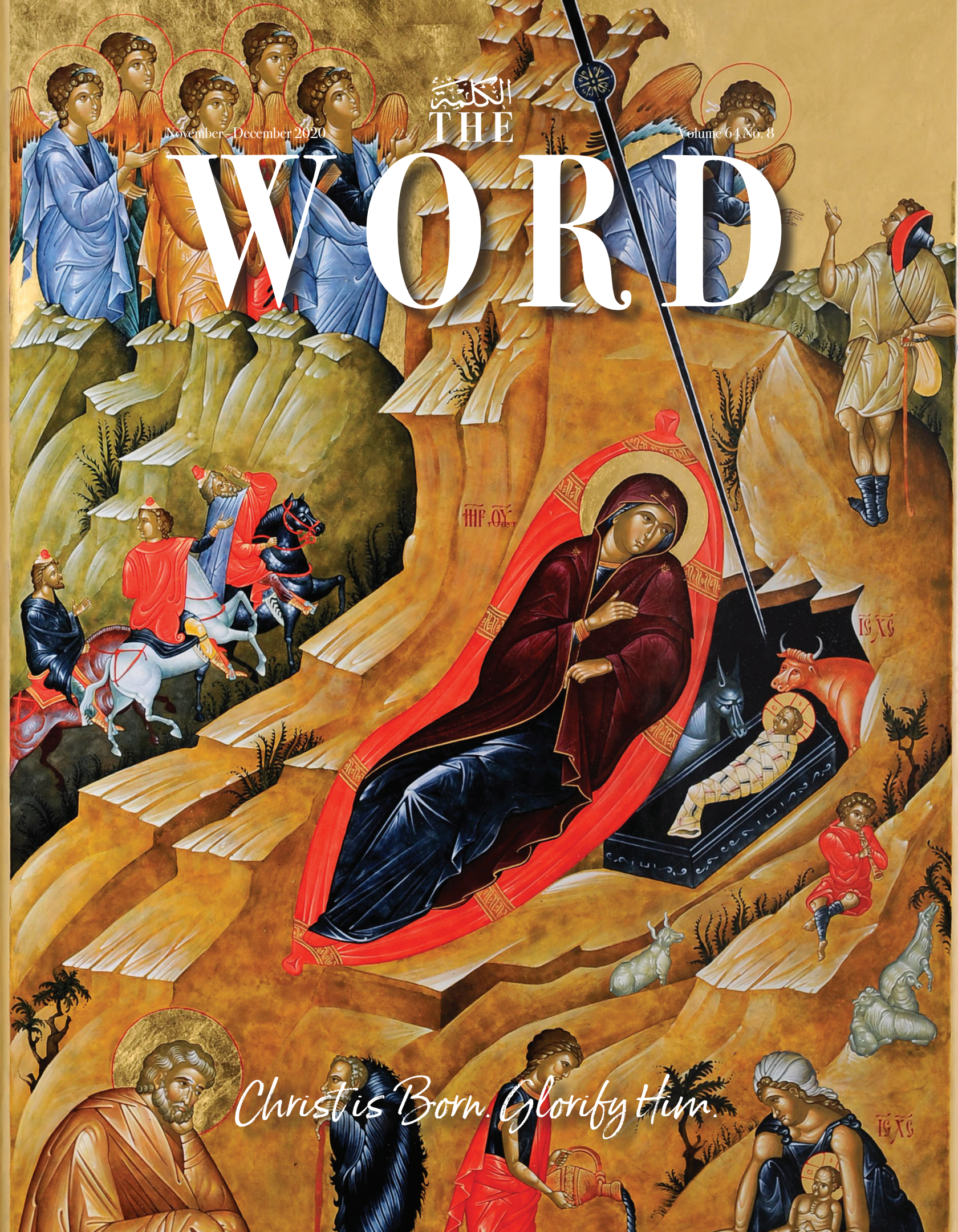


November–December 2020

الكنيسة
THE

Volume 64 No. 8

WORD



Christ is Born. Glorify Him.

THE WORD

الكلمة

CONTENTS



COVER: ICON OF THE NATIVITY
WRITTEN BY THE HAND OF
JANET JAIME, ELEOUSA@COX.NET

- 3 EDITORIAL
by Bishop JOHN
- 4 HIS EMINENCE
METROPOLITAN JOSEPH MEETS
WITH SECRETARY POMPEO
- 5 BEIRUT BLAST
by Subdeacon Tony E. Nasrallah
- 10 THE EUCHARISTIC CHANGE
ACCORDING TO THE ORTHODOX
LITURGICAL TRADITION
by Fr. Patrick B. O'Grady
- 13 REGISTRATION OPEN FOR
ONLINE NATIONAL ADVANCED
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
- 14 ST. ELIZABETH,
GRAND DUCHESS OF RUSSIA
by Fr. Daniel Daly
- 20 FROM THESE STONES:
THESE DAYS, OUR CROSS
by Fr. Joseph Huneycutt
- 21 CHILDREN'S RELIEF FUND
- 22 SUNDAYS OF ADVENT:
PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR
THE NEW COVENANT
by Fr. Michael Massouh
- 25 A MESSAGE OF HOPE FROM
THE ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS
- 26 COMMENCEMENTS:
NEW BIRTH AND DEATH
by Fr. Michael Massouh
- 29 2021 JACK G. SHAHEEN
MASS COMMUNICATIONS
SCHOLARSHIPS
- 30 THE JOY OF ORTHODOXY
by Deacon David Lochbihler
- 32 PRISON MINISTRY
by Deacon Noah Papas
- 33 ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE
- 35 ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS

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

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION:
U.S.A. and Canada, \$40.00
Foreign Countries, \$50.00
Single Copies, \$3.00

The WORD (USPS626-260) is published in September, November, January, March and May, by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America at 358 Mountain Road, PO Box 5238; periodicals postage paid at Englewood, New Jersey 07631-5238 and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster send address changes to The WORD, 358 Mountain Road, PO Box 5238, Englewood, NJ 07631-5238
ISSN 0043-7964 www.antiochian.org.

Canada Post Publication Agreement No. 40043404
Return Canada address to
American International Mail, STN A - BOX 697, Windsor
ON N9A 6N4, Canada

Only Covid Is Uncertain

Bishop JOHN

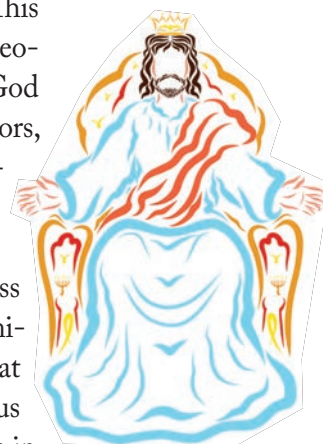
As I write, the most common depiction of our time is of uncertainty. A year after the first documented case of Covid-19, we are still uncertain as to how and when the threat of Covid will disappear and we can go back to normal. Politicians, physicians, educators, business leaders and clergy all disagree within their ranks as how best to handle this crisis. Such uncertainty leads to stress, anger, frustration, depression, and anxiety. Many make the case that we have all been traumatized by this disruption of our lives. I feel this tension and anxiety everywhere I go. Yet amid such uncertainty, Christians can rest upon that of which we are totally certain; the empty tomb, and our conviction that Christ has risen from the dead. We are also totally certain that God loves us and is with us, even when we suffer, and when disease destroys our bodies. We know for certain that God shares His life with us, and through His church attaches us to Himself. He allows us to share in eternal life, love, and joy. The tomb is empty, and the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Blessed is the Kingdom!

In the last year, medical researchers and policy-makers have learned much about Covid. We understand that it is a deadly disease. We also understand that God created us to be social beings, uniquely able to commune deeply with Him and each other. Like Him, we naturally desire to know others and be known. Isolation

is unnatural, painful, and destructive to our minds, bodies, and souls.

Metropolitan JOSEPH met with the clergy of the Archdiocese on September 29, 2020. While we want to do everything that we can to keep everyone safe, it is also time for us to do all we can to return to the churches and do the work Christians were baptized to do. This work, called liturgy, is gathering as God's people, worshiping with the prayers given by God through inspired biblical and liturgical authors, receiving His message through the preachers and teachers of the Church, and sharing the good news with the world as witnesses, icons and workers of good. We bear witness to Christ and His Resurrection with our families, our parishes, and the world. This is what makes us the Church, this is what makes us Christian. Parishes have been highly creative in finding and inventing ways to do the Church's work. People have gathered for daily prayer in internet chat rooms. Parishes have produced modules to lead family discussions. There are daily, weekly, and monthly Bible studies on Zoom and similar platforms. Parishioners have been calling each other, offering encouragement, shopping, and rides to the doctors. Teens have held car washes to raise money for suffering people in Beirut. Ladies have cooked with masks on and practiced social distancing, parishes have held weekly virtual coffee hours, checking in on each other, and the list could go on.

Fear has crept into many of our churches during this time of Covid uncertainty: fear of



**Be not
afraid!**

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop BASIL

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS

The Right Reverend
Bishop ALEXANDER

The Right Reverend
Bishop JOHN

The Right Reverend
Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend
Bishop NICHOLAS

Founded in Arabic as
Al Kalimat in 1905
by Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny)
Founded in English as
The WORD in 1957
by Metropolitan ANTONY (Bashir)

Editor in Chief Bishop JOHN

Assistant Editor Christopher Humphrey

Design Director Donna Griffin Albert

Editorial Board Fr. Michel Najim
Fr. Patrick O'Grady
Fr. Thomas Zain
Fr. Andrew Damick
Fr. Nicholas Belcher
Fr. John Oliver
Fr. Chad Hatfield
Kh. Erin Kimmet
Peter Samore
Ann Bezzerides

Editorial Office:
The WORD
2 Lydia's Path
Westborough, MA 01581-1841

e-mail: WORDMAG@AOL.COM

Subscription Office:
358 Mountain Road
PO Box 5238
Englewood, NJ 07631-5238
registrar@antiochian.org

getting sick, fear of losing freedoms and autonomy, fear of losing our financial reserves, and fear of losing our pre-Covid lifestyles. This sinful fear – sinful because it separates us from God and each other – often manifests itself in political activism and blog-posting. In the Church such activism is divisive and compromises our Christian witness. These things must be avoided in the Church and by church leaders. We have a greater purpose.

One of the most frequent biblical admonishments is, Be not afraid! Christians need not be afraid in our uncertainty, because we are certain of our God. I join our Metropolitan in encouraging everyone to take every reasonable measure to stay safe. How each of us defines *reasonable* is admittedly difficult, but we cannot surrender our lives to fear, as if we have no hope in God and do not understand that we are the people of the Resurrection. In baptism, we die with Christ and rise with Him.

I am encouraged because I have great trust in the clergy, whose wearied yet optimistic faces I saw on my computer screen yesterday. They are worthy of our trust. I am encouraged because the people of our parishes have risen to the challenges of this world crisis, and are keeping our churches going. I am encouraged because our Metropolitan and bishops are dedicated and have kept the vision of St. Raphael, Metropolitan ANTONY, Metropolitan PHILIP, and all of the other bishops who have served in America. God is with us. Heaven is at hand. Blessed is the Kingdom.

HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN JOSEPH MEETS WITH SECRETARY POMPEO



On Thursday, October 15, 2020, His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH met with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in his office at the Department of State in Washington D.C. The two leaders discussed ongoing issues of importance in the Middle East, with Sayidna offering his expertise, particularly in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, and the critical situation in that region.

Sayidna JOSEPH thanked Secretary Pompeo for their meeting, and for his friendship, attention, and deep interest in the security of the region. His Eminence also conveyed the greetings of His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X of Antioch and All the East, as well as of the clergy and laity of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America.

BEIRUT BLAST



by Subdeacon Tony E. Nasrallah

THOUGH THE CORONA VIRUS HAS BEEN THE CATASTROPHE THAT PUT THE GLOBE ON ITS KNEES, IT IS PROBABLY THE LEAST OF THE MANY CATASTROPHES THAT HAS BEFALLEN LEBANON WITHIN ONE YEAR: AN ECONOMIC COLLAPSE WITH FIVEFOLD INFLATION, A POPULAR UPRISING, FIRES, A PONZI SCHEME WHERE INNOCENT PEOPLE LOST THEIR SAVINGS, AND PLENTY OF POLITICAL UNREST. HOWEVER, THE GREATEST OF OUR CATASTROPHES HAS ONLY RECENTLY EMERGED: AN EXPLOSION OF UNPRECEDENTED MAGNITUDE IN BEIRUT.

I had just arrived on the eighth floor of my apartment complex with my wife and son when I called Rania, my sister in Hazmieh (a quarter in Beirut). As we were talking, I felt the building dance. It must be an earthquake, I thought, and of great magnitude. Rania felt it too, so this confirmed my hypothesis as it was felt all over the city. My wife later told me that she literally thought that the building was collapsing. Then there were two very loud blasts, the infamous explosions that claimed two hundred lives and devoured half the city.

The shaking continued; it had dampened briefly only to be revived more intensely. Over the phone, I

heard my sister yell, “Tony pray! Tony pray!” It took me time to realize that whatever was happening at her end was more intense than here. She wanted to check what was happening, so we agreed to hang up and talk later. Tables fell over where she was, the carpet flew in the living room, dirt, dust and empty boxes flew onto her balcony, broken glass windows wounded someone in her building, and her ears kept ringing for hours after the explosion. Hazmieh is about 3 miles from the Port where the blast erupted.

Throughout these moments, my wife was carrying our one-year-old son and hugging him tightly. He noticed our unusual behavior (fear coupled with focus on

the phone to receive news instead of playing with him) and he himself became anxious. We all stood under beams at home lest we be buried under rubble should the building crumble. We texted our families, many of whom are abroad, to inform them that we are all okay, though, we clarified, we knew not what had happened.

