EDITORIAL

TOGETHER: MIDDLE EASTERN CHURCHES MEETING OF CHRISTIAN ARAB AND MEET Metropolitan Joseph ATTENDS "ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL ORTHODOX COMMUNITIES IN ACTION" by Fr. Peter Kavanaugh. Metropolitan Joseph ATTENDS MIDDLE EASTERN CHURCHES MEETING OF CHRISTIAN ARAB "ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL ORTHODOX COMMUNITIES IN ACTION" by Fr. Peter Kavanaugh. The Middle Eastern Orthodox Churches, United States Conference provides an edifying example of how the Church can work together for the future of our youth, to listen and learn.

The Church has an opportunity today to equip parents to do their God-given task of educating their children in Christ, into whom they brought their children at baptism. Parents need themselves to encounter God, to experience Him in prayer and liturgy, and to share in His life, before they can offer these gifts to their children. Parents and church leaders need to be deliberate about working together.

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METROPOLITAN JOSEPH ATTENDS MEETING OF CHRISTIAN ARAB AND MIDDLE EASTERN CHURCHES TOGETHER

On September 17, 2019, His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH attended the fall meeting of CAMECT (Christian Arab and Middle Eastern Churches Together) at the Coptic Orthodox Diocesan Center in Staten Island, New York. He was accompanied by Archdiocese Vicar General Fr. Thomas Zain. Leaders and representatives from the various Christian Churches with roots in the Middle East, including Bishop GREGORY Mansour of the Maronite Catholic Church, Archbishop ANOUSHAVAN of the Armenian Orthodox Eastern Prelacy, and a representative from IDC (In Defense of Christians), gathered for their fall meeting, hosted by Archbishop ANBA David of the Diocese of New York and New England of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The group discussed the situation of the Christians in the Middle East, with each representative giving an update of his particular community’s situation. The biggest concern continues to be the displacement and emigration of the Christians from the Middle East for a variety of reasons, including persecution and economic factors, as well as the instability caused by the various wars in the region.

In the discussions, the Church leaders came up with three goals towards which they will work in the coming year: sponsorship of a United Nations event on religious freedom; a continued partnership with IDC for the Washington events (which has included the very successful prayer service in the United States Capitol Rotunda last July); and our own Metropolitan’s suggestion of having CAMECT leaders and others visit various Middle Eastern countries as a show of support and hope for our people there. They also pledged to be seen together more often, in order to bring the common witness they represent to the American people.

The next meeting will be held in March and will be hosted by the Antiochian Archdiocese.

PATRON SAINTS

I don’t really know how patron saints are made. I’m sure that, at some point, somebody, someplace had to make an argument, stating that this or that saint was best for this or that parish, region, country, family, person, or cause. No doubt, that argument was based on all sorts of factors: the connection of the saint to that place, an answer to prayer to that saint, personal struggles in the saint’s life, miracles performed while living, the inspiring story of a saint’s life or martyrdom, or simply general devotion. The practice of adopting patron saints can be traced first to the churches built over the graves of martyrs. By the Middle Ages, it had expanded to include patron saints for diseases or various struggles. The thought is this: the intercessions of the patron of a various disease or vice is most helpful since that saint, by personal experience, understands. It’s like asking a single man (rather than a married woman) to speak with and counsel young single men who are struggling with loneliness, guilt, rejection, and all other issues that might be attached to being a single man.

At some point, someone (or a group of someones) had to make an argument for why a particular saint was more suited to a particular issue. Again, some points of the argument were, no doubt, easy to connect, and personal experience weighed heavily. After hearing the arguments, someone decided the merits of the argument.

So, I’m making an argument. My argument is that those who struggle with the vice of lust should seek the prayers of Saint Joseph in order to achieve the virtue of chastity. The goal in battling any vice is to overcome it by replacing it with the corresponding virtue. It is not enough – in fact, I will be so bold as to say that it is more harmful – merely to ask for the will and to develop the behavior of avoiding the sin. If that is all, then it is both a negative goal (“I don’t want to do this anymore”) and, worse yet, it opens the door for a greater attack or another vice. Jesus warns us about this one-sided method when he says that the unclean spirit, driven out, seeks rest by returning to a swept, out-in-order, yet empty house. Empty is the problem. For empty means there is more room for the seven
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CONSIDERING JOSEPH’S NAME

The first thing we need to know about our patron is his name. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, a wonderfull holymist and holy abbot, urges us to learn what kind of man St. Joseph was by considering his name, “which undoubtedy means, Increase.” St. Bernard then immediately connects our St. Joseph with the Old Testament Patriarch. Both were sons of Jacob. Both were leactly connected to a miraculuous birth: the one born a barren woman, the other the guardian of a virgin mother. Both married and protected despised women: the one an Egyptian, the other a woman suspected of adultery. And both were royalty: the one appointed by Pharaoh, the other a direct descendant of King David.

These details are not coincidences. In fact, as is common with the Holy Spirit, what we might call coincidences are actually planned types and anti-types. For the Joseph of old, both in the details and in the conduct of his life, pre-figured the guardian of the Mother of God. Let us hear how St. Bernard marvelously describes their connection:

“Call to mind that great Patriarch who was sold into Egypt in olden times: and be assured that this Joseph not only had the same name, but also attained unto his chastity and equaled him in innocency and grace. That Joseph, sold through the eney of his brothers and led into Egypt, prefigured the selling of Christ: this Joseph, reeking from the eney of Herod, carried Christ into Egypt. The former, faithfully serving his master, would have no intercourse with his lord’s wife; the latter, knowing that his wife, the Mother of his Lord, was a virgin and being chaste himself, faithfully guarded her. To the former was given understanding of the mysteries of dreams: to the latter it was given to know and to share in the heavenly mysteries. The former preserved wheat, not for himself, but for all the people: the latter received the Living Bread from heaven to preserve both for himself and for the whole world.”

In the latter you see the former. The same is true in their shared name, which means, “May the Lord give increase.” The Patriarch Joseph undeniably leads to the increase of the descendent of Abraham. Certainly, by God’s providence, the young man sold as a slave by his brothers is raised up so that he might relocate his father’s family to Egypt, and so that they do not diminish through famine but increase through the food he prudently stored away. In his own words, Joseph says: “God Almighty appeared to me at Luzar, which is in the land of Canaan: and he blessed me, And he said: I will cause thee to increase and multiply, and I will make thee a multitude of people: and I will give this land to thee, and to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession” (Genesis 48:3–4) “And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7)

How did this all come about? First of all, by chastity. You know the story (Genesis 39:1–20): Joseph is put in charge of Potiphar’s entire estate. Daily he is tempted by Potiphar’s wife, but Joseph does not give in to his desire of lust. In word and in deed, with his eyes and in his mind, he practices chastity. In fact, if you listen carefully, you can almost hear Joseph repeating the Psalm: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes” (Psalm 101:3). Patriarch Joseph’s initial reward for refusing to indulge his eyes and his disordered desires is to be humiliated, then falsely accused, and then imprisoned. These are the sufferings, the grief, that he manfully strives against. The loneliness and deprivation in prison – that is the reward for struggling against his own flesh, for not giving in, even in the secret of the bedroom. Yet he endures these evils, and like all the righteous, he does not give in or give up. Rather, Joseph perseveres. And the Lord rewards his virtue by strengthening him and enabling him to live up to his name – for the good of the children of Israel. Chastity, therefore, has its reward, even though for a long while, perhaps even for an entire life-time, we must constantly and diligently refuse the evil and seek the good.

You can see the Patriarch Joseph zealously, relentlessly, unwaveringly guards his chastity. Why? Not for his own reputation’s sake. Not because of fear of being found out. Not because of self-shame. The estate he manages for Potiphar, even Potiphar’s seductive wife – he sees these as gifts, given by God, entrusted to him, placed under his protection, care, and guardianship.

