

# THE WORD

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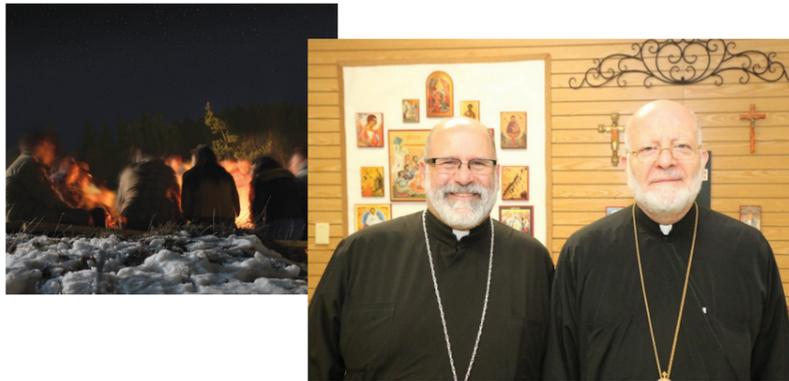
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# THE WORD

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## EDITORIAL

# Making Better Choices; Feeding the Spirit More than the Flesh

BISHOP JOHN



**T**here is an Orthodox way, or *phromina*, that expresses how God makes His presence and love known. There is indeed an Orthodox way of discerning truth, calling each other to health, and recognizing the Holy Spirit working through us. To recognize the Spirit in our lives is an art that requires deliberate efforts and interaction with God. This necessitates an awareness of the complexities of our human condition, as well as our obedience to the God who calls us and empowers each of us to serve. Let us consider the human condition both generally and personally, and seek to fashion a balanced and holy response to those around us whom we venture to serve and are called to witness. Let's think about man's God-given freedom, with its many complexities and enslavements. As Saint Paul points out, we do what we don't want to do and don't do what we want to do.

To be effective witnesses to each other, we need to respect those whom we find around us who are

themselves also in the image and likeness of God. As God is free to love and free to create, so He has given us such freedoms as well. Freedom is an essential tenet of our understanding of God and His creation. Also, we understand that we are both spiritual and physical, and sometimes it seems that our spirits and bodies have different needs and gain pleasure in different ways. Metropolitan JOSEPH asked me to call to your attention the work of Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, who teaches that the mind must choose to concentrate on the spiritual over the physical, when their respective desires for pleasure are at odds. Our resistance to living lives that reflect our God-given nature is rooted in this tension. The teaching of St. Nicodemus, that we are to feed our spirits more than our physical bodies, implies that we are truly free to make choices that reflect our God-given nature. St. Nicodemus says, surprisingly, that we are a *macrocosmos* in a *microcosmos*. This formulation inverts the view of those philosophers who would see man as but a minuscule dot in an expanding universe. According to St. Nicodemus, the *macrocosmos* that is each person is a universe of complexities, including all kinds of emotions, drives and feelings, residing in a world,

Excerpted from Metropolitan JOSEPH's and Bishop JOHN's Keynote Address, "Compliance and Resistance: Discerning the Spirit," made to the Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology and Religion (OCAMPR) at its 2018 Annual Conference.

His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

### ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

September 19, 2018

Beloved in Christ,

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

In 1905, our Father among the Saints, Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn, understood the missionary need of a periodical for his new flock. He founded the Arabic-language magazine, *Al-Kalimat*, where he applied his impressive literary and theological skills to directly communicating the teachings of Holy Orthodoxy to the people in a contemporary and engaging way. His Eminence Metropolitan ANTONY brought the magazine into his own times in a new English-language version, *The WORD*. Today, we are blessed to have His Grace Bishop JOHN continuing to grow and expand this ministry in our day as its Editor-in-Chief.

I would like to thank all of those who have worked with Bishop JOHN so ably as the Editorial Board – namely Fr. Joseph Allen, Dr. Antony Bashir, Fr. Antony Gabriel, Ronald Nicola, and Dr. Najib Saliba – as well as all of those who served in the past. They have done good and holy work, and on behalf of myself, my brother hierarchs, the reverend clergy, the esteemed trustees, and the devoted faithful of our Archdiocese, I offer to them my profound gratitude.

As we continue our journey into the Twenty-first Century, the time has come to recruit a new editorial board to take up the legacy of its honorable predecessors in constantly renewing the tradition of *The WORD* magazine. With great joy, I announce the appointments of the new Editorial Board:

- **Fr. Michel Najim**, Dean of our Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Los Angeles, California, and President of the Board of Trustees of the Antiochian House of Studies;
- **Fr. Patrick O'Grady**, pastor of our parish of Saint Peter in Pomona, California, and Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Antiochian House of Studies;
- **Fr. Thomas Zain**, Vicar General of the Antiochian Archdiocese and Dean of our Saint Nicholas Cathedral;
- **Fr. Andrew Damick**, pastor of our parish of Saint Paul in Emmaus, Pennsylvania, and an author and contributor for Ancient Faith Ministries;
- **Fr. Nicholas Belcher**, Assistant to His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH;
- **Fr. John Oliver**, pastor of our parish of Saint Elizabeth in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, an instructor at Saint's Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary, and an author and contributor for Ancient Faith Ministries;
- **Khouria Erin Kimmitt**, author, iconographer and founder of Annunciation Press, and Khouria of our parish of Saint George in Norwood, Massachusetts;
- **Dr. Ann Bezerides**, Director of the Office of Vocation & Ministry at Hellenic College Holy Cross, noted author and editor, and a member of our parish of Saint Mary in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

I have confidence that this fine and talented group of Orthodox Christians will continue the tradition in new and dynamic ways under Bishop JOHN's leadership.

While still offering *The WORD* in its current print and online forms, exciting plans are underway to distribute the magazine as a first-class "app." This should more easily reach our people in this increasingly technological society – all while continuing in the holy tradition set for us by our Holy Father Raphael. The new Board will welcome feedback and new ideas as we enter this new era.

Giving thanks for all of those who have faithfully contributed to this ministry of *The WORD* magazine by giving of their time, talents, and treasure, and asking God's blessing on those taking up their sacred mantle, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

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

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the body of each human being. The cosmos, on the other hand, is not in the image and likeness of God, and therefore is not greater than man; rather, it is created for man's needs. We are indeed spiritual creatures with bodies. We need to approach each other with awe and respect.

Freedom and autonomy are traits of both God and those with whom we live. Because God can do as He chooses, and He makes us in His own image and likeness, we too must have freedom to choose, though we don't always choose well, or reflect God's image in our actions. God calls us to a way of living that is beyond what we understand to be "normal" in a fallen world. In Isaiah 55:8-9 we read: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The ways of God are indeed different from our own. Who among us would have a party for a son who wasted our retirement for evil pleasures? Who would spend a day looking for a coin? Nevertheless, God gives us choices. In Genesis 2:15 we read, "Then the LORD God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it," but with a condition: "But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die." We are given the freedom to make choices, pointing towards life or death, and we ought not to disregard each other's freedom.

Not satisfied with our separation from God by our own choices, God calls us to repent. He sent His Son to join Himself to us and to return us home. Still, He continues to give us choice. In our work we do well to recognize the choices of those we live among. Were we simply to tell people what to do, they would feel forced to choose between following our instructions and maintaining their autonomy. Research indicates that when one's autonomy is challenged, people almost always choose to reject what they are told to do, even when they want what they are instructed to do. In social psychology, this principle is called *reactance*. Christ shows that His way is to offer a better way, and to let us choose it. As we live together, we should do likewise.

St. Nicodemus explores how each of our senses, which are gifts to commune with God, can be misused. By choosing to use our senses properly, we can meet our spiritual needs and find great joy. We can grow and mature, and we can give others the opportunities they need to grow spiritually, too. When our spirit is well-fed, our temples or bodies will feel full, and will not call for pleasures of other kinds, temptations that will not satisfy our hungers, but leave us forever hungry. Feed your spirit and you will find real contentment.

**According to St. Nicodemus, the *macrocosmos* that is each person is a universe of complexities, including all kinds of emotions, drives and feelings, residing in a world, the body of each human being. The cosmos, on the other hand, is not in the image and likeness of God, and therefore is not greater than man; rather, it is created for man's needs.**

# THE HIGH CALLING OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Bishop BASIL's Presentation to the Antiochian Clergy at the Clergy Symposium



*Before I begin this reflection on the high calling of the priesthood, I thought it wise that we hear, once again, the prayers that were offered for each one of us who are priests on the day of our ordination, the ordination prayers. Of course, it begins with "The grace divine, which always healeth that which is infirm and completeth that which is wanting, elevateth through the laying on of hands – all of y'all – the most-devout deacon to be a priest, wherefore I pray that the grace of the All-Holy Spirit may come upon him." And then the ordaining bishop continues the two prayers while the litany is quietly said.*

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  
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by Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny)  
Founded in English as  
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O God, who hast no beginning and no ending, who art older than every created thing, who crowneth with the name of presbyter those whom thou deemest worthy to serve the word of thy truth of the divine ministry of this degree, do thou, this same Lord of all men, deign to preserve in pureness of life and in unswerving faith this man also, upon whom, through me, thou hast been graciously pleased to lay hands. Be favorably pleased to grant unto him the great grace of thy Holy Spirit, and make him wholly thy servant, in all things acceptable unto thee, and worthily exercising the great honors of the priesthood which thou hast conferred upon him by thy prescient power. For thine is the might and thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen.

O God great in might and inscrutable in wisdom, marvelous in counsel above the sons of men: Do thou the same Lord fill with the gift of the Holy Spirit this man who but hath pleased thee to advance to the degree of priesthood, that he may be worthy to stand in innocence before thine altar, to proclaim the Gospel of thy kingdom, to minister the word of thy truth, to offer unto thee spiritual gifts and sacrifices, to renew the people through the labor of regeneration, that when he shall go to meet thee at the second coming of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, thine only-begotten Son, he may receive the reward of a good steward in the degree committed unto him, through the plenitude of thy goodness.

**W**hile those are the prayers that are offered at the time of the ordination of a man to the sacred priesthood, for me, who now find myself in the position of being the ordainer, the most moving part of the ordination of a priest is the presentation of the Lamb to the newly ordained priest. It still takes my breath away, as it did the first time that I heard it when I was the one receiving the Lamb. My voice often breaks because it's such a powerful gift that is given to that young man – in some instances, not-so-young – to the ordained. “Receive thou this pledge, and preserve it whole and unharmed until thy last breath, for thou shalt be held

to an accounting thereof at the fearful second coming of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

The fearfulness with which I present the Lamb and the fearfulness with which I am sure the ordained receives the Lamb speaks to the great calling, the high calling, the holy calling of the priesthood. There are four patristic meditations – that we know of – on the priesthood. Of course, the most well-known is that by our father among the saints, John Chrysostom, and it's the earliest of the four that we still have extant. As I said, there may be others, but these are the four early ones that we have extant. His dates some time before the year 386, so in the latter half of the Fourth Century.

As you know, it was written to an anonymous friend. All we know is that his name was Basil, one who was called to the holy priesthood and one who wanted to flee the holy priesthood. St. John Chrysostom did his best to convince him not to flee. He ends that meditation on the priesthood with these words, offered to his friend. Really, they are beautiful words, received from a friend who now has convinced this unknown Basil to submit to ordination. St. John Chrysostom says: “I smiled, and then I said to Basil: What can I offer? How can I help you to carry so heavy a burden? And yet, such is your desire, take courage, my dear friend, for whenever it is possible for you to have a respite from the cares of your office, I will come to your side and encourage you, and nothing shall be left undone that lies within my power.”

Would that each of us had a friend like that!

An earlier meditation on the priesthood is that which we know as *De Fuga*, or *The Flight to Pontus*, offered by St. Gregory the Theologian. Written in 362 A.D. it pre-dates St. Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood*, by about twenty years. St. Gregory was the one who fled after he was ordained. He not only didn't get out of town before being ordained, he got out of town right *after* he was ordained and abandoned the pastoral charge that his father had given him. *De Fuga*, or *The Flight from Pontus*, is his apologia, if you will, to the people that he had abandoned, explaining why he fled back to his place of ascetic retreat. He returned, of course, but this was his apologia, his defence.

In historical order, then, the first would be St. Gregory's *De Fuga*, and the second would be St. John Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood*. The third is by St. Gregory the Dialogist, the Pope of Rome, and it's at the end of the 700s, so it's about four centuries later: *The Pastoral Rule*. I'm sure most of you are familiar

with it. It's not so much a meditation on the high calling of the priesthood as it is an explication of the responsibilities of the priesthood. Then the fourth in historical order is called *On the Priesthood*, just like St. John Chrysostom's, but it's an eighth-century work, that is, in the 700s, by St. Symeon the Archbishop of Thessaloniki. I'll be reading quite extensively from that one, because it's really relatively unknown. I'll also use some from St. John Chrysostom, but I'll assume that all of you will have read St. John Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood* at least once.

Having said that, there's a little vignette I'd like to tell you about: me and *On the Priesthood* by St. John Chrysostom. When I worked with the late Metropolitan PHILIP – God grant him paradise – in Englewood, he often charged me to meet with the young men who came to be interviewed about going to seminary. Sometimes he would have the late Bishop ANTOUN – God rest his soul – to interview them as a priest, or the late Metropolitan – bishop then – ELIAS (Saliba) interview them. Sayidna ELIA liked to ask them to sing “The Star-Spangled Banner.” I could hear it from my office. Fr. Tom Gallaway will remember that very well: Sing “The Star-Spangled Banner.” But if they were busy or otherwise occupied, he would then have me meet with the prospective seminarian.

One young man came, and after he left, after I had met with him – I remember it was in the great room, the big living room in Englewood – Sayidna called me to his office: “Well, Basil, what do you think?” I said, “I think we have really a very fine candidate here.” “What did you talk about?” “I shared a little bit. When he left, I gave him a copy of St. John Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood*.” Sayidna PHILIP banged his desk. He said, “Why would you *ever* do that? You're going to scare him away!” But it didn't scare him away. He went to seminary as a married man, as a father, even, a young married man and a young father, and he's a highly respected priest in our Archdiocese, a good, loving priest and dedicated pastor. Fr. Tom Gallaway got to sing, “O say, can you see?” And Fr. Michael Laffoon got a copy of *On the Priesthood* by St. John Chrysostom.

Since I have ordained so many of you, you're more than likely going to hear repeated some things that I said at your ordination. I love to preach on the priesthood. And if I didn't ordain you, perhaps I elevated you, at which time I still like to preach on the priesthood. So some of you have heard some of what I'm

going to say, some of you have heard nothing of what I'm going to say, but there's not a one of you who has heard everything of what I'm going to say.