We started searching for news. The first thing we heard was that former Prime Minister Saad Hariri's house was burning, and the news came from a reputable TV station. It is easy to understand such a scenario for many reasons: 1. His house is relatively close to the site of the explosion (within one mile); 2. His father, who too was Prime Minister, was assassinated in that vicinity in 2005, and the explosion back then was heard miles away; 3. In the coming couple of days the international Special Tribunal for Lebanon was expected to issue its final verdict regarding the assassination of Hariri senior; 4. Hariri Junior was with the Saudi princes who were confined in The Ritz Hotel in Saudi Arabia in November 2017, and he had been forced to broadcast his resignation as Prime Minister of Lebanon from Saudi Arabia. Though not in the same orderly neatness, these thoughts rushed to my mind.

Then we heard that what detonated was a depot of fireworks. Later we heard that this was an Israeli attack on a Hezbollah arsenal. Israel was a convenient entity to blame so the politicians could spare themselves the blame of negligence. The supporters of Hezbollah (an Iran-backed Islamist organization in Lebanon) would say the blast was perpetrated by the "Little Satan" (Israel) as opposed to the "Greater Satan" (the US). Finally, those against Hezbollah would say, "Look what Hezbollah has dragged Lebanon into." None of the reports were confirmed. Hezbollah departed from its prior tradition by not blaming Israel and various speculations were drawn from this silence.

No one at first imagined that the explosion was of this magnitude, even those who were quite close to it and saw its worst. We started receiving videos. The first video I saw showed a mushroom cloud ascending from the blast. Still in the denial phase, I thought to myself, who has the time and patience to manipulate a video and create fake news at this moment? We received more videos from independent sources, and they all showed the same hard-to-believe Hiroshima cloud, so my short-lived denial phase expired. Later, I learned from one of the survivors, whose story will be detailed below, how he miraculously escaped his building in the vicinity of the blast and went to another street, thinking it would be better, but it was not, so he went to another and another, only to find all were

equally damaged.

Someone forwarded me an audio of a lady, unknown to me, saying that her husband, who works at the port, had immediately said that the blasts were caused by a stock of ammonium nitrate stored there and that he had warned his superiors about their dangers. I was told that the blast was heard in Cyprus, more than 100 miles away. I could not believe that, so I texted a former student of mine who lives there, and, yes, indeed, not only was our blast heard in Cyprus, but they felt it like an earthquake. I think this was the first time in history that this island has heard something, with the naked ear, from a mainland. Not once, throughout the many wars on Lebanese soil (chief of which was the war of 1975-1990), with all the warplanes and sophisticated heavy artillery used, did Cyprus hear our mess directly.

We knew not what was best to do. Should we keep the windows open to release the pressure lest another explosion occur? Is the air polluted and should we therefore keep the windows closed? Some news was circulating that the American University of Beirut Medical Center, warning of toxic air. I checked their website but there was no report of this sort.

We continued calling immediate family and friends and they were all fine, but as we widened our circle of acquaintances, we noticed that not all were fine. Here are some stories.

JAD

One of my friends was in the An-Nahar building, a little more than half a mile away from the epicenter. He was watching the first fires when the gigantic blast occurred. He recounted to me that what he saw was like a surreal Hollywood movie right before his eyes. He saw cars fly in the air and walls and roofs explode and fly up or away, and within a moment he himself flew several feet back. He stood up seconds later to find his colleague, who was standing next to him ten seconds ago, lying flat covered with dust, glass, and, well, blood. He tried to wake her up, and after many attempts, during which he almost lost hope, she regained consciousness.

They tried to escape, but the building was a wreck. The stairs and doors were gone, and fragments of glass were everywhere. Torn, catapulted furniture, buried in dust and debris, blocked their way. After finding his way to his car, which was parked underground, he drove over all sorts of rubble and shattered items like glass, trees, furniture, and stones, all blown underground, in order to get out. In a short while I started texting him and he texted back that his head was bleeding. I phoned him immediately:

-Jad, where are you?
 -I do not know [voice was panting].
 -What do you mean you do not know? What is around you?
 -Somewhere in Ashrafieh (quarter in Beirut) searching for a hospital.
 -Call an ambulance.
 -No one will look at me. Everyone around is more injured than me.
 -Hold on, and I will go to you.
 -You cannot reach. The roads are all blocked

My wife, who had worked as an emergency nurse for years before she turned into a professor of nursing, spoke to him and asked him some specific questions and gave him some tips, such as to compress his bleeding with his shirt.

I thought I could go to him, no matter where he was. I could park my car and continue walking. My wife told me that by the time I reached him he would be in a hospital already. A few days later, he described to me that what he saw was like a movie:

"Imagine everyone around you is wounded. Some are standing and some are on the ground, and, alas, some are probably dead. There is glass, steel and stone on all the streets, and no one knows what is happening, and no one knows where to go. The whole world is dusty and all the streets look the same. You cannot

identify the streets. All you see is chaos and blood."

Jad drove from one over-crowded hospital to another – not to mention the dysfunctional ones – until he called a clinic in the suburb of the city and reached it about an hour after the blast. He had the nerve to escape and drive, but when he reached the clinic, he just broke down. His back was all blood and sprayed with glass shrapnel and he had not yet realized that he had been wounded there.

He told me the following day, "The death toll will reach one thousand. Mark my words." In fact, the death toll has barely reached 200, but there is no doubt that God's great providence saved many lives. Had the explosion occurred during work hours, the number of casualties would have certainly increased exponentially. My wife, for example, had just finished a workshop in the vicinity of the blast exactly one hour before it happened. That building was destroyed, but most of the people had left. Horrific and high as it was, the death toll was considerably lower than what one could have expected. I think Jad's estimates are logical, but God's mercy is above logic.

The phone conversation with Jad was the moment I started to fathom the magnitude of the event. I say "started to," because even then I could not fully apprehend its magnitude.



RONY

All that evening I was worried about my friend Rony, from whom we heard nothing. I had spoken to him a few hours before the explosion, and I knew that he was heading to his office late in the afternoon. We lost all telephone connections with him and his office, which is only half a mile from the epicenter.

Friends confirmed at night that he was alive and in a certain hospital. I called the hospital the next morning and spoke to him briefly. He was still panting. Two days later he was discharged from the hospital and told me his story in some detail.

Rony was a little distant from his office window when the explosion detonated. He flew back and hit a column with his back. Though the column fractured Rony's back, it also saved him by stopping him from falling through what used to be glass panels on the other facade, from the third floor to the ground. "The saints! The saints! The prayers of the saints saved me! They gave me a new life to live!" This is what he told me later.

Rony was able to stand up and he said to himself, "Let me run now that I still have some energy." His only option was the fire escape, but he had no energy to open its door. God sent him some healthy men from the building who kicked the door open. At the ground floor, he faced an unexpected challenge: sheets of glass and metallic elements and flames of fire were noisily splashing left, right, and center like avalanches! How can he exit? He simply put his hands on his head and ran, with the little energy he had left.

"All I need is energy for two hundred yards to the nearest hospital." But that hospital was now out of service. So were the nearest three hospitals. Damage was everywhere, and the most unwanted traffic was building up rapidly, partly because of the damaged cars.

The first few persons he saw in their cars were understandably not so welcoming, as they were badly injured. A Christian man from the southern city of Tyre was sound and healthy and let him in his car. I do not want to romanticize history, but Tyre is the city that resisted Alexander the Great for many months in the Fourth Century BC, and, a few centuries later, welcomed our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It was in its vicinity that the Syrophoenician women's perseverance won a healing from Christ (Mark 7).

Rony's adrenaline rush ended there, and he lost his energy completely in the Tyrean man's car. Tyreans are resilient. Rony and his new friend searched one hospital after another amidst the unbearable traffic. Their phones were damaged, but they finally borrowed

a phone and that is how they were guided to another hospital many miles away. I asked Rony about the damage he saw from the car, and to my surprise, his answer was that he barely remembered anything from the moment he got into the Tyrean's car. As soon as they reached the hospital, it overflowed with patients.

JOE

Joe has been my friend since we were both ten years old. On the morning of the explosion he crossed my mind, so I called him and he invited me to his wine and cigar shop. Fortunately, I declined this invitation. There is a nice corner in his shop with couches, where his visitors can sit for a chat or a drink. The glass wall facing the couches, with all the loaded shelves of wine by the wall, flew in a thousand little pieces, tearing the couches apart. A friend of Joe's was parking his car to visit him at the moment of the big explosion. It was the perfect timing. Had Joe's friend arrived a moment earlier, they would have both been on the couches. Had the friend been late, no one would have entered the shop anytime soon to search for Joe and drive him to the hospital to treat his injuries, as his friend did.

MY WIFE

An hour or so after the blast, my wife decided to volunteer at a hospital close to the blast where she teaches nursing. After our son had fallen asleep (it took him longer than usual as he sensed something was not right), she went and then returned many hours later.

It was not the blood and wounds that shocked her, as she had served as an emergency nurse for a long time both in Lebanon and abroad. What shocked her were two things: the intensity of the damage on the streets, and the seemingly endless flood of patients coming in. The hospital quickly ran out of beds, so consequently a great number of patients were asked to lie down on the floor. They soon were short of basic medical supplies.

The hospital no longer had closed windows or doors, and much of the interior ceiling was on the floor. Glass was all over the place. My wife was surprised to see a number of staffers from another hospital walk in for treatment; it turned out that they were wounded in their own hospitals, which, alas, had ceased to function.

With tears she conveyed to me the story of a man who came in carrying his little daughter, both of them soaked in blood. What touched my wife the most was how the father covered his daughter's eyes to prevent her from seeing the many wounded persons.

OTHER STORIES

The above stories happened to people I know.

There are many other stories that I have heard that happened to people my friends or family know. I will only report on three such stories briefly.

FAITH IN THE DIVINE PRESENCE

A lady was driving her car when the blast blew her car up like a leaf in a storm and dropped it on the street upside down. Whoever saw the car said that no living person would get out of this car, and yet she did. After receiving something like 450 stitches, she said that in the moment her car was in the air, she felt our Lord Jesus Christ's presence in an intense and inexplicable way, carrying her personally in His hands, and she was at peace. I was told that her family was alarmed at the peace that has been radiating from her since the event.

HOPE IN NEW DRAGON-SLAYERS

The oldest Lebanese hospital in Beirut is Saint George Hospital, founded by the Orthodox Church in 1878 and managed by her since. The hospital's share of destruction was sizable, and it closed.

One of the babies born in the hospital within an hour after the blast, that is, born at a closed hospital to traumatized parents, was reported on the BBC and got noteworthy attention. The parents named their newborn son "George," a name common among Christians in Lebanon. One of the narratives of the hagiography of the child's patron, Saint George, claims that it was there, literally a few yards away from the blast, that the third-century saint slew the dragon, representing the evil oppression over the innocents in the city.

Perhaps little George, along with other children from his generation, will grow up one day to slay Beirut's corruption that led to this devastating blast and impending economic and political collapse. Perhaps they, like St. George, will bring a brighter chapter to the city's history.

LOVE IN HUMILITY

Another, distinctly generous story involves a friend of mine. He collected some money and searched for the humblest, most damaged house he could find in one area. He saw an old man there standing under the lintel of a door where absolutely nothing remained of his house except for his threshold. After a cordial conversation with the old man, my friend gave him the envelope gently and politely. The old man opened the envelope, smiled, and gave it back, saying that their neighbor on the other side of the building has children, and was in greater need than he was.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The last three of the stories are, respectively, true stories of faith, hope and love. As Saint Paul puts it, "and now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Indeed, nothing else remains in this city. One homeless man said, "I had the street to sleep on, but now even the street I do not have!" This is a truly indicative statement. Before the blast, the economic situation in Lebanon was already very bad. People were not given back their money from the banks because the money is no longer, for the most part, there.

Lebanon pays a third of its taxes for the interest on the National Debt. The Corona pandemic was of no help at all, and now came this catastrophe, damaging 300,000 homes. If someone pays Lebanon, at this moment, 5 billion dollars in cash – a thing that will never happen – to reconstruct after the blast, Lebanon would only go back to where it was a few weeks ago, which was already a desperate situation.

Until the Sixth Century, Beirut was a center of jurisprudence in Roman law, and was called, "The Mother of Law." But there were catastrophes of nature, an earthquake and tsunamis, that wiped out that historic ascendance. If law harmonizes societies, catastrophes disintegrate them. The Mother of Law has, unfortunately, degraded herself to become the mother of explosions, not just this summer, but over the past decades.

Recorded by American military historians as the deadliest single-day explosion since World War II, surpassing records in Vietnam, two suicide truck bombers struck buildings in Beirut in 1983, killing 307 persons, including 220 US Marines. Two Lebanese Presidents and one Prime Minister have been assassinated by explosions, not to mention the many politicians and citizens who also died concurrently.

One can only hope that, like the earthquake and tsunamis that wiped out an advanced city for hundreds of years, this last blast will serve as a reckoning on which to rebuild a firmer foundation of social and political justice rooted in faith, hope and love.

Tony E. Nasralla is a Subdeacon in the Antiochian Orthodox Church in Lebanon, instructor of Civilization Studies at the American University of Beirut, and a Ph.D. candidate at L'université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth.

The author is grateful to Dr. Beverly Questad for her editing and input to this article.



THE EUCHARISTIC CHANGE

ACCORDING TO THE ORTHODOX LITURGICAL TRADITION

V. Rev. Fr. Patrick B. O'Grady

WHAT TAKES PLACE IN THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST AT ITS CLIMACTIC MOMENT, THE CONSECRATION ITSELF, THE *EPIKLĒSIS* (THE *INVOCATION* OF THE HOLY SPIRIT), IN WHICH THE CELEBRANT CALLS DOWN THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BRING ABOUT THE EUCHARISTIC CHANGE, THUS MAKING POSSIBLE THE ACT OF HOLY COMMUNION IN THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST?

This article presents a reply to that question without using the language of ecumenical dialogue or analogies. Our Orthodox tradition emphasizes the awesome profundity of the sacred mystery accomplished in the Divine Liturgy. How might reflection on these verities contribute to our holy faith, deepen our hope, and perfect our love for God and God's love in us?