This Joseph, as I’ve said, is simply the type; the one who prefigures and points to the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The latter one is our champion for chastity, exemplifies his name. What does St. Luke say? By God’s providence, entrusted as a gift, the very Son of God was placed under St. Joseph’s protection, care, and guardianship. In his care, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). This increase means not only that Jesus grew up in St. Joseph’s home. It means that Our Lord Jesus bore Joseph’s name; that He learned from Joseph the art of constructing and fashioning things with His hands; and that Jesus was schooled by Joseph in the family heritage – the Davidic royal line with all that this entailed.

“Jesus increased” also means that the Son of God “found in Joseph an ideal son of Abraham; that is to say, a man who lived, as Abraham did, by faith.” And what does that faith look like? faith looks like a man who submits without question to the will of God. From Joseph, Jesus saw, “Not my will, but thine be done.” Which, among other things, means, “I will not satisfy my own desires; I will not give into my own appetites; I will not do what pleases me. Instead, I will trust in the prayer I say: that God gives me, day by day, all I need to averse my loneliness and my needs. And I will let the love of God burn so brightly that it will burn away all my ungodly passions.” That’s what submission to God looks like: desire for God to snuff out self-serving desires. That’s what “Thy will be done” looks like: not feeding my whims or convincing myself of what I deserve or seeking my pleasure above all else, but trusting that God knows what I truly need and that He is merciful enough to supply, in whatever way He chooses, that need. We see that faith, that submission, that confidence, that prayer lived in the Patriarch. And for nearly thirty years, Jesus sees it alive in His divinely ordained foster-father. And so He “increa[s] in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”

The more one denies his flesh, the more one subdues his appetites, the more one practices true chastity – the more one achieves true serenity, and escapes anxiety, and acquires a spirit free from frenetic distraction. For frenetic distraction, apprension, and disquietude are embedded within the demon of lust. Yet from his guardian and foster father, as He grow us, Our Blessed Lord sees and learns the opposite. For St. Joseph was not a person given to anxiety. He appeared, rather, as a man of
extraordinary experience. We find Joseph in five scenes in the gospel [according to] Matthew, and every single time he is sound asleep. Whatever troubles Joseph endured, they did not include insomnia.23

St. Joseph feared and trained our blessed Lord from infancy until the beginning of His public ministry. And through the hand of St. Joseph, Our Father granted increase in wisdom and stature, in virtue and insight, for His well-beloved Son. And I suggest that the strength of St. Joseph’s character, the underlying charism that enabled Joseph to be the guardian Jesus needed, was his faith which led him to sacrifice his carnal passions.

**STRENGTH**

Joseph offers us an example of the strength of virtue over vice. St. Joseph demonstrates that it is possible to live an intimate, even romantic life, with another, without sexual relations or without the life being “sexualized.”

What is most remarkable about this account is that St. Joseph doesn’t accuse the Holy Mother Mary of indiscretion, but rather blames himself for letting down his guard: “for I have not watched over her.” In this regard, he compares himself to Adam, who was blithely singing, rather than guarding Eve, as was his task from God. Adam failed in guarding Eve by not being mindful of Satan’s approach. St. Joseph understands that he has failed in the same way. He knows both his duty to St. Mary, and what that requires from himself. He must be on guard. Since he has apparently failed, something must be done, yet without putting his betrothed in harm’s way. While Joseph is tosing and turning, mulling over what to do, his guardianship of the Holy Mother is confirmed by the angel of the Lord: “Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife” (Matthew 1:20). Take her, not to possess but to guard; not to make her your own, but for her well-being.

“There is no doubt but that this Joseph was a good and faithful man, he to whom the Mother of the Savior was espoused. He was, I say, the faithful and wise servant whom his Lord hath made protector of his mother, guardian of his own Manhood, and, in short, the sole, and most faithful assistant on earth of his mighty counsel.”25 With those words, St. Bernard ties St. Joseph’s justice, his righteousness and goodness, directly to being a guardian both of the Mother of God, and also of the Holy Child. So Joseph, who held the position of husband but was in actuality servant and steward . . . is called father, but is more a guardian.25

A guardian guards. He guards others, but in doing so, he must guard himself as well. For how can one guard if one is not on guard? And how can one keep watch if he is busy indulging himself? And how can one protect others from assault if he does not know how, or does not practice, protecting himself? And so, to guard this Holy Family, St. Joseph needed, in order to defend, to guard, to provide self-control against vice. Controlling our passions – most especially, the passion of lust.

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2. See Thompson the Re- corder, Unser Heiter (Cincinnati, NY: St. Vincent’s, 1869-1871).
4. Ibid.
6. St. Seraphim of Sarov is quoted as saying: “From these stones” (Catholic Gentleman, April 10, 2019; https://www. catholicgentleman.com/.../saints-of-christian-practice, however those in digital images. “The light of Christ illumines all!” The light of Christ illumines all! We are not called out of the world, transfigured in Christ, and sent back into the world to be Darwi- nian, just supporting life for the sake of multiplying our species. Rather, in the waters of baptism, we put off the old man, dying to Christ, and are raised a new man in Christ, who is the God-Man. We are called, commissioned, to be light, “You are the light of the world!” (Matthew 5:14). Orthodox Christians are reminded of this every time we light a candle in prayer. We are called to remember that it is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is the true light, and that He will grant us true life.

"The light of Christ illumines all!"

In the Orthodox tradition, these words are intoned by the priest during the service of the Paschaltide Gifts during the Great Fast of Lent. The parishesioners, should they be of the pious sort, have been fasting – not only forgoing meat, dairy, wine, and oil – perhaps having had no food all day. The Royal Gates open. The celebrant appears holding a candle in one hand, the censer in the other. He faces the people of God and chants: “The light of Christ illumines all.” This is intoned whilst the congregation is in full prostration; that is, on their knees, with their faces to the ground.

I would venture to say, brethren, that in the life of the Church, light and life cannot be separated. Just as it is not possible to separate the life of Christ from the light of Christ, the same is true of death and resurrection, His and ours.

The late-Fr. Hardon said that Aloysius wrote about these himself and also wrote about his sexual passions; he had very strong sexual passions. So, he was doing penance not so much to repair what sins had been committed already, but more for preventive purposes. Fr. Hardon said that Aloysius wrote about his passions; he had very strong sexual passions.


8. Ibid., p. 114.


10. Ibid., p. 113.


12. Ibid., p. 113.


15. St. Seraphim of Sarov is quoted as saying: “From these stones” (Catholic Gentleman, April 10, 2019; https://www. catholicgentleman.com/.../saints-of-christian-practice, however those in digital images. “The light of Christ illumines all!” The light of Christ illumines all! We are not called out of the world, transfigured in Christ, and sent back into the world to be Darwi- nian, just supporting life for the sake of multiplying our species. Rather, in the waters of baptism, we put off the old man, dying to Christ, and are raised a new man in Christ, who is the God-Man. We are called, commissioned, to be light, “You are the light of the world!” (Matthew 5:14). Orthodox Christians are reminded of this every time we light a candle in prayer. We are called to remember that it is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is the true light, and that He will grant us true life.

In lighting our candles, the first thing we should do is make an offering for the candle. Everything that we have is from God and the first step is to give back to Him for all His many blessings. We light candles and remember those we love, those who are sick, those with whom we struggle, and those who are poor and in need of the well. We beseech God for mercy on us all.