St. John Chrysostom boldly proclaims that after the gift of God the Father to us – His gift to us of His only-begotten Son – the next greatest gift is the priesthood, given to mankind by God the Father: men to share in the salvific work of His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. It's a high calling, then, brothers, perhaps the highest calling. St. Symeon of Thessalonica said it's the highest calling, numbered right after, again, the ministry of our Lord himself of His Incarnation.

St. John Chrysostom, in his book *On the Priesthood*, addresses Basil, but he reminds all of us who at one time were Basils, contemplating our ordination to the fearful priesthood. St. John says the work of the priesthood is done on earth, but ranked among heavenly ordinances, and it's only right, for no man, no angel, no archangel, no other created power but the Comforter Himself, ordained this succession, and persuaded men, while still remaining in the flesh, to represent the ministry of angels.

St. Symeon the New Theologian (not the Archbishop of Thessalonica) in his *Hymn 14* meditates on the priesthood, that high calling in which we all share, by God's grace, with these words:

The priesthood is a dignity formidable even to angels, since one must touch the inaccessible God. There, indeed, where the bread is placed and wine is poured in the name of thy body, O Word of God, thou art there thyself, O Word my God, and they truly become thy body and thy blood through the advent of thy Spirit and the power of the Most High. We priests, we touch with audacity the inaccessible God, or rather, the One who dwells in light inaccessible, not only to humanity but also to the exalted angels themselves. This, then, is the inexpressible and the supernatural that I have been instructed to perform. It impels me always to keep death before my eyes. Thus, leaving behind all satisfaction, I have been seized with fright, knowing that it is impossible for me, as everyone, I think, to celebrate this service worthily and to lead an angelic life in the body, or rather, a life higher than the angels, so as to become a dignity even closer to Him than they, since with my hands – *y'all's hands* – I touch, and with our mouth – *my mouth, he says* – I eat, before whom they stand in fear and trembling.

It's no accident that when we look upon icons, most especially of Theophany (though there are others, of course), as the angelic hosts approach our Savior, they cover their hands, that they not be burned up by the brightness, by the brilliance of His divinity, that they, the angelic hosts, the archangels, they do not presume to touch him. Yet we, who are made from this earth, and who should be like grass burning when we come so close to the fire, but are not, by God's grace, can not only touch Him – and that's

**The fearfulness with which I present the Lamb and the fearfulness with which I am sure the ordained receives the Lamb speaks to the great calling, the high calling, the holy calling of the priesthood.**



from the first moment of our ordination; it doesn't come with long years in the priesthood, like a priestly elevation – from the very first moment of our priesthood, we are granted to touch His body, and then to break His body, to divide His body.

The angels stand in awe of you, brothers, not just of our Savior, who rests upon that holy table where we serve, but the angels and archangels stand in awe of you. Remember, they were created before us by God's providence. They were witnesses of our creation. We might be able to fool others and even ourselves, but we can't fool the angels. They know from where we came. They know of what matter we were made. And yet, they see us presume, not only with boldness to

call God, "Father," but presume to take the place of His Son in the role of salvation history, of being good shepherds to the flock of Christ entrusted to our pastoral care. They see us – dirt, if you will, soil – take a little child in our hands and, seeing him as a son of Adam, with a destiny to eternal death, the angels see us take that child and immerse him in a font three times, and bring that same child out, no longer a son of Adam, destined to eternal death, but as a son of God, deemed worthy of eternal life. That's why the angels stand in awe. They don't take it for granted. We might become used to it somehow, but the angels never do.

They see us take bread and wine, and the angels know not only where we came from, but they know where the bread and the wine came from. The know it's fruit of this earth. They're mundane things. But they see you take that bread and wine and offer it to God the Father in the name of our Savior, the Son of God, and by the might of the All-Holy Trinity, take it up in our hands again, now as the body and blood of Christ. They see us eat the body and drink the blood, the body and blood that they can't even approach unless their hands are covered. Brothers, that's your high calling.

I know there are many opportunities for a parish priest to be humbled, to be trodden down, even to be beaten down. Some

are simply a consequence of being human. If you're a married priest, your wife and your children, if you have children, offer you plenty of opportunities for humility. Those of you who are monastics, your prayer rule, the words of spiritual counsel of your spiritual father offer you opportunities for humility. But today is a day, brothers, to be lifted. It's not a day for humility except for us to be humbled that we are called to such a high calling. Angels stand in awe of you.

St. Paisios said this:

*The divine liturgy which is offered by the priest sustains the world. [Boy, that's a high calling, eh?] And we who are so unworthy of it. There*

*are priests who live this divine mystery at every Divine Liturgy. A priest once told me that a very simple and good priest had once confessed to him: I have such a hard time during the consuming of the holy Gifts at the end of the Divine Liturgy. My filthy tears fall into the divine chalice. I cannot contain them, and this makes me so upset." As he was speaking these words, he was crying. So the other priest told him, "Please, Father, ask Christ to give me some of those filthy tears, so that I might shed them as well."*

In *The Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschos, there's a wonderful vignette about a village priest who took a long time to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, so much so that the council of the parishioners – I don't know if they called them parish councils, but it was like that: representatives of the parishioners – went to complain to the bishop. "This priest takes forever to serve the Liturgy, and we can't bear it anymore." So the priest was called in, and the bishop asked him, "Father, what are you doing? I serve the same Liturgy you serve. It doesn't take me three hours to serve the Liturgy." The pious priest told him, "Sayidna, I can't help it. At the time of *epiklesis*, I have to wait until I see the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hover over the Gifts. Once I see that, then I can proceed." The bishop dismissed the priest and called the people from the parish back in and told them, "I want a priest like you have a priest."

Brothers, that which occurs within the holy place where we have been deemed worthy by God for His own reasons, I can only speak for myself, but I am sure all of you feel that way: I often wonder why. What is it that God sees in us that He pronounces us worthy? But there are things that occur in that holy place – in the holy temple in general, but most especially in the holy place – where we have been deemed worthy to stand. Perhaps our eyes don't see it. There's a lot that we don't see. I don't see angels, though I know they're there. Perhaps our ears don't hear what happens in the holy place, but there's a lot our ears don't hear. Age is not always such a blessing. There's an innocence, a purity of heart that little children possess, that gradually we lose. Our ears become stopped, our eyes become blinded...

Time for another vignette. When I was youth director, there was a young man, who was the treasurer of our southwest region teen SOYO, a very nice young man from a very pious family, but a normal young man. After he graduated college, he went on to

law school, and I lost contact with him, of course. He moved away from his parish and out of our southwest region. We had a midwinter meeting one time in the state where he was living, and I attended. This young man, now no longer a teen, but a fine young attorney, was there. He came and took my blessing – I was a brand-new bishop – and he said, "Sayidna, if you have five minutes, I'd really like to meet with you. I have a problem." Lord, have mercy. "Okay, come to my room, and right after lunch we'll talk."

He came, and, as I said, this is a normal young man, not a religious fanatic in the least. He came and he confessed his problem: "Sayidna, I no longer see my guardian angel." I said, "I beg your pardon?" He said, "I used to see him, standing at the foot of my bed every night." I said, "Until when? How old were you?" He said, "Maybe two, three years ago. I no longer see my guardian angel." How that convicted me! Here was one who had gone through university and law school and all, being a normal young man, everything that happens in the world around you, an attorney, and yet he had been able to preserve the innocence that was ours – all of ours, not only in paradise; don't forget our foreparents, Adam and Eve, saw and heard things that we no longer see and hear – but preserved the innocence and purity of heart of his childhood.

Elder Iakovos of Evia, who was just recently glorified as a saint, himself a priest, wrote this:

*People are blind and do not see what takes place in the church during the Divine Liturgy. Once I was serving, and I could not make the Great Entrance because of what I saw. I suddenly felt someone pushing me by my shoulder and guiding me toward the holy prothesis. I thought it was my chanter. I turned around and saw a huge wing that an archangel had laid on my shoulder and that he was guiding me to make the Great Entrance. What amazing things take place in the holy place during the Divine Liturgy! Sometimes I cannot handle it, and so I pass out in a chair, and thus some concelebrating priests conclude that I have got something wrong with my health, but they do not realize what I see and hear.*

There's a teaching from St. Kosmas Aitolos, a priest-monk of the holy mountain who, with the *igumen's* blessing, left the holy mountain, that he might go around benighted Greece, during the time of the *Tourkokratia*, and re-enliven people's hearts, first and

foremost to the love of God, the All-Holy Trinity, and to the love of their holy Orthodox faith. He would go from village to village. He had three stock sermons. That was it, just three. Perhaps that's why he didn't stay in one place longer than three days. They would erect a large cross in the central square. A podium would be put there after evening prayers, after vespers. Those who wished would come, and St. Kosmas would teach them. If they enjoyed his preaching and asked him to stay a second day, they got his second sermon. Again, if they enjoyed his sermon and found it soul-profitting and asked him to stay a third day, they got his third teaching. Then he moved on.

One of his teachings concerned you, the priesthood: teaching people how the priesthood and the person of the priest ought to be revered. He might look like you; as a matter of fact, he does look like you. He doesn't look much different from the moment after he was ordained from the moment before he was ordained, though he *is* very different – though you *are* very different. St. Kosmas said this to the people: For example, if you're walking on the street, and on your side of the street comes the emperor, with all of his servants, all of his attendants; on the other side of the street comes the priest. You leave the emperor, folks, cross the street, go make a *metanoia* before that simple village priest and take his blessing, and then you can go see the emperor. He said, beyond that, if you're walking in the street and you see on one side of you, coming toward you, a host of archangels and on the other side of the street that same, simple parish priest, again, you leave the angels, and you first go to the parish priest and make your *metanoia* and take his blessing. Then you can go and pay your respects to the angels.

Brothers, I tell you this not to puff you up – or me, for that matter! For goodness' sake, I share in that same priesthood. I don't say this to boast of us, to puff us up, but to make us gratefully humble to the great high calling to which we have each been called. St. Symeon of Thessalonica addresses that: "This being the case (our high calling), it is obvious that priests have been granted the greatest *charismas* and gifts, and as such are therefore the greatest debtors to God, because so much has been given to us."

To keep us humble, gratefully humble or humbly grateful, take your pick, St. John Chrysostom in *On the Priesthood* reminds us that the priest's shortcomings simply cannot be concealed. It's not because we live in a fishbowl; it's because we have presumed to

accept the gift of this high calling and to flesh it out in this world. That gives people expectations, then, brothers. There are others who have been called to the calling, like you and I, and who fled and who never took it up. There are even those who, once having been ordained, served no liturgies, because they know of their unworthiness.

St. John Chrysostom then says that the priest's shortcoming simply cannot be concealed, but everyone, including your parishioners, measures sin not by the size of the offense but by the standing of the sinner. And where do we stand in that line of sinners? Usually at the head, because of our high calling. There's nothing else in this world that has a calling that comes even close to the calling to which you have responded. St. John Chrysostom says, "Everyone wants to judge the priest, not as one clothed in flesh, not as one possessing a human nature, but as an angel, exempt from the frailty of others." So people want to judge us as if we were angels, which means that even a simple, little frailty can be huge in their eyes. St. John Chrysostom also warns us that, though people expect us to live as angels, and look upon us as angels, we ought never to think of ourselves as angels. They are passionless, and that's why angels cannot sin. That's from St. John of Damascus, by the way; it's a very interesting concept. Also, because the demons are fallen angels, it's the same reason why the demons cannot repent.

I have a brief confession to make. Those of you who are old enough may remember when I was elected to the sacred episcopacy – or nominated first – at the convention in Washington, D.C., in 1991. Are any of you here who was there? There's still a few. If you remember, I didn't even go to that general assembly. I stayed in my room, and it was pretty much common knowledge among people that, if I could, I would have fled to Pontus rather than be elected bishop, but I don't know where Pontus was, so I just fled to my room.

I had spoken with him who was then my father-confessor, Sayidna ELIAS (Audi), Metropolitan of Beirut, who happened to be at that convention, and whose room happened to be right next to mine. I was assigned to be his *syngellos*, so I had to escort him everywhere. When the list came out of the names of the eligible candidates, all the priests of our Archdiocese who met the objective criteria in our Archdiocesan constitution, about fifteen, if I recall, I saw my name there. I asked Sayidna ELIAS if I could take

my name off the list.

If you know Sayidna ELIAS, he's really a tough confessor. I mean, he aims right between the eyes when he talks with you about something. He's a loving man, but as a confessor, as a spiritual guide, he doesn't mince words. Sayidna said, "Basil, how *dare* you be so prideful? Shame on you! I never expected that from you!" and on and on and on, making me feel about this big. I just didn't understand what he meant that I was prideful. I said, "Sayidna, explain to me. I'll obey you, but explain to me." He said, "Just because your name is on the list, you think you're going to be nominated? You're worried about being nominated? Shame on you!" I said, "Okay."

Well, I got nominated. There were three of us at that convention in Washington, D.C., where I didn't even go to the general assembly that day. I got word I had been nominated, I was one of the three, so I asked Sayidna ELIAS. I said, "Now, Sayidna? Now is it time that I can take my name off the list?" And again, the same old rigmarole. "Vasile, I'm so ashamed of you! So prideful!" I said, "Sayidna, I listened to you the first time, and I *did* get nominated." He said, "Just because you're nominated doesn't mean you're going to be elected. You're so prideful!" On and on and on.

I was a priest in Wichita. When I got a call from Balamand right after that holy synod meeting, saying that I had been elected, I called Sayidna ELIAS, at the Balamand, because he was at that holy synod meeting. I said, "Now, Sayidna?" He said, "How dare you doubt the will of the Holy Spirit? I'm so embarrassed by you! Shame on you!" On and on and on.

All of that to say, when I was consecrated, Sayidna ELIAS came to Wichita for my consecration. Everybody else was saying all of this flowery stuff, "You're this" and "You're that," and *Eis polla eti, Despota* and kissing my hand, you're the best this and you're the best that, you're young, on and on and on. It felt good for a while, until Sayidna ELIAS got up at the banquet to speak, and he put everything in perspective. He said, "Basil, as a bishop your vocation is not that different from when you were made a priest. You need to think of yourself as a priest and then as a bishop." Now, he wasn't at my priestly ordination, so he couldn't tell me then, but at my episcopal consecration, he said: "Think of yourself as a piece of incense that's burned upon the charcoal of God's love. That you will be dissipated because of the ministry to which you are called. It'll be a beautiful thing if you do it joyfully and sacrificially. It'll be sweet-smelling,

just like the incense is sweet-smelling. But in the end, the incense is gone, the smoke is gone. What remains is the hot charcoal."

