

الكلمة

# THE WORD

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2023

VOLUME 67 NO. 4

## THE 56TH BIENNIAL ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION



# THE WORD

## CONTENTS



COVER: THE 56TH BIENNIAL  
ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION

- 3 THE ADDRESS OF  
HIS EMINENCE  
METROPOLITAN SABA TO THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE  
56TH ARCHDIOCESE  
CONVENTION
- 9 ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE  
PATRIARCH JOHN X
- 13 WITH MY BODY  
I THEE WORSHIP  
by Father John Fenton
- 14 THE 56TH BIENNIAL  
ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION  
by Deacon Peter Samore
- 20 "FROM THESE STONES"  
IT'S OK TO BE ITTY-BITTY  
BUT ...  
by Father Joseph Huneycutt
- 22 WE BECOME WHAT WE  
CONTEMPLATE  
by Fr. Peter Andrew Kavanaugh
- 24 ORATORICAL FESTIVAL  
JUDGES' CHOICE  
by Sarah Alamir
- 26 ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE
- 31 IMAGE AND LIKENESS IN  
EVERY GENERATION  
by Fr. Joseph Huneycutt
- 33 MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD:  
THE ICON FROM  
SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
- 34 COMMUNITIES IN ACTION
- 35 NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY  
by Fr. John Oliver

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

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION:  
U.S.A. and Canada, \$40.00  
Foreign Countries, \$50.00  
Single Copies, \$3.00  
Checks should be made payable to THE ANTIOCHIAN  
ARCHDIOCESE.

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

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

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

### CORRECTION

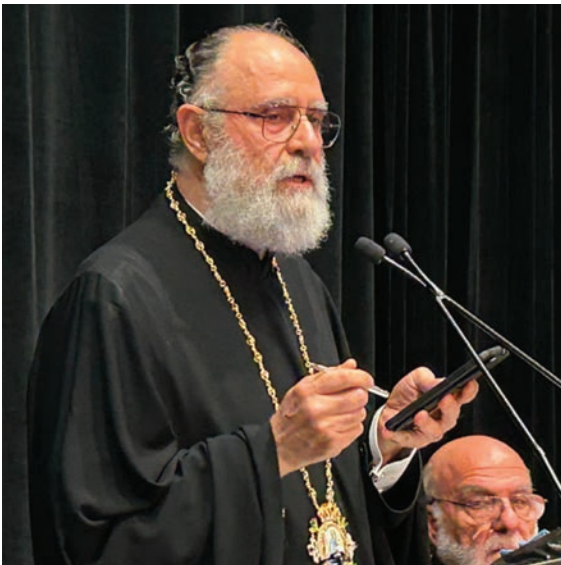
The icon of Pentecost on page 7 of the June Issue was by Randa Azar.

# THE ADDRESS OF HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN SABA

TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE 56TH ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION

(PHOENIX, 27 JULY 2023)

YOUR BEATITUDE, OUR FATHER IN CHRIST, PATRIARCH YOUHANNA X, YOUR GRACES, BELOVED CLERGY, ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF OUR GOD PROTECTED ARCHDIOCESE, HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS, MEMBERS OF THE ORDER OF ST. IGNATIUS, MEMBERS OF THE ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN, MEMBERS OF SOYO, OUR DEAR YOUNG ADULTS, PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS, AND ALL THE FAITHFUL OF OUR ARCHDIOCESE,



FRIDAY, JULY 28, 2023  
Metropolitan SABA Addresses General Assembly  
His Eminence Metropolitan SABA (Isper)

It is with joy that I am present among you at the 56<sup>th</sup> Archdiocese Convention, a gathering that is dear to all our hearts. We meet in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, to rejoice in His presence in our midst, to rejoice in our communion/fellowship together through Him, and to be inspired by His Holy Spirit in order to illumine us for the service, uplifting and growth/progress of His Church, which He has entrusted to us.

Our teens at our Parish Life Conferences inspired me to begin my address with the theology of the image and likeness which you have chosen as a theme for this year's convention. The teens presented their papers with such theological accuracy, and heralded a promising Orthodox future for our Archdiocese. May God increase their blessings and bless us with them, their works and more of their likes.