Let's rule out certain analogies, or patterns of thought which some like to use in explaining the Eucharistic change. One such analogy is the "union of natures," as expressed in the christological "definition" (*óros*) of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod held in Chalcedon (A.D. 451). In this union of natures, Christ Himself is truly God and truly man, with those two natures "unconfused, indivisible, inseparable, and without change." (This last ascription asserts that each nature remains what it is, even after the union of these divine and human natures in one and the same person, our Lord Jesus Christ.) In the proposed analogy, in a similar way the consecrated holy bread and wine remain what they are, that is, creatures (the nature of the bread and the wine remain intact) while becoming, in the Eucharist, what they were not, the Body and Blood of Christ. It is not customary, however, for the Orthodox Church to use this christological category to explain the Eucharist. When the bread becomes the Body of Christ, this is not

a repeat of the incarnation; there is no hypostatic (that is, personal) union between Christ and the bread that occurs in the Eucharist. Christ has not appeared as man again in the bread. The incarnation was a unique event, quite unrepeatable. So the use of the Chalcedonian definition as a means of explaining the matter constitutes a misstep.

Another mode of explaining the Eucharistic change is through symbolism. This approach denies that any real change is effected in the consecrated Bread and Wine; they remain what they were before. Now this requires some care to tease out. In early centuries, before the Church had perfected the rule of faith, the concept of *symbol* was put to use here and there to explain the relationship of the bread and wine to the Body and Blood of Christ. The primitive authors who used the word *symbol* had in mind what we might call a *mysteriological identity*. These are my own words, but they are based upon the language of St. Maximos the Confessor (7th Century), the chief Father of the Sixth Ecumenical Synod. By *mysteriological identity*, we mean that the mystery (the sacrament) truly imparts what it proclaims and represents in a sensible way. St. Maximos speaks of the Eucharist in this way: *The mystery (of the Eucharist) transforms those who partake in a worthy manner into itself and, by grace and participation, renders them similar to the One*

(God) *Who is good as the cause of everything that is good* (On the Ecclesiastical Mystagogy, 21 and 24). In general, St. Maximos wrote, *the archetypal mysteries are represented... through sensible symbols* (Mystagogy, 24). Now, after St. Maximos, the primitive use of *symbol* with the meaning of mysteriological identity could be employed only rarely. The word *symbol* in its conventional meaning in this context indicates that the bread and wine are merely *signs* for the divine reality itself, rather than the *reality* veiled in materiality (that is, in St. Maximos' words, the sensible symbol representing the archetypal mystery). So, we must be extremely careful with the idea of symbol.

Can we explain the Eucharist by the theological distinction established between God in His essence and God in His energies? This has been attempted as well. This essence-energy distinction was worked out by St. Gregory (Palamas) the Wonderworker, based upon the patristic and ascetical tradition, in order to ground the truth of direct experience of God to the monks. St. Gregory's detractors had claimed that the Athonites were subject to psychosomatic experiences only and mocked them as "navel-gazers." But as important as the Palamite doctrine is in establishing the experience of God in the holy ascetics, there is no place for it in discussion of the mysteriological change effected in the bread and wine at the Eucharist. Those who employ this mode of speaking like to speak of the symbolic ("putting together") conjunction of the material bread and wine with the very Body and Blood of Christ. This conjunction is to be thought of as a kind of permeation of the bread and wine with the uncreated energies of God. This would mean that there would be what the theologians call *an energetic union* of the bread with the Body of Christ. By so doing, one may find himself in a position to deny that any change takes place to the bread and the wine presented at the Eucharist. Instead, one would attribute the entire change *to the faithful* who commune. This does not stand, however, as we shall see next, because it is precisely a *change* in the elements themselves which our liturgical tradition itself indicates.

The language of the Divine Liturgy itself is quite clear in expressing the truth that a profound change takes place in the mystery (sacrament). Consider the following citations from our liturgical tradition, "Send down this, thine all-holy Spirit ... upon us and upon these holy gifts set forth ... sanctify this bread and make it the holy Body of Christ ... and this cup, the precious Blood of Christ" (Liturgy of St. James). "That thy Holy Spirit may descend upon us and upon these gifts ... and bless them and sanctify them and show this bread to be itself the

precious Body of our Lord ... and this cup to be itself the precious Blood of our Lord ..." (Liturgy of St. Basil the Great). "Send down thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts set forth and make this bread the precious Body of thy Christ and that which is in this chalice the precious Blood of thy Christ, *changing* (literally, "having changed") them by thy Holy Spirit." In all these citations, we see the Eucharistic doctrine of our Church quite clearly. The celebrant, acting *in persona Christi*, that is, as the very hands and mouth of Christ, invokes the Holy Spirit upon the gathered faithful, the people of God, as well as upon the presented bread and wine. The bread and wine are "trans-made" (as St. Sophrony of Essex called it) and become the Body and Blood of Christ. There is no language of infusion of energies. St. Nicholas Cabasilas writes (*Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, 27), the gifts "after having received His most holy and all-powerful Spirit (are) transformed – the bread into His holy Body, the wine into His precious and sacred Blood." Without any further treatment, we are presented with nothing else than the very Body and Blood of Christ. St. Nicholas again: "The whole sacred rite is accomplished, the offerings are consecrated, the sacrifice is complete; the splendid Victim, the divine Oblation, slain for the salvation of the world, lies upon the altar." St. Basil does indeed employ the term *antitype* in reference to the pre-consecrated bread and wine in his anaphora-prayer. This word is roughly synonymous with the narrowly considered meaning of "symbol" but St. Basil intended the word *antitypes* to refer to the bread and wine *before* the consecration, not after the change. This is a very important distinction. After the Eucharist, there are no longer antitypes before us. Someone has suggested that the *symbol* denotes the eucharistic mystery as "the divine energies ... most intensely present in Christ's deified humanity, which we receive as his Body and Blood." As I read this, I am reminded of a species of medieval transubstantiation, called "consubstantiation." This was an early Protestant adaptation of the Roman Catholic scholastic doctrine of transubstantiation. Those who adopt a symbolic language about the Eucharist run the risk of promoting a Protestant view of the Eucharist. There is no "infusion"; there is a *change*, according to our language. We reject the mechanical view of transubstantiation, as crafted by the medieval scholastics, namely, that the bread changes in substance but not in appearance, following Aristotle's categories. As well, we reject the mere alignment of the divine with the bread as suggested by symbolism. Just as we rejected a *hypostatic* union, as explained above – there is not a new

incarnation taking place at the Eucharist – so here we also reject an *energetic* union in the Eucharistic change: the bread is not energized by the divine.

One holy Father who treated the Eucharist with great discretion in his writings, St. Nicholas Cabasilas (13th Century) is quite clear in his expressions. Nowhere in his profound exegesis of the Eucharist, as far as I can tell, does St. Nicholas employ the essence – energies distinction to elucidate the eucharistic change, nor indeed does he employ any other analogy. Cabasilas was a younger contemporary of St. Gregory Palamas and is considered as fully in accord with Palamas in his theology and hesychastic outlook. Had Cabasilas considered the essence-energies distinction to be suitable in addressing the eucharistic mystery, he surely would have done so. Cabasilas asserted that after the consecration “there is no longer bread” but rather “the true Victim, the most holy Body of the Lord, which really suffered the outrages, insults and blows”

Some find it difficult to assert simply that a change has occurred to the elements of bread and wine “in an unspeakable manner” because they fear it will sound like medieval transubstantiation. The efficacy of Holy Communion in the mysteries of Christ, however, does not in the end devolve upon the piety of the lay communicant himself or herself, but rather on Christ Himself whom the communicant receives, *into all my joints, my reins and my heart* (Post-Communion Prayer of St. Symeon Metaphrastēs). If this were not so, we would not commune infants. In fact, Holy Communion brings about a profound change in the communicant, as well. The act of reception of Holy Communion purifies, illumines, and deifies the communicants. Most often, our liturgical tradition speaks of *illumination*. Deification is very seldom mentioned in our eucharistic tradition. The first mention of deification can be seen in the seventh pre-communion prayer of St. Symeon the New Theologian: “Everyone that eateth and drinketh of thee in sincerity of heart is enlivened and deified.” After this, St. Symeon mentions “the divine and deifying graces” and “thy deifying words.” There is then the *troparion* to be said immediately before communing: “Shudder, O man ...” in which very moving references to deification are expressed. This very recent *troparion*¹ is usually omitted in our printed books, however, along with a few others leaving us with the now traditional (and older) three: “I believe, O Lord ...”; “Of thy mystical supper ...”; and “Not unto judgment nor unto condemnation” To be sure, St. Maximos does point to deification among the other fruits of Holy Communion: *He will make us*

into Himself (*Mystagogy*, 21). The traditional states of Christian perfection, purification, illumination, and deification are all accomplished by the same purifying, illumining, and deifying divine grace which is at work in the faithful: reception of Holy Communion purifies the repentant sinner, illumines the faithful, and deifies the perfect. Deification is the end-result of a profound exchange, involving every aspect of a man. In point of fact, our liturgical tradition stemming from the oldest period known to us speaks more consistently of *illumination* or *enlightenment*. The faithful are *enlightened*, if they receive Holy Communion with a clear conscience. It is enough to cite the pre-communion tradition: “May the live coal of thy Body be unto enlightenment for me who am darkened”; “May I be sanctified in soul and body, O Master; may I be enlightened ...”; and “May thy most precious Body and Blood, O my Saviour, be for me as fire and light, burning the substance of sin, kindling the thorns of my passions, and wholly enlightening me to worship thy divinity” (Pre-communion canon, Λ, Ψ, Ω). As for the pre-communion prayers themselves, it is enough to cite the second one (of St. Basil) and the third one (of St. John Chrysostom), respectively: “Let these holy gifts be for me unto healing, purification, enlightenment, protection, salvation and sanctification of soul and body ...” and “Let the fiery coal of thine all-holy Body and precious Blood be for me unto sanctification, enlightenment and strengthening of my lowly soul and body” The reader will note the similarity of language with both of these holy Fathers.

At the invocation (*epiklēsis*), the climax of the Eucharist, the priest invokes the Holy Spirit to change the gifts. The Greek word is *metaballō*, literally, “to turn [it] into something else” – *change* in a way which is beyond expression. What is the result of this sacred, consecratory *metabolism*? It is stated succinctly by the celebrant immediately after the invocation: “That to those who partake, they may be unto vigilance of soul, unto forgiveness of sins, unto communion of thy Holy Spirit, unto the fullness of the kingdom of heaven and unto confidence toward thee, not unto judgment nor unto condemnation.”

May we all find ourselves at the homeland of our hearts’ desire, as expressed by these sacred words! As we say to begin the post-communion prayers, as profoundly moved is the sacred communicant who inscribed them for us: “Glory to thee, O God! Glory to thee, O God! Glory to thee, O God!”

V. Rev. Fr. Patrick B. O’Grady, Pastor
St. Peter the Apostle Church, Pomona, California
and Assistant Professor of Liturgical Theology
Antiochian House of Studies

1. These *troparia* are to be said by the clergy together “as they hold the holy Body in their hands,” as indicated in manuscripts of the 16th through 18th centuries. See Trempela, *The Three Liturgies*, pp. 140–141.

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR ONLINE NATIONAL ADVANCED LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Registration is now open for the Fourth Annual National Advanced Leadership Conference. Held exclusively online this year, the event runs September 18–19, 2020. It is hosted by the Orthodox Christian Leadership Initiative and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary.

The conference aims to unite the body of Christ to serve those divided by pandemics, politics, and persecutions. Showcasing the pan-Orthodox *Intensive Program in Servant Leadership*, participants will be introduced to the principles, disciplines, and tools of servant leadership, which equip clergy and laity to work together and thrive in the communities they serve. Topics covered include Foundations of Servant Leadership, Creating Effective Ministry Teams, Cultivating Vision and Change, and Inspiring Generosity and Stewardship. Additional presentations will touch on Emotional Intelligence, Solving Complex Problems with Diverse Teams, and Facilitating Small Group Discussions. Leaders and emerging leaders who serve the local parish, diocese, or related non-profits are encouraged to register at <https://www.orthodoxservantleaders.com/national-conference.html>.

"This is a great opportunity for clergy and laity to come together, to collaborate, to learn from each other, to reduce the isolation that we face, and to really think outside of the box, even during this pandemic, so that we can work together across jurisdictions, in our cities and at diocesan levels as well," said Hollie Benton, the Executive Director of OCLI, during an interview with Bobby Maddex on Ancient Faith Radio.

Speakers at the conference include Rev. Dr. Sergius Halvorsen, Dr. Katherine Kahn, Rev. Dr. James Katinas, Dr. Al Rossi, and Dr. John Mark Reynolds. You can view the full line-up of presenters at <https://www.orthodoxservantleaders.com/national-conference.html>. Event attendees will also be honored by the presence of Metropolitan JOSEPH, Archbishop ELPIDOPHOROS, Metropolitan TIKHON, and Metropolitan NICOLAË, who will gather together in a hierarchy panel discussion to address the need for servant leader-



ship in North America.

Founded in Scripture and the teachings of the Orthodox faith, servant leadership is an essential blueprint for all those practicing leadership in the church. "This is a way in which we're able to come together and be honest, to rethink, reset, so we're doing a better job of service," said Rev. Dr. Chad Hatfield, President of St. Vladimir's Seminary. "Jesus himself says 'I am among you as One who serves.'"

Visit the website to learn more and to register at (<https://www.orthodoxservantleaders.com/national-conference.html>). The online conference will take an asynchronous approach: registrants will have access to over ten presentations before and after the gathering, so that our time together online is optimized with interactive discussion, virtual break-out rooms, and thoughtful Q&A opportunities.

Hollie Benton, Executive Director

The Orthodox Christian Leadership Initiative (OCLI) exists to nurture and empower Orthodox Christian servant leadership. It is a national initiative to increase generosity, servant leadership, and social outreach by clergy and laity of all jurisdictions, working together nationally, regionally, and locally.