I guess that was probably the best lesson I had. It was the one phrase or one little vignette which I remember from that day which otherwise is sort of clouded in mystery. All of that is to say that when I had to leave the priesthood as a parish priest, I went fifteen hundred miles away, and my confession is this: I was in mourning. I had very little joy. I would smile when I would visit parishes. I don't know if the parishes on the West Coast, where I was sent, knew that I was in mourning. I tried to be chipper and normal, but I was in mourning. I had lost what I thought was my bride, and I called Sayidna ELIAS – I took a chance!

I explained it to Sayidna ELIAS. When I visited Simonopetra as a young priest, I asked Fr. Aimilianos, "What is it that makes someone choose a spiritual father – not just fall in line, use your parish priest, but really want something serious? What are the criteria for a spiritual father?" He said this: "The one who knows when you need to be smashed and the one who knows when you need to be uplifted." This time, Sayidna ELIAS was tender. He was not tender those other times, because I needed to be smashed. This time he knew that I needed to be uplifted. Well, I was blessed. Sayidna ELIAS was that kind of a spiritual father to me.

When I called him in the midst of my mourning, he had me speak of it, trying to describe it. I said, "Sayidna, there's really nobody I can love by face and name." When I was in a parish, the first thing I did on every morning, including Saturday, though not Sunday, was to go to the hospital; I went to see the shut-ins. First thing, before they had their coffee, so I could give them the Eucharist, or before they had their surgery. That's where I had my first cup of coffee in the morning: in the hospital or in an old person's home, visiting them. I said, "I don't have anybody like that anymore. I get up and I make my own coffee." I said, "I don't see people grow any more. I used to see babies that I would welcome into this world in the hospital, going to read that first-day prayer, receive them into the Church at forty days old, baptize them. I could see them grow: first grade, second grade."

I said, "I don't see anybody grow, and perhaps what is even worse, I don't see anybody die. There are no hospital calls. I don't know anybody to visit in the hospital. Really, I lost the bride to whom I was married," meaning my parish, everybody, not one

particular person. Sayidna ELIAS really was very tender then. He said, “Sayidna BASIL, you just have a new bride. You have a new congregation.” I said, “Who is that? There’s nobody here.” He said, “No, it’s your priests, your deacons, and their families. That’s your congregation. You’re *their* priest. You don’t have to worry about the people in the parish any more. God has provided them with priests, and they’re well taken care of if they have good priests in the parish. You have to be the priest for your priests and deacons, their wives, and their children.”

I took that to heart. I don’t know that I was a good priest, or am a good priest to my priests and deacons and their families, but I don’t feel I’m in mourning any more. Right then it dissipated.

I don’t know how many of you know of the contemporary elder, now deceased, Papa-Dimitri Gagastathis, a married priest. This is the prayer that he prayed as a priest.

“O Jesus, the Good Shepherd, I thank thee, because thou hast given to me, the small and weak one, the same command thou gavest to thy apostle, when thou didst tell him, “Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.” Never would I dare, O Lord, to accept such a commission and such a high calling if I did not believe that thy grace healeth that which is infirm and completeth that which is wanting. Therefore, in this moment in which I feel my shortcomings so intensely, I, thy priest, the sacrificer, the small shepherd of thy flock, do implore thee: Uphold me, O Lord, and keep my heart pure, whole, free from money, in attachment to thy commandments. Take away from thy servant selfishness, ostentation, and worldliness. Keep him from anger, rancor, envy, and jealousy. Make me a man of prayer, so that not only with my lips but also with my heart I may praise and glorify thy holy name. Help me not forget the holy feelings of my first Divine Liturgy...”

Can y’all remember your first Divine Liturgies? I remember mine so distinctly. I’ll do a footnote on that when I get done.

Help me not forget the holy feelings of my first Divine Liturgy, and by them to chase away the germ of habit which every so often comes to me. Help thy priest, O Lord, be always an angel of comfort for the afflicted, a source of spiritual invigoration for the disheartened, a guide

towards thy peace, and a source of joy for the wounded. Help me, my Savior, combine in my priestly life and work tenderness and firmness, tact with strength, sensitivity with strictness. Reduce my faults so that no one may fall because of my weakness.

I think that’s very insightful. He doesn’t say, “So that I might go to the kingdom,” but “So that I don’t scandalize someone else.”

Reduce my faults so that no one may fall because of my weakness. Teach me, O Lord, how to instruct the children, how to inspire the youth, advise the adults, turn back the sinners, encourage those who are about to die. Teach me, O Lord, who knowest the hearts of men, how to perform the mysteries of thy Church, and especially the mystery of holy confession. During that time, make me a perfect physician of souls and an affectionate father. Help me be in my parish an inspiration of good works and a leader in God-pleasing endeavors so that all may be won over for their own happiness and for the glory of thy name. Amen.

My first Divine Liturgy as a priest was for the feast of the Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple (February 2). I was still working at the Archdiocese headquarters in Englewood, so I went to St. George in Little Falls, New Jersey, Fr. Dimitri’s parish. At that time, the priest was Fr. Michael Simon, and those of you who have white hair, white beards, remember Fr. Michael Laffoon’s relative, really a fine priest who served in that parish over fifty years and who loved the divine services. He welcomed me to come and serve the Divine Liturgy by myself, two days after I was ordained, for the feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple, and I did.

All was going well. Fr. Michael stood off to the side and was grading me on every little movement. I made the Great Entrance. All was going well: I made the Great Entrance, I came down the center aisle, and as I look at the holy table, I see the gospel book is still on the holy table, the antimension is still folded underneath the gospel book. What am I going to do with this stuff? Talk about being humbled. But Fr. Michael is such a wonderful and loving priest. He stood off to the side, and those of you who know him can really picture this; he was standing there with a belly laugh, just a belly laugh, not because I had forgotten, but because he was entertained by the look

on my face! God give him paradise! He moved the gospel book, the antimension, and all went well after that.

Brothers, I love the priesthood, because it’s the life of Christ. I love to talk about it, I love to think about it, and it’s your life. I know some of you have tough times. Even in material ways, not just in spiritual ways, which we all have, but in material ways. “How are we going to get the kids through college? How are we going to make that payment for the car, the house, this month? How are we going to do that?” Other mundane concerns, but which nonetheless are concerns. I can’t tell you to forget them. One hopes that, at the Liturgy, you can lay aside your earthly care as we are counseled to do, but it’s not like we throw them away. It just says, “Lay them aside”; they’ll be right there when we’re done with Liturgy, and you can have them back: they’ll be right there.

But possessing all of those concerns, about your family’s health, and then about the things in the parish, the little jibes you get, the judgments that you hear – or worse, that you don’t hear, but your wife hears, or, God forbid, that your children hear. I can’t tell you to ignore those, and I would never presume to tell you to ignore them, but balance them. Really try to balance them with the recognition of the high calling in which you now find yourselves. It will outweigh the other things a million to one. Again, that doesn’t make them disappear, but it should make you confident, brothers, that our Savior called you, all of whom are more worthy than I, but I’m worth nothing, so to be more worthy than nothing is not all that great. I mean, we all feel that, right? But our God saw something in us.

Perhaps it was our unworthiness, that He could take the weak of this world and make them the strong. He can make wonders, brothers. He makes bread and wine into body and blood. He fed five thousand with a little brunch loaf. He makes a baby into a son of God simply by going into a font at our hands. He takes a young man and a young woman, two bodies and two souls, and at our blessing, the words which we pronounce, they become one flesh – a miracle! He can make many miracles. The miracle I pray for you is that in those sad moments, in those tough moments, the frustrating moments, the angering moments, that our God uplifts you, that He calls to mind – just pricks your conscience or your heart a little bit – to be reminded of the confidence that God, the All-Holy Trinity, has in you. Perhaps you don’t even have that

confidence in yourself. I don’t even have that confidence in myself, and I think that’s precisely why He chooses us: because we need to lean on him, to depend on Him for everything.

You’re all familiar with Elder Joseph the Hesychast, and his many spiritual sons. He died in 1959. If you know anything about Elder Joseph, you know he was not a wimp; he was one of those tough ones. Talk about right between the eyes! He was hard on himself, a little less hard on his spiritual sons, but nonetheless very tough. Listen to these words in a letter to one of his spiritual sons who had just been ordained a priest. Consider this is a letter *to you* from Elder Joseph the Hesychast.

My son [and you can insert your name here], my blessed priest, may mercy and enlightenment, strength, peace, love, and the abundant grace of the Lord be upon your noble soul. May the Lord our God send you a good angel to direct your steps in the way of peace, according to His holy will. My truly beloved son [your name], who won my love with your noble feelings, may your fiery soul be graced with brilliant splendor. May the holy protection of our sweetest Queen, the pure Virgin and Theotokos, cover you like Moses, along with all your spiritual children, as the divine Andrew, the Fool-for-Christ, saw in Constantinople. May our sweet Jesus make your *nous* and heart shine with His holy seal, as well as every God-pleasing work of yours, so that the Enemy will not find anything in you at all to plunder.

At His second coming, may He reward and bless and crown every single one of your good deeds which were done with love. May He enrich all your spiritual children through His rich endowment and heavenly grace. And may they become [what a beautiful image!] fragrant flowers of paradise, so that you will see them in that day and rejoice in their sweet fragrance. I, too, rejoice, seeing all of you as flowers, with the sweet smell of good works – I, who am empty of every good. You, my priest, are my happiness, my joy, my wealth in poverty, my great boast. Through your spiritual works, the Father is glorified, the Son rejoices, and the Holy Spirit is exalted.

Amen. May the Lord God remember your priesthood in His kingdom always.

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“FROM THESE STONES”

# DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

## Donne with the Ecumenical Campfire

Unlike the harvest celebration in the autumn of 1621, this Thanksgiving story involved a Russian deacon, an Antiochian priest, a Greek layman, an Episcopalian laywoman, a Roman Catholic priest, a Baptist, and a stranger. It took place somewhere between Rapid City, South Dakota, and Gillette, Wyoming, just before Thanksgiving.

The Roman priest, Fr. O'Malley, was traveling to Gillette to visit his mother. The Episcopalian, and her nice-looking Baptist beau, was traveling to Rapid City to introduce him to the family. They were hoping to get married, but her proper Anglican parents weren't too keen on her getting hitched to a Baptist. The Russian deacon had befriended the Antiochian priest and the Greek layman on Facebook. They were traveling to a clandestine meeting of like-minded and concerned Orthodox Christians in Billings, Montana.

You never know who you might meet on the highway, especially in an ice storm the day before Thanksgiving. Authorities had advised folks not to travel. As you might imagine, however, the lovebirds were determined, as were the Greek, Antiochian, and Russian churchmen. Fr. O'Malley had not seen his mother in two years; her health was failing. All believed they were on a “Mission from God.”

Fr. O'Malley was listening to a favorite radio personality recounting the traditional Thanksgiving story. You know how it goes ....

*The Pilgrims who sailed to this country aboard the Mayflower were originally members of the English Separatist Church (a Puritan sect). They had earlier fled their home in England and sailed to Holland (The Netherlands) to escape religious persecution. There, they enjoyed more religious tolerance, but they eventually became disenchanted with the Dutch way of life, thinking it ungodly. Seeking a better life, the Separatists negotiated with a London stock company to finance a pilgrimage to America. Most of those making the trip aboard the Mayflower were non-Separatists, but were hired to protect the company's interests. Only about one-third of the original colonists were Separatists.*

The car slipped, the rear wheel ran off the road and, had it not been for his trusty hands at “10 and 2,” Fr. O'Malley was certain he would have fish-tailed his old Buick Skylark right off the road. He needed a break. Up ahead was a rest area. It was closed. He stopped, nevertheless, to calm his nerves.

He pulled from his shirt pocket a little book of poetry that he'd brought along to while away the time as his mother slipped nearer to death. It fell open to a favored, dog-eared page. He turned the radio down and read John Donne's words aloud:

*No man is an island,  
Entire of itself.  
Each is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less.  
As well as if a promontory were.  
As well as if a manner of thine own  
Or of thine friend's were.  
Each man's death diminishes me,  
For I am involved in mankind.  
Therefore, send not to know  
For whom the bell tolls,  
It tolls for thee.*

He thought of his mom. He thought of friends who had gone on before – those for whom he was thankful, and those whom he'd lost without reconciling. He thought of his own mortality. The 72-year-old cleric fell asleep.

A few miles yet in the distance the young couple rode along in their Toyota Prius and talked of wedding plans. Close by, in an old SUV, three Orthodox men shared war stories. The main topic of conversation was the recent statement by the Pope of Rome that all Christians were now welcomed to petition to be accepted into full communion with the See of Peter, and few changes needed be made to their way of worship or doctrinal beliefs, if they only accepted the papacy. He'd even called for a Council, a sort of Vatican III, for the coming year, inviting the Orthodox and the Anglicans. These travelers, excitable types all three, had been warring on the Internet against what

they called “global ecclesiastical warming” for years. Other than companionship, they longed for assurance and consolation.

Fr. O'Malley awoke with a start; the sound he'd heard was one of crumpling metal. And, so it was. The Protestants had just been struck by the Orthodox. No one was hurt, but the cars, especially where the rear wheel of one and the front wheel of the other were concerned, were now immovable.

The Orthodox stared straight ahead in utter disbelief. For, emerging over the hillside, came a man in a cassock, carrying a priest's hospital bag. They were especially aghast because, settling into their vehicle for a long, cold journey, they had opted for jeans, boots, and hoodies, foregoing – *at least the priest and the deacon* – their normal clergy attire. They were traveling incognito.

As the travelers began to survey damage and introduce themselves, a light snow began to fall. Down by the rest area, Fr. O'Malley had left his radio running, his key in the ignition, and, unbeknownst to him, his doors were all locked tight. Yet, within the car, the radio announcer continued the 400-year-old story of that first Thanksgiving feast, in the year 1621

*– which was not repeated the following year. Many years passed before the event was repeated. It wasn't until June of 1676 that another Day of Thanksgiving was proclaimed. On June 20 of that year, the Governing Council of Charlestown, Massachusetts, held a meeting to determine how best to express thanks for the good fortune that had seen their community securely established. By unanimous vote they instructed Edward Rawson, the Clerk, to proclaim June 29 as a Day of Thanksgiving. It is notable that this thanksgiving celebration probably did not include the Indians, as the celebration was meant partly to be in recognition of the colonists' recent victory over the “heathen natives.”*

Elsewhere, these motley pilgrims whiled away the time together on that frigid November evening. Thanks to the camping clutter in the SUV, they were able to get a small fire going and begin introduc-

tions, only first names, beginning with Suzie and her man, Chad. Fr. Nicholas simply introduced himself as “Nick,” and Deacon Innocent as “Boris.” Athanasios Joanides always went by “Tom” anyways, so he was more-or-less honest. In short order, their identities, hopes, and vocations revealed, conversation faded. They knew, or thought they did, what each other believed, and they understood this was not the time or place.