## CREATION OF MAN

“Furthermore, God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let him rule over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the heaven and over the beasts and over all the earth and over everything that creepeth and moveth on the earth’ (Genesis 1:26).

The uniqueness of man; that which distinguishes him from all other creatures, lies in the fact that he is created in the “Image of God.” And in that his uniqueness is not limited only to the “Divine Image,” but also in the fact that this “Icon” is called to be in the “Likeness of God.” This is what Orthodox Christian theology has known and taught from the very beginning.

As bishop of Lyon Saint Irenaeus (130-202 AD), preached that the “Glory of God is the Living Man.” Some of the Fathers of the Church define or identify rather than combine the “Divine Image,”

The Right Reverend  
Bishop THOMAS

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ALEXANDER

The Right Reverend  
Bishop JOHN

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend  
Bishop NICHOLAS

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

*Editor in Chief* Bishop JOHN

*Assistant Editor* Christopher Humphrey

*Design Director* Donna Griffin Albert

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

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

e-mail: WORDMAG@AOL.COM

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

or the "Icon," according to which man was created to mean the totality of his nature. Because man is viewed as a single entity uniting all the divisions known to human culture such as body, soul and spirit. Church Fathers consider the "Image" to mean the supreme manifestation of man, referring to his spirit and his spiritual understanding. Saint Gregory Nazianzus says: "Being dust, I cling to the life of this earth, but also being a masterpiece of God, I carry within me the desire for the life to come." This is the understanding through which man obtains the knowledge of God and through it he lives in communion with God.

According to our faith, this means that the "Image of God" in man is what differentiates him from animals: his freedom, the ability to choose and change, the knowledge of good and evil, the ability of innovation, the power of creativity and the reshaping of the world, to praise and to re-offer the world as a transfigured world, etc. We should be aware that the thought of the holy fathers avoided defining the image of God with any part of the human being.

Orthodox Christian theology makes a clear distinction between the "Image" and the "Likeness." It defines the "Image" as man's ability to live in God, while the "Likeness" is the achievement of this possibility.

In the words of the late Metropolitan KALLISTOS Ware (1934-2022), "The 'Image' is what man has from the beginning. It is what enables him to enter the spiritual path. While the 'Likeness' is what he aims to obtain at the end of his journey. Origen (184-253AD) the teacher wrote: "Man has acquired the honor of the 'Image' from the first creation. But the fullness of perfection of resembling identification with God will be granted to him only at the end of all things when God becomes all in all."

Our belief is that man is created in the image of God. This means that our belief is that man is created to be in communion and union with God, and that if he rejects this communion, he will not become a human being in the authentic understanding. Apart from God a "Normal man" cannot exist. The state of the man who has cut himself off from God is abnormal. Thus, the meaning state of our belief in the "Image" is that God is the center of man's existence. In other words, the divine element is what defines our humanity. If we lose our connection with the divine, we lose our connection to the human as well.

Orthodox theology is unique in saying that man is not only created in the image of God, but more specifically in the image of the Triune God. Since the "Image" of God in man is that of the Trinity, then man, like God becomes true to this divine nature through a life of mutual communion. The "Image" means a relationship, not only with God, but also with other people. Just as the Triune Divinity lives one in the other and one for the sake of the other, so man, reflecting this image of the Trinity, becomes true to this aspect of his creation when he sees the world through the eyes of others. When he takes upon himself the joys and sufferings of the other.

Every human being is unique, but each, in his uniqueness, is created to be in communion with others. Hence the Orthodox tradition recognizes the communal priesthood not the isolated. A person lives either in the communion of a matrimonial family or in the communion of a monastic family.

## THE FALL

Did man lose the "Divine Image" with the fall of Adam and Eve? Our Orthodox theology does not teach that the "Image" was totally lost but rather that was darkened or blurred. What happened to man because of his fall from Paradise, that is, from the Divine Presence? What happened to man was that he could no longer

comprehend the rank to which he was created and so he could no longer recognize how to reach or interact with that “Likeness.” By man turning away from God, the “Image” of God in him was distorted, but it was never destroyed or erased.

