, and love – one of the "many mansions" Christ is preparing for us to enter into the Kingdom.

Only if you educate with hope can you break through the barriers that separate the student's mind from the heart. No longer do you want merely to know facts about a thing. Instead, you turn yourself toward a God who can be trusted unconditionally. You acquire a personal love for Him and begin to become like Him. This is turning wonder into wisdom, knowledge into mastery – the very heart of St. Athanasius' purpose as a creative educational opportunity and ministry.

Start your student's journey today! Our enrollment process is simple, quick, and easy. Go to [www.saat.edu](http://www.saat.edu) for more information about class offerings and registration.

Fr. Matthew Snowden

# WHAT CAN PRISONERS TEACH US ABOUT REPENTANCE?

*“God is the life of all free beings. He is the salvation of all, of believers and unbelievers, of the just and the unjust, of the pious and the impious, of those freed from the passions or caught up in them, of monks or those living in the world, of the educated or the illiterate, of the healthy or the sick, of the young or the very old.” – St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 1*



To those described in the quotation of St. John Climacus above, we might include those in prison and those outside of prison. We are all God’s “free beings,” and He is the salvation of all of us! Yet it is all too easy for those of us outside of prison to see this differently, to assume we know more about God or how to pray to Him than those inside prisons. This is not necessarily true.

A wealthy family once invited St. Paisios into their home and lamented that so many people were suffering while they lived comfortably in a large house. The saint’s response surprised them. “If Christ were to ask me, ‘Where should I put you, in a house like this or in prison?’ I would reply, ‘In a dark prison.’ Because a prison would do me good; it would remind me of Christ, the holy martyrs, the ascetics who lived in the holes of the earth, it would remind me of monastic life . . . I would rather spend one thousand nights in a prison cell, than one day in a plush house.”<sup>1</sup>

St. Paisios rightly saw the potential of any place – even the darkness of a prison cell – to become

a place of holiness. What may appear to be only places of suffering, the saints understand as invitations to God’s grace and healing power. Whether we enter suffering voluntarily (the slight suffering of not eating meat or dairy, for example) or involuntarily (being arrested and imprisoned), God’s strength is still

made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:8).

The staff and volunteers of Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) have witnessed prisoners striving toward God in ways that we firmly believe will inspire you to do the same. They have not just engaged in spiritual practices most Orthodox Christians do – praying at set times of day, fasting, and so forth – but have done these things amidst a level of violence and loneliness most of us will never have to bear. While most Orthodox Christians pray their morning and evening prayers from the comforts of their living rooms, prisoners are bending their knees on bare cement, surrounded by constant noise throughout all hours of the day and night. Some prisoners are praying from a cell they are only allowed to leave for a quick restroom and shower break.

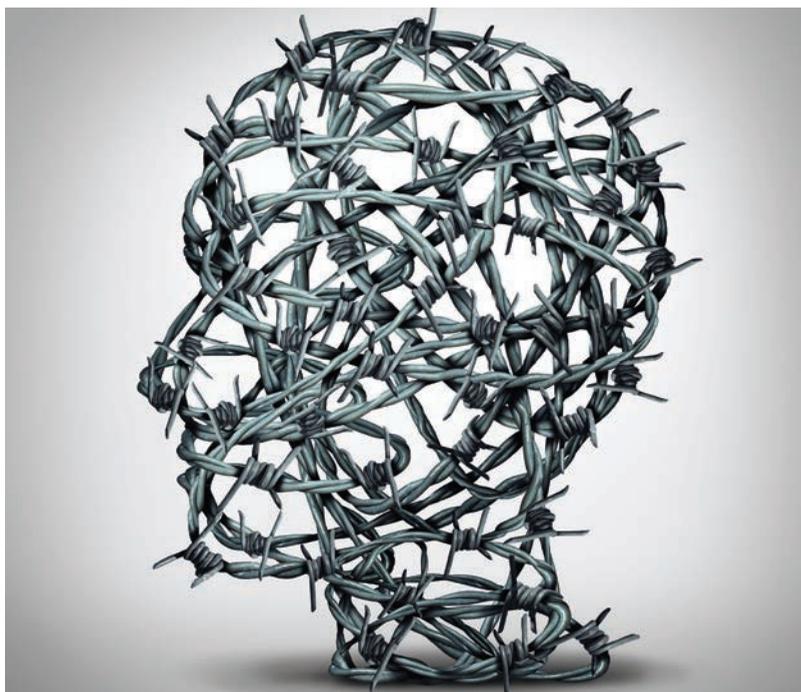
Throughout the season of Great Lent, the Church asks all of us to make greater efforts in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, in order that we may grow closer to Christ together as one Body. This season, please remember the prisoners in your prayers, as they remember you in theirs.