Our progression toward the light is by way of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. This is the way Orthodox Christians work out their salvation. It is how we voluntarily deny ourselves – die to ourselves – and take up our cross to follow Christ. St. Seraphim of Sarov is quoted as saying: Prayer, fasting, vigils, and all other Christian practices, however...
Glorify Christ, Risen from the dead

thereby become co-workers with God for the salvation of the world. This is the promise. This is the mission. This is the fruit of our labors: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

“...inasmuch as he is crucified with Christ so that his death can be joined with Christ’s death. This is life. He knows that he must be crucified with Christ, crucified with Christ, crucified with Christ. What else can he do? He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

In the end, on the night of Great and Holy Pascha, the darkened church sees the Royal Gates of the altar opened and the priest emerging with a lighted candle, chanting:

“Come ye take light from the Light that is never over taken by night...
Come glorify Christ, Risen from the dead!”

And we are called to be like God. Then our service is to be as an apostle sent by God. If the word apostle means “the called,” then our service is to be as a disciple called by God. If the word apostle means “the minister,” then our service is to be a service for God. If the word apostle means “the called,” then our service is to be as a disciple called by God. If the word apostle means “the called,” then our service is to be as a minister called by God. If the word apostle means “the called,” then our service is to be as a disciple called by God. If the word apostle means “the called,” then our service is to be as a disciple called by God. If the word apostle means “the called,” then our service is to be as a disciple called by God. If the word apostle means “the called,” then our service is to be as a disciple called by God.

The Ministry of the Clergy in the Orthodox Church


The union of man with God, or deification, is a legitimate aim to seek. This is due to the preexisting union between divinity and humanity in the incarnation. It is Christ, then, who has set it before us as an aim. Union here includes all the gratuitous means of grace—baptism, Holy Communion, and perpetual repentance. Union also includes struggles such as fasting, charity, bridling of tongue and mind. It involves constant prayer as well as acts of love and humility. It certainly includes as well God’s invisible succor to those who strive to reach him.

Among various interpretations, it is these three offices which most clearly point to the variety of “gifts of the Spirit” (charismata; “grace,” “gifts”), but only inasmuch as each remains fused within the same body and is “for the common good.” Thus the
THE ART AND PRAXIS OF THE PASTORAL MINISTRY

St. Gregory Nazianzen (also called St. Gregory the Theologian) understood this global and comprehensive scope when, in his famous Oration on the Flight to Pontus, he called the pastoral ministry an “art.” Certainly, however, he did not mean that skill and attitude were unimportant. The remainder of his writings, like the writings of the other two of the Three Hierarchs (Basil the Great and John Chrysostom), indicate that he well knew skill and attitude to be part of the ministry. To describe the ministry as an art, however, is probably the most comprehensive and proper description. What is “art,” except that which includes elements of creation, truth, spontaneity, vision, and so forth. These elements must be channeled and directed by the skill and attitude of the artist. This is also virtually a description of what takes place in diakonia, or ministry. Thus the Nazianzen writes of the service of the clergy as “the art of the same body and “for the common good.” Of this healing, we are ministers and fellow laborers, for whom it is a great thing to recognize and heal, first of all, our own passions and weaknesses . . . but a much greater thing is the power to heal and the skill to cleanse others” (1 Corinthians 12:27).

In a like manner, The Pastoral Rule of St. Gregory of Rome calls this direction of the souls “the art of arts” (av arct atrim regimen animarum). He writes: “No one ventures to reach any art unless he has learned it through pondering it deeply. With what rashness, then, would the pastoral ministry be undertaken by those who are unfit to do this, seeing that such direction of souls is the art of arts” (in Paulist Press’s Ancient Christian Writers, The Pastoral Rule, 1, p. 21). Both Gregories know, then, that this “art” is one which includes the skill and attitude proper to its praxis within the Church.

This “art of arts and science of science,” however, cannot be reduced to any one element within the praxis. Indeed, it implies the most global care of the people of God; it is not merely counseling, administration, liturgy, teaching, preaching, and so on. It is indeed inclusive of all these particulars, but for the Orthodox clergy, to reduce such care to any one of them would wholly diminish the scope of his activity.

For this reason St. Basil the Great has best described this as an epimeleia (which means “total care”), and such a term has the meaning of what the Lord Himself is: “The shepherd (poimeno) and overseer (episcopus) of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25). Such “total care,” however, does not wash away the exacting functions of the Orthodox clergy. Indeed, it has traditionally brought him into a most intimate and fatherly relationship with those to whom he is sent to minister: “And he calls them by name . . . and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice” (John 10:2-4). If this is true, however, we must then ask, “What can be said of those more exacting functions within such total care?” Although some may have other groupings, most would agree that there are three, inter-connected such areas of pastoral care in the Orthodox Church, and that all three are very visible and understood by the people as a need of the church.

THE THREE MAJOR FUNCTIONS

1. The Liturgist

The first area is that of the liturgist. Given the vast traditions, blessings, and liturgies with which the Orthodox people have lived and celebrated over the centuries, the preeminent role of the pastor as leitourgos, the minister of the sanctuary, is obvious. He is not himself, however, this leitourgos, but present the One Himself. Christ is “the minister of the sanctuary, of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not made” (Hebrews 8:2). In his ministry, the clergy are re-presenting this, “presentifying,” the One who is always present through the Spirit (Hebrews 10:15-16). Jesus is the sole priest, the sole celebrant, at every liturgy; the liturgical function of the clergy being only to realize in that function the presence of the One Leitourgos. This ministry is delivered to him by the Lord, and received from him by the Lord (cf. The Anaphora of Saint John Chrysostom).

His function is clearly in persona Christi, and thus for the people it is Christ Himself who is “the Offered and the Offerer.” The liturgist, therefore, is the foremost of the three exacting functions of care in Orthodox pastoral life.

2. The Preacher and Teacher

The second area is the clergy as teacher and proclaimer. It is always the Gospel, the Good News, that is taught and proclaimed, and usually (but not solely) in the liturgy. The substance of what is preached, the reason for it, the meaning of it, is always the same; “Jesus Christ is the Lord.” The pastor who is preaching is delivering only that which he has first received: “For I delivered to you, first of all, that which I also received” (1 Corinthians 15:11). Although this same-message is kept, it is also to be appropriated, applied and delivered in its context; it moves out of the one basic message toward the particular. Following the pattern of the great preachers like the Apostle Paul or Saint John Chrysostom, up until the modern age, it is always the task of the clergy to give the distinctive human form to the proclamation, so that it speaks to the circumstances and predicament of the people. This proclamation (kerygma) is never an essay nor a speech – that is, it is never reduced to mere human technique. It is always up to the clergy to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in its formulation and delivery. This co-operation (synegesis) is realized by prayer and study (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2 and 1 Timothy 4:13). It is always God Himself who lifts up this all-too-human effort. Such care offered to the people through teaching and proclaiming is seen by those same people, then, as God’s very Word.

3. The Father-Confessor and Spiritual Director

The third exacting function in the praxis of this care is in the area of counsel, and most particularly as father-confessor and spiritual director. The pattern for this function is found in the legislations (rûyîa, geôn, stâret, staretz), so highly esteemed in the Orthodox Christian Tradition. This function of spiritual direction may be connected to the sacrament of repentance, but they are not to be totally identified. Repentance (confession) is a re-entrance, a baptism through tears, through which the penitent is received again into the Body of Christ. As an exact function, however, spiritual direction is otherwise, although it may begin at confession when the person raises this or that sin or difficulty, that is, one that justifies an extended counsel of the clergy. It may also be – and this is happening more and more in Orthodox pastoral life – that one comes to his pastor for counsel without coming first to confession. The telephone call, the social gathering, the conversation about a son or daughter, a crisis in marriage or family, and even today certain bio-ethical issues: these call for a particular meeting and dialogical relationship.

In whatever way it comes, however, the clergy-man is always to be seen in a distinct pastoral setting, rather than as a secular counselor. The clergy represent the Christian response; they are always concerned about helping persons grow toward the truth, the should, as given by the Faith. If he does not first “meet” them where they are, he cannot stretch them; if he has no intent of stretching them, his touch has no spiritual goal.