Man fell because he chose to reach the “Likeness” by relying on himself without God. This is the main sin right now. Let us contemplate the words of the book of Genesis: “When ye shall eat thereof ... ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). By moving away from his source, man lost what revives and grows the “Divine Image” within him.

The text of the Evlogetaria for the Funeral Service states: “I am an image of thy glory ineffable though I bear the brands of transgressions” (Antiochian Service Book). We still long for our origin, even though we no longer know it, that is because we still bear the “Image” of God, or to be exact, its remnant, and therefore we still retain a free will, even though sin restricts this free will of ours.

Saint John of Kronstadt (1829-1909) said: “We ought to never confuse the man created in the ‘Image’ of God with the evil that is in him, for evil is nothing but a stumbling block, a disease, a satanic fantasy. While the essence of the person is the ‘Image’ of God, and this has remained in him despite any distortion.” Orthodoxy rejects any interpretation of the Fall that leaves no room for human freedom.

#### HOW DOES ORTHODOXY DEFINE THE STATE FROM WHICH MAN HAS FALLEN?

Again, to quote the Bishop of Lyon, Saint Irenaeus: “Man was given existence to grow and mature, to become strong, to attain the fullness of glorification, and to be glorified in order to be able to see God.” According to Saint Irenaeus, man, in his original state, was in a state of spiritual childhood, innocence and simplicity tied to a moral purity. Man had to reach the divine “Likeness” through a slow journey. Saint Irenaeus does not see the fall of man as a fully matured rebellion, rather a reckless, hasty, and immature desire.

Saint Jerome (+420AD) considers man when he was first created “like a child” in need of “growing” into perfection. In other words: man, at the beginning of his creation was innocent and able to grow spiritually. This is the “Image.” But this growth was

not automatic, rather the fruit of his cooperation with divine grace. Thus, by the good use of his free will, man was created to become perfect, slowly, gradually, in God and by him. This is the “Likeness.” From this perspective we understand the “Image” of God in man is a dynamic sense not a static one.

Simply, we understand the “Image” to mean that something of God exists in man. While man is called, in cooperation with his Creator, to cultivate this “Image” until it reaches its divine “Likeness.”

#### HOW SHOULD WE NOW BEGIN TO REFLECT, IN REALITY, THIS THEOLOGY OF “IMAGE” AND “LIKENESS” WITHIN OUR ARCHDIOCESE NOW AND IN THE FUTURE?

Everything in the church should be based on theology. The short answer is that the “Image” is her message and that the “Likeness” is her vision. More clearly, we should state that those blessing we have been given in this Archdiocese such as: man power and organizational capabilities as well as the blessings of material and spiritual wealth that have been granted to us by God are the “Image.” On the other hand, the “Likeness” is the sanctifying of these blessings through the good deeds of our witness to, and the services for, those around us and the society as a whole.

To define the current image, we must first know what precious gifts we have been given. Here and now let us enumerate and give thanks to God for some of the great blessings we have in this Archdiocese. Here are just a few of the many attributes of this Archdiocese that I have noted from my visits in the past and now from my brief time as a permanent resident.

- Through the tireless efforts of our ancestors; the saints, hierarchs, priests, deacons, and laity that have preceded us; we have to use the language of engineering, been blessed with a firm foundation and even some of the framework in place. Each parish has its own church in which to celebrate the services, a parish hall for various social and communal functions.
- We have people who love God, rich in their faith, piety, zeal, and generosity towards the Church. Its continuity and the permanence of its existence is at the very center of their lives.
- We have been blessed with pious and zealous

clergy, that have dedicated their lives to the service of their parishioners and seek to strengthen the witness of Antiochian Orthodox Christianity on this continent.

- We have been blessed with many departments and organizations that take care of and look after the spiritual life, pastoral care, and financial matters of the Archdiocese with decency and order.
- We have been blessed with volunteers, ready to serve the Church in any capacity with all sincerity and dedication wherever the service calls them.
- We have been blessed with active organizations and fellowships filled with generous people who are ready to serve the needs of the Church and of our less fortunate brethren in Christ.
- We have been blessed with the Antiochian Village, which serves as a vibrant and beating heart of the Archdiocese. A meeting place for both the young and the old, contributing to the unity of this Archdiocese.
- We have been blessed with programs for the study of theology. For the expanding of the knowledge of the faith in the hearts of believers and a place for the explanation of our faith to inquirers. Continuing education for clergy, present and future.
- We have been blessed with modest properties throughout the Archdiocese.
- Last but not least, we have been blessed with many missions across this great land of North America. Due in no small part to a significant uptake in the interest in Orthodox Christianity. One U.S. statistical department recently considered the Antiochian Orthodox Church to be the fastest growing Christian church in North America.