1. *Spiritual Counsels*, vol. 1, p. 183.

*Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) is an agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States. For Orthodox Christians who have been arrested for crimes, OCPM helps them return to the Faith, offering forgiveness and reconciliation with Christ. For both Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, OCPM provides spiritual care, enabling prisoners to find hope and purpose in their lives. For more information, please visit [www.theocpm.org](http://www.theocpm.org) or follow us on Facebook and Instagram @theocpm.*

# MENTALLY ILL PRISONERS: ICONS OF CHRIST

For nearly three years, Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) staff have been regularly writing to a prisoner, whom I will call Michael, who lives in a state mental hospital and suffers from delusions. The staff send Michael personal letters, cards with pictures of nature and wildlife, icon cards and even funny illustrations. Often, Michael's letters are full of his delusions, but sometimes he has moments of clarity, such as when he wrote this:



For more information about OCPM, go to [www.theocpm.org](http://www.theocpm.org).

*Thanks for your recent letter and pictures. Yes, you two are very Hollywood . . . smile . . . You both are very interesting; and Zossima finds funny pictures a lot. Are you two best of friends? Father Duane, you have a very cool beard . . . I keep you both in my prayers; I am grateful we are great friends. - love, Michael*

Imagine you inhabit not one prison, but two. That is the reality for prisoners like Michael, who suffer from mental illness. Prisons are being called the “new asylums” because of the large numbers of mentally ill. According to the Treatment Advocacy Center, the

Los Angeles County Jail, Chicago’s Cook County Jail, or New York’s Rikers Island Jail each hold more mentally ill inmates than any remaining psychiatric hospital in the United States.

How do you minister to such suffering? For the staff of Orthodox Christian Ministry, those who are mentally broken are still icons of Christ, made in God’s image, and worthy of our most devoted ministry and care. That care has come largely through OCPM’s Correspondence Ministry.

OCPM regularly writes letters and sends materials to prisoners regardless of their mental condition or whether they write back. There is a prisoner named Thomas who lives in a forensic unit (for mentally ill prisoners) in a Pennsylvania state prison. He had not received mail in fifteen years. The chaplain there asked OCPM to write to him. Thomas was deeply affected by the personal letters. He even started painting the postcards of nature that were sent to him. His condition was so improved by this new care and attention to his life that the doctors were able to significantly lower his psychiatric medications. When a psych patient has their medications lowered it means that they are able to handle reality on their own.

When a person is locked up, one of the most important parts of their day is when they get to hear their name spoken at mail call. It is a spark of recognition and a reminder that they are not forgotten. One prisoner recently wrote to OCPM: “In a world full of chaos and craziness you are a solid rock that keeps people like me anchored to Christ and keeps us focused on the things that are important, true, pure, and holy. We couldn’t do it without you and others like you. So, thank you.”

In our Orthodox services, we often say, “Remember me, O Lord, in thy kingdom.” As long as we are in God’s memory, we continue to exist. If God were to forget us, we would cease to exist.

That is what Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry strives to do with all the resources at our disposal. We remember those who are easily forgotten and give them a reason to hope.

# ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

## ORDINATIONS

FARMAN, Deacon Gregory, to the holy priesthood by Bishop THOMAS, on February 20, 2022, at the Church of Ss. Constantine and Helen, Dallas, Texas. Fr. Gregory is awaiting his assignment.

HASTINGS, Ephraim (Eric), to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN, on March 5, 2022, at St. Michael Church, Cotuit, Massachusetts. He is attached to the parish.