These three functions, then, lie at the center of the art and praxis of the pastoral ministry, showing precisely that the ministry reflects the “total care” of the people of God: liturgist, preacher and teacher, and father-confessor. These are the major functions within the ministry of the clergy: bishop, priest and deacon.

THE FATHERS ON THE PASTOR AS SHEPHERD

St. Basil the Great, remembered for being an organizer of the monastic life and an insistence on true Christian philanthropy, turned his attention to the position of the pastor as shepherd. In doing so he emphasizes the word procoto (leader): “Such
are the leaders of the Disciples of Christ. They lead them forth to . . . nourishment of true doctrine, they water them with living water . . . they raise them up and nurture them until they produce fruit: then they guide them to rest and safety . . . (On Psalm 28:2).

The leader, however, must use all the qualities which God has given him, since there is such a variety of persons he has to lead. This brings to Basil’s mind the notion that the Church is like a house: “In the choir house, which is the Church, there are not only vessels of every kind – gold and silver, wood and earthenware – there are also manifold lives and talents. Indeed [the house] houses hunters, traveler-s, architects, builders, shepherds, athletes, soldiers” (Homily 3:4). Each of these must be met, seen and dealt with as they are. “The renewal of the mind,” he reminds us again in Homily 29, takes place in the individual, in his own walk of life, again “in order that no one may be left without [the Church’s] aid.” Finally, St. Basil says the clergy have got to create the proper disposition and atmosphere within the community. This can only be done by true faith and love: “What is this ethos of a Christian? Faith working through love . . . not to seek one’s own good but the good of the loved one for the benefit of his body and soul” (Moral Rule 30:22).

St. Gregory the Theologian, who turns his attention to the “identity” question of the pastoral life, focuses on the shepherd of the flock as a doctor: that is, one acting with maturity and propriety. In his tation on the Flight to Pontus, his prayer is that be, now as ever, the leader of the clergy, would be able to realize that god through the grace of Christ: “Such is my defense: its reasonableness I have set forth: and may the God of peace himself hold me by my right hand, and guide me with his counsel, and receive me as a perfect gift, who is a Shepherd to shepherds and a Guide to guides: that we may feed his flock with knowledge, and not with the instruments of a foolish shepherd” (NPVF, p. 228).

The shepherd, according to St. Gregory, must learn to apply the “medicine” to the flock according to what they can bear. The clergyman needs maturity in order to “cure as does a doctor.” “Sometimes, and in certain cases, the doctor will make use of the cautery or the knife or even the severer remedies; but none of these, laborious and hard as they may seem, is so difficult as the diagnosis and the cure of their habits, passions, lives, wills and whatever else is within us . . . and establishing in their stead what is gentle and dear to God . . . not allowing the superior to be overpowered by the inferior, which would be the greatest injustice . . .” (NPVF, p. 208).

Finally, the Nazianzen writes: “And before a man has, as far as possible, gained this superiority, and sufficiently purified his mind. I do insist upon the paro-
toral ministry of the shepherd (until his death in 397), addressed his flock at Milan with these words: “The duty of the priest or minister is to help all, if it is possible, and to harm no one. Therefore, if an other cannot be helped without being hurt, it is bet-
ter not to help him so as not to hurt him. It belongs to the priestly office to do no harm to anyone and to be desirous of helping everyone; but the accom-
plishment of this can come only from God” (from Migne’s Patro-
lologae Latinae [The Latin Fathers], henceforth PL; Duties of Ministers, 3, 9, pp. 58–59).

St. Gregory the Great, who lived the monastic life before he became Pope in 500, writes in his Pastoral Rule (written after his election to this rank) that the shepherd must be “chief in action,” since the “flock, which follows the voice and manners of the shepherd” needs the example even more than the words; “to speak” must never be separated from “to exist.”

“The ruler (of souls) 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 neces-
\[This is a continuation of the text.]

The selfsame power of the words makes the priest holy and venerable, for he is “set apart” from the rest of the community by the new blessing which he has received. Though but yesterday he was one of many, one of the people, now he is suddenly proclaimed a lea-
er, a ruler, a teacher of piety, a priest of hidden mysteries. And this comes about without any change at all in his bodily appearance. As far as externals go, he is who he was, but his invisi-
ble soul is changed for the better by a certain invisible power and grace [from Migne’s Patro-
lologae Graecae (The Greek Fathers), Sermon on the Baptism of Christ, pp. 581–584].

Finally, St. Cyril of Alexandria summarizes for us these patristic thoughts on the pastor as shepherd. Each of the clergy, regardless of the rank of office, bishop, priest or deacon, serves in the ministry of Jesus Christ Himself; it is the Great Shepherd who truly ordains all the offices by the Holy Spirit: We Lord Jesus Christ ordained [the di-
ciples] pastors and teachers of the whole world and ministers of his divine mysteries . . . And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit . . .” (John 20:22). After elevating them to a position of eminence by the great dignity of the ministry, and ap-
pointing them priests and ministers at thealtars of God, he at once sanctifies them, breathing upon them the power of the Holy Spirit. He shows that it is necessary for the Spirit to be given to those whom he chooses for the di-
vine ministry . . . because they can do no pleasing to God, nor can they free themselves from the chains of sin, changed into something other than they were. Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . brings to perfection priests for the altar of God, and he does this by sanctifying them in very truth, making them share in his own communication of the Spirit, and in a man-
er fusing the nature of man with a power and glory which is more than human (Patrologiae Graecae, Commentary on St. John, 7–8, p. 712).

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er fusing the nature of man with a power and glory which is more than human (Patrologiae Graecae, Commentary on St. John, 7–8, p. 712).
THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST DOES NOT GO WITHOUT SAYING

Archpriest Andrew Stephen Damick

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

You have probably heard the expression "preach the Gospel at all times; if necessary, use words," attributed almost certainly falsely to Francis of Assisi, or heard, "Acquire the Spirit of peace and thousands around you will be saved," a genuine saying of St. Seraphim of Sarov. You may have then heard these things used to mean that it is not necessary, and perhaps not even desirable, for Orthodox Christians to speak actual words to non-Christians or non-Orthodox concerning Jesus Christ, Who He is, what He did and what He is coming again to do. That means we have to talk about it. That means that we will have to use words. It is good news. That means that we will have to use words. That means we have to talk about it.

"Preach the Gospel at all times; if necessary, use words" makes about as much sense as, "Feed the hungry at all times; if necessary, use food." It doesn't make sense. Yes, one can use

preach and feed in metaphorical senses, but if the metaphorical mean-
ing replaces the direct, literal one, then we have a problem. Yes, we should use our lives to "preach" and our kindness to "feed," but that doesn't mean we get to leave out the words, or the food.

It is true that the Church both now and in history has hermits, monks, nuns, and so forth, who are not obviously engaged in preaching the Gospel -- though many of them actually do and did. Not all monastics in every period of Church history were separated from the world in every way. And it is true that God calls these rare, few people to that kind of life, in which their intense prayer lifts up the world and protects it from the evil one.

But that is not the call that most of us have, and if it really is your call, then that means you have to live that life in its true fullness, with all the prayer, asceticism, and self-denial that are entailed. If you really have a calling to serve the whole world through your prayer, rather than your words, you have to do it the right way and not just give lip service to it. Don't hold up monastics who apart from the world as an example in the way that's convenient and then not follow that example in other ways.

As Christians we have a hope within us, the hope of Jesus Christ, and just as we so freely speak words about many other things we love -- food, drink, entertainment, books, ideas, and so forth -- we cannot fall silent about the coming of the King of Kings into this world to conquer death itself, and about His return, when He will judge the living and the dead. It makes no sense for a Christian to be evangelical about everything except Jesus. If you are a Christian and do not know how to preach the Gospel in your own way and in your own context, then you need to learn. Not every one's way will be the same -- for some of us, it is very public, but for others it will be much more intimate. For all of us, however, it will mean communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ does not go without saying.