Sensing a small measure of commonality, and hoping to break the ice, Fr. O'Malley began the “Our Father” and was quickly joined by the Tom the Greek. By “Thy will be done,” all of them were in unison. Fr. O'Malley deferred to Fr. Nick to finish with the prayer's Benediction, accompanied only by the Baptist, who didn't know any better. The deacon pulled out his rope and taught the strangers the Jesus Prayer.

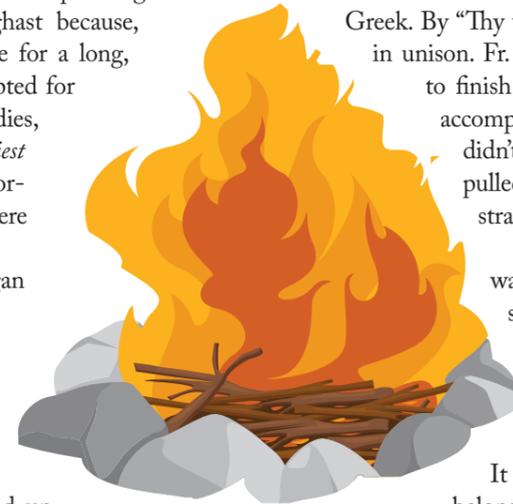
A hundred knots and an awkward silence later, Fr. O'Malley spoke: “The last time I sat by a camp fire was in Kansas. I was twenty; I'd dropped out of college and moved to a small town called St. Mary's.

It was a settlement of people that belonged to a breakaway Catholic group who rejected the second Vatican Council. I believed most Catholics were of the nominal *cafeteria type* and I wanted a more authentic expression of the faith. I moved to St. Mary's and enrolled in the seminary. It comes to mind, because once some of us went camping in the Flint Hills.”

“I didn't finish seminary there,” he continued. “In my final year, I had a bit of a crisis. I realized that, really, I just did not believe.” He stared over the fire into the distance and continued quietly. “I knew the tenets of the faith, I was very pious, keeping all of the rules, fasts, feasts, and rites. I was *Mr. Catholic*. But when I sat quietly and put the question to myself, it seemed to me there was no God. I was good at science and had been raised on an intellectual diet that was as much positive materialism as it was Christian Faith. I realized one day that my default mode was *materialism*. So why was I giving up the worldly stuff if there was no God?”

Tom the Greek was wide-eyed by this point: “How could you not believe in God?”

“I couldn't figure out what belief looked or felt



like. I asked others about their own faith. Everyone seemed to have a different answer. Nowhere could I put my finger on an ‘organ’ of belief, if you follow me. We see with eyes, we hear with ears, but what do we believe with?”

“Our hearts,” said Suzie.

“Yes, but, I couldn’t figure out what that felt like. So, I left. I was gone for about six years.” Fr. O’Malley chuckled to himself, “But I made a lousy hedonist. I really didn’t know how to go about *worldliness*. Mostly, I just read. It was not too long before I began going to church again, a regular Catholic parish in Topeka. I didn’t commune, but I attended and participated.”

“You went to church and prayed, even though you didn’t believe?” asked Tom.

“It seemed that some part of me believed; some part that drove me to Mass, to kneel, to make the sign of the cross, and to adore the sacrament. Eventually, I decided to throw my lot in with that part and stop worrying about what it did or did not feel like. The priest at the church said that I would probably always struggle; that was part of the faith.”

“You didn’t go back to the schismatic group?” asked Suzie.

“Nah, I was over that. Faith is hard enough without a bunch of people keeping a piety score card. Many people may appear nominal, *cafeteria*, but you would be surprised how much genuine struggling for faith they go through. Once I reconciled myself to some sort of actual personal faith, all that stuff became less important. Oh, I still struggle! Who knows? Once I get through this journey with my mom, maybe I’ll become Orthodox,” Fr. O’Malley winked at the other (shocked) clergy.

Suddenly there was the sound of an engine in the distance; headlights appeared through the snow. A black Hummer slowly emerged and stopped just short of the pilgrims. By this time everyone was standing.

The door flew open and out bounded the driver, yelling, “Get in!” as he ran around opening the doors. When everyone had piled in, the owner introduced himself, “I’m Sam. I was down in the southern part of the state on business and wanted to be home to my family by Thanksgiving. Guess I should have left yesterday.” Upon discovering that three of the six were clergy, he laughed and said it sounded like a bad joke. Suzie mentioned that he could add an Episcopalian to the joke, and Chad quipped that he could add Baptist. That’s when Sam said, “Well happy Thanks-

giving, Pilgrims – I’m what y’all used to call *Indian*.”

They laughed. Sam continued: “I hope you’ll all forgive me because I am none of the above. I see no evidence of a God, I see no need; I see a lot of people all over the world fighting and suffering for whatever they believe. I’ll respectfully abstain.” He eased the Hummer onto the road. “How about I take you to a motel ‘bout fifteen miles down the road? Y’all just relax.”

The travelers stared out in silence. When they arrived at the motel, Sam told them to sit tight, squelching questions or protest. He returned with key cards for everyone saying, “We’ll settle up in the morning.” Too tired to argue, they made their way to their rooms.

When they awoke the next morning, the snow had stopped; the sun was shining. The insecurities of the previous day allayed by the night’s sleep, they shared a light-hearted breakfast together. When they approached the front desk to pay the bill, the manager explained that Sam had settled the tabs and had their cars towed to a local mechanic. “He sells us our cable and internet service, so we were able to work something out. You folks are lucky Sam found you!”

They thankfully agreed and asked how they could possibly repay him. Smiling, the clerk told them not to worry about it. “Besides,” he chortled, “Sam’s probably afraid that if you had his e-mail, you’d just try to convert him! Oh, I almost forgot. Sam went back out to your ‘campsite’ this morning and found this. It’s a bit wet, I’m afraid.”

Fr. O’Malley’s book had obviously fallen from his lap as he’d exited his car the day before. He stared at the pages as his fellow travelers gathered around. Everyone could see the blush of emotion on the old priest’s face.

Suzie said, “What is it?”

“It’s the poem by John Donne, *No Man is an Island*. At first, I thought the book’s ink had faded – but it seems our friend Sam wrote a note on the page.” He read aloud:

*Today, as you give thanks with your friends and loved ones – each of you, sure of your own beliefs, going your separate ways to serve God – please pray for me, and those like me.*

*Sincerely,*

*Sam – the unbeliever*

*Metropolitan JOSEPH Presides at*

## WESTERN RITE CELEBRATION

Metropolitan JOSEPH, assisted by Bishop JOHN, presided over the Western Rite Vicariate Conference, which was a celebration of sixty years of witness, August 7–10, 2018, at St. Peter Orthodox Church, Fort Worth, Texas. This was an historic moment for the Antiochian Western Rite, since it was the first time a Metropolitan had presided over the biennial conference. Both in his presence and in his words, His Eminence matched the unhesitating, strong support

In his keynote address to the clergy and laity the following day, His Eminence reiterated his commitment to be a vigorous supporter of the Western Rite. Further, he announced that he has assigned Bishop JOHN to the Western Rite Vicariate. Against those who think the Western Rite has run its course, “I would argue,” said the Metropolitan, “that the mission Metropolitan ANTONY had for the Vicariate is actually more critical in our troubled contemporary



for the Vicariate of his predecessors, Metropolitan ANTONY and Metropolitan PHILIP.

In his opening remarks, His Eminence stated that he would do no less than his predecessors. “All the support, all the love, all the prayer, all the sacrifice, any kind of help will be given to you because you are in my heart,” Metropolitan JOSEPH declared. “You are not apart from the Archdiocese. You are a part of this body.”

times.” For this reason, the Archdiocese continues its “commitment to you and your congregations to welcome you into Holy Orthodoxy while you maintain a way of life, a way of prayer, and a way of worship that was passed down to you throughout many generations.” Hence, the Western Rite clergy and laity are “not second class members of our Church!” The Metropolitan then challenged the Vicariate parishes to be simply Orthodox. “Pray as simply Orthodox. Repent

as simply Orthodox. Forgive one another as simply Orthodox. Read the Scriptures and Fathers as simply Orthodox. And, yes, within the context of your Rite – liturgize as simply Orthodox!”

All divine services and presentations for the four-day conference were held at St. Peter Orthodox Church, a Western Rite parish. “Using the facilities of a parish helps involve the local laity and gives us an authentic and true picture of the Vicariate in action,” said Fr. John Fenton, Conference manager. “It allows the host parish to present its parish life, choir, and other strengths in order both to encourage the clergy and laity across the Vicariate and to give them practical ideas. Using the local parish has also contributed toward increasing cohesiveness and unity within the Vicariate.”

The four-day conference featured daily Matins, Lauds (Orthros), Divine Liturgy, and Vespers, with the ordinations of a priest and a deacon by His Eminence. It also included two presentations by the Metropolitan; presentations by Bishop JOHN, Fr. Edward Hughes (the Western Rite Vicar General), and Paul Jabara; and a viewing, with discussion, of the recently released film, *Ladyminster*, about the Antiochian Western Rite monastery in Colorado.

The conference opened with Vespers and Benediction on the evening of August 7, followed by brief welcoming remarks from His Eminence. The next morning during the Mass (Divine Liturgy), His Eminence ordained Abbot Theodore as a priest. Father Theodore, who had been elevated in February to Abbot by His Eminence, will continue his ministry leading the Benedictine dual monasteries of Our Lady and St. Laurence in Canon City, Colorado. Throughout the week, Vicariate priests led the four daily services, assisted by chanters and choirs from Vicariate parishioners who led Gregorian chant and sang motets. During the closing Mass (Divine Liturgy), Metropolitan JOSEPH ordained Sub-deacon Peter Cox, a Holy Cross graduate, as Deacon, assigning him to the St. Peter in Fort Worth, a Western Rite parish. One Eastern Rite Antiochian priest commented that he found all of the services spiritually moving.

During his presentation, Bishop JOHN encouraged the Vicariate laity and clergy by reminding them that they are Orthodox in every respect: the good, the ugly, and the hopeful. For this reason, “those who serve using the ancient [Western] rite should not be apologetic of their Orthodoxy. You are Orthodox because you are attached to an Orthodox bishop, you maintain Orthodox faith, and your Eucharist is united to the

Eucharist given by Christ mystically in His Kingdom.” His Grace also stated that the Western Rite challenges “those of the Church who use the Eastern liturgies to rethink what it means to be Orthodox.” Finally, Bishop JOHN pointed to Metropolitan JOSEPH’s presence as a sign of His Eminence’s “love and commitment to our Western Rite parishes and people.” “His attendance is historic as this is the first Conference presided over by a Metropolitan of the Archdiocese. I am grateful for his making this conference a priority for us.”

Father Edward Hughes, the Vicar General for the Western Rite, addressed the impact that Orthodoxy has had on Western culture from the beginning. He made it clear that Western art, music, and culture was shaped by Orthodoxy before the schism. He challenged the Vicariate to continue to recapture, rather than surrender, what is increasingly being lost by living the authentic traditions of the Western churches.

The chairman of the Department of Sacred Music, Paul Jabara, said that he was present primarily to listen and learn. What he saw thus far, he said, was that the Western parishes are no different from the Eastern parishes in terms of their musical talent, strengths, weaknesses, and possibilities. In an impassioned speech, Mr. Jabara pledged the full support of the Department in supporting and developing accessible and beautiful Western chant and song.

The attendance at this year’s conference was the largest in recent memory, and registrations were at an all-time high. Clergy and laity from Vicariate parishes from Maryland to California attended, as well as most of the monastics from Our Lady and St. Laurence monasteries. They were joined by clergy from several other Orthodox jurisdictions, as well as clergy and laity from Anglican and Catholic parishes. During the conference, Metropolitan JOSEPH and Bishop JOHN met with local Anglican bishops.

“What an honor it was for St. Peter Orthodox Church in Fort Worth, Texas, to host the 2018 Western Rite Conference,” commented Fr. Mark McNary, Pastor of St. Peter’s Church. “Having attended these blessed conferences before, I have always known the encouragement that comes from being with our hierarchy, brother clergy, monastics, and the priesthood of all believers. I must tell you that the experience of hosting this event was beyond what I could have imagined. There was great joy in the experience of the prayers, the worship, and the loving fellowship of all in attendance. By the prayers of all there was great grace and joy in serving all of those who joined us. The

testimonies keep rolling in of how both clergy and laity alike were encouraged and strengthened by their time at the conference. Even the parishioners of St. Peter Orthodox Church continue speaking of both the blessing they received during the Conference and the sense of blessing we are all experiencing after it.”

V. Rev. John W. Fenton

His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH’s Address to the Biennial Conference of the Western Rite Vicariate St. Peter Orthodox Church, Fort Worth, Texas August 7–10, 2018

Beloved in Christ,

Christ is in our midst!

We gather here in Fort Worth to celebrate the Sixtieth Anniversary of the establishment of the Western Rite Vicariate in our Antiochian Archdiocese. We honor the memory of our ever-memorable arch-pastors Patriarch ALEXANDER III and Metropolitan ANTONY – both of thrice-blessed memory. We look back with a sense of awe at the vision and courage of these two men to embrace an idea that other Local Churches talked about in theory for a century, and they made it a reality. I believe that theirs was the true spirit of Antioch – a spirit of missionary zeal and a spirit of lived, incarnational theology. Some theorized about the catholicity of our Holy Orthodoxy by speaking in lectures and writing essays, while our venerable arch-pastors showed it by example.

My esteemed predecessor to the throne of North America, Metropolitan PHILIP, of thrice-blessed memory, followed in the footsteps of Metropolitan ANTONY in being a vigorous supporter of the Western Rite. When I came to this country as the Bishop of Los Angeles and the West, I took my example from Metropolitan PHILIP and worked to support the Western Rite parishes under my arch-pastoral care. In our diocese, there was always unity and brotherhood of all of our clergy, and I always worked very hard to provide care without discrimination to all of our parishes. I am committed now to continuing in this path, which is why I have made it a priority to be with all of you this week.

In my remarks today, as the successor to Metropolitans ANTONY and PHILIP as Shepherd of this God-protected Archdiocese, I would like to revisit the founding vision of our Vicariate and discuss how we may stay true to its principles, while advancing those principles in our own time. There are those who argue that after sixty years of trying, now may be the time

to abandon this project that is the Orthodox Western Rite. I do not believe that they truly understand the times in which we live, the challenges that we face as Orthodox living in the West, and the necessity of building on the work that was begun sixty years ago. I would argue that the mission Metropolitan ANTONY had for the Vicariate is actually more critical in our troubled contemporary times.