KAUFMAN, Deacon John (Ryan), to the holy diaconate by Bishop ANTHONY, on February 27, 2022, at St. Nicholas Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is attached to the parish.

McCLANAHAN, Philip, to the holy diaconate by Bishop BASIL, on February 27, 2022, at St. George Cathedral, Wichita, Kansas. Deacon Philip, with his wife Kristiana and their three children, will be going to Indonesia as missionaries of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC).

MEKHEL, George (Abram), to the holy diaconate by Bishop THOMAS, on February 20, 2022, at the Church of Ss. Constantine and Helen, Dallas, Texas. He is awaiting his assignment.

## ELEVATIONS

WALLACE, Priest Mark D., was elevated to the rank and dignity of Archpriest by Bishop BASIL on Sunday, February 20, 2022, at St. James the Son of Alphaeus Church, Stillwater, Oklahoma, where he is *proistamenos*.

## REPOSED

MATOOK, Dr. Alan E., on February 20, 2022, in Rhode Island. Dr. Matook was born in 1944 and passed into eternal life after a long battle with cancer. He was a parishioner at St. George Church, Little Falls, New Jersey, for a long time, then moved to Rhode Island to retire there. His funeral will take place at St. Mary Church, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, on Thursday, February 24. His Eminence extends

his condolences to his sister Florence. May his memory be eternal!

PIERCE, Khouria Patricia, widow of the late Father Justin Pierce (+2012), while in hospice care following a fall which resulted in a broken hip.

Join Metropolitan JOSEPH for the Consecration service of St. Anthony the Great Antiochian Orthodox Church, San Diego, California, on Sunday, June 26, 2022.

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# COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

## AFGHAN REFUGEES WELCOMED TO BOSTON

St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts, is working with the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health and the Boston Afghan community. The Kataluma Refugee Hospitality organization seeks the generosity of Boston families and businesses to support the needs of arriving Afghan families.

The first Afghan evacuee family to come to the Massachusetts area was welcomed by members of St. Mary Orthodox Church, in conjunction with the Kataluma Refugee Hospitality, organization ([www.kataluma.org](http://www.kataluma.org)), enthusiastic members of the Boston Afghan community and The Brookline Center for Community Mental Health ([www.brooklinecenter.org](http://www.brooklinecenter.org)).

The couple, former residents of Kabul, worked in security at the Kabul airport. The organizations and volunteers provided them and their active toddler, with com-

fortable lodging, food, toiletries, clothes, and translation services on their first day in Boston, during which they also found a playground and a Halal store, and watched the "T" go by. Local businesses also welcomed the family.

The family was joined by another refugee family with three children that arrived late Sunday night. Both families are being temporarily housed with financial assistance from the Brookline Center's Care Connections program.

"The urgent, immediate task is to quickly find short-term lodgings in the Greater Boston Area near public transportation," said Gary Moorehead of Kataluma Refugee Hospitality. "Practical support, property management, and a case worker would be provided.

Anyone with leads on apartments, homes, or available in-law suites is asked to e-mail Gary at [home@kataluma.org](mailto:home@kataluma.org), or to call 617-460-9409. St Mary's contact is Natasha Smith, [nasmith05@gmail.com](mailto:nasmith05@gmail.com). Concurrently, Kata-

luma is searching for a large home to welcome refugees and documented asylum-seekers as they transition to life in the US.

*Kataluma Refugee Hospitality* is a non-profit, church-oriented community seeking to establish or support model houses that provide a) transitional lodgings for newly arrived refugees, and

b) settings for local residents and others to learn about hospitality and practice it.

*Kataluma*, a 503(b) non-profit, relies on the generous support of donors and friends to partner with us in welcoming refugees with housing, meals, and friendship. All in-kind or monetary donations are tax-deductible. Donations and offers to volunteer may be made on our website.