St. Elizabeth, Grand Duchess of Russia

Fr. Daniel Daly



On the second of June, 1884, a twenty-year-old Lutheran princess from the small Duchy of Hesse-Darmstadt, rode in the gilded coach of Catherine the Great. The coach was entering St. Petersburg, the capitol of the Russian Empire. Her name was Elizabeth. At her side was the wife of the Tsar. Elizabeth was in route to be married to Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, the brother of Tsar Alexander III. She was about to become part of the Romanov family which ruled the vast Russian empire, stretching from Poland to Alaska. Her entrance was triumphant. She was welcomed by the crowds who came out to see her. On the next day she would be married to the prince whom she loved. Everything that the world could offer was waiting for this beautiful young woman. The world was at her feet. She was now to become Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia. Who would think that her husband would be assassinated twenty years later, and that she would be the foundress of an Orthodox monastery, be martyred by the Bolsheviks, and be canonized as a saint of the Orthodox Church. Grand Duchess Elizabeth Fedorovna was a remarkable woman in every way. St. Elizabeth is one of the great saints of the Twentieth Century.¹

THE BIRTH OF ELIZABETH

Elizabeth was born on November 1, 1864, (or October 20, Old Calendar) in the city of Darmstadt, in present-day Germany.² Her father was Grand Duke Louis IV of Hesse-Darmstadt. Her mother was Princess Alice the daughter of Queen Victoria of England. Her parents had been brought together by the Queen.

The marriage of her parents was overshadowed by two sorrowful events in the year 1861. Queen Victoria's mother died on March 16th. Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria and the father of Princess Alice, died on December 14 of the same year. The wedding of Princess Alice and Grand Duke Louis, which was held in the following July, was described by Queen Victoria as more of a funeral than a wedding.

Known by her family as "Ella," Elizabeth was the second of seven children. She was baptized Elizabeth, named after St. Elizabeth, a well-known saint from Hungary, who was one of the ancestors of her father's family. Elizabeth admitted that she was strongly influenced by the life and deeds of her patron saint.³

Her mother Princess Alice was a lifelong example to Elizabeth. She, who had cared for her parents, continued her works of charity in Darmstadt. Each Saturday she and her children visited the sick in the

local hospital. Princess Alice was very solicitous for the people of the Duchy. She supported the Duchy with her own funds and those of her husband. She cared for the wounded of the war with Prussia as well as the war with France. The hospital founded by Princess Alice remains in Darmstadt. Her life of charity had a lasting impression on Elizabeth. Although the children of a Duke and Princess, Elizabeth and her siblings were required to care for their own rooms.

Elizabeth was privately tutored. An indication of her intelligence can be noted in a letter she wrote to Queen Victoria at the age of 17. "You asked me what I have been reading lately. In German I am reading Schiller's 30 years' war & then Grimm's Lectures about Goethe. In French extracts of different stories & in English two books Uncle Bertie (later King Edward VII of England) sent Irene and me at Xmas, Sense & Sensibility & Mansfield Park by miss Austin."⁴ It would be a rare high school student today who could read three languages.

Her biographer Lubov Millar states that as a child "she displayed a complete absence of selfishness, always trying to please others, frequently at her own expense. She never criticized, never blamed others, rather tried to find excuses for their misdeeds."⁵ Her many letters to Queen Victoria and other family members are very revealing of her personality.

The life of nobility in 1878 may sound idyllic, but nothing could protect them from the tragedies that befell other families. Her brother Frederick fell to his death from a window at the age of three. His death devastated his mother. In 1878 the epidemic of diphtheria took the life of her mother and her three-year-old sister Mary. This was a tragedy for both Elizabeth and her grandmother. Elizabeth made a number of trips to England where she stayed with her grandmother whom she dearly loved. Queen Victoria took an interest in the welfare of her grandchildren, particularly in their marriages. This was certainly true in the case of Elizabeth. Elizabeth was a very beautiful young woman with a sense of humor. Her attractiveness made her a much sought-after bride. Her beauty was a topic of discussion throughout her life. Grand Duke Alexander described her as possessing "a rare beauty, extraordinary intellect, fine sense of humor, angelic patience, a noble heart"⁶ Millar notes that she was not photogenic.⁷ Unfortunately, the photos taken of the

various royal family members are all very serious. No one smiles.

Elizabeth came from a very large extended family. Queen Victoria had 42 grandchildren. The Darmstadt family was often visited by young men of nobility. According to the archives of her father Louis, approaches were made by at least six princes for her hand.⁸ And there were more. Among them was the son of her aunt Victoria, who was the wife of the German Emperor, Wilhelm. This was "Willy," who was to become Kaiser Wilhelm. Wilhelm fell in love with his beautiful cousin when she was only eleven years old. He was not to be her choice, which he resented very much.

Another frequent visitor was Marie Alexandrovna, wife of Tsar Alexander II, who was also of the family of Hesse Darmstadt. The Empress brought her two young sons, Paul and Serge. Elizabeth and Serge knew each other since childhood. He was no stranger to Elizabeth. He too sought her hand in marriage. After two proposals, she accepted his proposal.

Throughout his life Serge was a controversial person. To many he seemed aloof and distant, but those who were close to him knew that he was innately shy. He was a deeply religious man who loved music and literature. He was also a staunch monarchist.

Although she eventually consented to the marriage, Queen Victoria was troubled by her choice of a prince. Russia was in turmoil. She feared for the safety of her granddaughter. Tragically, her anxieties were confirmed in 1918.

MARRIAGE

In early June 1892, the entire Hesse family set out from Darmstadt for Russia, a journey of over 1,400 miles. "At the end of their long journey, the glorious rococo palace of *Peterhof* on the shores of the Gulf of Finland, some twenty miles from St. Petersburg was Ella's first and most memorable experience of Romanov magnificence."⁹ It was built as the *Russian Versailles*. At the Peterhof railway station they were met by Serge, along with the Tsar Alexander III and Empress Marie Feodorovna. On June 14, Elizabeth made her state entrance to the





city. As described above, Elizabeth was welcomed to the Russian capitol in grand style. The following day was her wedding day.

The ceremony for dressing brides for royal Russian weddings was strictly regulated by fixed rules.¹⁰ Even the Empress played an important role in the preparations, arranging the hair of the bride. After her bridal veil of white lace was put on the bride, Elizabeth was crowned with the Romanov nuptial bridal crown. The crown consisted of 320 large diamonds and 1,200 smaller ones.¹¹ One of her ladies in waiting remarked that Elizabeth was “dazzling ... the most beautiful bride ever to be seen in the Palace Chapel.” Passing through the state rooms of the palace, filled with royal guests and members of the diplomatic corps, Elisabeth entered the chapel and took her place beside Grand Duke Serge. Members of the Russian, German and British royal families filled the chapel. Elizabeth and Serge were married in the traditional Orthodox service by the Metropolitan. Because Elizabeth was still a Lutheran, a Protestant service followed in one of the state rooms. It was at this time that her twelve-year-old sister Alix met the future Tsar Nicholas II, whom she would later marry with the encouragement of Elizabeth.


Their honeymoon was to be at Ilyinskoe, an estate some 25 miles from Moscow. En route the newlyweds stopped in Moscow, where they visited the palaces and churches. Elisabeth was captivated by this ancient city. Staying in the Kremlin, they visited a number of monasteries; the favorite of Serge was the 14th-century Holy Trinity Monastery of St. Sergius of Radonezh. This monastery is regarded as the first cloister in Russia. The Kremlin itself was the home of at least four cathedrals, the ancient Trudov Monastery, as well as the imperial

palaces.

From Moscow the newlyweds journeyed to Ilyinskoe, a 2,400 acre estate given to Serge by his mother. Ilyinskoe became the favorite residence of Elizabeth. It was here that she discovered the extreme poverty of the local Russian people.¹² Although on her honeymoon, she sought ways of helping the people. She was especially concerned for the women who had little care in the birth of their babies. Serge would later build a maternity clinic for the women of Ilyinskoe and the surrounding area. Her care for the sick and suffering would remain with her until the end of her life.

In the early years of their marriage, Serge's obligations as the brother of the Tsar as well as his military duties took much of his time. From birth he held the military rank of Colonel of an infantry regiment. He held several military appointments. Eventually he became the Major General commanding a regiment founded by Peter the Great.

As his wife, Elizabeth had social obligations that one can only imagine. She was born part of an exceptionally large family. As the granddaughter of Queen Victoria, she had 41 first cousins, who were princes and princesses of royal houses throughout Europe. In Darmstadt and later in Russia, these relations were regular visitors. As a member of the Romanov family, she was obligated to host members of the royal family. This involved, dinners, balls, and concerts. As the “first lady” of Moscow, her obligations were greater. Her biographer notes, “The Grand Duchess's charming smile, her warmth and simplicity of manners, at once won popular affection, and what was a much-admired center of attention. With her fine sense of humor and contagious laughter, she created an atmosphere of light-hearted ease and dispelled any constraint. According to



her brother Ernest, she knew how to describe various incidents with such comic wit that she was irresistible. Men admired her, but some of the ladies were jealous of her success The Grand Duchess was good dancer and, moreover, had a fine taste and gift for choosing the right clothes.”¹³

CONVERSION TO ORTHODOXY

Unlike her sister Alix, who became the wife of Tsar Nicholas II, Elizabeth was not obligated to become Orthodox. From her childhood she was a devoted Christian. As Serge’s wife, she accompanied him to the many Orthodox services. Certainly, the beautiful churches of Russia made a powerful impression on her. Serge never forced her in any way to accept his faith. From the beginning of her married life she was attracted to Orthodoxy. Her desire to receive the Eucharist became very strong. Eventually she asked for books about the Orthodox faith. One event was very important in the process of her conversion: a trip to Jerusalem.

Many Russian people visited the Holy Land. Serge had already been part of the establishment of an agency to assist the pilgrims. In the autumn of 1888, Serge was asked by the Tsar to represent him at the consecration of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene which had been built on the slopes of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The church had been built in honor of their mother Empress Marie Alexandrovna. The Empress was also the grand aunt of Elizabeth. After a pilgrimage through Kiev, Constantinople, Smyrna, Ephesus, Beirut and Damascus, the couple arrived in Palestine. After visiting Nazareth and Mt. Tabor, the couple entered Jerusalem on September 28. Their first visit was to the Tomb of the Holy Sepulchre. She would later write to her brother of the great joy she experienced by being at the site of the death and resurrection of Christ. The final part of their pilgrimage was to the Church of St. Mary Magdalene for its consecration. It was here that her life changed. “Her visit to the Holy Land and all that it had said and meant to her was arguably the moment when all those thoughts crystallized and she took her first step towards embracing what she would come to regard as ‘the true faith.’”¹⁴ She has said to have told her family that she would like to be buried in this church when she died. This wish would come true in unexpected and tragic ways.

One of the heartaches that Elizabeth had to

bear was the sadness of her father when she finally told him of her intention of become Orthodox. He could not understand why she would make this momentous choice. He also objected to the marriage of his youngest daughter Alix to the future Tsar Nicholas II, again on religious grounds. Queen Victoria, however, was more understanding and did not object to Elizabeth’s actions. She was chrismated on Saturday the 25th of April, 1891, which was the day before Palm Sunday, known to the Orthodox as Lazarus Saturday. This took place in the chapel of the Sergeivsky Palace.¹⁵

MOSCOW

In 1891 the world of Elizabeth changed dramatically. Her husband Serge was appointed by his brother as the Governor of Moscow. Two personal tragedies also marked her life. Her sister-in-law, the wife of Serge’s brother Paul, died in childbirth. Her father suffered a stroke and died in Darmstadt. Elizabeth and Serge became the foster parents of the two children of Paul, the newborn boy and his sister. Paul married a divorced commoner. He was forced to leave Russia and his children. Divorces were not as common as they are today.¹⁶

From 1891 until 1905 Serge and Elizabeth lived in Moscow. History has been critical of Serge, especially in his role in the expulsion of the Jews from Moscow. Elizabeth’s reaction can be found in her letter to her brother, in which she stated, “I cannot believe that we will not be judged in some way for this in the future. He (Serge) believes this is our security, I see nothing in it but shame.”¹⁷ During his fourteen years as Governor, Serge sponsored many charitable organizations. He would go incognito in the city to see firsthand the quality of life of the people. Elizabeth devoted her time to works of charity. One of her first challenges was the famine in which 400,000 people died of starvation.¹⁸ “She committed herself to organizations that reflected her concerns for the welfare of the poor, for orphans and children in need, for the sick, for prison welfare and for education.”¹⁹

THE ASSASSINATION OF SERGE

In July of 1904, Serge wrote a letter to his brother the Tsar which reveals the state of life in Moscow at that time. “We are living through terribly difficult times, and the enemies within are a thousand times more dangerous than those outside.”²⁰

1. In his biography of St. Elizabeth, Christopher Warwick made the decision to make his book "her story" and not to enter into the very involved history of the Romanov family and the Russian revolution. It is my intention to follow this approach in this article.
2. Grand Duchess Elizabeth Fedorovna of Russia was called "Ella" by her family. We in Orthodoxy know her as St. Elizabeth. With respect to this saint, and for the sake of simplicity, I will use her baptismal name Elizabeth in this article.
3. Lubov Millar, *Grand Duchess Elizabeth* (Richfield Springs, New York: Nikodemus Orthodox Publication Society, 1991), p. 25.
4. Christopher Warwick, *The Life and Death of Ella Grand Duchess of Russia*, (first published as *Ella, Princess, Saint and Martyr*, John Wiley and Sons; this edition published by Albert Bridge Books, 2014), p. 47.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
10. Millar, p. 32.
11. Warwick, p. 115.
12. Elizabeth was very much the daughter of her mother Princess Alice. Her mother regularly visited the wounded soldiers from the Seven Weeks War with Prussia. She founded a special asylum for mentally ill people. She founded what would be known as the "Alice Frauenverein," dedicated to recruiting and training nurses. She was an advocate of women's rights, and the improvement of the lives of poor women and girls. The Alice

The greatest tragedy of Elizabeth's life occurred on February 4, 1905. Serge was leaving the Kremlin in his carriage. Ivan Kalyev, a 27-year-old revolutionary, hurled a bomb as the carriage emerged through the Nikoklskaya Gate of the Kremlin. Thrown from only four feet away, the bomb hit the Grand Duke directly. He was killed instantly. Hearing the blast, Elizabeth left her quarters and ran to the bloody scene. She insisted on picking up the remains of her husband and placing them on the stretcher. His remains were taken into the Kremlin to the Alexei Chapel of the Chudov monastery, where the prayers for the dead were intoned. Elizabeth knelt beside the stretcher for the service. Two days later Elizabeth visited Kalyev in prison. The meeting was private, but it seems that her hope was to bring the murderer to repentance. He was hanged shortly after. The state funeral of Serge was held on February 10th. His body was placed in a burial vault beneath the church of St. Alexi in the Chudov monastery. Elizabeth had a cross erected on the site of the assassination of her husband. Lenin personally pulled the cross down. Stalin later had the Chudov monastery blown up. In 1990 the vault containing Serge's remains was discovered and they taken to The Cathedral of the Archangel.