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As we've seen, we belong to a variety of communities. These communities influence us, form us, guide us, shape our opinions on various issues, and provide us with a support system. Within the Divine Liturgy, we are invited to worship God with the words “Come, let us worship...” Our response to this invitation brings with it some questions that we must answer, like “What does it mean to belong to God?” If we respond with “OK!” and we come and worship God, we join ourselves to that community and are bound by God's commandments. All too often, though, we forget this. We're more inclined to follow the terms and conditions laid out by the various clubs, groups, sports teams, and social media platforms with which we belong.

Let's look, for a moment, at social media. This is a great tool, but we often lose sight of the fact that it is a tool. On the surface, it's used to keep us connected to one another. When you probe more deeply, it's also used for marketing and to “get the word out.” It is a great tool, but we often lose sight of the fact that it is a tool.

The Divine Liturgy has as a goal to teach us, to inform our lives, so that we can be transformed by it. This is an important distinction for social media users. While most social media users view it as an end—a virtual community with a chance to connect to people around the world—there are others who view it differently. Erik Qualman, a motivational speaker and author who focuses on social media marketing, says, “We don't have a choice on whether we use social media, the question is how well we do it.” Marketers would argue that the best times to post are early in the morning, around lunch, between work/school and dinner, and around bedtime. These are when people are most likely to be checking their various social media outlets and, therefore, are the most vulnerable. They do this because they recognize that their communities influence us, though we often claim that they do not.

If we recognize that our communities influence us, we can see how right it is that the community formed in the Divine Liturgy influences our lives. The Divine Liturgy has as a goal to teach us, to inform our lives, so that we can be transformed by it. After we are invited to worship, we are given the saints as examples of the way to live, and we hear about their lives in the *trisagion* and *kontakion*—Greek names for the hymns we sing after the entrance. These hymns are about the Resurrection of Christ, the lives of the saints, and the feasts celebrated throughout the year. These hymns introduce the portion of the liturgy that we often refer to as “The Liturgy of the Word.”

Following the singing of these hymns, we sing the *Trisagion*, or *Trisagion* Hymn. This hymn is well-known: “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.” We say the word *holy* three times, which is why it is called “Trice-Holy.” The origins of this hymn come from the book of Isaiah. In Chapter 6, Isaiah recounts his vision of the Throne of God. He writes: “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ And the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.” The hymn of the angels includes the repetition of the word *holy* three times, just like the “Trice-Holy Hymn.” This angelic hymn is a theme that carries us throughout the Divine Liturgy. In this instance, we are invited to worship, we are given the saints as examples of the way to live, and we hear about their lives in the trisagion and kontakion—Greek names for the hymns we sing after the entrance. These hymns are about the Resurrection of Christ, the lives of the saints, and the feasts celebrated throughout the year. These hymns introduce the portion of the liturgy that we often refer to as “The Liturgy of the Word.” Following the singing of these hymns, we sing the Trice-Holy, or Trisagion, Hymn. This hymn is well-known: “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.” We say the word *holy* three times, which is why it is called “Trice-Holy.” The origins of this hymn come from the book of Isaiah. In Chapter 6, Isaiah recounts his vision of the Throne of God. He writes: “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ And the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.” The hymn of the angels includes the repetition of the word *holy* three times, just like the “Trice-Holy Hymn.” This angelic hymn is a theme that carries us throughout the entire Divine Liturgy. In this instance, the hymn is sung as the bishop, or priest in his absence, moves from before the altar to what is referred to as “the High Place,” and is also called “the throne on high...” Often, there’s an icon of Christ Enthroned in that place, with a throne for the bishop. With this movement, the deacon says: “Bless, Master, the throne on high,” to which the bishop, or priest in his absence, prays: “Blessed art Thou on the throne of the glory of Thy kingdom, Who art enthroned upon the cherubim.” This reference to God’s throne reminds us that where we are and what we are doing is something extraordinary.

Following this hymn, we hear the Epistle and Gospel. These are a public reading of the Word of God (Scripture). We are given the Word of God because we need the Word of God. The calendar is set each year, outlining which readings we will hear each Sunday, according to the season of the church year. These readings are often tied to the hymns we heard earlier, the *trisagion* and *kontakion*. For example, as we celebrate the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple this month, we hear about the feast in the *trisagion*, the *kontakion*, the Epistle, and the Gospel. Tying all of this together is the Sermon. The primary goal of the sermon is to explain the Scripture readings in such a way that we might apply them to our daily lives. The primary goal of the hearer of a sermon is to take what he hears and apply it to his life. In a recent survey of 171 Orthodox Youth from 48 parishes and three Orthodox jurisdictions around the United States, 72 percent cited the sermon as that point which connects the Divine Liturgy to their daily lives. One teen said, “My priest incorporates modern-day issues into his homilies so we can connect the liturgy to our daily life.” Another said, “I try to take what I learned from the homily into my daily life.”

Let us return to our discussion of social media. We know that those who use social media influence us, some intentionally. We have influence, too. We need to look at what we’re posting and be discerning with what we put out there, and how it might influence others. We need to ask ourselves: What does what I share say about me? We need to look with a critical eye at whom we let into our lives on social media. Are these actual friends? Do I know the person outside of Instagram, or Facebook, or Snapchat?

We're fooling ourselves if we think anything posted is private. Our posts are on display for the world to see. We must ask ourselves: What are we allowing influence us, and what are we showing the world?

Gregory Abdalah, D.Min.
The Divine Icon

Icons, or images of holy people, reflect this transformation, the inner spiritual beauty of an ordinary person who has extraordinary faith, humility, and obedience to God. Icons depict these holy people, or saints. The saints serve as role models and sources of obedience to God. Icons depict these holy people, or saints. The saints serve as role models and sources of obedience to God. Icons depict these holy people, or saints. The saints serve as role models and sources of obedience to God. Icons depict these holy people, or saints. The saints serve as role models and sources of obedience to God.

Gary and Romans of the later period venerated portraits of their gods and emperors, who were considered “divine.” Man has always desired to portray the divine, so that in seeing its image, he could better understand it and commune with it. It was only natural that Christians wanted to depict Christ as well. They wanted to paint a picture of Him, not only to remember what He looked like, but to portray the divine. In light of God's commandment, “Thou shalt not make any graven image,” wouldn't it be wrong to portray the divine Person? John wrote in his Gospel that “no man has seen God.” These two things would be the main arguments that the iconoclasts would later use to justify destroying the icons. Christ, however, was not only divine, He was also human. And because God the Son came to earth and became a human being, He enabled us to portray His human face and body. This is the reason we can paint a picture of Him, even though He is God. Christ is the Holy Trinity, one in essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. So when we see an image of Christ, we also see His complete divine-human person, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is the Holy Trinity, One God.

Early Christian symbols and images representing Christ, such as the Fish, the Shepherd, and the Lamb, were drawn, because the icons of Christ were considered to be representations of Him. Scenes depicting events in the life of Christ were used to teach the mystery of Salvation to the new believers, many of whom were soon to become martyrs. The early Christians never worshiped these images, that prayer would strengthen and calm them, preparing them for any test he had to face. The face of the saint in the icon is stylized. It reflects a spiritual beauty rather than a purely natural beauty. The ears of the saint are closed, closed to gossip, slander and distraction. They hear and obey only the Word of God. The eyes of the saint are large, seeing only the love, the image of God in all people and things. The mouth of the saint is closed, signifying that the tongue must be controlled and should only speak what is edifying for another. Our speech must be transformed into God’s Word. The hands of the saint are either in the form of prayer, giving a blessing or ready for works of charity. The fingers and hands are elongated, being transformed by doing God’s will. The feet of the saint walk in the path of God.