## CONSECRATION OF ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT

St. Anthony The Great ~ San Diego Parish and Very Rev. Fr. John Reimann welcome His Eminence to our parish June 25 and 26, 2022, for the Consecration of our church. St. Anthony began as an English-speaking parish in 1995. We recently celebrated our 25th Anniversary and are now thankful to God for the blessing of the Consecration by Metropolitan JOSEPH. All are welcome to join us in prayer and thanks for this special occasion in the life of the church. Hierarchal Vespers will be on Saturday, June 25 at 4:30 pm in the afternoon with a welcome champagne reception in our church garden, to follow. Orthros on Sunday begins at 8:00 am, Consecration at 9:15 am, Hierarchal Divine Liturgy at 10:15 am followed by a luncheon banquet with His Eminence at the San Diego Marriott, Mission Valley. All are welcome to attend. Information for the weekend festivities can be found on our website [www.st-Anthony.org](http://www.st-Anthony.org).



# ORTHODOX PRO-LIFE STATEMENT

The Orthodox Church has consistently and unequivocally recognized the full humanity of every person beginning at the moment of conception. This position is informed by Scripture and Holy Tradition and is validated by modern science, which confirms that a new, distinct human organism comes into existence at conception. The Orthodox Church is, and always has been, unabashedly pro-life, regarding abortion as the killing of another human being.

In recent weeks, this position has been called into question, and, consequently, we, Orthodox Presiding Hierarchs representing several canonical jurisdictions in the United States of America, are compelled to proclaim the only true and correct teaching of the Church on this matter. We reiterate the words of the Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations (the *Didache*), which dates to the earliest generations of the Church: "Do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant" (οὐ φονεύσεις τέκνον ἐν φθορᾷ οὐδὲ γεννηθέντα ἀποκτενεῖς).

The Orthodox Church strives to stand above politics; yet the Church also stands for order, against the forces of chaos and lawlessness. All civilized societies prohibit the intentional taking of the life of one human being by another human being, except under extreme and unusual circumstances. The United States of America is certainly no exception: in every state, intentional homicide is outlawed. Yet our laws are inconsistent, banning the killing of some humans but not others. There is no basis in either law or science, and certainly not in morality or religion, to draw a distinction between a human who is in the womb and a human who is outside of it. Thus, the Orthodox Church calls upon the civil authorities, not only in the United States but globally, and especially in traditionally Orthodox lands, to treat all humans equally under the law, and thus to forbid the evil practice of abortion.

It is true that the Most Holy Theotokos gave her consent to the Incarnation of the Uncreated Word of God. The Lord did not impose Himself on human-

ity, but took on our nature with the permission of us humans, represented by the greatest of us, the Virgin Mary. Once this consent was given, the Incarnation took place: the Word became flesh at that moment. The Orthodox Church embraces this paradox of the Incarnation, of the Uncreated becoming one of His creatures. Yet while paradoxes of this kind are essential to our faith, so too is clarity: the clarity that the newly-conceived human – including the Lord Himself at the moment of His conception – is a full human. Here, then, the consent of the Theotokos ends, and her duties as a mother begin: once she conceived the Lord, she had the sacred responsibility of nurturing and caring for Him, which she fulfilled perfectly.

This same Lord Who became incarnate of the Virgin Mary on the Feast of the Annunciation loves every human being He creates, from the moment of their conception. He loves their mothers, along with the fathers, who suffer and sacrifice for their children. The Church, and, indeed, all of humanity, has a duty to care for and support these children and their mothers.

No less equally, the Lord also loves the mothers who, victims of deceitful pressures from this world, make the tragic choice to have their children killed. For these mothers, the Church offers forgiveness, compassion, and healing through repentance and reconciliation both to God and to their lost children.

The Lord loves those fathers and other men who, failing in their duty to provide and protect, instead pressure and even force mothers to have their children killed.

The Lord loves those physicians and other practitioners who, themselves victims of deceit, have allowed themselves to become instruments of evil in the murder of innocent children.

Finally, let us all implore the same Lord, Who desires that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, that His all-encompassing love and mercy will enfold all who are affected by the tragedy of abortion and bring healing to our land.