The Western Rite Edict founding the Vicariate talked about a twofold mission: One, to provide a home in the Orthodox Church for western people who did not want to become “eastern” to become Orthodox, and two, to serve as a witness to the catholicity of the Orthodox Church to her Eastern Rite faithful. When he presented his proposal to the Archdiocese Convention in 1958, Metropolitan ANTONY called upon the empathy of the attendees to understand that those Western Christians seeking Orthodoxy wished to “preserve ancient forms which are as precious to them as ours are to us.”

He explained that in the history of the Church, the different ethnicities and cultures who accepted the Gospel developed rites that were suitable to their own languages and music, but he emphasized that our Faith was one. He actually joked in his remarks about the different liturgical expressions being like food: “Yorkshire pudding and sauerkraut and spaghetti are just as nourishing as *kibbee*, it’s just that we don’t enjoy them as much!”

Of course, His Eminence was being humorous, but there is an important point upon which all Orthodox Christians from traditional Orthodox countries would agree – there are many important traditions in our cultures, our ways of life, that help transmit the Gospel from generation to generation in very tangible ways. In Lebanon, there is a beautiful custom of setting a bonfire on the feast of Saint Elias after celebrating the Vespers of his feast. There is the Serbian tradition of an entire family having a patron saint and celebrating what they call the “slava” together on the feast day. The Russians make special pancakes called “blini” for Cheesefare Week before Lent. There are countless beautiful cultural expressions of the faith in both the East and West that help people live as Christians in their everyday experiences.

So Metropolitan ANTONY understood that we should not – *cannot* – legislate that everyone has to adopt each and every one of those local customs to be fully Orthodox, nor should we attempt to deprive people of their cultural customs when they are not in

opposition to the Orthodox Faith. He extended this not only to the “little *t*” traditions I mentioned, but to the Holy Tradition – a big capital *T* – that is our liturgical worship as well.

Our Archdiocese, therefore, has made a commitment to you and your congregations to welcome you into Holy Orthodoxy while you maintain a way of life, a way of prayer, and a way of worship that was passed down to you throughout many generations. Of course, Metropolitan ANTONY – in his wisdom – created a Western Rite Commission to study the liturgical texts and rubrics and customs to make sure everything was in conformity to the Orthodox Faith.

On a side note: I am not unaware that there is still work to do in this area, and there are points of disagreement between some of you about what forms or devotions from the Western Rite are applicable or appropriate for Orthodox use. The matter is a complex one. We are trying to incorporate a rite that at its root is wholly Orthodox, but has continued to develop over a thousand-year period in separation from the bosom of Orthodoxy. Within that span of time it was further affected by a splintering of Western Christianity into a multiplicity of denominations – each with their own attempted reforms of the rite. I would remind everyone that sixty years is actually a short amount of time – at least in terms of church history – to get everything exactly right in this regard.

I have been very pleased to assign to you a godly bishop, known for his pastoral love and wise discretion, in the person of Bishop JOHN. I have confidence in his approach to consider all of these things with patience and prayer and brotherly love. I do not believe the way forward is through a reliance on scholarly debate, or writing academic papers, or delving into liturgical archaeology. The way forward is through the ascetic labor of Christian life – worshipping, praying, fasting, serving, forgiving. The way forward is constantly refreshing one another with the reading and studying of the Holy Scriptures and divinely-inspired Holy Fathers. As you become illumined by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will guide you in further developing that Orthodox *phronema* that is the surest guide – in fact, the only sure guide – to working through the questions with which you sometimes wrestle. I will address this topic in more detail when I discuss the “Self-Discipline of the Priest” in my remarks tomorrow.

In looking at the discussions surrounding the Western Rite during its early days in our Archdiocese,

I discovered certain misgivings shared by Father Alexander Schmemmann in a famous series of essays regarding the wider problems he found in American Orthodoxy. He completely agreed philosophically with the idea of the Western Rite, but he was concerned that congregations entering the canonical boundaries of the Church would not be able to “convert” fully to Orthodoxy. He did not say this in any sense of Orthodox triumphalism. On the contrary, in his wider critique of American Orthodoxy, he felt that due to our theological, pastoral, missionary, and canonical weakness in this country, the only true way of transmitting the Faith was through our liturgical worship. He asked the question, therefore, how would western congregations become Orthodox without those services?

Again, I realize that is not a simple question with simple answers, yet I think Father Alexander’s essays contain the very path forward for our Western Rite congregations as well as our Eastern Rite congregations. Let me say clearly: *I do not believe that I need to make any kind of special address to you as though you are not an organic part of this Archdiocese.* You are not second-class members of our Church! Your challenges are everyone’s challenges. The answers to those challenges – and I think Father Alexander had compelling answers – are everyone’s answers. These remarks and the vision I present today are for you and the whole of the Archdiocese as one body.

Let me tell a brief anecdote to reinforce my point. When I was the Bishop of Los Angeles, I was visiting one of our parishes in Alaska. This was a parish comprised completely of converts. I told them very plainly: “Although I was born into the Orthodox Faith, I am still like you. I am a convert!” We are all converts. We all have to put off the old man to embrace the new man. We all must daily take up our crosses and follow Christ. We all must work to conform our minds to the mind of Christ. We must struggle to attain to the full measure and stature of Christ. This is a life-long battle for each and every Christian!

During my speech at the clergy symposium, I said the following:

*I think some of our people have a “gospel of prosperity” mindset, in which they believe that, if they go to Church, kiss the icons, receive Communion, and get the blessing of the priest, God will give them materially blessed lives. We have seen priests, and even hierarchs, question the moral teaching of the Church, using sophistry to warp*

*the teaching of the Fathers. We have faithful who treat our tradition of noetic prayer and stillness as simply some form of therapeutic meditation. We have parishes that consider themselves as parishes for only “Lebanese” or “Syrians” or “Palestinians” or “Americans” or “Converts” or any other demographic category that Saint Paul would have severely denounced as a betrayal of the Gospel.*

These are problems all of our parishes have. The Eastern Rite has not, through osmosis, kept certain of our people from warping Orthodoxy in their minds or understanding its language in ways alien to the patristic Tradition! Perhaps it has provided an anchor that has helped keep them from straying even further away, but it is not an end in and of itself. Embracing the struggle of the Christian life within the liturgical life of the Church is what forms the necessary spiritual conditions to understand the liturgical texts and writings of the Scriptures and the Fathers with an Orthodox *phronema*. So regardless of the rite, we need an Orthodox life to be Orthodox.

So let us turn to Father Alexander’s critique of American Orthodoxy and his proposed solutions to its challenges and look to see where they are still instructive for us today.

In his third of three essays, Father Alexander pointed to an often-heard statement of his day that I hear in our contemporary time as well – “It is impossible to be Orthodox in America!” In other words, the American way of life is so antithetical to the traditional Orthodox way of life, the Church must adapt herself. His list of “impossibilities” back then amounted to enforcing canonical norms, providing a full liturgical life other than Sunday mornings, and getting the people interested in anything other than social activities. I often wonder what he would think if he were to hear the list of “impossibilities” that we hear from our people in 2018!

What Father Alexander pointed to as the main issue undergirding these “impossibilities” was secularism. The way he discussed secularism in the American context of his time was very interesting. He pointed out a great paradox, that the United States is very religious, yet very secular. The way this paradox worked itself out is that the public sphere is “autonomous – governed by its own values, principles, and motivations.” So in contrast to an atheistic secularism, as in the Soviet Union or China, American secularism allowed the Church to be “religious” in its own sphere – to conduct

its rituals unimpeded within the walls of the building. To quote Father Alexander: “[American secularism] both *accepts* religion as essential to man and at the same time *denies* it as an integrated world-view permeating and shaping the whole life of man.” One of the ways in which this happens is that Americans came to view religion as playing a useful role in society. Religion “helps.” It helps people feel better when life is hard. It helps people celebrate or mourn important milestones in life. It helps people be nicer to one another. So American secularism can accept the utility of religion, on its own terms.

Father Alexander powerfully argues that to be Orthodox is to accept the Gospel, not as an intellectual proposition, but as a way of life. Orthodoxy cannot be confined to its utility. She cannot accept in her children the compartmentalization of their lives. Father Alexander argues that, unfortunately, the Church in America unconsciously surrendered.

She surrendered when her leaders began talking in terms of “our people” when discussing her Orthodox faithful America and of saving their *Russian-ness* or *Greek-ness* – and I will add, *Arab-ness* – within the context of the “American way of life.” She surrendered when her parishes were reduced to the worldly success of tracking the number of people in the pews, counting the money raised at ethnic festivals, taking pride in the size and beauty of church buildings, and even focusing on the correctness of the rituals offered. She surrendered when her parishes considered themselves as merely “religious communities” or “corporations” within the wider American society.

Father Alexander called for the Church in America to remember that salvation is a matter of persons striving to live Orthodox lives. A people is not saved. A culture is not saved. *Individual persons together in the Church are saved.* Priests and bishops must present the Gospel to their flock as individual persons, and save souls. Our parishes – and our archdioceses – must not have the *organization replace the Church*. They must not be places that retreat to their assigned function in society, but must be places where the Living God is encountered and each person has his or her life transfigured by communion with Him – the whole of life, not a part of life.

The solution to secularism, according to Father Alexander, is threefold: The Church must recover the true spirit and meaning of liturgy, she must educate her faithful in discipleship, and she must recover her missionary character. I do not want to delve too much

more into the specifics of the essay – I recommend reading all three of his essays if you have not already – but what Father Alexander goes on to say about liturgy as a challenge to American secularism is so important, especially in a *synaxis* of priests whose gathering here is defined by the use of a distinct rite.

He calls on the priests to cease being the “organization man” who builds up the reductionist version of his parish. He must lead, and the first place he must lead is in the liturgy. The liturgy must be for our flock “an entering into, and communion with the reality of the Kingdom of God.” The liturgy must provide “an all-embracing *vision of life*, including heaven and earth, time and eternity, spirit and matter and as the *power* of that vision to transform our lives.” In response to the notion that the Church’s liturgical life is incompatible with the “American way of life” because it is too busy, Father Alexander replies:

All conversations about people being “busy” and “having no time” are no excuses. People were always busy, people always worked, and in the past they were, in fact, much busier and had more obstacles to overcome in order to come to Church. In the last analysis it all depends where the treasure of man is – for there will be his heart. The only difference between the present and the past is – and I have repeated this many times – that in the past a man knew that he has to make an *effort*, and that today he expects from the Church an effort to *adjust herself* to him and his “possibilities.” The liturgical restoration must be thus the first challenge to secularism, the first judgment on the all-powerful “prince of this world.”

To do this adequately, it is not just a matter of the correct rituals and correct rubrics. In his essay dealing specifically with liturgy, Father Alexander states that the problem of secularism must be healed by the “*language of the Church* in the deep all-embracing, and not only linguistic, meaning of the word that man and society do not hear or understand, the language which includes the texts and the rites, the whole rhythm and the whole structure of worship.”

So the priest must be a teacher of the liturgy. He must educate his people through his homilies, his talks, and above all the example of his own life of the transformative power of the liturgy. The priest must make the sacred words of worship – with all of their poetic beauty and theological profundity – relevant to his flock. Not made relevant by changing or dumbing

down the liturgy – God forbid! – but by evangelical teaching!

I think we can all agree that Father Alexander had a very insightful view of the challenge that American culture had for Orthodoxy in his time, and I think he provided a very comprehensive view of the way Orthodoxy needed to meet that challenge. We can discuss the ways in which the Church in America may have succeeded in implementing some of his ideas, and ways which she did not.

I would like to offer a few thoughts by way of updating his view of American secularism for our contemporary time. I believe the days of the benign secularism Father Alexander described are fast coming to a close. It is not hard to see that merely teaching our people “to be nice and sociable” in the public sphere is no longer acceptable. There is increasing pressure to succumb to abandoning the moral precepts of the Gospels as many Protestant communities have.

We can see the way the reductionist surrender of our parishes to being mere social clubs will now come to haunt us. If our parishes have accepted to be merely worldly organizations in a wider society – not the hospital for sinners to be healed spiritually for participation in the Kingdom of God – then the wider society may now feel completely justified in dictating how we draw up our membership rolls and how we decide our employment policies.

We can also see the rise of nationalism and identity politics in our society, further reducing human beings to ethnic groups and races. We will be tempted as never before to have our parishes succumb to the temptation to be only for “a people” or “a culture.” This reduction may be very tempting for many of our parishes, and perhaps the pressure of the secular society can be abated somewhat by appeals to multiculturalism, but this reduction is a trap and a betrayal of the Gospel.

I think it is also important to note that one of the major issues Father Alexander wrote about is that people in the Church throughout history may have been worse sinners than people now, but those people would have identified the Church as the reference point of their lives – they would have recognized their sinfulness! Father Alexander wrote about the people in his time believing the Church should adapt to them as the reference point – how much worse is this issue in our day!

Let us now return to the Western Rite Edict of 1958. As we mentioned before, there was a two-fold mission: the first was to offer the western liturgical

tradition for people of western cultures, and the second was to offer a witness to the catholicity of Orthodoxy to those of our Eastern Rite. In what way do we enhance this mission in 2018 – now sixty years later?

First and foremost, as I have said, both aspects of the twofold mission will be enhanced by your being “simply Orthodox” – to play off of the line “mere Christianity,” used to such great effect by C. S. Lewis. Pray as simply Orthodox. Repent as simply Orthodox. Forgive one another as simply Orthodox. Read the Scriptures and Fathers as simply Orthodox. And, yes, within the context of your Rite – liturgize as simply Orthodox! Be simply Orthodox!

Without my getting into the specifics of the rubrics or liturgical texts of the Western Rite, I call on you – as I do our Eastern Rite priests – to join the “liturgical rebellion” against secularism that we have been speaking of. What are we rebelling against? We rebel against being reduced to people in an ethnic group or worldly organization, not persons being saved. We rebel against liturgy being a ritual on a Sunday, not something that transforms the whole of our lives. We rebel by making the Liturgy and its evangelical preaching and eschatological reality the real reference point in the lives of their flock! Brothers – join the rebellion!

You must infuse your ancient Rite – not with debates about the rubrics of this or that century – but with the pure teaching of Orthodoxy that used to define it. As Father Alexander calls us, we as the priests must teach the liturgy. Make it relevant for the transformation of lives. Teach your people the Orthodoxy of your ancient rite. Reclaim it by your constant conversion to it. As I said at the outset, Western and Eastern rites need this constant conversion to the *phronema* of Orthodoxy.