We have, therefore, a great cumulative legacy left to us by those who have gone before us and that our faithful are working hard to keep active and develop. This great legacy needs to be preserved, sustained, and made permanent. A great deal of work will have to be done to highlight its importance and to grow and increase it in order to respond to the requirements of our witness to today's society. Therefore, the most important and pressing question for us, if we want to be honest witnesses of the Lord here and now, is, how does this image, we

have, become the likeness we desire?

## CHALLENGES

Before we answer this question, we need to know the challenges and obstacles that face us. Many have asked me about my plans for the Archdiocese. I have answered them that I need time to know well how the Archdiocese is on ground, what are its possibilities, and what are its challenges. And to hear from its members, I mean you, to know of their aspirations. Only then could I offer a comprehensive and realistic vision of the near future. One that is studied well and thoroughly planned in order to develop the executive mechanisms to achieve our goals.

First let us examine some of the challenges we face.

- **Secularism** is our first main challenge. Secularism is an attitude within society based on the liberation of various spheres of life (political, social, cultural, values, morals, etc.), and their complete independence from the religious field. Thus, man is living according to the values of the world. A world that, according to our faith, is searching for its original image. An image that was lost with the rejection of God, the source. People in this culture of secularism have no reference of comparison except themselves. Man has become the source and reference for himself and for everything. And this is the sin of Adam and Eve. God no longer has a place in the organizations of human life. Therefore, this ruling culture is producing different lifestyles that transcend all previously known taboos justified by personal freedoms. We are confronted with a society of strenuous work and excessive consumption. New moral values violate the sanctity of our homes, families, churches, and faith. Some people feel that we are in an anti-Christian society. There is a question that has been asked in several of the parishes that I have visited: "How do we deal with our enemies?" When I asked: "What do you mean by 'enemy'?" The reply was that; "Many in society are hostile towards us simply because we are Christian."

In many parishes around the Archdiocese, we are also witnessing some who leave the Church. Especially among our youth who are educated and grow up in such a secular society. One common question that I have heard in my pastoral visits:

“How do we bring our youth back to the church?”

- **Relativity** is the first-born consequence of secularism, and perhaps the most dangerous thing as it rejects the notion of an absolute truth. Relativity becomes the criterion. What suits you is the truth for you and what suits me is the truth for me. The sources of truth: God, the Church and the family have marginalized. Man became vulnerable to all kinds of common trends and religious discrepancies.
- On the ecclesiastical level we face challenges of **the separation of theology and life**. The secularized society, not a religious society, becomes the most important factor in the shaping of a lifestyle. As a result, the phenomenon of religiosity became stronger than living a life with God and in God. Religiosity is limited to the practice of religious practices, rituals, ceremonies, customs, and folklore, but faith and the life with God need more. They require purity in the human soul, growth in virtues, and the welcoming of the fullness of the presence of God.
- A shortage of eligible candidates **for the priesthood**. We have approximately 456 active and retired priests. The average age of active priests is 60. This means that in 5 years we will face the challenge of securing priests to continuing the ministry of Christ in our parishes.
- We are witnessing the beginnings of an economic setback, deterioration of individual finances, high cost of living, low wages, and signs of the decline of the “Life of Luxury.” The vast divide between the income of employers and employees is causing disinterest among the young in pursuing employment in the job market.
- Also, I hear about the fears of the retirement of a priest, who has been serving without compensation, because the parish is unable to afford a new priest, as well as from some parishes that are only able to afford one priest, they need more, but cannot afford it. The Archdiocese constantly receives requests by different parishes, not missions, for monthly financial assistance.
- **Poor coordination and communication** that threaten the optimal performance and even internal unity of the Archdiocese.