Metropolitan JOSEPH  
Antiochian Orthodox  
Christian Archdiocese of  
North America

Bishop LONGIN  
Serbian Orthodox Church  
in North and South  
America

Metropolitan NICOLAE  
Romanian Orthodox  
Metropolia of the Americas

Metropolitan JOSEPH  
Bulgarian Eastern Ortho-  
dox Diocese of the USA,  
Canada, and Australia

# THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN MONASTERY

Deacon David Lochbihler



“And now here is a secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”<sup>1</sup> With these words, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry describes how we are to see our world through the inner eyes of faith. This lifelong quest for the essential and invisible beauty of our lives in Christ came to mind as I reflected on two pre-pandemic, summer visits to the magnificent Monastery of Our Lady and Saint Laurence in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

## THE JOURNEY

Most drive, yet some fly, to visit the Mountain Monastery. I began my two trips to Colorado from Saint Patrick Orthodox Church in Virginia. Baptized as an infant, I never really looked closely at my baptismal certificate issued shortly after my birth, until a few years after my chrismation in the Orthodox Church on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Sunday, Sep-

tember 8, 2013. It is amazing how God works in all our lives. Mom and Dad met at Marshall Field’s

in downtown Chicago after World War II. A tall, handsome man, Dad served as a Lieutenant at Guadalcanal and eventually became a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army. Mom was a rare beauty with spark, smarts, and wit. Blessed beyond measure to be their youngest son, I was born nearly a decade later in Valparaiso, Indiana, and baptized as an infant at Saint Patrick Catholic Church in nearby Chesterton. More than fifty years later, I was chrismated at Saint Patrick Orthodox Church in Virginia. All our journeys in life are in similar ways strikingly orchestrated by the hand of Almighty God.

The cross-country trek across our spacious land was magnificent. Driving through the Appalachian Mountains in the East toward the Rocky Mountains in the West, you pass through the flatlands of Iowa and Nebraska. While tourists visit Europe for the history, art, and architecture, a drive across America is filled with natural wonders. Whether you travel to the Monastery of Our Lady and Saint Laurence by land or by air, the last dozen miles are the same for everyone, as you leave the paved highway for the bumpy dirt road up toward the monastery. A prayerful retreat both slows your pace and clears your mind, and this last leg of your journey, with winding curves and dusty roads, begins the quieting of your soul.

Tired from your long journey, you step from your car and are immediately mesmerized by the scenery. The Rocky Mountains embrace you with their immense beauty. “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.”<sup>2</sup> You see a steep mountain cliff rising upward on your left, two layers of mountaintops in front of you, and to your right, all topped with a Virgin Mary blue sky with pristine white clouds: an artist’s heaven, a poet’s paradise.

## THE CHURCH

Heaven on earth, all day and all night; Lauds before dawn, Sacred Scripture sung and spoken methodically and carefully. Slowly and precisely, each



word becomes a Word of God to be prayed in faith, from the heart, deep down inside. You pause in the middle of each verse, thinking “Jesus, Jesus” with an intake of air before finishing. The Western Rite Mass soon follows with mostly hidden, yet partially revealed mysteries touching our feeble minds and burdened hearts. The ancient Divine Liturgy of Saint Gregory the Great is filled with sublime beauty. The Epistle and Gospel, the magnificent Canon of the Mass, the Body and Blood of Christ, the priest’s Blessing. Lord, we truly are not worthy. Immersed in holiness, we find that time flies, and the service is completed in the blink of an eye.

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17 NKJV). In a monastery, the monks pray ... and pray and pray and pray! They pray in the church, through their choirs, at their rest, during their sleep. “Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments” (Psalm 119:164 KJV). We see Prime, Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. This is only the beginning.

Compline is quiet and simple, profound and powerful. Before it begins, the monks ask for mutual forgiveness. At the end, a beautiful rendition of the *Salve Regina* is accompanied by a procession to the back side altar of Our Lady of Glastonbury. Among the saints in the icon of Our Lady, I see Saint Joseph of Arimathaea and am reminded of Metropolitan JOSEPH. I see Saint Patrick and am reminded of the wonder-filled folks from my home parish in Virginia. I see Saint Dunstan, a blacksmith holding the tools of his trade and a chalice, and I am reminded of Father Patrick, our parish priest, laboring at his blacksmith shop and raising the chalice during the Canon of the Mass.