Serge was a man who enjoyed all the wealth, power, and privilege that the world could offer. Elizabeth was equally privileged. Yet in one moment it meant nothing. In an instant her life changed in every way imaginable. In the days following the death of her husband, Elizabeth made changes in her life that revealed the path she would take in the coming years. She never ate meat for the rest of her life. Her living quarters were changed. The ornate furniture was removed. The walls were painted white. Only icons and a cross remained. Elizabeth was on the path to the monastic life.

1904-1918

In 1904 Russia entered into war with Japan. At the same time, the upheavals caused by the various revolutionary groups were breaking down the fabric of life throughout Russia. Elizabeth was aware of what was happening in Russia. She wrote to her brother Ernest, "All is going from worse to worse without any illusion of better times coming for months. We are in the revolution. What turns all will take nobody knows as the government is so week (sic)...We feel physically well and have

good nerves and don't think of moving – nothing will make me leave this place I will live and die here."²¹

THE VISION OF ELIZABETH

We do not know when Elizabeth decided to found the institution that would involve her for the remainder of her life, but by 1908 she began to plan. Since her childhood and throughout her life in Russia, Elizabeth saw the importance of caring for those in want.

The Gospel imperative of feeding the hungry and caring for the sick was part of her whole life, but in the aftermath of her husband's death, a second vocation called her. Elizabeth was drawn to the monastic life. Could these two lives be brought together? Russian women monastics were not involved in things beyond their monastery. Elizabeth knew that this was not the case in the Catholic Church in the west. She also was attracted to the restoration of the order of deacons for women. The name she chose for her monastery reveals the ideal she was searching for: St. Martha and Mary. Elizabeth wished to create an institution that was an intermediary between a monastery and a hospital. And this she achieved. After an extended struggle, she received the approval of the Holy Synod, with the support of the Tsar who understood the importance of what she was doing.

By selling her collection of jewels, Elizabeth bought an estate across the Moscow River. From the four existing buildings she created a hospital, a clinic, a soup kitchen, a residence for the sisters, a chapel and an orphanage for girls. She accepted widows and unmarried women from 21 to 40 years of age. They were trained by doctors to be hard-working nurses. She began with six sisters, and within a year there were thirty. And on April 9, 1910, seventeen sisters, including Elizabeth, were tonsured as sisters.²²

With the help of the best doctors in Moscow she created the best hospital in Moscow. The outpatient clinic was served by 34 doctors each week. The doctors and surgeons worked free-of-charge. In 1913 more than ten thousand patients were treated in the clinic.

Unlike the case with modern philanthropists, the charity of Elizabeth was literally "hands on." She personally assisted in the care of the patients. She helped in the surgery with the doctors. She cared for the sickest patients and was there for their

deaths. Her very presence was a source of healing and comfort. But both in the hospital and in public she tried to remain anonymous. And yet she received all who came to the monastery. Although she kept the hospital small and served the poor, the Moscow hospitals sent her their most ill patients. In addition, her sisters made countless home visits to people in the city.

The year 1917 changed everything in Russia. The Bolsheviks were on the winning side of the revolution. Tsar Nicholas abdicated in March, 1917. The Provisional Government fell on November 7. The future was now in the hands of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. The hostilities came to the very door of the Martha and Mary Monastery.

At first the convent was respected by the Bolsheviks. Supplies came to the hospital. During her final year Elizabeth had several opportunities to leave Russia. She would not leave her sisters and her monastery. Several days after Pascha, on April 27, 1918, the dreaded Chekists arrived to arrest her. After given thirty minutes to say her farewells, she and Sister Barbara were taken away by car. Elizabeth had been arrested by order of Lenin.

Elizabeth and Sister Barbara were exiled first to Perm, more than 700 miles from Moscow, then to Yekaterinburg, where she was joined by other members of the Romanov family. They remained there for about a month. They were all taken to Alapayevsk on 20 May, 1918, where they were housed in the Napolnaya School on the outskirts of the town.

The end approached at noon on 17 July. Cheka Officer Pyotr Startsev and a few Bolshevik workers came to the school and sent away the Red Army guards. Cheka men replaced them. That night the prisoners were awakened and driven in carts on a road leading to the village of Siniachikha, 11 miles from Alapayevsk, where there was an abandoned mine with a pit over sixty feet deep. Elizabeth and her companions were thrown into the mine where they died. Three months later when the White Army captured the area, they recovered the bodies. The bodies of Elizabeth and Sister Barbara were taken to the east, later to China, and finally to Jerusalem, where they were taken to their final resting place at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene. They remain there today. The wish she expressed in her visit to this Church in 1888 came true.

Why was Elizabeth murdered? She and her

community were helping people in heroic ways. Was she killed as a Romanov? I believe that is true. There is more to her death, however: Elizabeth was a Christian. There would be no place for God in the Marxist government. The best answer to her death was given by Lenin himself. He welcomed Elizabeth's death, remarking that "virtue with the crown on its head is a greater enemy to the world revolution than a hundred tyrant tsars." How well he knew. The two great Christian virtues of faith and charity were and are anathema to the communists. Elizabeth died a martyr.

Fr. Daniel Daly

AFTERWORD

The two biographies cited in this article are very well worth reading. The biography by Warwick supplies many details about this historical period. The biography of Millar is written as the life of a saint. It contains a large number of her letters as well as many photographs. It would make a very excellent gift for any young woman. The work of St. Elizabeth is continued today in the Convent of St. Elizabeth, 6 Vygotskogo Str., Minsk 220053 Belarus.

Hospital is still serving people in the city of Darmstadt.

13. Millar, pp. 41-42.
14. Warwick, p. 150.
15. Ibid., p. 165.
16. King Edward VIII of England was forced to abdicate in 1936 over his planned marriage to a divorced woman.
17. Ibid., p. 170.
18. Warwick, p. 174.
19. Ibid., p. 175.
20. Ibid., p. 217.
21. Ibid., p. 251.
22. Millar, p. 158.



"FROM THESE STONES"

DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

THESE DAYS, OUR CROSS

Fr. Joseph Huneycutt

Vice-Chairman of the Department of Missions and Evangelism

A friend said, "You, know Father – all of my life I've been a churchgoer. There was never a question as to my schedule for Sunday mornings: no breakfast, no plans; just get up and go to church. Doing otherwise never occurred to me. But I've got to say, *these days* interrupted my routine. There have been mornings where I have lain in bed thinking: Do I really want to go to church today? I'm not sure I can do it anymore."

I said, "Understood, Abouna – but you're the priest!"

"I know, Father, but I liked the cross I had. My parish had programs, classes, active organizations, youth activities, various ministries. Most Sundays we had a full house! That was my cross. That is what I miss," he said.

"Abouna, as one priest told me: 'We always miss *the cross we had*. But this, our present struggle, is the cross that God provides.' He doesn't provide anything without our salvation in mind."

In trying to encourage and console my friend I was, in equal measure, talking to myself. We both nodded, looked a little sad, smiled, and parted ways till another day. We do not visit as often as in the "old days" – before, you know, *these days*.

I once spent the night at my friend Eric's house. He and I were the same age, in *those days*: 10 or 11. As soon as his parents opened the house following a church softball game, Eric and his younger brother immediately stripped down to their underclothes and started running and roughhousing all over the place. Obviously, this was a normal occurrence in their home. I did not even do that in my own house!

I was reminded of that when *these days* first began in March of 2020. In my sermon on the last Sunday before restrictions, I said: "Remember when you were a kid and your friend's parents had different rules? *Your* parents set the rules for *your* house. Other parents' rules may have been stricter or looser, but it did not matter – your parents were responsible for you. They had your safety and best interests in mind, whether you agreed or not."

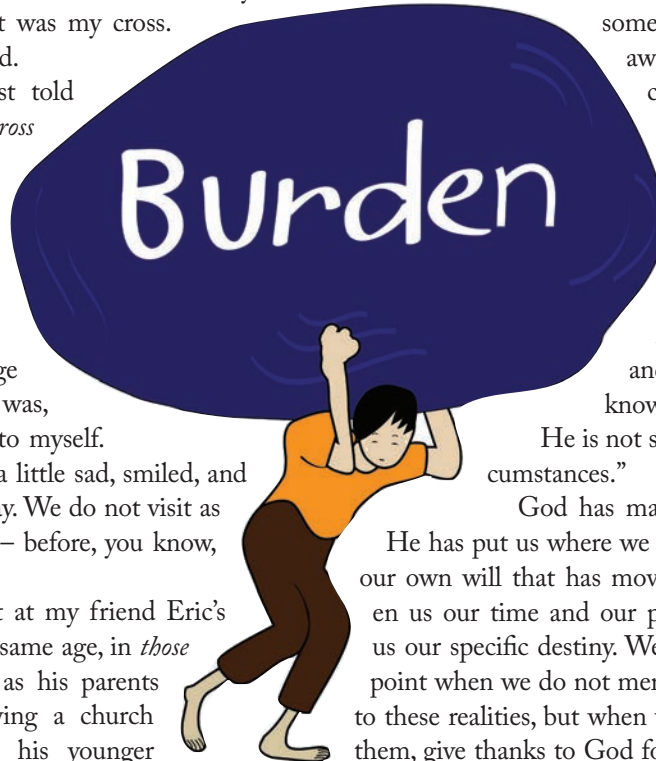
I noted the smiles and nodding heads of the faithful. Every preacher knows that once you've got people relating and agreeing, that is a good time for the punch line: "You have seen different clergy setting various 'house rules' for their flocks; some strict, some more lenient. We have seen

some parishioners fall away from attending church out of caution or fear; many wear masks, some do not. Do not judge. Our calling, to the best of our ability, is to trust God and be faithful. God knows what He's about.

He is not surprised by our circumstances."

God has made us who we are.

He has put us where we are, even when it is our own will that has moved us. He has given us our time and our place. He has given us our specific destiny. We must come to the point when we do not merely resign ourselves to these realities, but when we love them, bless them, give thanks to God for them as the conditions for our self-fulfillment as persons, the means to our sanctity and salvation. Being faithful where we are is the basic sign that we will *God's will* for our lives. The struggle to "bloom where we are planted," as the saying goes, is the way to discern



God's presence and power in our lives, to hear His voice, to accomplish His purposes, to share His holiness. Jesus said that only those who are "faithful in little" inherit much and get set over much. Those who are not faithful in the little things of life, and thereby fail to accept and to use what God provides, end up losing the little that they have, or – as Jesus says in Luke's Gospel – the little that they *think* they have, for even the "little" may exist only in their own deluded imaginations.¹

Brothers and sisters, *these days* have been given to us for our salvation. Though we be tempted to long for a previous time, a different cross, let us not be deluded. Just as Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever – so is His Church. Though seemingly everything else has, our calling has not changed.

To put in bluntly, we've got work to do! While live-streaming and virtual meetings have helped to keep many tethered to the life of the Body, it does not constitute the Body. Our circumstances of late have revealed all sorts of warts and ailments, weaknesses, doubts, and fears. "As long as we view our suffering as an unnecessary burden, the imagination exaggerates its intensity, making it unbearable. But when we take up the same "cross" with joy, voluntarily, the same suffering then seems light."²

We can persist in delusion, wishing for the cross we had, or we can "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."³ Regardless of our opinion of current circumstances or the decisions of others, *these days* are given for our salvation. We must seek the Lord. "While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?' And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cle'opas, answered him, 'Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in *these days*?'⁴ We all know that story. Everything these men had hoped for seemed lost; everything they had worked for, vanquished. As they related their woes, Jesus said to them: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."⁵

Later at table with them, the Lord took bread,

and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. That is when they recognized him, in the Eucharist. It was then that they changed. They were transformed. Only then did they embrace the women's message that *the Lord is risen!*

Although he was filled with doubts and fears, the same transformation happened with Thomas. Only when he was found in the assembly of the faithful did he experience the Resurrection.

Let us gather in the temple of the Lord where the house rules are – bear your cross; bear one another's burdens. Let us reassemble, as we are able, brother and sisters, as the Body of Christ to receive the Body of Christ. Trusting that God is with us, let us experience the Risen Lord in the Eucharist. Truly, that is the *best* we can do *these days*.

1. Byron J. Gaist, referring to an observation by Fr. Thomas Hopko, in *Creative Suffering and the Wounded Healer – Analytical Psychology and Orthodox Christian Theology* (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2010), p.333; cf Matt 25:14-30; Lk 19:11-27, 8:18.
2. Vassilios Bakoyiannis, noted in Gaist, p.192; cf. Matthew 11:30.
3. Galatians 6:2.
4. Luke 24:15-18.
5. Luke 24:25-27.



The Children's Relief Fund, under the guidance of Metropolitan JOSEPH and the Department of Charities, has been a godsend to hundreds of needy children and their families in Lebanon and other countries in the Middle East. We are so proud and privileged to help and support them financially, but more importantly, with love and concern.