By submitting ourselves to the Will of God, we find that our bodies come into a harmony with God, as He created us to be. Union with God, or theosis, happens when God’s life fills and transforms us. Even when we see an icon of a martyr who is being tortured or beheaded, he is portrayed as calm, submissive, and totally in union with God. There is no need for great emotionalism or theatricality, as is seen so often in Western paintings. We see this peace, this complete submission to God, in the saint’s face and demeanor. We believe that, because of God’s great love and mercy, this holy person is in His presence and hears our prayer. We attempt to emulate the love and faith of the saint. His or her image reminds us that it is possible for us, too, to become holy.

Every color in an icon symbolizes something divine. Blue is the color of heaven, the mystical life, and the garments of Mary, Mother of God. Red is the blood of the martyrs and their garment. It is the color of the robe of Christ, of life, vitality, and beauty. Purple depicts royalty, wealth, and power. Gold symbolizes God’s divine presence in all creation, His glory, splendor and divine energy. White represents purity, innocence, and God’s uncreated light. There are no shadows in an icon, because God’s light fills and permeates the saint. The body of the saint radiates this “uncreated light,” shining to illuminate all things, thereby casting no shadows.

Traditionally, iconographers do not sign their names on the front of icons. This would call attention to themselves. They either remain anonymous, or sign the back of the icon, printing above their name, “by the hand of,” or “through the hand of,” believing that God has paints the icon through their hand for His glory and for the salvation of those who venerate it and pray before it. The venerating person prays, “He who has painted the icon through their hand for His glory and for the salvation of those who venerate it and pray before it.” Iconographers are said to “write” an icon because, in essence, they are writing the theology of the Church in depicting the saints and their attributes, and the Feast Days. They follow, without change, the pattern of the images that have been passed down by generations of holy iconographers. If they add undue emotion, naturalism, or their own interpretation, they would be altering the dogma of the Church upon which these icons are based.

We are God’s living icons. Through Christ, the image of God has been renewed in us as we are transformed by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Linda Fowler

What does it take to waken up a sleeping soul to the reality of God? Secularism, consumerism, television, and all those comforts of our modern life have the effect of a narcotic. They make us drowsy and blasé, numb us to this reality: drugs, sex, entertainments that sound conveys is inaccessible. Instead, she is locked inside herself. In a way, we can all relate. In our secular times, we feel trapped in a disenchant- ed world. Despite our entertainment and technology, life so easily feels empty and stuffy. Whether or not we believe in God, He simply feels distant.

What is it like to be a modern person? A Canadian philosopher, James K. A. Smith, says we live in a secular age, in a time where the universe feels flattened and meaningless. “[We live today in] a flattened human universe where the escapes are boredom and distraction . . . most of the time the best ‘salvation’ we can hope for is found in behaviors that numb us to this reality: drugs, sex, entertainments of various sort . . . A spectator haunts our secular age, ‘the specter of meaninglessness’” (“Heur [Nei] To Be Svinder, Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014, pp. 14, 129). We have forgotten God or confined him at a safe distance. Consequently, nothing fills our hearts.

Sometimes the best way to understand a culture is by looking at its music. We are not satisfied, and that dissatisfaction permeates modern lyrics. Here is a song by the indie pop group, Post Services:

*And I’m looking through the glass Where the light bends at the cracks And I’m screaming at the top of my lungs Pretending the echoes belong to someone – Someone I used to know [quoted in Smith, p. ix].*  

It is all in Holy Scripture. The Psalter goes to the same place in the heart. “Lord . . . turn your ear to my cry. I am overwhelmed . . . I am counted among those who go down to the dead . . . I am set apart with the dead . . . I am confined and cannot escape; my eyes are dim” (Psalm 88:1–3, 5, 8–9). Some are depressed and turn to distractions to fill them. The rest of us may be simply dry.

Where is the hunger for God? Where is our fer- vor to pray and fast? When we read the lives of the saints, I always marvel at their passion. They spend their entire days in prayer. Yet why do I have so much trouble following their example? Why is it so hard to sit still long enough to pray a rosary, let alone, a rosary day after day? Why is it a struggle to stand for five minutes before an icon, let alone to pray unceas- ingly? Why do temptations suck us in like a vacuum? We are that man who was deaf and mute, and Jesus Christ is our hope.

Our Lord took the deaf man aside, put his fingers into his ears, and touched his tongue. “Be- hold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20). The message of the Christian gospel is this: if we seek Him, God will reach down and touch us. The deaf man knew loneliness. He was cast away, rejected, and hopeless, when, all of a sudden, a hand touches him. This is the touch of the Creator God can make us alive. There is no lones- liness that God cannot break through. There is no meaninglessness that God cannot fill and permeate. With a touch, God can make us young again. Like dew the morning, leaves bring freshness.

Why does Jesus Christ heal with spit and clay? This miracle could not be more beautiful. When God touches us, he heals our life, soul and body; spirit and matter. God permeates our daily, human life. A home blessed with prayers and holy water is a home full of angels. The air in the Christian home is differ- ent than the air in an atheist’s home. It buzzes with presence of God fills our lives the way sunlight fills a landscape. God’s healing is real.

Yet, most of the time we settle. Maybe we feel that we have enough of God. Maybe life took a turn, it did not go the way we wanted, and so we are just waiting it out, living in the past, or dream- ing about the future. Most of the time, we are not even aware that our soul is dry. We imagine we are good just the way we are. Meanwhile, Christ stands at the door and knocks. “If anyone hears my voice and opens…I will come in to him.” What does this mean? God will shower us with gifts as soon as our hands empty enough to receive.

Looking up to heaven, he groaned, saying, “Ephphatha,” “Be opened” (Mark 7:35). St. Bede suggests that Christ groaned to teach us how to pray. “He looked up to heaven to teach us that it is from there the dumb must seek speech, the deaf hearing, and all who suf- fer healing. He groaned, not because He needed [any- thing] . . . but that He might give us an example of groaning, when we must call upon the assis- tance of the heavenly mercy” (St. Bede, *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers,* San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000, volume 4, p. 26).

So, your soul is numb and your heart is dry. When Ezekiel stood in the valley of the bones, the Lord commanded him: “Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord:’ This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord” (Ezekiel 37:4–6). A little book was enough to spark life in the soul of C. S. Lewis. Heaven knows what is needed in our lives to wake us up. We must begin by praying, God will do the rest.
The Centrality of the Gospel Reading in the Divine Liturgy

Orthodox Christians have a lot of things to offer this world, but one of them is not punctuality. In many parishes, the faithful can be seen arriving for Sunday Liturgy all throughout the first half of the service. This may be a cultural habit, or a personal one, but it is something most of us find to varying degrees in our parishes. Most clergy try to find ways to convey to their congregations the importance of arriving on time for Liturgy. Obviosly, we can point to the fact that it’s simply good manners, and we don’t want to disturb the prayer of others who are there on time. Perhaps another approach is to teach about the centrality of the Gospel reading during the Divine Liturgy. If we understand more fully the vital importance of the Gospel within the context of the Divine Liturgy, then the importance of hearing it, we would say that there is an inseparable connection between the proclamation of the teaching of Christ contained therein, and the reception of His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. The Gospel Book takes center stage in our Liturgy from the get-go. As Fr. Paul Tarazi notes in his book, *The Rise of Scripture*, “the Gospel Book itself is never ‘blessed’ since it is the bestower of blessings as much as God himself” (St. Paul, Minnesota: OCA RBS, 2015, p. 473). “In the Orthodox church even crosses and icons are blessed with the Gospel Book, whereas the Gospel Book itself is never blessed or consecrated; it is the bestower of blessings” (p. 439). In all of our Orthodox sacramental liturgies (the Divine Liturgy, baptism, the sacrament of marriage), the service starts with the blessing of the altar itself with the Gospel Book, while the priest proclaims, “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

After the initial litany comes the Small Entrance, with the deacon or priest carrying the Gospel Book out among the people. Symbolically, this can be understood as Christ making His public appearance in the midst of the people, proclaiming His teaching. And then we lift high the Gospel book and proclaim loudly with joy, “Come let us worship and fall down before the Lord.” Before what? Before the book? No. Before the altar? No. Before Christ. Come let us worship and fall down before Christ! Functionally speaking, the Gospel Book is the presence of Christ among us at that point in the service!