My favorite time of the day during my monastery visits occurred immediately after Compline. As the Grand Silence descends, a door opens in the heart. For nearly four decades, I discovered immense joy and peace while slowly pacing inside large churches. In old churches, I ponder the hundreds of thousands of prayers lifted towards heaven from the pews by our faithful, fallen-asleep people. In new churches, I marvel at the precious beauty of the icons and the architectural magnificence of the pillars and high ceilings. Within the monastery church, facing the East, I walk slowly towards the giant golden Crucifix, the icons of Madonna and Child and the Risen Christ, the glass Tabernacle containing the Corpus Christi, and the altar relics

of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the left and Saint Benedict on the right. Taking a step towards the South, I see the large icons of Saint Benedict, Saint Bede, and Saint Antony. Turning the corner to walk toward the West, in the back of church, I pause in deep respect and admiration before some of the greatest heroes of our timeless Orthodox tradition, in order from left to right: Saint Peter the Apostle, Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Gregory the Great, Our Lady of Glastonbury, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Basil the Great, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Athanasius, and Saint Paul the Apostle. Turning to finish the square by slowly pacing towards the North, I recognize the beauty of Saint Cecelia, Saint Agnes of Rome, and Saint Katharine. After a slow walk around the church to calm the human heart and experience the divine presence, I leave the church for my cell in the dark of night, filled with awe and wonder and ready to sleep in joy and peace.

#### COME AND SEE

You cannot adequately describe the Orthodox Church. The best you can say to both friend and stranger searching for truth and looking for love is, “Come and see.” The best vacation you and your family can take during the summer of 2022

is to “come and see” the Mountain Monastery in Colorado. Your life will be changed forever.

Surrounded by God’s grandeur and touched by God’s grace, you also will be embraced by the heartfelt warmth of monastic hospitality. Driving up the winding dirt road and passing through the gate, you may see deer or elk, rattlesnake or chipmunk, and even an occasional mountain lion or bear. Once you arrive at Our Lady and Saint Laurence Monastery, Dom Theodore will greet you with a smile and a hug, and in your heart you will realize you truly have come home.



1. Antoine De Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1971), p. 73.
2. W. H. Gardner and N. H. Mackenzie, *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 66.

# ANTIOCHIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES SEEKING FULL ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION

V. Rev. Dr. Joseph Purpura,  
Director of Accreditation

## THE GREAT FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION (MARCH 25, 2022)

The Antiochian House of Studies (AHOS) is a graduate program of theology, initially established as the Saint Stephens Program in 1980, which has since grown to become known as the Antiochian House of Studies, now offering five graduate degree programs.

accreditation, and for the ATS evaluators to prepare their recommendations for the June 14 Business meeting of ATS. At that time a vote will take place on the Antiochian House of Studies' request for full accreditation.

In addition to the Saint Stephens Course, the Antiochian House of Studies offers the following Degree Programs of Studies.

- Master of Theology in Applied Ortho-



On March 13 and 14, 2022, The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) through the efforts of their board of evaluators, conducted a site visit of the Campus of the Antiochian House of Studies in La Verne, California, and on March 21–24, conducted an extensive site visit of the Campus at the Antiochian Village in Ligonier Pennsylvania. Their purpose was to assess the school's submitted Self-Study Report. During this visit, ATS conducted in-depth interviews of the AHOS President, Dean, faculty, staff, students, alumni, Board members, and Archdiocese leaders. These meetings were the final steps for ATS to assess the readiness of AHOS for

dox Theology

- Master of Theology in Pastoral Care and Counseling
- Master of Divinity
- Doctor of Ministry
- Doctor of Philosophy

The school offers a comprehensive distance education (with required residencies, depending on the program enrolled) and currently enrolls over two hundred students. Having worked over the past several years to be accredited here in North America, the school asks for your prayers as we continue this process towards full accreditation with ATS.