I found one aspect very strange in those visionary and prophetic essays of Father Alexander – his essays are a call to conversion of Orthodox to Orthodoxy. Yes, he questioned whether the Western Orthodox could be converted using their rites. He wrote that we convert through rediscovering what the Liturgy is, rediscovering its power. He admitted that his Eastern Rite contemporaries had the Liturgy but were getting it wrong. I do not understand why he thought the Eastern Rite clergy could rediscover their tradition, but the Western Rite could not.

So I call on you to continue your conversion to Orthodoxy – the same way I do every day – and let it transform your liturgical life, and by doing that you will be transforming lives – individual by individual.

You will be fulfilling the high calling of the first part of the edict for our Western people.

What do you now offer your Eastern Rite brethren? You have witnessed to the catholicity of the Church for sixty years. I think there are further things you can offer. One, you can offer this image of which I have spoken: constant conversion to an Orthodox mindset. You can offer an example of liturgical renewal that renews lives. Father Alexander knew our Eastern Rite clergy needed it then, and I say we need it now more than ever. Offer them that witness.

I will also challenge you to present to your brethren – especially those tempted to give up their cultural traditions to embrace the “American way of life” in the negative sense Father Alexander wrote about. Show them an example of Americans who model an authentic Orthodox American way of life. I do not mean that you should undermine American life, but rather we should be a positive affirmation of what is good, what is holy, what is beautiful about American life. Show them an American life transfigured by Orthodoxy.

In actuality, I hope you hear my message that your challenges are *all* our challenges. Your way of answering those challenges are the same answer for all of us. We are one Archdiocese. We are one Body of Christ. We all equally share the incarnational theology and missionary spirit of our Mother Church, the Church of Antioch. We meet these challenges and work towards fulfilling our call as Orthodox priests in this time and in this land together as one.

I look forward to spending these blessed days with you. I pray that they will be full of God’s divine grace and for our salvation and the salvation of our flocks.

#### Metropolitan JOSEPH’s Presentation to the Conference – The Self-Discipline of the Priest

Beloved Brothers in Christ,

Christ is in our midst!

In my last talk, I spoke to you about continuing to develop an Orthodox *phronema* by being “simply Orthodox.” We discussed that we need you, our priests, to join a “liturgical rebellion” against the secularism of our age, and that requires you to fully engage in the ascetical life of Orthodoxy – prayer, fasting, and almsgiving – so that your preaching and serving may be inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Today, I would like to expound on this topic to discuss the self-discipline of the priest.

In preparing these remarks, I wanted to switch from the usual Eastern Orthodox emphasis on Saint

John Chrysostom's work, *On the Priesthood*, and focus on the great father of Western Orthodoxy, Saint Gregory the Great, and his work entitled *The Pastoral Rule*. I believe this is very important, as Saint Gregory represents the beautiful common inheritance of Eastern and Western Orthodoxy. Many of you serve the Liturgy of Saint Gregory, and all of us in the Eastern Rite serve the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts that is ascribed to him. The Liturgy of St. Tikhon found its roots in St. Gregory's Liturgy. I would like to hold up a few quotations from this great Father of the Universal Church for our instruction and edification.

Saint Gregory begins the second Book of his work, which focuses on the life of the pastor, with a list of the qualities that should raise the level of the life of the shepherd over his flock, and the Book continues by elucidating them, point by point. He speaks throughout the work of the "prelate" and the "ruler," but for our purposes, I will substitute "priest," as I think all of these qualities, as well as his admonitions, are relatable to all of us. The list reads as follows:

It is necessary, then, that in thought he should be pure, in action chief; discreet in keeping silence, profitable in speech; a near neighbor to everyone in sympathy, exalted above all in contemplation; a familiar friend of good livers through humility, unbending against the vices of evil-doers through zeal for righteousness; not relaxing in his care for what is inward from being occupied in outward things, nor neglecting to provide for outward things in his solicitude for what is inward.

I will highlight a few thoughts from this list about the lifestyle of the priest.

- 1) *Keep your thoughts pure*: "The [priest] should always be pure in thought, in as much as no impurity ought to pollute him who has undertaken the office of wiping away the stains of pollution in the hearts of others also; for the hand that would cleanse from dirt must needs be clean, lest, being itself sordid with clinging mire, it soil whatever it touches all the more."
- 2) *Actively live yourself what you teach and preach*: "The [priest] should always be chief in action, that by his living he may point out the way of life to those that are put under him, and that the flock, which follows the voice and manners of the shepherd, may learn how to walk better through example than through words. For he who is required by the necessity of his position

to speak the highest things is compelled by the same necessity to exhibit the highest things. For that voice more readily penetrates the hearer's heart, which the speaker's life commends, since what he commands by speaking he helps the doing of by showing."

- 3) *Know when to speak and when to keep silence*: "The ruler should be discreet in keeping silence, profitable in speech; lest he either utter what ought to be suppressed or suppress what he ought to utter. For, as incautious speaking leads into error, so indiscreet silence leaves in error those who might have been instructed."
- 4) *Balance staying close to your people and focusing on spiritual life*: "The ruler should be a near neighbor to everyone in sympathy, and exalted above all in contemplation, so that through the bowels of loving-kindness he may transfer the infirmities of others to himself, and by loftiness of speculation transcend even himself in his aspiration after the invisible; lest either in seeking high things he despise the weak things of his neighbours, or in suiting himself to the weak things of his neighbours he relinquish his aspiration after high things."
- 5) *Stay humble and loving even as you correct the faults of others, but do not let affection allow sin to go uncorrected*: "For he is rightly numbered among the hypocrites, who under pretense of discipline turns the ministry of government to the purpose of domination. And yet sometimes there is more grievous delinquency, if among perverse persons equality is kept up more than discipline."
- 6) *Put proper focus on both necessary worldly matters and spiritual ones*: "Since, then, all who are over others ought indeed to have external anxieties, and yet should not be vehemently bent upon them, the priests are rightly forbidden either to shave their heads or to let their hair grow long; that so they may neither cut off from themselves entirely thoughts of the flesh for the life of those who are under them, nor again allow them to grow too much. Thus in this passage it is well said, "Polling let them poll their heads"; to wit, that the cares of temporal anxiety should both extend themselves as far as need requires, and yet be cut short soon, lest they grow to an immoderate extent."
- 7) *Do not be a "people-pleaser," but also be mindful of*

*what pleases your people*: "For it is indeed difficult for a preacher who is not loved, however well he may preach, to be willingly listened to. He, then, who is over others ought to study to be loved to the end that he may be listened to, and still not seek love for its own sake, lest he be found in the hidden usurpation of his thought to rebel against Him whom in his office he appears to serve."

- 8) *Beware that what people praise in you may be one of your vices*: "Whence it is necessary for the ruler of souls to distinguish with vigilant care between virtues and vices."
- 9) *Discern when to correct and how forceful or gentle to be*: "Some things, however, ought to be gently reproved: for, when fault is committed, not of malice, but only from ignorance or infirmity, it is certainly necessary that the very censure of it be tempered with great moderation.... Some things, however, ought to be vehemently reproved, that, when a fault is not recognized by him who has committed it, he may be made sensible of its gravity from the mouth of the reprover; and that, when any one smooths over to himself the evil that he has perpetrated, he may be led by the asperity of his censurer to entertain grave fears of its effects against himself."
- 10) *Daily read, study, and meditate on the Holy Scriptures to rise above idle talk in human life*: "But all this is duly executed by a ruler, if, inspired by the spirit of heavenly fear and love, he meditate daily on the precepts of Sacred Writ, that the words of Divine admonition may restore in him the power of solicitude and of provident circumspection with regard to the celestial life, which familiar intercourse with men continually destroys; and that one who is drawn to oldness of life by secular society may by the aspiration of compunction be ever renewed to love of the spiritual country."

All of these precepts require a very skillful balance and holy discernment. How do we keep the balance and acquire discernment?

- ❖ As St. Gregory says – we need time for retreat and prayer and contemplation. We must balance this with the work of ministry.
- ❖ I remind you of my talk at the Clergy Symposium – as St. Gregory said, the life of contemplation and meditation on Scripture must be

balanced with administrative matters. Remember that *administration* is *ministry!*

- ❖ I remind you of what I said about needing a spiritual father – "The one who has himself as a spiritual father has a fool for a spiritual son." All of us need the help of hierarchs and brother priests to find the various types of balance that St. Gregory speaks of: being close to your people without being too close; being involved with worldly matters but being spiritual; being pleasing to your people without being a "people-pleaser," and so forth. You need help to realize when your vices are mistaken for virtues. You help to know when to rebuke and when to be gentle.

By striving for this beautiful vision of Saint Gregory, who is such a beautiful example of Western Orthodoxy, you will be fulfilling the vision I laid out for you as the Western Rite Vicariate yesterday. As I said yesterday, nothing that I have presented cannot be related to all our priests. This beautiful vision of pastordom is from a Western Orthodox, that is, one who is "simply Orthodox."

#### Keynote Presentation

Fr. Edward Hughes

*Si fueris Romae, Romano vivito more; si fueris alibi, vivito sicut ibi.* "If you are at Rome, live in the Roman manner; if elsewhere, live as they do there."

When St. Augustine arrived in Milan, c. 387 A.D., he observed that the Church did not fast on Saturday as did the Church at Rome. He consulted St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who replied: "When I am at Rome, I fast on a Saturday; when I am at Milan, I do not. Follow the custom of the Church where you are." I would like to argue that we live in the West, in "Rome" as it were, and should follow the customs of the ancient Christian West, of Rome.

We are all very familiar with the fact that the Church worldwide before the Thirteenth Century enjoyed a great variety of customs and traditions from place to place. We should also be very familiar with the fact that these differences caused no concern. For the great majority of people, who never travelled anywhere, this variety was largely unknown. Only for those who travelled for business or for diplomacy was this an accepted experience.

In border lands between great nations, of course, people would be aware of these varieties. There one

might see two or three different customs being followed by people from different areas, all living in the same town or city. Southern Italy was always such a place, where Romans and Greeks and various types of barbarians were living and mixing together. Interesting liturgical experiments went on there during these early centuries, experiments which might have seemed quite exotic to people in the centers of their nations, or even to us, today.

North America has become one of those types of places in our world today. We have people from all kinds of countries and cultures, all living together in cities and towns all over North America. In many cases they have tried, with varying levels of success, to maintain the customs of their homelands. The ultra-orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe, for instance, have managed to maintain really well the entire civilization of Eastern European Jewry of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries in the middle of some of our largest urban centers, like Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Chicago. The Chinese have had similar success, also in the center of our largest urban centers. With somewhat less success, the Amish and the Mennonites have tried to maintain their seventeenth-century rural culture all across the vast rural areas of America and Canada. Russian “Old Believers” have had some success in Canada and Alaska. Elsewhere we find “little Italy’s,” “little Polands,” “little Germanies,” “little Azores,” and so on, in many of our cities. The maintenance of their cultures, however, seems to be really superficial: a lot of restaurants and markets and little else. The prevailing “American” culture is actually the cultural matrix in these communities. This is especially true of the grandchildren and later generations beyond the immigrant generation. The great “melting pot” much spoken and written about at the turn of the Twentieth Century is indeed a real thing. Public schooling, the English language, the media, especially entertainment, does its job and creates a standard, an expectation of standardization, which brings all of these people into one cohesive cultural expression. By the third generation, we all speak the same English, we all went to the same schools, we all eat the same food (except maybe on holidays), we all see the same movies and we all listen to the same music. We all go to Disney or Six Flags on vacation. We have all become “Americans” or “Canadians.” And that is without the hyphen: “German-Americans,” “Polish-Americans,” “Italian-Americans” – all that is a thing of the past. It goes away immediately as the immigrant generation passes away.

Is this a good thing, or a bad thing? That entirely depends. How we, as American Orthodox are to proceed, depends on the answer we come up with. Is it possible to be truly, completely Orthodox and truly, completely American or Canadian at the same time? We see an entire variety of answers all across the Orthodox jurisdictional divide. Certainly the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) has institutionally answered Yes: use of the English language, at least, and some kind of adaption to American culture, as they understand it. Our Antiochian Archdiocese has also answered Yes, if in a somewhat more qualified way. We pioneered English-language liturgy and outreach to non-Orthodox Americans. Do you know that by the 1950s, over half of our clergy were converts? Other jurisdictions have also said Yes, if perhaps more softly and in an even more qualified way. I don’t think that anyone has answered No. Even if there are isolated communities in Chicago or the Bronx, in which it seems that America does not exist at all, their larger jurisdictions do not expect everyone to live like that. Our people came to this continent in almost all cases for economic opportunity. They wanted what America or Canada had to offer in terms of the “American Dream.” They did not want to re-create the conditions from which they came. An awful lot of them never looked back.

So what is “America” or “Canada,” culturally? These nations were created by Great Britain. There; like it or not, it is so. Sure, there were French all over the place, and Spanish here or there, but it is the British who created the framework of politics, culture, and language in which all of us live, work, and play, even if we happen to be in Acadia, or Gulf-coast Louisiana, or California, or Arizona, or Southern Florida. The remains of the French or Spanish past are decidedly *secondary*.

This means that we are cultural heirs to a very specific civilization. The roots of this civilization are in Europe of the fourth to seventh centuries. Europe was a collection of various tribes: Celtic, Gothic or Germanic or Frank, and other kinds of barbarians. The Romans were not culturally ascendant at the time. The revolution which created Europe out of these warring chaotic tribes was the preaching of Christianity. St. Martin, St. Boniface, St. Patrick, St. David, and the others are all credited openly and plainly with *creating* the nations which they evangelized. There is no continuity between the pagan tribes and the Christian nations which they became. Their history ended, so to speak, and something brand new began. The event of Baptism fundamentally changed who they were and

how they lived. Even in Italy, the barbarian invasions and their subsequent adoption of “civilization” effected the same fundamental change. Besides the preaching, teaching, and organization of the great missionary bishops, the influence of Benedictine monasticism was incredibly important. All of these bishop-saints brought with them St. Benedict’s *Rule*, and armies of black-robed monks praying and singing in Latin. This means that there was a great deal of commonality and identity between all of these new “nations” of Christian Europe. They were brought and given “civilization,” along with their brand new Christianity. It is impossible to over-state the huge influence of the towering figures of St. Gregory the Great (Dialogos) and St. Benedict of Nursia. They are the holy authors of the civilization which was carried all over Europe by the great missionary bishops. And it was *Roman* in the ecclesiastical sense. The differences between Rome, Milan, and Toledo in custom and tradition did not travel throughout Europe. It was Rome that sent out the missionaries, and Rome that sent out her Christian culture. The brief experiment of the Celts at the very edge of the world was extinguished with the council of Whitby (663–664) and the success of the Saxons in the area. The bishops and the abbots were constantly traveling to Rome to procure books, music, and teachers, as they enlarged and spread the civilization among the people and created a Christian culture which for the next five hundred or so years was completely Orthodox, but completely Western at the same time. The height of all of this is the Romanesque period (from the Fourth or Seventh or Ninth Century, to the Thirteenth); art, architecture, literature, music, all of it deeply Christian and somehow Roman. I think that the case can be made that the Romanesque is a discreet *culture* in and of itself, one which unified all of Europe up to the Thirteenth Century. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann wrote in his Journal that “Christianity is not *about* culture, but it cannot avoid giving birth to culture, inasmuch as culture is a holistic vision of God, man and the world.” This “holistic vision” is beautifully represented in the Romanesque manifestation in Europe at the time of the “split” between East and West.