Before the Gospel is read, the priestcrowns around the altar table. This is a ceasing not so much of the altar itself, but of the Gospel book which lies upon it, just prior to it being opened and read. Then, the priest utters a prayer. This is usually done quietly, while the Epistle is being read, but perhaps it would be better if it were in the hearing of the faithful, and conveying the importance of what is about to take place. The priest says, “Illumine our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, with the pure light of Thy Divine Knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Thy Gospel teachings, that trampling down all carnal desirings, we enter a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well pleasing unto Thee.” The divine knowledge of God, the wisdom of His teaching which gives life, is what we are about to receive communion with, that teaching is contained within the Gospel, which we are praying to be made available to understand. This teaching is what makes us able, by the grace of God, to trample upon our fleshly desires, and to enter the fullness of spiritual life here and now, as we think and then do the things pleasing to God.

Then the Gospel is proclaimed, and the sermon is preached. Both are essential in the context of the Liturgy; they are not merely a “preamble” to Holy Communion; rather, the proclamation of the Good News is what “opens the door” for us to receive communion. (Even at baptisms, before the newly baptized receive communion, the Gospel is read.) When we hear the Gospel proclaimed, the words themselves contain a power all their own. It is as if we are looking in a mirror, seeing ourselves not only as we truly are, but as we should be. In this way, when the Gospel reading is literally “poured” into our ears, it functions for us as a judgment, for the sake of our instruction unto life. When we hear Jesus say things like, “If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will my Father in heaven forgive you your trespasses,” or, “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, . . . . Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me,” we immediately know whether or not we are measuring up to Christ’s standard. So we are placed under judgment before the Final Day, not a judgment resulting in destruction, but a judgment unto instruction (the way a good father instructs his children!). This is done in the hope that, encouraged and instructed by the Lord, we would correct our life, getting back on the way that Christ has laid out for us. The Gospel gives us the teaching that enables us to do this. The grace comes from God, but the decision to trust in God, and live out this trust in the way we act, is ours. The sermon which follows is not so much needed to “explain” the Gospel to the faithful. It is not a “Bible study” per se (which has its own place in the weekly schedule of the parish). Rather, it is an exhortation to place our trust in the One True and Living God, no matter what happens, and to be merciful, even as our Father in heaven is merciful.

Having heard and accepted the Gospel, we are given access to the Mystical Supper of the Lord. The Gospel Book is moved out of the way so that the antimension can be opened up, in order for the Holy Gifts to be placed upon it. Note, however, that though the Gospel is moved, it is not removed from the altar table. The liturgical rubrics call for the Gospel to be stood upon, in a prominent place (often in direct line with the tabernacle containing the reserved Communion) so that everyone, especially the priest, will be able to see it. If so, we examine the antimension itself, we will notice that in the four corners are icons of the four Evangelists – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Similarly, if we look up into the dome of an Orthodox church, we’ll notice that at the four corners supporting the dome, with its icon of Christ the Pantocrator (the Almighty), are the same icons: the four Evangelists, the four accounts of the one Gospel which “present” or “hold up” Christ to us through the text.

After hearing the words of Christ, we receive the Word of God in the flesh in Holy Communion, for the forgiveness of our sins. In this way, the Gospel is consumed, this Gifts are consumed, the communion vessels are cleaned and put away, and the Gospel book is replaced upon the altar, once again enshrined in its place. Everyone should take note of this, for in Holy Communion is consumed, the vessels are cleaned and stored properly, the Gospel is enshrined upon the altar. It remains there as a witness of the presence of Christ in our midst, as a call to align our lives with His, and as a life-giving proclamation that the God of Scripture is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His words will remain, heard, and acted upon by the faithful of all generations, until He returns to judge the living and the dead. On that day, may we – having taken with the utmost seriousness the proclamation of the Gospel during the Divine Liturgy – be found worthy to be resurrected to life. May we join Christ at the eternal banquet in the heavenly Kingdom; the banquet of the One Who said: “Heaven and earth may pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matt. 24:35).
COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

SUMMER READING PROGRAM AT ST. PHILIP CHURCH, SOUDERTON

To many people, the words “summer” and “slide” conjure up warm images of sunshine-y days spent on the playground. For teachers and librarians, the dreaded “summer slide” refers to the educational progress that students lose in the months before the educational year. One of the main goals of public libraries is to keep students involved in reading over the summer months. This is an important service for libraries to provide, as it helps to prevent the loss of learning that occurs during the summer break. The goal of the summer reading program is to engage children in reading, and to encourage them to keep learning over the summer break.

The Summer Reading Program at St. Philip’s Church, Souderton, is an example of how libraries can reach out to their community during the summer months. The program is open to all children in the area, and offers a variety of activities to keep students engaged in reading. The program includes a summer reading log, which consists of six boxes. Children can fill out the boxes as they read books, and the completed logs are submitted to the church at the end of the summer. The program also includes a summer reading challenge, which encourages children to read a certain number of books over the summer.

The program also includes a summer reading club, which meets on Sundays at the church. The club includes a reading program for children, and a reading program for adults. The reading program for children includes a summer reading log, which consists of six boxes. Children can fill out the boxes as they read books, and the completed logs are submitted to the church at the end of the summer. The program also includes a summer reading challenge, which encourages children to read a certain number of books over the summer.

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ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL ORTHODOX BISHOPS MEETS TO ADVANCE UNITY, ENCOURAGES LOCAL CONCELEBRATIONS

The Executive Committee of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America met September 18, under the chairmanship of Archbishop ELPIDOPHOROS, to discuss the state of canonical normalcy and pastoral unity of Orthodoxy, the jurisdictional representatives reiterated their commitment to the local faithful of America and rededicated themselves to fulfilling the call for canonical normalcy and pastoral unity on contemporary issues.

The meeting began with jurisdictional updates, which were followed by the Secretary’s report on the activities of the body since the last Assembly meeting in October 2018. The Executive Committee decided to mandate its Endorsed Orthodox Christian Association of Mass Communications (OCAMPR), to develop a task force to address the issue of mental health. OCAMPR will work in partnership with the Assembly, through the Office of the Secretariat. Additionally, the bishops received an appeal from Orthodox Christian organizations working on the crisis of homelessness. In response to their recommendations, a working group to develop an Orthodox Volunteer Corps, under the guidance of the Assembly Secretariat, was sanctioned.

Finally, the date and location was established for the 10th Anniversary Meeting of the Assembly of Bishops: May 2–5, 2020, in Washington, D.C.

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Applications: Hard copy applications only. Send the following items to the ADC Research Institute (address below):

* A one-page statement explaining why you meet the scholarship, identifying your goals, and declaring that you are a U.S. citizen of Arab heritage.
* Two original, signed letters of recommendation from professors of mass communications.

* Copies of your articles, DVDs, films, and so forth. (Items will not be returned to you.)
* Official academic transcripts (minimum 3.0 GPA).
* Your permanent home address, phone number, and e-mail address, and your phone number during the school year, if it is different.

Deadline: Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted; remember: only hard copy applications will be accepted.