The coordination between many of the departments and organizations working within the Archdiocese is weak. The well-intentioned initiatives that happen from time to time on the local level tend to strengthen parochialism and independence of the rest of the Archdiocese. Much of our works are not done according to a shared and unified vision by the Archdiocese as a whole and its faithful, rather according to the vision of those doing them.

- **A misconception of church membership** where our ecclesiastical attitude is dominated by the spirit of membership that exists in clubs and non-church associations. This should not be the case in the Church that is the Body of Christ. This is reflected in the pastoral ministry in particular; for example, this causes the lack of pastoral visits. The warmth of the one body becomes weak, and the believer does not feel embraced by the community. But membership in the Church of Christ is a familial membership. The faithful are one entity, one body and their financial participation is the fruits of their faith and gratitude to God.

Enough with the challenges. Let us look to the future and some of the visions and aspirations so that we may begin to build the comprehensive action plan needed to achieve our goals.

After 130 years of being in this blessed land, it is imperative that we become more active in our service to this country. We should solidify our Christian witness in this land that has given us so much.

- We need to develop and build ecclesiastical institutions based on the theology of Christian witness. To identify and prioritize these entities will require prayer, reflection, discussion, and expert advice. The Archdiocese can no longer bear the failure of insufficiently studied ill planned projects and initiatives.
- Economically, we need to stabilize and strengthen the financial resources of the Archdiocese. The finances are still dependent on the same limited resources. We have an opportunity to establish various institutions and endowments that provide ministry and service to society while being a financial investment. We need to pay serious attention to the education of our young and the care of our elderly to name a couple. We need to search for new

- investment opportunities. The saying is true: "Do not put all your eggs in one basket."
- In such a multicultural Archdiocese, we should respect every culture. We need to learn how the Church unifies all the diversities and heals all divisions through the life in Christ. Here is where the example of the Great City of Antioch can be our guide. For many centuries, the faithful of Antioch used to pray in at least four languages: Greek on the coast, Syriac in the inlands, Arabic in the south and Armenian in the north.
  - We should also renew our pastoral ministries, seeking out those that have been absent from the church lest they fall away forever, seeking them out for the sake of their salvation. In such a complicated society, we need specialized pastoral ministries that are complimentary to the traditional ones. Pastoral ministries dependent on the priest alone is no longer sufficient in today's highly specialized world and huge cities. Our ministry should take into account the many challenges to the faith of each age and professional group. We need more deacons with customized ministries in our departments and fellowships.
  - We need to develop a culture of joyful integration. The mentality of ostracism and monopoly should be rejected. In an open and borderless world, we need to interact more with the other Archdioceses of the Antiochian Patriarchate as well as the other Orthodox jurisdictions. Exchanging with each other ideas and experiences for the enrichment of all. No one lives alone. Our modern world is open. Let us wisely build good relations with the others Orthodox families.
  - The spiritual thirst that I have seen in my pastoral visits to parishes requires us to pray fervently for God to send us monastic men and women, so that the Archdiocese will be revived by their prayer and ascetic struggles. Monasteries will be an oasis of comfort, peace, and healing.
  - The Church itself, as an oasis, requires more effort in raising up priests according to the heart of our Lord – priests who as living images of Christ in front of our young people who can see in them what the love of Christ does to man and how God alone is really enough for

man. We can do this by beginning a campaign to instill a love of the priesthood in our youth. The testimony of a faithful and dedicated priest in the service of his parish influences the hearts of young people and endears them to the high mission of the priesthood.

- I also wish for the establishment of prayer groups in every parish, beginning with the encouragement of a family life filled with prayer and piety in the home, drawing from the fountains of traditional and living spiritual life in the Orthodox Church here and everywhere. Believers, themselves, should become oasis of God existed here and there in this world – a world longing for true life, fueled by the spark of seeking the best life that Christ wishes and provides for us. Today's exhausted people ask us to create specific ministries for new kinds of spiritual retreats and activities. We cannot comfort the oppressed people of today by sermons alone. Is not our church, centered social services and activities our greatest witness to the world?
- Last, but not least. Each of us has been baptized into Christ, anointed with the holy Chrism and have acquired the grace of the "royal priesthood," so let us do these works not only with our hands but our hearts as well. Calling to mind the words of the Apostle Paul that our works may be done "with decency and order."