I need to mention here the historical fact that the Western Church – Rome – and all of Europe and North Africa were fully and completely understood to be Orthodox at this time. It also needs to be understood that the Church of Rome, including North Africa, was using the historical Western Liturgy both for the hours and for the Mass. Since the time of St.

Gregory the Great (Dialogos) (590–604) the Roman Rite remained almost exactly the same until the 1970s. The Roman Rite before St. Gregory was hardly different, either. St. Gregory made only small changes in the form of the services. What he did was to compose and organize the changeable propers for various feasts and seasons. Even the two other Western liturgies, that of Milan and Toledo, are essentially Roman in their outward form and structure.

I say these things because some of us, especially some of our Eastern, Byzantine brethren, imagine that the West used the same services as the East before the split. This misunderstanding is encouraged by the strange and anachronistic icons of ancient Western Saints dressed as modern Byzantines. In fact, it was the Byzantines who changed radically how they worship. St. John Chrysostom never heard “Only Begotten Son...” or the Cherubim hymn. He never wore a *Sakkos* or a “Byzantine Mitre” either. If he saw a modern Byzantine Hierarchical Liturgy, he would not recognize what it was at all. If St. Gregory the Great (Dialogos) or St. Benedict, or St. Leo visited one of our Western Rite parishes, they would be quite at home, know exactly where they were, and might even sing along with the chants.

The people who colonized North America, and who bequeathed to us the institutions and world-view which are “American,” came from this Europe, albeit after the Protestant Deformation and the Thirty Year’s War (1618 – 1648), which had caused *8 million deaths* throughout Europe. America and Canada were colonized and organized as part of Christian civilization. Some came here specifically to preserve their religious culture, such as the Puritans, Quakers, Moravians, Amish, Mennonites and Roman Catholics, while others came for economic freedoms, but completely committed to the religious traditions which they brought with them. The “English” expressions of Christianity became the normative: Church of England/Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist are still the mainline churches of America. Lutheran and Church Reformed (Church of Christ) represent the large number of Germans who came from the beginning. The Roman Catholics were originally English, then German, then Irish – mirroring the development of American culture through the early immigration. (The French and Spanish Catholics were there all along, but did not appreciably affect our common culture.)

From the beginning, America was full of “religion.” Along with the early settlers came missionaries intent

on Christianizing the natives. Some of our greatest universities were originally “Indian schools” of one religious bent or another. In New England, the local parish church was the center of politics as well as religion. In Pennsylvania, Moravian and Lutheran pastors were leaders in the Revolution. Some seventy-five years later, various churches were very active in the debates on both sides of the American Civil War. It was in parish churches all over the North that people gathered to listen to activists speak about the issues. Even today, when we are so used to talking about the decline and decay of American religious life, people in America are much, much more “religious” than their European counterparts.

One very important aspect of all of this is that American “religiosity” if you will, is Western in form. The mainline churches are all directly descended from the Roman Catholic Church of the middle ages through the English and German reformation experience. Our art, music, and literature are all part of the development which begins with the Romanesque flowering in Europe and descends directly from there. The “authorized” or “King James” Bible has had the most profound effect on our language itself, as well as our literary forms; with Cranmer’s “Book of Common Prayer” right behind it. (You can look it up; there have been studies.) Even if people today do not recognize the origin of so much of our everyday culture, they are intimately familiar with it, and it lives in our lives nevertheless. Does everyone who hears the Pete Seeger song, “Turn, Turn, Turn,” know that it is an extended quote from Ecclesiastes? Probably not. But countless people can sing all of it. My wife, a high school history teacher observes that no one can read most of the original documents of our history intelligently without a thorough knowledge of the Bible.

Does anyone know that the Andrew Lloyd Weber song “Pie Jesu” comes from the Requiem Mass? Probably not. But you can hear it everywhere – strangely, often at Christmastime. And speaking of the Requiem, the melody of the sequence: “Dies Irae...” is everywhere. A partial list, courtesy of Wikipedia is: Symphonie Fantastique – Berlioz, Totentanz-Liszt, Danse Macabre – Saint Saens, Symphony No 3 – Saint Saens, Isle of the Dead – Rachmaninoff, Symphonic Dances – Rachmaninoff, Metropolis Symphony – Daugherty, Stars and Stripes Forever – Sousa, Sweeney Todd – Sondheim, Hunchback of Notre Dame – Menken, Star Wars prequels – John Williams, Close Encounters of the Third Kind – John Williams, Home

Alone – John Williams, Marie Ward – Elmer Bernstein, Nightmare Before Christmas – Danny Elfman.

Since we are thinking of the Requiem, does anyone wonder why the colors of Halloween are orange and black? Of course, there are a lot of sociological and psychological reasons why the Requiem would be a very, very powerful influence on individuals, and collectively on the culture as a whole.

One could go on at great length, finding and listing all sorts of images from art, music, poetry, language, and elsewhere, which come directly from the Western Church. It would be a lot of fun, and very, very informative, but it would take a lot longer than we have time for. You can just imagine that they are everywhere.

Another important feature of our culture is the Latin language. The Church made the Latin language universal. When one visits England, one can be immediately overwhelmed by the amount of Latin around. At one time it was the language of government, law, and education, as well as the Church – because of the Church. In the United States, eighteen of our State mottos are in Latin. Latin appears on the great Seal of the United States, and on many State flags and town and city seals. Many, many university seals feature Latin, and some still print their certificates all or partially in Latin. It is still a feature in law and medicine. Because Latin was the language of education for such a long time, the influence of the language itself imprinted itself on our ways of thinking, discussing, and understanding in ways we never notice. There is an entire discipline which tries to understand the psychology of language. We Americans all carry the influences of the Latin language with us in the way we process and understand everything.

All of this means that North American culture bears the indelible print of the Western Church on it, under it, around it, and through it. Does that mean that North Americans are all immersed in the Church and Christian thought? No. In fact, hardly at all. Despite the fact that Americans are more “religious” than Europeans, their focus has been on individual experience and leaning strongly toward syncretism and the occult. (Again, there are plenty of studies to look at, if you like.) Fr. Alexander Schmemmann was very strong when he wrote in his *Journal*: “The West – secular, hedonistic, technological, etc., lives by its renunciation of Christianity. I emphasize, not by indifference to Christianity, but precisely renunciation. – The revolutionary West lives by its fight with Christianity,

with the Christian man.” I like to say that the West has sought to evacuate the Christian meaning out of everything in our culture. We see this most especially at Christmas. Our Christmas feast is unlike anything that ever came before, precisely because Christianity – Christ Himself – is unlike anything that ever came before. The anti-Christians are forced to jump through hoops of their own making in order to try and re-claim Christmas for themselves without the Christian content. It never works very successfully because Christ comes and re-fills everything with Himself whenever no one is looking. One has to be very vigilant, very forceful, and very committed to be constantly on the watch, for creeping Christianity always finding its way back in.

So, we can see two clear choices regarding the way we can proceed. We can seek to differentiate ourselves in every way from modern, contemporary Western culture. We can dress strangely, maintain a different language, advocate for a radically different lifestyle, and keep ourselves in isolated communities, largely cut off from the main-stream society. It works for the Amish and the Ultra-Orthodox Jews, and perhaps for the Old-Believer Russian Orthodox. This was not our ancestor’s intent when they came over here, but we can say that they did not anticipate the radical anti-Christian takeover of the culture. I know that this option is being seriously considered by young Orthodox all over the country. I actually see it in practice somewhat in certain young communities of believers. I must say that I am not comfortable with it. But then I am of a very different generation, and I had a very different formation at Seminary. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann would not have been very much a fan.

There is a kind of moderate form of this, in which converts are asked to “renounce” their culture, at least symbolically. They take new names, they learn the exotic and foreign Byzantine liturgy, but they keep their language. They go to school and work in the wider world, but they might modify their appearance a bit in order to make it clear that they are not “of this world.”

Freely admitting that there might be other choices, I would like to explore a radically different direction. What if we were to re-fill, powerfully and even triumphalistically, our ancient Christian culture with Christian content, the same content around which it was originally formed? We can do this. It would take serious preaching and teaching based around our own ancient Christian past. It would take a lot of work to disassociate ourselves from false impressions, misun-

derstandings and willful twisting of that content. So many people have written off traditional Christianity because they think that they know what it is, but in fact, have absolutely no real idea. So many of them are reacting to what they have been told by others, or what they misunderstood themselves, not having bothered to study seriously for themselves. This is a whole “rant” in and of itself, but it must seriously be dealt with. Of course, this pre-supposes that we would worship according to our Western Rite heritage, using the very forms which helped form the world in which we live.

We see a new interest in people finding their “roots.” It is even becoming quite a lucrative industry. Geneology and DNA research, reinforced by trendy TV series, seem really to be taking off. There is something really powerful here. When I think of my own ancestors being introduced to Christianity in the West-country of England or the Rhineland, and realize that they heard the same words, the same hymns, in the same melodies which we are using right here, it is always very moving to me. This is *my* history, *my* heritage, *my* roots, and it moves me deeply. For how many others is this a reality as well? In a very, very real sense, the WR Vicariate turns back the clock on history. Metropolitan PHILIP always said that that is impossible. But we do! We take our culture back to a time before the hideous protestant deformations, before the religious wars of the Seventeenth Century, to a time when the “world” was Christian and Orthodox, and all of culture was an expression of that Truth, of Christ Himself. Maybe it is hard to get our minds around a time after and before inclusive pluralism, but there was such a time, and it was *ours*. There are some Roman Catholic conservatives who suggest that in order to do this we have to return to small agrarian communities and isolate ourselves from the rest of the world. I suppose that it would work, somehow, but I am not suggesting that. I am suggesting living and working and witnessing in the world around us. I am suggesting that we be as secure and confident in our own culture – our ancient Christian culture – as is the culture around us. I am suggesting that we use the culture itself to preach, to manifest Christ as He once was manifest in all His Glory. Yes, the world is fallen. Yes, the world is mortal, and passes away. But once, Christian culture witnessed to the eternal Kingdom of Heaven in a way that surrounded and filled believer’s lives with the presence of that Kingdom of Heaven, even as they lived out their lives in this mortal world. I believe that anti-Christians will react strongly and

even violently against us if we were to attempt this. I believe that a lot of people would ignore us, being secure in their unfounded rejection of Christianity. Yet I believe that some people would find in the Church, in Christ Himself, a fulfillment of human potentiality, and an answer to their own unanswered longings. As St. Augustine so poignantly pointed out at the very beginning of his *Confessions*:

Great art Thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Thy power, and of Thy wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee, man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that Thou 'resistest the proud,' – yet man, this part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee. Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.

– Book 1, Chapter 1

Election of New Metropolitan for Buenos Aires and All Argentina

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Synod of Antioch, under the presidency of His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X, elected Archimandrite Jacques El-Khoury as the new Metropolitan Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires and All Argentina. The date of his consecration to the holy episcopacy is forthcoming.

His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH participated in the election at the Patriarchal Monastery and Seminary in Balamand, Lebanon, earlier this week, during its regular October session. Sayidna JOSEPH congratulated his new brother Metropolitan-elect Jacques on behalf of the hierarchs, clergy, Board of Trustees, and laity of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America.

Statement of the Holy Synod of Antioch Concerning the Current Developments in the Orthodox World

The Holy Synod of Antioch met in the Our Lady of Balamand Patriarchal Monastery, Lebanon, (October 3–6, 2018) and made the following statement:

The fathers examined the general Orthodox situation. They stressed that the Church of Antioch expresses her deep worries about the attempts to change the boundaries of the Orthodox churches through a new reading of history. She considers that resorting to a unilateral reading of history does not serve Orthodox unity. It rather contributes to the fueling of the dissensions

and quarrels within the one Church. Thus, the Church of Antioch refuses the principle of establishing parallel jurisdictions within the canonical boundaries of the Patriarchates and the autocephalous churches, as a way to solve conflicts, or as a *de facto* situation in the Orthodox world.

The fathers of the Church of Antioch emphasize that any approach to granting the autocephaly of a certain church has to be in accordance with Orthodox ecclesiology and the principles agreed upon by the churches in a conciliar way in past years. These principles for granting autocephaly are about the necessity of obtaining the agreement of the Mother Church and the acknowledgement of all the Orthodox autocephalous churches. The Church of Antioch affirms the necessity of resorting to the principle of unanimity concerning the common Orthodox work, and any stand on controversial issues in the Orthodox world; this unanimity is a true safeguard of Orthodox unity.

The Church of Antioch warns of the dangers of implicating the Orthodox world in international political conflicts and the resulting harm which comes from approaching the Orthodox Church's issues on the basis of politics, ethnicity, and nationalism.

The Church of Antioch calls upon His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch to call for an urgent *synaxis* of the primates of the Orthodox autocephalous churches, in order to discuss the current developments in the Orthodox world, in particular the issue of granting autocephaly to new churches, and to make efforts to find common solutions before taking any final decisions about this issue.

The Church of Antioch highlights the necessity of spiritual vigilance in this critical period of history, the importance of preserving the peace and unity of the Church, and the need to be watchful and avoid the trap of political entanglement, which history has shown causes a weakening of the Orthodox Church's united witness in the world.

Ordinations

DILLON, Christopher, to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN on September 30, 2018, at St. George Church, Danbury, Connecticut. He is completing his studies at St. Vladimir's Seminary.

FIELDS, Deacon Herman, to the holy priesthood by Bishop JOHN on September 30, 2018, at St. George Church, Danbury, Connecticut. He is completing his studies at St. Vladimir's Seminary.

HARGRAVE, James, to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN on September 16, 2018, at St. George Church, Boston, Massachusetts. He is completing his studies at Holy Cross Seminary.