Submit all materials at the address below:
ADC Research Institute
Attn: Mr. Nabil Mohamad, ADC Vice President
1705 Desales Street, N.W., Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20036

If you have any questions, call 202-244-2990, or e-mail organizing@ADC.org.

Awards will be presented at ADC’s 40th National Convention in Washington, D.C., in 2020.
In this world, however, we are seldom satisfied. I can have a pastry full of food and say that there’s nothing to eat; a house full of games, books, and music, and complain that there is nothing to do. Sometimes I feel dissatisfied with everything around me . . . even with everyone around me. My parents don’t understand; my brother is irritating; my friends aren’t there for me. These self-absorbed thoughts and desires are brought about by logismoi — those evil thoughts that influence our hearts and lead us astray if we do not keep on guard against them. Logismoi come to us in many forms. The Church fathers spoke of two, which I think are the most insidious: tristitia, thoughts of sadness and depression, and acedia, despondency or dejection, which steal our peace and leave us vulnerable to Satan’s snares.

Fr. Maximos of Mount Athos explained the Church Elders’ teachings about logismoi, writing that they begin with an assault or attack on our mind. Next, we may open up a dialogue with the thought. Fr. Maximos believes that this stage can be dangerous, because this is when we entertain the thought. It is not, however, until the third stage (consent), when we give in to the thought, that a sin occurs.

In Homily 24, St. John Chrysostom tells us that we cannot overcome temptation by our own power. He says, “Not even those moderate temptations . . . may we bear by our own power: but even in them we require aid from Him in our warfare which we may pass through them, and until we have passed, bear them.”

This is why we need continually to renew our minds in Christ, for it is only in His strength that we can defeat or put aside these logismoi, these harmful thoughts of selfish desire, discontentment, discouragement, and despondency.

One of our greatest struggles is with social anxiety. I am uncomfortable in groups and have trouble talking to people, even if I know them. My mind replays the same messages: No one really likes me; they think I’m boring; I am ugly. If weren’t here, no one would even notice me. If I were to isolate myself to protect myself from rejection. I feel like I have no purpose and can become apathetic and discouraged.

I realized, however, that the one place I am never discouraged or listless is in Mass. Mass is not about me; I am immersed in a community, worshipping God and participating in the sacraments. Last summer, I was really nervous before going on the Project Mexico mission. I wondered if I would have anyone to talk to, if I would be able to fit in with the group, if I would be included. I wondered about me. When I got there, however, I saw the people we had come to serve and I wondered about them. When I put myself aside and focused on others, Christ could strengthen me and work through me. From building the house to playing with the children, the week was life-changing. I was part of the community, joined with my brothers and sisters, and perfectly content. Even sleeping on the hard ground in a tent, or working in hundreds of degree heat, there was no sense of acedia.

You see, acedia and discontent are two sides of the same coin. They come from our thoughts. Last fall we read Elder Thaddeus’s book, Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives. He writes, “Our life depends on the kind of thoughts we nurture. Both good and evil come from our thoughts. Our thoughts become reality.” So, whether we are in trouble, suffering, and insecure, or popular, wealthy, and talented, whether we are fighting cancer or heading off to that dream college, our thoughts, our refusal to interact with the logismoi that threaten us, determine our ability to find contentment in Christ.

So, how does the Orthodox Christian avoid discontentment, and banish the logismoi that the think to ensnare us? The answer is simple: essentially we must “put on the mind of Christ” and imitate His life. Specifically, we should honestly seek the Father to know His will. As Orthodox Christians, we know that constant prayer and daily Scripture reading are crucial. Neither should we neglect reading the works of saints and godly men and women. Through these practices, we might become more aligned with God’s purposes.

Furthermore to live as a Christian is not to isolate oneself. Living in the Orthodox community is vital. By singing in the choir, playing the organ, participating in the sacraments, co-leading Vacation Bible School, and volunteering in the community, I live my Orthodox faith.

In short, to paraphrase St. Augustine, “Love God and others, and do what you want.” These surroundings that are aligned with God, it is not possible for us to deviate from His will. Our prayers would be answered, since they are encompassed in His will. We can do all things through Christ.

So prayer may not get me into MIT, but I will be successful if I can say, just like my grandmother did, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race.”
In short, FFHP&CO will fund the following:
1. Expansion of well-established charitable programs;
2. Establishment of new charitable initiatives (such funding may be granted to new programs to help cover legal expenses incurred in applying for 501(c)(3) status); and
3. Emergency Funding, to be given on a one-time basis (even outside of the designated proposal due dates, if necessary).

Decisions of the Committee will be final and cannot be appealed.

**Procedures for Funding**

The following procedures must be followed by all churches and church organizations applying for funding:

1. Submissions must be made by the following deadlines:
   - Spring: February 1
   - Fall: September 1
2. Proposals may be delivered electronically through e-mail to annethomas@abthomasesq.com
3. Optional relevant materials may be submitted to supplement the Grant Application form. Please number additional pages, and note attachments on the application form.

**Application Procedures for Funding**

Our Antiochian churches have, for many years, engaged in charitable outreach programs in their particular communities. Usually this is done with individual donations and/or fundraising efforts. Each year the need in the U.S. and Canada increases as the number of homeless and families living below the poverty line increases. For over forty-five years the Archdiocese has responded to world hunger and disasters worldwide through the Food for Hungry People & Charitable Outreach (FFHP&CO) Program. Our churches and individuals have given hundreds of thousands of dollars to this effort. While the Archdiocese will continue to respond to world needs, FFHP&CO recognizes our responsibility to assist churches through a structured process to combat hunger and its related effects in North America.

FFHP&CO recognizes the myriad of programs and projects sponsored by our churches and church organizations to make a difference in the community in which they are located. We also recognize that these efforts alone are not sufficient to alleviate the hunger and poverty that beset so many of our neighbors. Additional measures are required.

Beginning January 1, 2020, FFHP&CO will accept proposals for funding to assist Antiochian parishes and/or parish organizations establish, strengthen, and expand charitable programs. Applications for funding, including all required documentation and signatures, must be completed in accordance with the procedures given below. The FFHP&CO Funding Oversight Committee will grant funds for limited, specific purposes but not for general, ongoing sustaining of programs.

**Food for Hungry People & Charitable Outreach**

**Application Procedures for Funding**

**Name of Church/Organization:**

**Address:**

**City:**

**State:**

**Zip:**

**Telephone:**

**Fax:**

**Priest:**

**Position:**

**Program Name:**

**Grant Request Amount:**

**Signature:**

My signature certifies that the applicant currently has tax-exempt status under §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is classified as “not a private foundation” as defined under §509(a). My signature is made as one authorized to do so on behalf of the applying organization.

**Name/Title:**

**Signature of Authorized Person:**

**Date:**

1. **Program Overview:**
2. **What are the program goals?** How will the program achieve these goals or objectives?
3. **Staffing:** Who will administer the program, and what are their qualifications? (For established programs, this list should include the names of the Governing Board.)
4. **At what location will the operations of the program be carried out?**
5. **How long will the program continue?** For an established program: How long has it been in existence?
6. **How will the program be sustained, financially?**
7. **What criteria will be used to evaluate the program’s effectiveness?**

Submit a proposed budget, including a budget summary of income and expenses.

**For an established program, submit as well a copy of the following documents:**
- the latest Form 990, 990EZ, or 990-PF, if filed;
- the most recent Annual Report, including audited financials;
- the IRS determination letter indicating 501(c)(3) status, if applicable.

**For a new program, submit as well an explanation of the steps being taken to apply for 501(c)(3) status, if applicable.**
2019 PROJECT
Antiochian Women - North American Board

“BEHOLD, THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS AMONG MEN!”

Building a new Cathedral
for our Archdiocese at the Antiochian Village