The Very Rev. Fr. Isaac Crow was the Director of our Children's Relief Fund. On March 26, 2020, the Lord called Father Isaac home to his eternal life. May his memory be eternal. Due to Father Isaac's illness and eventual passing, earlier this year there was a need for a re-organization of the Department. The responsibility of administrating the Children's Relief Fund previously handled by Father Isaac in Potomac, Maryland, was transferred to Debbie Brown in Brooklyn, New York, and is now being coordinated by her.

We deeply apologize for our silence over the past several months. We have been re-organizing the Department, along with facing the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have also been challenged in navigating the banking situation in Lebanon, and we continue to explore options for disbursing funds to the children there. We promise we will continue to support and love these children in need, in the same fashion that we have since the Fund's inception in 1983. We are very excited about the future of this Department and the future of our children in the Middle East, but we can't do it alone: we need your help and support.

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, or \$1.10 per day. Donations in amounts less than \$400 are always welcome, too. Once you sponsor a child, we will send you his name, age and address. Your child in turn will correspond with you. She will send you letters about her life and pictures, and you will be able to develop a special personal relationship with her. You will be able to communicate with him or her at any time.

We are proud to say that 100% of your donation goes directly to the sponsored child. The CRF is a U.S. tax-exempt, charitable, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Its basic purpose is to provide financial assistance for needy children in Lebanon and Palestine. A receipt for your loving donation will be sent at the end of the year.

If you would like to make a difference in a child's life, please join us and become a sponsor. You may donate through PayPal on our website at <http://www.childrenreliefund.org/donate-now.html>. Alternatively, you may send a check payable to: Children's Relief Fund, P.O. Box 90072, Brooklyn, NY 11209

We hope you will consider sponsoring a child, making a difference in his or her life, and giving that child the opportunity to have a beautiful, successful future in a difficult area. If you have any questions about Children's Relief Fund, please feel free to contact us at any time. We will be happy to answer any and all questions and to address any concerns you may have.

Thank you for considering a sponsorship. May God bless you and yours, and give you strength in the coming days.

www.childrenreliefund.org

email: childrensreliefund@gmail.com

Sundays of Advent: Planting the Seeds for the New Covenant

Fr. Michael Massouh



UNLIKE GREAT LENT, THE ADVENT SEASON STANDS WITHOUT ADDITIONAL WEEKDAY SERVICES OR SUNDAY REMEMBRANCES THAT WOULD HELP US KEEP THE FAST FOR THE FORTY DAYS AND TO PREPARE OURSELVES FOR CHRIST'S BIRTH. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DISTURBED THAT THE CHURCH HAS NOT RESPONDED TO THIS LACUNA, THAT IS, UNTIL THIS YEAR.

When I read Archimandrite Vassilios Papavasiliou's *Meditations for Advent: Preparing for Christ's Birth*, I began to see connections I had missed. He brings together readings from Scripture, including the Odes of the Old

Testament, the seasonal *troparia* from the Compline Service and Vespers, writings from the Fathers, and other sources, to flesh out the Nativity Season. As I began to prepare Sunday Sermons, too, I discovered that the Epistle and Gospel readings focus on one of the reasons Christ came to dwell among us. We are all familiar with His coming to defeat death and the Devil, and to re-open the Gates of Paradise for us. He also came to inaugurate the New Covenant, and the readings of the Sundays of Advent make this quite clear.

In these readings, we are reminded that Christ publicly challenged the Jewish leadership's focus on the Law – the Old Covenant. As He says at one point, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13). Throughout His public ministry, He purposefully performs acts that upset them to the point – as we know – that they ultimately seek His crucifixion.

The Epistle readings vary from year to year, but usually for the first Sunday of Advent it is from St Paul's Letter to the Galatians, in which he warns them that the Jewish leadership "would compel you to be circumcised," even though "not even those who are circumcised keep the law" (Galatians 6:12-13). So, why keep the Law? Christ is preparing them and us for something new.

On the second Sunday, St Paul writes to the Ephesians "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the tyranny of men" (Ephesians 4:14). Rather, we should stand fast to Christ's teachings. The men of tyranny to which Paul refers were the Jewish leaders who adhered strictly to the Law as they interpreted it.

The Gospel lessons for the first two Sundays of Advent appear to have no relation to the season. The first is the story of the Foolish Rich Man, who would tear down his barns and build bigger ones to house the windfall that came from God (Luke 12:16-21). The second deals with the Rich Young Man seeking eternal life (Luke 18:18-27). Christ calls the first one a "fool" and depicts God asking for his soul that

very night. He tells the second one to sell all his possessions, give the money to the poor, and then come and follow Him. Christ's message to them and to us is to use one's wealth to help others, and not to spend it exclusively for one's own benefit. We are to do the same with the gifts God has given us, as did the early Christians. We learn in the Book of Acts that they pooled their resources and gave to others as they had need (Acts 2:42-47). Almsgiving is one of the things we do during a fast.

On the third Sunday of Advent we read again from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians that Christ came to break down "the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments [that is, the Torah], so as to create in Himself one new man from the two [Gentile and Jew], thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity" (Ephesians 2:14). Clearly, Paul endorses Christ's replacing the "law of commandments" which applied exclusively to the Jews, and the bestowal of God's grace on all humanity. Further, he states that Christ came first to reconcile the estranged Jews to God and then to reconcile the Jews to the Gentiles, so that there is no longer Jew nor Greek, master nor slave, male nor female, because all are one under Jesus Christ, making clear that the New Covenant is for everyone (Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11).

The fourth Sunday's reading from Ephesians emphasizes the message of the New Covenant that "There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all." [Eph 4:4-6] In other words, we are all one in Jesus Christ. No one is superior to another, no one is shunted aside, no one is without God's grace. This is a consequence of the New Covenant.

The theme of establishing a New Covenant continues throughout Advent. On the third Sunday we read in Luke's gospel about Jesus healing on the Sabbath a woman bent over for eighteen years. Here is one example of Jesus confronting the leaders of a synagogue directly who myopically hold to the Old Testament Laws. Indeed, they are indignant that anyone should do "work" on the Sabbath, and proclaim that there are six days to do work; the Sabbath is a day of rest. Jesus answers them forcefully. "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to

water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound – think of it – for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” His reply put “all His adversaries to shame; and the multitude rejoiced.” [Luke 13:10-17]

Clearly, we are reminded during the Advent season that Jesus challenged the Old Covenant many times because He was laying the foundation for the New.

The fourth Sunday’s Gospel from Luke tells the story of Jesus at a home of a Pharisee who had invited Him to dine (14:16-24). Jesus tells a parable that cannot be misunderstood. A certain man gave a great supper and invited many. But one after the other made excuses for not attending: one bought a piece of land, one bought five yoke of oxen, another just got married. When the man’s servant reported these things to the master, the master became angry and told the servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.” When this was done there was still room for more. “Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.’” In this parable, those invited were the Chosen People, but some of them refused to attend. Jesus reminded the Jewish leaders that the Chosen People had not lived up to their end of the covenant that God had made with them. Now God would find others to come into His Kingdom. In Matthew’s account of this parable Christ’s message was very clear to the Pharisees who had gathered to dine with Him: they then “went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk” (Matthew 22:1-15). (See also the Pharisee’s reaction when He dined with them at another time, in Luke 11:53-54.)

God’s attempt to reach His chosen people over the centuries, by sending prophets to admonish them and to remind them of God’s blessings, had not worked. By the time of the Prophet Jeremiah about the Seventh Century, B.C., God decided to establish a New Covenant, as He told Jeremiah:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which

they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

God made it clear to Jeremiah that the New Covenant He would inaugurate would supersede the Old. The Old would be replaced and no longer apply. Paul stresses this point in Galatians: “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But, after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Galatians 3:24-25).

On the Sunday before the Nativity we read the human genealogy of Jesus Christ, to show that Jesus had an earthly ancestry. He did not appear out of nowhere. He came to fulfill the promise to Abraham, to David, and to others. “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise. God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (Hebrew 11:39-41). The promise was that we should see the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ, the one we are preparing to meet at His Nativity.

Paul reminds us that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived before the Law was handed down to Moses. We can return to the time of the Patriarchs: Noah, Melchizedek, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The New Covenant ushered in a new world; one that we are struggling to experience.

The Scriptural readings for the Nativity season therefore do have a focus. They orient us to one of the reasons God gave His only begotten Son, that is, to establish a New Covenant between Himself and all those who would believe in His Son, from every tribe and nation. We will all know Him in our hearts if we allow Him to enter.

What a gift! What a beneficent God! What a joy to be connected to the Immortal One!

Sadly, there are as yet no weekday services during Advent. We do, however, possess these Scriptural readings that give us one of the reasons for Christ’s Nativity.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

A Message of Hope from the Assembly of Bishops

OCTOBER 7, 2020

The Tomb Is Empty



We, the Members of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, gathering for our first digital meeting on October 6-7, 2020,

offer the perennial message of Christian hope and spiritual encouragement to our clergy and faithful, and all persons of good will, in these unprecedented times of the current global health crisis, political division, and social strife.

The Coronavirus pandemic has affected every human being in the world with some form of trauma: loss of life, debilitating illness, separation from loved ones, financial hardship, or emotional fatigue. Yet it remains true that through the Cross joy has come into all the world. Through these tragedies, health care workers who have sacrificially cared for the sick, parents who have had to manage every aspect of their children's education and care from home, those who are without employment and those who are facing financial struggles, and clergy who have maintained the spiritual and liturgical lives of their parishes – all bear witness to the power of love and goodwill to provide solace in these troubled days. At the same time, this health crisis and the energy required to shoulder it have also given rise to an unhealthy increase of polemical opinion related to questions of science, medicine, and civil and ecclesiastical directives. As often happens when human passions erupt, such polemics have infected other areas of society, as reflected in the rise in this country of racial tensions, ideological clashes, and political polarization. We remind all that, as Orthodox Christians sojourning in this land, we are not called to base our lives upon the ephemeral convictions that are common in the realm of politics, economics, or ideology. Rather, we are called to “set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:2), placing our trust in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and doing His Holy Will through our efforts to fulfill His life-giving commandments.

In our present circumstances, trying to hold a sensible middle ground between opposing forces of faithless reason, on the one hand, and spiritualized folly, on the other, is the greatest challenge of our time. As Orthodox Christians we are called to follow the road, turning “aside neither to the right nor to the left” (Deuteronomy 2:27). Saint Jerome teaches that the high way or royal way is the way of the One who declares, not only that “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” but also “Your ways are not like my way” (Commentary on Isaiah). This means that keeping our eyes on Christ and His sacrificial love for the entire world, and being humble about our own particular opinions is the time-tested way to walk the path worthy of the Christian calling.

Certainly, our present physical separation from one another and spiritual isolation from the divine services have complicated our ability to navigate these troubled waters. It is not fitting for us, as Orthodox Christians, to add to the burdens of our brothers and sisters either by condemning them, or by appeasing them with insincere flattery. Rather, we ought to fulfill the law of God honestly by bearing one another's burdens, as the Holy Apostle Paul reminds us (cf. Galatians 6:2). This means that we are called to an authentic life of patient obedience, sincere humility, genuine compassion, and sacrificial love, even towards those with whom we differ. This is not an easy task for human beings to accomplish, but by grace and by the power of the Cross, we who are weak are made strong through Christ. With that grace, let us boldly give expression to Christ-like love and Christ-like humility in a world where many are unable to see anything beyond their own opinion. With that power, let us steadfastly remain faithful to the Tradition of the ancient Church in a land of modernity, uncertainty, and confusion. As a guide, let us “lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven” (Lamentations 3:41) and make our own the words of the Psalmist who cries out: “O God, thou art my God; I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee, my flesh faints for thee, as in a dry and weary land where no water is” (Psalm 63:1).

Commencements: New Birth and Death

Fr. Michael Massouh

RECALL YOUR FRESHMAN DAYS IN HIGH SCHOOL AND/OR COLLEGE. THOSE FIRST FEW DAYS COULD BE BEWILDERING, WITH NEW BUILDINGS, NEW TEACHERS AND PROFESSORS, AND NEW EXPECTATIONS. YET UPPERMOST IN YOUR MIND WAS GRADUATING FOUR YEARS LATER. INDEED, IT NEVER LEFT YOUR MIND, AS YOU TOOK COURSES, WROTE PAPERS, DID THE READINGS, TURNED IN THE HOMEWORK, SAT FOR EXAMS, AND MADE SURE YOU WERE ON TRACK TO FULFILL ALL THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE. YOU LOOKED FORWARD TO A GREAT EVENT.



At Commencement you participated in an ancient rite, in which you donned a gown and mortar board, walked across campus to the hall or stadium or tent with your classmates, found your seat, and listened to the various speeches. At the appropriate time you walked across the stage to the president as the dean announced your name, while your parents, family, and friends cheered. The president shook your hand and with the other hand handed you your diploma. After all your classmates had done the same and returned to their seats, the president asked you all to stand. Then he said something like, "By the power invested in me by the trustees of this august institution, I declare that you now have earned the degree for which you have worked so long and hard." The president then directed you to turn the tassel on your mortar board from the right side to the left, and then said something along the lines of "Welcome to the fellowship of educated men and women." Commencement marked one of life's milestones and the beginning of a new life, in which you were now entitled to all the benefits, rights, privileges, and honors that pertained to that degree.

Now that we are out of school, we need to keep in our daily consciousness – as we did in high school and college – another goal: our departure to another

realm, our commencement into the heavenly Kingdom. We need and want to fulfill the Lord's requirements and expectations of us, so that we may hear Him say on that special day: "Well done, good and faithful servant Enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21).

How do we get ready for that graduation day? How do we fulfill the requirements for that office? We begin with Baptism, the new birth, the initiation rite into the Church. Most of us as Orthodox experienced this rite as infants, so we have no idea of what our godparents pledged and vowed for us. At most of the baptisms that we witnessed as we grew older, even when we participated as godparents, we were so focused on the child and the dunking that we paid little attention to the prayers the priest read. Let's take a look at some of them.