# A Quest for the New Testament Church

*New Materials at Antiochian Village*



In 1973, a devout group of Protestant church leaders embarked on a journey to find and emulate the New Testament Church. As they studied Scripture anew and read the writings of the early Church Fathers, they uncovered facts about what the early Church believed, how its members worshiped, and how the Church was organized – facts that challenged many of their long-held

Fr. Gordon Walker, Pascha 2014. Photo by Joel Smith, used by permission

beliefs. By 1979, they had formed the Evangelical Orthodox Church (EOC), and the findings of their years of research were ultimately organized into a teaching program, known as the Institute of Biblical Theology (IBT). In this way, members of their parishes could study these materials and begin to align their beliefs, their worship, and their lives according to these teachings. Eventually, after a process of spiritual discovery that included meetings with various Orthodox Christian leaders, all of the EOC faithful who desired chrismation were welcomed into the Orthodox Christian Church.

Now, for the first time, documents from their



Fr. Gordon Walker (left) with his brother Phillip, Pascha 2015, about two months before Fr. Gordon's repose.

unique teaching program – which helped guide their path to Orthodoxy – have been made available in digital format. These IBT materials were compiled and organized by Dr. Phillip Walker, brother of the late Fr. Gordon Walker of blessed memory, who was one of the leaders of this historic movement to Orthodoxy. The materials are now part of the digital collections of the Antiochian Heritage Library and may be accessed for study through the library by any interested persons.

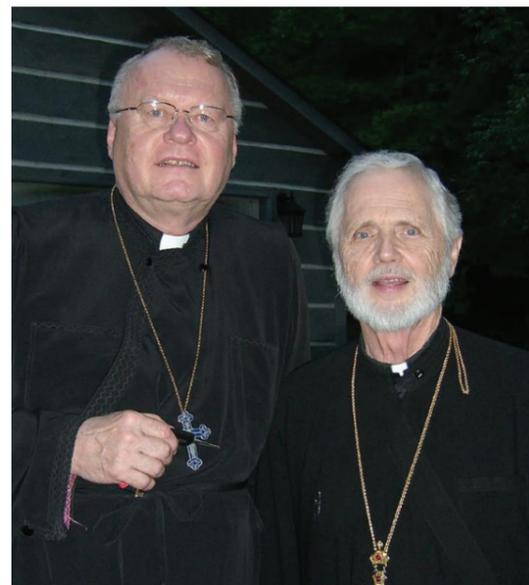
Why is the IBT worthy of attention today, nearly forty years after its inception? First, its mere existence is inspiring because, through its teachings, the IBT “lit the way” for many people on their spiritual journey. Perhaps we can learn from it, from the way it helped guide these Protestant believers into canonical Orthodox Christianity. Secondly, it is remarkable that those who drafted these teaching materials were able to arrive at a deep understand-

Fr. Peter Gillquist and Fr. Gordon Walker, 2009

ing of Orthodox theology through simply delving into the Scriptures, exploring the writings of the early Church Fathers, and studying the crucial theology of the seven Ecumenical Councils – before even meeting with Orthodox Christian theologians. As one of the leaders of this movement, Fr. John Braun, puts it, “Our first contact with Orthodoxy was discovering the Council of Nicaea.” (See his article, “Historical Sketch of the Evangelical Orthodox Church,” item A3 in the IBT, and his writing on Church History and Government, item E1 in the IBT.) Only after they had begun to draft the IBT materials did they have opportunities to consult with leading Orthodox Christian clergy and theologians.

It is also inspiring that the great majority of members of these EOC parishes completed the study of much of this IBT material. Their dedication to this effort is emblematic of their love for, and their desire to be a part of, the true New Testament Church: the Orthodox Christian Church. They were well-prepared for their eventual entry into canonical Orthodoxy. Thanks be to God, the efforts of the EOC were rewarded and their prayers answered when, in 1987, all of the EOC faithful who desired chrismation were accepted into Orthodox Christianity by Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice blessed memory, and became members of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. The joy and the contributions of these enthusiastic “converts” are well described in the excellent book, *Becoming Orthodox* (Third Edition, 2009), by Fr. Peter Gillquist of blessed memory.

Many of us today – from inquirers to cradle



Orthodox Christians, from clergy to Sunday School teachers – could benefit from delving into this material. We can imagine the experience of those who studied it many decades ago, and have some idea of the role that these materials played in bringing large numbers of American Protestant Christians, at times entire congregations, to their new, yet ancient faith.

#### WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THE IBT MATERIALS

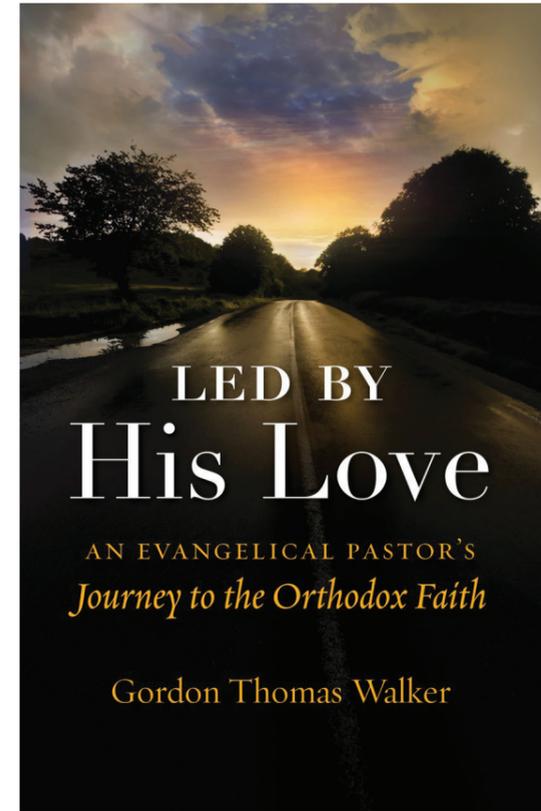
The topics covered in the IBT are arranged to assist inquirers in assimilating the important teachings of Christianity. While a few of the original documents have been lost, most were found and have been organized by subject. There are 14 categories in all, including but not limited to an outline of the Book of Romans, Early Church History, and 12 Catechism Lessons on subjects important for new converts. Although these documents are decades old, they remain relevant and timeless in their purpose of presenting the truths of Orthodoxy, truths that do not change.

For an Overview of the IBT materials, and to read the 19-page “Introduction,” visit the online catalog of the Antiochian Heritage Library ([www.antiochianvillage.org/library](http://www.antiochianvillage.org/library)) and do a keyword search for “IBT”, “EOC”, or any related term. You may contact the library via e-mail at [library@antiochianvillage.org](mailto:library@antiochianvillage.org), or by calling 724-238-3677 x425 or x409. The staff of the Antiochian Heritage Library will be happy to help you explore the IBT and the many other treasures in the collections. The IBT may also be accessed through Grace Ministries, Inc. ([www.graceministriescga.org](http://www.graceministriescga.org)).

#### Related Book: Led by His Love

Ancient Faith Publishing recently released a book based on the memoirs of Fr. Gordon Walker, one of the leaders who brought the EOC into canonical Orthodoxy under the care of Metropolitan PHILIP. The book, titled *Led by His Love: An Evangelical Pastor's Journey to the Orthodox Faith*, can be purchased through the **Antiochian Village Bookstore** (<https://store.antiochianvillage.org/>). The publisher describes it as follows:

Archpriest Gordon T. Walker served God for his entire life, from his childhood as a Baptist in Alabama through years as a Protestant pastor and finally, after decades of searching for the true Church, as an Orthodox priest. One of



Now available through the Antiochian Village Bookstore: [store.antiochianvillage.org](http://store.antiochianvillage.org).

the founding leaders of the former Evangelical Orthodox Church, Fr. Gordon had a special heart for youth and founded Grace Ministries to facilitate serving them. In the course of his ministry, he touched hundreds of lives with the boundless love and grace of God. This memoir, compiled and edited after his repose by his brother Phillip Walker, reveals the servant heart of a dedicated man of God.

#### RELATED PODCASTS

Interested readers will enjoy a recent podcast in which Bobby Maddex of Ancient Faith Radio interviews Dr. Phillip Walker about the life and legacy of his brother Fr. Gordon, and about the writing and purpose of the new book, *Led by His Love*. You can listen here: [http://ancientfaith.com/podcasts/exlibris/led\\_by\\_his\\_love](http://ancientfaith.com/podcasts/exlibris/led_by_his_love). In addition, Dr. Walker plans to appear next month, in December 2018, on Fr. Barnabas Powell's Sunday live talk show, *Faith Encouraged Live*. Look for this interview here: <http://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/faithencouragedlive>

Julia Ritter, Director of the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library, in collaboration with Dr. Phillip Walker

# MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN

*Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken from her."*

Luke 10:38-42

**O**ftentimes as moms, grandmas, wives, daughters, or workers outside the home, we women feel pulled in a million directions. It seems that we are needed and called to be "all things to all people," especially today, when we are wearing so many hats and have so many demands placed on us everywhere we look. Even when we are doing things for a very good cause – raising our children, raising funds for our church, helping out in church, helping our neighbors, whatever our present situations require – we feel like we are stretched beyond what we can give. It seems like everywhere we turn, someone needs something. We can be exhausted, and often feel as though there's not much more we can give. This scripture reading from St. Luke is a perfect picture for us today.

Martha was anticipating Jesus' visit and working so hard to make it perfect. She was making all the preparations of food, place settings, and so forth – everything had to be perfect for her guest – but when He came she was so busy that she missed her guest. There He was in her home, the very one she had worked so hard to welcome, but Martha was running around making everything "perfect." When Jesus finally arrived, she missed Him, she missed His words.

Mary, on the other hand, was also anticipating Jesus' visit, but, unlike Martha, she dropped everything when Jesus arrived and sat at His feet and *heard* his word. She stopped what she was doing to *sit still* in the presence of Jesus. The Psalmist tells us in Psalm 46:11, "Be still and know that I am God." Mary chose to sit still before Jesus.

"Jesus said to Martha, 'You are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be

taken away from her.'" Jesus was not faulting Martha for her acts of love and serving, but Martha was *distracted with much serving*. Serving in and of itself is a beautiful gift we offer to God, but when our serving becomes our primary devotion and distracts us from first sitting at the feet of our Lord, in prayer, quiet meditation, in contemplation, we too miss our guest. In order for us to perform any service to God, we must first, like Mary, sit quietly at the feet of Jesus and hear His word.

Dr. Rossi says in his book *Becoming a Healing Presence*, "We know that Psalm 46:11 tells us, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' The converse is implied: If I am not still, I run the danger of not knowing the real God. If I don't know God, I don't know myself, because I am made in God's image and likeness" (p. 22).

In order for us to be able to perform any and all acts of mercy, service, and love, we must first take the necessary time to be *still* before God. We need to be like Mary and sit at the feet of Jesus, then we can hear God, then we will have the ability to serve others in a spirit of love. Then we can act without expecting praise for ourselves, but wholly for the good of others, to the glory of God.

We are Antiochian women, modern day myrrh-bearers for our Lord. Our strength to perform all the beautiful acts of love and mercy that God has prepared for us to do have to come from our "quiet time" before the Lord. That is how we will get the strength we need to serve Him, to serve the Church and to serve others. This is how we become God's healing presence to others, especially those who do not know our Lord.

Let us be captivated by Jesus, by His love, as we sit quietly before Him, so that we may be spurred on to do our good works in His name, to the glory of the All-Holy Trinity.



Maria Koropsak  
Religious Coordinator  
of Antiochian Women  
of the East



**Children's Relief Fund**  
www.childrenreliefund.org  
email: childrenreliefund@gmail.com

*"Whoever receives one little child like this in my name receives me." (Matthew 18:5)*

November 2018

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

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

This letter brings to you our "2018 Christmas Appeal" for the **Children's Relief Fund**. The purpose of this program within the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church of North America is to provide partial scholarship funds for the needy children in Lebanon, Palestine and the children of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

The wars in the Middle East have been devastating and have left many families in need of financial support to meet the needs of educating their children.

Since its inception in 1983, the **Children's Relief Fund**, through your generosity, has provided students close to \$3.5 millions in partial educational scholarships to several thousand needy elementary and high school children. These children remain thankful that someone out there cares for their welfare. In 2016, you supported 339 students (262 in Lebanon including 28 children of Syrian refugees and 77 in Palestine).

The need to continue and increase our support is now more challenging as more and more children are in need of financial assistance. As of now, we have some 77 applications of children waiting to be sponsored.

Once again, I appeal to your remarkable generosity in helping our charitable effort towards the needy children in Lebanon, Palestine and the Syrian children in Lebanon. Your past performance has brought much joy to so many young suffering innocents. **100% of your donation goes directly to your sponsored child and no money is used for administrative services.**

The Children's Relief Fund offers you an opportunity to donate your money to include us within your scope of your charitable giving. Your assistance will improve the lives of these children and give them a chance for a better future.

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

In anticipation of your kind and generous response, we thank you in advance for your support and pray that you enjoy this Holy Season with health, happiness and prosperity. Your generous gift will help in educating a child.

As always, I remain

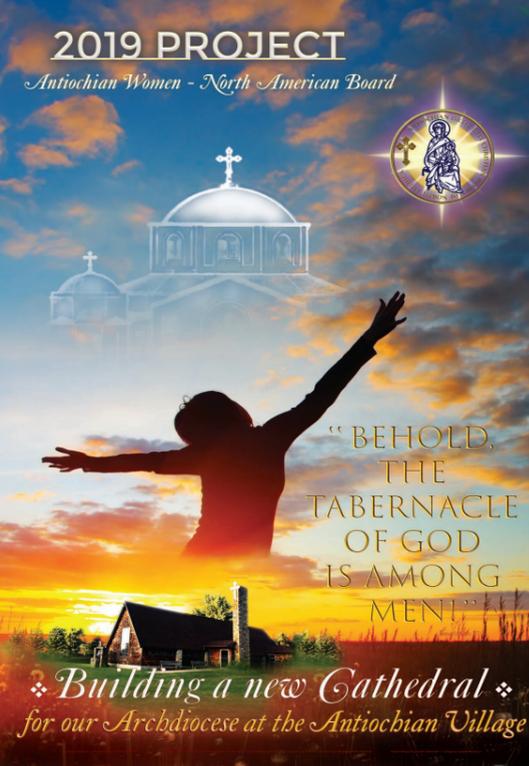
Yours in Christ,  
*Fr. Isaac Crow*

Fr. Isaac Crow  
National Director

Mailing Address: PO Box 60692, Potomac, MD 20859  
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