The Very Rev. Dr. Michel Najim, President; Rt Rev. Dr. Fadi Rabbat, Dean; Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Gergis, Vice-President; V. Rev. Dr. George Shalhoub, Provost, V. Rev. Dr. Joseph Antypas Vice-president of Business Development, and the V. Rev. Dr. Joseph F. Purpura, Director of Accreditation take this opportunity to thank Metropolitan JOSEPH, Chairman of the Board of AHOS; The Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS, Episcopal overseer; the AHOS Board of Trustees; faculty, students, alumni, and staff of AHOS; the benefactors of the House of Studies; and those who came before us who laid the foundations, for all of their good works, support, and generosity of time, talents, and resources.



Join us for fellowship, friendship, and worship!



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Mail and include the following items to ADC's Research Institute, c/o Mr. Nabil Mohamad:

1. Two original letters of recommendation signed by your of Mass Communications professors.
2. Print copies and/or email links of your relevant work.
3. Share how Dr. Jack Shaheen's work has influenced you. Include this in your one page statement explaining your goals, and stating you are a U.S. citizen of Arab heritage.

4. Official academic transcripts (minimum 3.0 GPA is required).
5. Permanent home address, mobile number and email address.

**Application Deadline: Tuesday, April 12, 2022**

Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted.

### Submit all materials to

ADC Research Institute  
Attn: Mr. Nabil Mohamad - ADC Vice President  
1705 Desales Street, N.W., Suite 500  
Washington, DC. 20036

Should you have further questions, call (202) 244-2990, or email [nmohamad@adc.org](mailto:nmohamad@adc.org).

The Jack G. Shaheen Scholarship Awards will be presented at the 2022 ADC National Convention.

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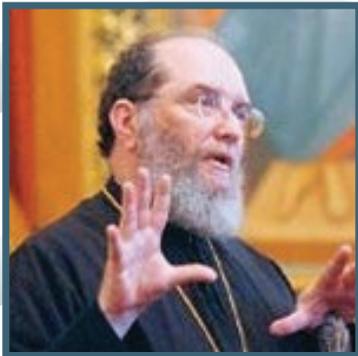
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Hierarchical  
Divine Liturgy with  
Bishop JOHN



*Commemorating*  
**Bishop BASIL's 30th Anniversary**

Preserve, O Lord, our Master and Chief  
Priest and Grant Him Many Years!

**DOWAMA PLC**

St. George Cathedral - Wichita, KS

**June 15 -18, 2022**

[www.dowamapl.org](http://www.dowamapl.org)



WITH THE BLESSING OF HIS EMINENCE  
METROPOLITAN JOSEPH  
AND HIS GRACE BISHOP THOMAS



*save the date*



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ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE CONFERENCE CENTER

THE DIOCESES OF  
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**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**



**“FOR OUR DELIVERANCE  
FROM ALL WRATH’: DEALING WITH  
ANGER IN AN ANGRY SOCIETY”**

**REV. FR. THEODORE PULCINI**

ANTIOCHIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES  
SUPERVISOR OF THE DIRECTED-PROJECTS  
RETIRED PASTOR OF ST. MARY CHURCH  
CHAMBERSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA



**“INTRODUCING THE YOUTH &  
YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY  
TASK FORCE”**

**REV. FR. NICHOLAS BELCHER**

CHAIR OF THE YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT  
MINISTRY TASK FORCE  
PASTOR OF ST. GEORGE CHURCH  
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PARISH LIFE  
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WICHITA, KS**

Reservations: Hyatt Regency  
<https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/WICRW/G-GECA>

**THEME:** Unless you are converted and become like children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven  
— Matt 18:3



# The Children's Relief Fund



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

This letter brings you our *"2022 New Year Appeal."* The purpose of this program within the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America is to provide funds for the children in need in Lebanon and Palestine, and the children of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

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

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

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

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



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

In anticipation of your kind response, we thank you for your generosity, and pray you enjoy the rest of 2022 with health, happiness, and prosperity. May God bless you and yours and give you strength in the coming days.

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

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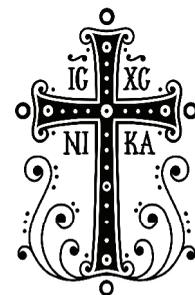
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