Baptism begins with exorcism. The initial prayers ask God to "root out of him/her every operation of the Devil," and, "delivering also this thy creature from the bondage of the enemy, receive him/her into thy heavenly kingdom." To aid the supplicant in his new life, we pray, "Yoke unto (his/her) life a radiant [guardian] Angel, who shall deliver (him/her) from every snare of the adversary, from encounter with evil, from the demon of the noonday, and from evil visions." It is interesting to acknowledge that a guardian angel is yoked to the child before the declarations vowed by a child through his or her

godparents. Then the priest breathes three times on the child's mouth, brow, and breast, saying, "Expel from him/her every evil and impure spirit which hideth and maketh its lair in (his/her) heart."

You would think these prayers and actions would suffice. These prayers, however, are said by the priest. Now the supplicant must consent. So, he or she is asked to turn and face the West, and the priest asks three times: "Dost thou renounce Satan, all his Angels, and all his works, and all his service, and his pride?" Then the sponsor responds, "I do." This is still not enough, and the priest then asks three times: "Hast thou renounced Satan?" and the sponsor responds, "I have." Now comes a very graphic action. The priest then instructs: "Breathe and spit upon him."

The child is at the most vulnerable point of his life. No one likes to be spat upon and so the Devil is now out to strike back. Here comes another strong action: the priest now turns the child and the sponsors around to face East, toward the Altar and Christ. No one can defeat the Devil except Christ. So, turning to Christ we ask for His protection. The priest then says three times: "Dost thou unite thyself unto Christ?" to which the answer is, "I do." Again, we have another three questions: "Hast thou united thyself unto Christ?" and the answer again is, "I have." There is a final question: "Dost thou believe in him?" and the sponsor answers for the child: "I believe in him as King and God," at which point the sponsor professes for the child the Symbol of Faith, the Nicene Creed – what we believe about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We are not finished yet. The priest now asks three times: "Hast thou united thyself unto Christ?" and the answer is "I have." Then the priest says: "Bow down also before Him," at which point the sponsor avers: "I bow down before the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit: the Trinity, one in essence and undivided."

These prayers and actions are cosmic in their power. Each of us has denounced the Devil and accepted Christ. We were united with a guardian angel to watch over us and to whom we can pray for guidance and intervention from the Lord.

The next step in the service is to prepare the child for baptism. Baptism means immersion. The priest anoints him/her with holy oil, stating: "The servant of God, *N.*, is anointed with the oil of gladness; in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and

of the Holy Spirit." The child is anointed on the brow, the breast and back, the ears, the hands, and the feet. The priest then takes the child and immerses him or her three times in the water he has blessed "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, read later in the ceremony, states clearly what has just transpired.

Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him (6:3-11).

Even at our new birth, we become conscious of our future demise from earthly life.

Chrismation is the second part of the baptismal service. Here the priest anoints the baptized with Holy Chrism – an oil prepared not by priests, but by bishops. Chrismation is an individual's personal Pentecost – the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles that energized them to spread the Gospel to one and all. Each time he anoints the brow, the eyes, the nostril, the lips, both ears, the breast, the hands, both feet, and between the shoulders, the priest says: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit," and the people respond, "Seal."

The next prayer makes clear what has transpired: "O thou who, through holy baptism, hast given unto thy servant remission of sins, and hast bestowed upon (him/her) a life of regeneration: Do thou the same Lord and Master, ever graciously illumine (his/her) heart with the light of thy countenance. Maintain the shield of (his/her) faith unassailed by the enemy. Preserve pure and unpolled the garment of incorruption, wherewith thou hast endowed (him/her), upholding inviolate in (him/her) by thy grace, the seal of the Spirit, and showing mercy unto (him/her)."

The child has now "put on Christ." He or she is then tonsured, given holy communion, and led around the baptismal font three times, while the chanters and the people sing, "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia"

(cf. Galatians 3:27).

Baptism then is more than an intellectual acceptance of Christ. It is an event charged with power. We renounced the Devil, accepted Christ as our God and Savior, were immersed three times in Christ's death and resurrection, were sealed with the Holy Spirit, and tasted the Body and Blood of Christ. We had been created in the image and likeness of God, made in such a way that we can respond to holy events and experiences beyond our full understanding. As we bond to the Body of Christ, we become one with Him.

What does it mean to "put on Christ?" We are grafted into His Body and become a member of His Body. Our relationship with Him is intimate. When we partake of Holy Communion, we literally become one with Him. Christ said: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:53-54, 56). At another point in His ministry, Christ said: "I am the true vine Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless you abide in the vine.... I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit" (John 15:1, 4-5).

Baptism begins our life in Christ. In college terms, it is like being admitted into the freshman class. We now need to attend the lectures, do the readings, and take the exams. Clearly, one of the requirements for ascending to Christ is to remember the vows we or our sponsor made at our baptism. What are some of the other requirements and expectations?

We need to keep in mind that God is everywhere present and fills all things, and thus is with us at all times. In other words, we need not be in church or at our home icon corner to be in His presence. It is good to know that we are never alone. Not only is God with us, but so is our guardian angel, our patron saint, and the Theotokos. When challenging things happen, we are assured that He is right there with us, and we can turn to Him in prayer for assistance.

Reading Scripture daily keeps us connected to Him. Other religious books – like the lives of the saints and the writings of the Fathers – provides us

with further insight into the mystery of the faith. We see how earlier Christians dealt with the troubles they encountered, and how they endured and overcame them. Many times, what we read rings true to our current circumstance, and we find that God is answering our prayers.

To stay connected to His Body, we need to partake on a regular basis of the sacraments, or as we Orthodox say, the mysteries: confession and communion. Confession is one of the most misunderstood mysteries of the Church. Most people resist meeting with a priest because they are unsure if he will keep what they say confidential, or if he will cross-examine them. In the Orthodox world confession is an opportunity to rid oneself of whatever burden one is carrying. The priest is like a coach who hears what is bothering us and then prescribes an antidote. Similarly, a pitching, batting, or voice coach suggests something to improve one's performance. A priest may make a suggestion to correct our performance as a follower of Christ, to put us on the road to the Kingdom. With all the confessions a priest hears, he reveals God's mercy and reconciles the penitent. In confession with a priest, unlike confession in private to God, he is empowered to ask God to forgive our shortcomings and give us absolution for what we have confessed. One can go in peace, having unloaded our burden to God's infinite goodness. We now possess a clean slate.

Another requirement for entering the Kingdom is that we thank God for whatever He has given us, and return a portion to Him. In the Old Testament the Hebrews were asked to give two turtle doves, or a lamb, or a calf to the Temple for a sacrifice. The sacrifice of Christ has taken the place of animal sacrifice, but God still looks to us to give from our treasury and ourselves. He blessed the widow who gave two mites – two small copper coins – because she "out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had" (Luke 21:4). We do not have to be millionaires to give to the Church. Give a portion, and if it is a tenth God will open "the floodgates of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it is overflowing" (Malachi 3:10).

Christ said we should love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, and our whole strength, and our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37). Helping our neighbor – and who is our neighbor? – is an essential part of following Christ. In His parable of the last Judgement, Christ

accepts into His Kingdom those who helped the least of His brethren: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, visiting the sick and those in prison, and providing shelter to the homeless.

We do not need to hold a seminary degree, or to become a monastic to enter Heaven. Not all college graduates earn straight A's. We need to remember what Christ prized in His children that permitted them to enter the Kingdom: humility, patience, long-suffering, and love. Moreover, we are expected to honor Him, to respect Him, and to please Him. By following Christ expectations of us we build up treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not consume and thieves do not break in and steal (Matthew 6:18-19).

The last thing we need to keep in mind as we complete the requirements for entrance into the Kingdom is that we will die. Keeping that uppermost in our consciousness – like keeping in mind our graduation date in high school or college –

keeps us focused on the prize. As St. Paul said: "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). And, what is the prize? The Kingdom!

As we grow closer to Christ, we begin to recognize that the Gospel values differ remarkably from the worldly ones. Thus, we have a choice to make. Staying closer to the Gospel values is difficult (which is why we go to confession to make a new start). Still, it will make us less distracted and give us strength to overcome the temptations we encounter each day.

Let each of us commit to fulfilling the requirements and expectations in the remainder of this life, so that we can hear the Lord say: "Well done, good and faithful servant.... Enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21).

Be joyful, be at peace, and become holy.

Fr. Michael Massouh

2021 Jack G. Shaheen Mass Communications Scholarships

Scholarship Award \$2,500.00

24th Anniversary!

Join the 88 previous recipients!

PURPOSE

To recognize and award Arab-American university students who excel in Media Studies.

ELIGIBILITY

University students currently enrolled in the 2021-2022 academic year, with a minimum 3.0 GPA. Juniors, Seniors and Graduate School students majoring in Journalism, Television, Radio, and/or Film.

APPLICANTS

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

1. Two original letters of recommendation signed by professors of Mass Communications;
2. Copies of your relevant work: articles, film links, etc.;
3. Official academic transcripts (minimum 3.0 GPA is required);
4. Permanent home address, mobile number and e-mail address.

Application Deadline: Monday, April 12, 2021

Note that 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 e-mail organizing@ADC.org.
The Jack G. Shaheen Scholarship Awards will be presented at the 2021 ADC National Convention.

The Joy of Orthodoxy

Deacon David Lochbihler

“REJOICE ALWAYS; PRAY WITHOUT CEASING; IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS; FOR THIS IS GOD’S WILL FOR YOU IN CHRIST JESUS” (THESSALONIANS 5:16–18 NASB). JOY, PRAYER, THANKSGIVING: THESE THREE VIRTUOUS COMMANDS BOTH OFFER HOPE DURING TRYING TIMES AND PERMEATE OUR WONDER-FILLED JOURNEY WITHIN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH. OUR HEART’S RESPONSE DESCRIBED BY SAINT PAUL BECOMES A DAILY REALITY: WE REJOICE NOT OCCASIONALLY, BUT ALWAYS; WE PRAY NOT JUST ON SUNDAY, BUT WITHOUT CEASING; OUR HEARTS OVERFLOW WITH GRATITUDE. OUR BEST FRIENDS, JESUS THE CHRIST AND MARY THE THEOTOKOS RESIDE DEEP DOWN INSIDE OUR HEARTS AND GUIDE OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND DEEDS EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY DAY.



Becoming Orthodox opens one’s world to wonder like never before. “And now here is my secret, a very simple secret,” Antoine de Saint-Exupéry explains. “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”¹ One sees the world rightly through the inner eyes of faith. This ongoing quest for the essential and the invisible best describes my lifelong journey into Orthodoxy.

The year is 1976, and I am a sophomore at the University of Notre Dame. Enrolled in a course entitled “Introduction to Philosophy,” I expected to be challenged with the discourses of Descartes and Hume. Instead, Professor Joe Evans began our collegiate philosophical inquiry with the children’s classic *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

It was then I learned the “Secret of the Fox,” in the quotation above. Fast-forward thirty-six years later as His Eminence Metropolitan KALLISTOS (Ware) speaks about how to incorporate the Jesus Prayer into our daily lives at Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Church in Fairfax, Virginia, on Saturday evening, June 23, 2012. He also quoted from *The Little Prince*, and later wrote to me from Oxford, “The book is a great favourite of mine.” Citing the Secret of the Fox, Metropolitan Ware invited us to pray the Jesus Prayer for fifteen minutes each day, and then spend the rest of the day loving others with Christ’s love. My journey into Orthodoxy took many unexpected twists and turns with this one great constant: The Secret of the Fox. My life has been a gradual learning of this special secret, a shift from the head to the heart, a deeper appreciation of the invisible, a journey with much joy towards “the Way and the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6 NLV).

In my own odyssey into Orthodoxy, although books took me some distance towards the truth, the Divine Liturgy has been by far the best teacher. The Divine Liturgy emphasizes the great mysteries, from the Annunciation to Pentecost, surrounding the miraculous manifestation of Jesus Christ



our Savior. The Divine Liturgy presents an amazing array of special feast days, while being itself each time we go to church an indescribably magnificent feast. “Feast means *joy*,” Fr. Alexander Schmemmann tells us in his *For the Life of the World*.²

The Divine Liturgy experienced as “heaven on earth” is the chief focus of this unbounded joy, and serves as the most constant anchor of our lives. “Our Church remains a liturgical Church par excellence not only in the sense of the uninterruptedness of her ancient tradition of worship, but also because of the place which worship occupies in the life of the faithful, because of the special love the faithful have for the church building and its services.”³ We experience the pinnacle of Orthodoxy during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Notre Dame Professor Joe Evans used to tell us, “No wonder, no philosophy ... and no wonder!” Wonder erupts anew during the Divine Liturgy. As we kneel during the Western Rite Canon of the Mass at Saint Patrick Orthodox Church, as the priest boldly repeats the words of Christ at the Last Supper, “Take, eat; this is My body... Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood” (Matthew 26:26–27 NKJV), we witness with our own eyes the greatest miracle we could ever ask or imagine. Minutes later during our Mass, as we eat His Body and drink His Blood, we live totally and completely in communion with Christ. “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (John 6:56 KJV).

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessa-

lonians 5:16–18 NASB). How soon we forget this heavenly victory! As we leave the church parking lot, do our minds begin shifting away from the inner joy and peace of the Mass? As we drive to work on Monday morning, has the Eucharistic miracle receded from our hearts? Our lives seem surprisingly ordinary given the profound Eucharistic miracle we experience every time we receive Holy Communion.

How strong is the joyful wonder of Holy Communion in our lives? How do we maintain and nurture this joyful wonder in our minds and hearts? How can we carry this joyful wonder with us into our homes and work places throughout the whole week? How can we bring this joyful wonder to the forefront of our everyday lives, every minute of every day?

The answer lies in Saint Paul’s simple command: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 NASB). With joyful hearts filled with thanksgiving, we remember our Holy Communion often and in so doing fulfill God’s most holy will for our lives. We embrace the deepest experiential aspect of our Orthodox faith, the reception of the Holy Eucharist, with a conscious decision to continually pray, with joy and thanks, deepening our eternal friendships with Jesus the Christ and Mary the *Theotokos* every minute of every day. Orthodoxy fills our minds and hearts with joyful wonder.

Deacon David Lochbihler
Saint Patrick Orthodox Church, Bealeton, Virginia

1. Antoine De Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1971), p. 73.
2. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973, p. 63. emphasis in the original.
3. Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), p. 27.

PRISON MINISTRY

Deacon Noah Papas



In the early 2000s, I met Fr. Stephen Powley from Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) at a church college event, and later we served together at the Antiochian Village Adventure camp. Hearing his incredible stories of prison ministry, my eyes were opened to the reality of Matthew 25:36: “I was in prison and you came to Me.” Until that time, I was always confused by this passage. I never knew anyone in prison, and being a naive young adult, I thought I never would.

Fast-forward to a couple of years ago, and I heard a familiar voice on Ancient Faith Radio. It was Fr. Stephen, again talking about the importance of Matthew 25:36. He suggested that a monthly donation of \$25.36, is a beautiful way not only to support prison ministry, but also to remember this verse each month, and to pray for our brothers and sisters in prison. Liking round numbers, my family and I chose a different amount to give each month, but the purpose remained the same.

Our monthly Matthew 25:36 Fellowship gift to OCPM is included in our monthly tithe. Under the direction of our spiritual fathers, most of our tithe goes to our parish community. Thankfully, we are also able to support some of the other important charitable ministries of our Church. By making smaller, regular donations, it is possible to spread our treasure consistently to support Christian philanthropy.

Having served as church treasurer, I know how important monthly giving to OCPM is. It helps

them project revenue and cash flow, and maintain good administration. Regular donations are the solid base of a healthy operating budget. From this foundation, we look forward to seeing OCPM not only continue their good work, but also grow in the years to come.

Deacon Noah Papas

Dn. Noah serves at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he lives with his wife Beth Ann and two young children Anthony (5) and Marina (3).



ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

ORDINATIONS

BRUCE, Deacon Benjamin, to the holy priesthood by Bishop JOHN on September 13, 2020, at St. George Church, Boston, Massachusetts. Fr. Benjamin is assigned as Pastor of the Church of the Advent, Atlanta, Georgia, effective September 14, 2020.

MASSIH, Deacon John, to the holy priesthood by Metropolitan JOSEPH on August 30, 2020, at Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Potomac, Maryland.

MILLER, Thomas, to the holy diaconate by Bishop BASIL on August 16th, 2020, at St. George Cathedral, Wichita, Kansas. He is currently in his second year of theological studies at St. Vladimir's Seminary in Crestwood, New York.

NIQUILA, Anthony (Angelo), to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN on August 15, 2020, at St. George Church, Boston, Massachusetts.

SHAHEEN, Deacon Stephen, to the holy priesthood by Bishop THOMAS on August 15, 2020, at St. Mary Church, Johnstown, Pennsylvania. He is appointed to the parish of St. John the Evangelist, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania.

ASSIGNMENTS

BOGHOS, Fr. Michel, as Interim Pastor of the Church of the Annunciation, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, effective August 28, 2020.

DARWICH, Fr. Dimitri, as Pastor of the Virgin Mary Church, Yonkers, New York, effective August 17, 2020.

EID, Fr. Christopher, to be determined.

HALSELL, Fr. Symeon, as Assistant Pastor of St. Athanasius, Santa Barbara, California, effective August 1, 2020.

HOULI, Fr. Amin, attached to St. George, Troy, Michigan, effective August 28, 2020.

JOHNSON, Fr. Martin, as Pastor of St. Anthony Church, Butler, Pennsylvania, effective August 1, 2020.

MEYER, Fr. Daniel, to be determined.

MOKHIBER, Fr. Justin, as Pastor St. George

Church, New Kensington, Pennsylvania, effective October 1, 2020.

SHAHEEN, Fr. Stephen, Assistant Pastor of St. John the Evangelist, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, effective January 1, 2021.

RECEIVED

HARPER, Fr. Demetrios, from the Church of Greece on August 31, 2020. He is attached to St. George Church, Utica, New York, and teaches at Holy Trinity Seminary, Jordanville, New York.

MITCHELL, Fr. Justin, from the Orthodox Church in America on August 25, 2020. He is attached to St. George Church, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

RETIRED

DAVIS, Fr. Christopher, effective January 1, 2021.

DECEASED

ALLEN, Archpriest Joseph, Th.D, 77, on August 7, 2020. Fr. Joseph was a former Vicar General of the Archdiocese, director of Theological and Pastoral Education of the Antiochian Archdiocese, and founder of the Antiochian House of Studies. He taught thousands of students and clergy in the Orthodox Christian faith. Father Joe held various teaching positions in the field of Pastoral Theology at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Massachusetts, and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York, in addition to his work in the Antiochian House of Studies. He authored 11 books on Orthodox theology. Ordained in 1966, he was the first ordination of Metropolitan PHILIP. Simultaneously, for more than 50 years, Fr. Joe was also pastor of St. Anthony Church in Bergenfield, New Jersey. He is survived by his wife Valerie, sons Philip and Joseph, and their families.

DIMAS, Priest Constantine (Dean), 90, on June 2, 2020. Father Constantine (Dean) Dimas was attached to St. George Cathedral in Wichita, KS since his retirement in the mid-1990s from Holy



Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Wichita.

JOHNSTON, Archpriest Raphael David, on July 31, 2020. He is survived by his beloved wife of 46 years, Khouria Debbie; sons Ian (Laura) and Michael; and grandchildren Aiden, Emma, and Makayla. Father Raphael served the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America from 2004 to 2018. He will be remembered as a kind, loving, gentle, and very humble man, as well as a spiritual father and guide to many. Father Raphael was the missionary priest and pastor of the Protection of the Holy Theotokos Antiochian Orthodox Church in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, from 2004 to 2013. He was then the priest-in-charge of the Antiochian Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Calgary, Alberta, from 2013 to 2016. Father Raphael was attached to St. Philip Antiochian Orthodox Church, Edmonton, Alberta, from 2016 to 2018.



KEISER, Archpriest Michael, 73, on August 15, 2020, in the Feast of the Dormition of our Most Holy Theotokos. He was former Pastor of St. Antony Orthodox Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Pastor of St. Elias, Atlanta, Georgia, and former Chair of the Department of Missions and Evangelism. Father Michael retired to Eustis, Florida,

having served in the holy priesthood for forty-four years. He is survived by Khouria Angelina and their children and grandchildren. Father Michael spent almost all of his years of ministry working primarily in small congregations, planting or restoring them. He studied at Nashotah House Seminary and St. Vladimir's Seminary, and mentored seminary students at Oral Roberts University. He was also responsible for overseeing the planting and preparing of new congregations of non-Orthodox Christians in the United Kingdom for the Patriarchate of Antioch. He authored several books, including *A Beginner's Guide to Prayer*.

MORRIS, Khouria Cheryl, 73, on August 24, 2020. Khouria Cheryl retired to Vicksburg, Mississippi. She had been ill for several months and finally died of complications of the Covid-19 virus. She is survived by her husband of 48 years, the Very Rev. Dr. John Warren Morris, retired pastor of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Vicksburg, Mississippi; and their two children, Dr. Matthew

Morris, and Elizabeth Morris, both of Austin, Texas. She is also survived by her granddaughter, Maria Sophia Morris Audette (the daughter of Elizabeth) and Maria's husband Brian Audette.

NIMER, Archdeacon David B., 76, on August 5, 2020. Archdeacon David was born in Akron, Ohio, on May 15, 1944. He moved with his family from Akron as a child to Miami, Florida, where he completed his education and graduated from Miami High School. He went to Miami Dade College to complete his degree in sales. He and his family had been active at the Cathedral his entire life. Under the tutelage of Father Michael Husson, he became the head acolyte of many young altar boys. On April 23, 1996, Bishop DEMETRI (Khoury) ordained him to the Holy Diaconate and on July 23, 2003, Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba) of thrice-blessed memory elevated him to Archdeacon during the Archdiocese Convention in Miami. He has served St. George Cathedral since the family came to Miami, both in the altar and on the Cathedral Council. Archdeacon David was married for 56 years to his wife Patricia and had three children (Laura, Michael, and Jeffrey), ten grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Many of the parishioners of the Cathedral in Miami have paid tribute to the Archdeacon, testifying to his love, faithfulness, and humility.

FRANCES MARIA SCHOLARSHIPS

On Tuesday, September 22, 2020, Metropolitan JOSEPH met online by Zoom with the eight recipients of the 2020 Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese Francis Maria Scholarships. Fr. Joseph and Kh. Kathleen Purpura, representing the Francis Maria Scholarship Committee and the Maria Family, were joined by several of the parents of our scholarship recipients. Each of the eight scholarship recipients received \$5,000 in scholarship money. Since 2003 the Francis Maria Scholarship has granted \$317,500 in Scholarships.

This year's scholarships are awarded to Nadine Dababneh, St. George Church, Montreal, Quebec
Said Dababneh, St. George Church, Montreal, Quebec
Aiden Deighan, St. Nicholas Church, Beckley, West Virginia
Zoe King, St. Mary Church, Livonia, Michigan
Sophia Kouri, St. Luke Church, Garden Grove, California
Aliah Mahshie, St. Elias Church, Syracuse, New York
Serena Rumman, St. Mary Church, in Livonia, Michigan

Nicholas Saliby, St. George Church, Washington, District of Columbia

ANTIOCHIAN CHARITIES

Food for Hungry People & Charitable Outreach January-July 2020

Grant Program	Award
---------------	-------

Emergency Food Assistance Program	\$1,000.00
St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church	
New Kensington, Pennsylvania	

Kids' Food Basket	\$10,000.00
St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church	
Grand Rapids, Michigan	

Camp Catanese Foundation	\$10,000.00
Phoenix, Arizona	

St. George Charity & Outreach Committee	\$6,000.00
---	------------

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church	
Little Falls, New Jersey	

Lawrenceville Cooperative Ministry	\$2,500.00
St. James Antiochian Orthodox Mission	
Buford, Georgia	

Grant Program Distribution	\$29,500.00
----------------------------	-------------

Food for Hungry People COVID-19 Emergency Relief

With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, a letter was sent in June to all pastors, advising them that funds were available from the FFHP & CO Program for individuals in their parishes struggling with a lack of food or other basic needs due to the pandemic. The call for assistance was greater than anticipated. Because our parishes do a wonderful job of providing for their parishioners, it was not overwhelming. The only criteria for assistance was a letter from the pastor indicating the number of members/families needing assistance, and a recommendation of the amount of money needed in the short term.

Requests received from twelve (12) churches/mis-
sions.

Disbursed: \$29,100.00

Number Assisted: More than 70 families/individuals in short term crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Total disbursed — 7 Months: \$58,600.00

Applications for the Grant Program are on the Archdiocese website.



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS AGREES ON A NEW COMMON VISION

Thursday, October 08, 2020

After a second day of productive deliberations, the Assembly of Bishops agreed on a Common Vision that commits themselves to work together toward Orthodox Christian Unity and Outreach, Common Orthodox Witness, Ministries and Initiatives, and Organizational Excellence. Read the full document here.

The collaborative process, initiated by the Executive Committee, acknowledges the spiritual needs of the collective Orthodox faithful in the United States of America. The Bishops look forward to working with the clergy and laity to implement their Common Vision.

Metropolitan Joseph, Vice-Chair of the Assembly of Bishops, commented, "Declaring 2021 as the Year of the Youth will set us on the right path to achieving our Common Vision. The youth are our present and our future."

As such, the Assembly is beginning the process to create two new Agencies – a Youth Ministry Agency, as well as the Orthodox Volunteer Corps – to launch in 2021. Additionally, the Committee for Youth will continue to work on Orthodox Youth Spiritual Formation by taking inventory of existing efforts and developing new tools. The Assembly updated the Committee's Terms of Reference to allow a wider breadth of work and approved the annual Orthodox Camping and Youth Workers Conference to take place again in 2021.

Finally, the Hierarchs of the Assembly released a Message of Hope during a difficult time in our country's history. Read the message here.

Contact: communications@assemblyofbishops.org

The Assembly of Bishops, comprised of the 51 canonical Orthodox Bishops in the United States of America, is the premier and official forum for Orthodox Christian Unity in the United States of America. Its purpose is to preserve and contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church by helping to further her spiritual, theological, ecclesiological, canonical, educational, missionary and philanthropic aims.

THE WORD
358 Mountain Road
PO Box 5238
Englewood, NJ 07631-5238

The Children's Relief Fund



The Children's Relief Fund, has been a godsend to hundreds of needy children and their families in Lebanon and other countries in the Middle East. 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, or \$1.10 per day. Donations in amounts less than \$400 are always welcome, too. Once you sponsor a child, we will send you his name, age and address. Your child in turn will correspond with you. She will send you letters about her life and pictures, and you will be able to develop a special personal relationship with her. You will be able to communicate with him or her at any time.

If you would like to make a difference in a child's life, please join us and become a sponsor. You may donate through PayPal on our website at <http://www.childrenrelieffund.org/donate-now.html>

Alternatively, you may send a check payable to: **Children's Relief Fund, P.O. Box 90072, Brooklyn, NY 11209**



Food For Hungry People Appeal

Over the span of forty-five years, this campaign has had a tremendous impact throughout the world, helping to alleviate the suffering and hunger caused by poverty, war, and numberless tragedies. Through your generosity to the Food for Hungry People campaign, you embrace the world with the love of Christ, saving yourself as you work to save others.

Be very generous in your contribution to this campaign. As we practice the virtues that cleanse our souls, let us not forget or refrain from the "greatest of the virtues." As important as prayer and fasting are, they are of no avail to us if we fail to give to those in need.



You can give your gifts to the hungry in honor of a loved one on any occasion such as a birthday, baptism, anniversary, thank you, retirement or any other special event. "A Gift from the Heart" is also a thoughtful memorial. We will send a personalized icon card to the person you designate to inform them of the gift you gave in their honor.

You may also give by sending a check along with a personalized donation form (PDF) to:

"Food For Hungry People", c/o Robin Lynn Nicholas, 4237 Dundee Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90027, robinFFHP@aol.com