Finally, I would like to express my great joy in meeting your beloved faces. I hope that our convention today will mark the beginning of a phase of planning, cooperation, and diligent work, aimed at making this archdiocese a place in which Christ takes pride, His beloved find solace, and holiness shines forth. These are the qualities that were embodied by Saint Raphael of Brooklyn, the founder of this archdiocese, who calls us to follow this example as we work together to build a beautiful future, guided by God's grace.

May God bless our efforts and make us a shining example and testament to His love for the world.



# ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH JOHN X

ANTIOCHIAN ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA, JULY 2023



I COME TO YOU FROM DAMASCUS, A CITY THAT, CENTURIES AGO, INHERITED THE GLORY OF ANTIOCH. I COME WITH PASCHAL JOY IN MY HEART, A JOY THAT OVERCOMES ALL SORROW AND PAIN. I CARRY THIS JOY TO YOU FROM THE LIGHT OF THE RESURRECTION THAT I SAW ON THE FACES OF YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO ARE STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE IN ANTIOCH, THE GREAT CITY OF GOD. I CELEBRATED THE FEAST OF PASCHA WITH THEM IN ANTIOCH, STANDING UPON THE RUINS OF THE SAINTS PETER AND PAUL CATHEDRAL DESTROYED BY THE EARTHQUAKE. HOWEVER, THE EARTHQUAKE DID NOT DESTROY THE RESOLVE OF THE ANTIOCHIANS OR THEIR VIBRANT CHURCH. THIS CHURCH STILL DEFIES THE CRUELTY OF HISTORY AND INSISTS ON SURVIVAL BY BUILDING WHAT WAS DESTROYED. THIS CHURCH BEARS WITNESS TO THE SWEETNESS OF CHRIST AND TO THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX HERITAGE.

**I** come to you from Damascus, from the Street called Straight, where Saul was baptized and after his conversion was named Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. I bring to you the blessings of the Mariamite Cathedral, Our Lady of Saydnaya Convent, and the Protomartyr and *Equal-to-the-Apostles* Thekla Convent in the town of Maaloula. The people in this town still speak the ancient language of Christ, despite all the tragedies that have afflicted them, and the latest being the terrorist occupation that uprooted them from their homes and destroyed their sanctuaries. Now, they are rebuilding with much determination and resolve, offering prayers with their sisters and brothers for peace in Syria, and for the return of the

displaced and kidnapped people. Here I foremostly remember the Archbishops of Aleppo Boulos and Youhanna, whose kidnapping recapitulates the present-day sufferings of Antioch.

I come to you, from Lebanon, this country whose name is frequently mentioned in the Bible, and which Christ visited with His disciples. It is the country where Christ made His signs, the Apostles founded several dioceses, and the faithful still bear witness to the Lord despite many challenges and difficulties. The latest challenge in Lebanon is the economic crisis under which the Lebanese people are suffering. These challenges did not prevent them in wartime from building a university on the hill of Balamand, and this university became one of the most important universities in Lebanon and the Middle East.

I come to you from the snowy Mount Hermon and its lofty peaks that embrace Galilee and Tiberias. From these peaks flow the waters of the river Jordan, irrigating the heart of Palestine, and invigorating the face of Jerusalem. I come to you from the Jordan's neighborhood, from the goodness of Jordan's people, from the depths of its love and the loftiness of its Petra. I come to you conveying damascene breezes that flow and mingle with the fragrance of Jaffa's orchards in the cherished Palestine and its noble and steadfast people, while carrying an intense affection towards Jerusalem, which is the destination for both Eastern Christians and Muslims who entreat the mercy of the Most-High, the Holy One.

I come to you, in these blessed days, to celebrate together the centennial of the establishment of this God-protected Archdiocese, which is the boast of Antioch. A few days ago, we celebrated the feast of the Hieromartyr Joseph of Damascus. Saint Joseph founded and taught at the patriarchal school in Damascus, where the ecclesiastical personality of Saint Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn, was initially formed, before leaving to Halki and later on to Kyiv, furthering his theological education.

As I reflect with you today on the lives of these two saints, where martyrdom and apostolicity embrace, and spiritual labor appears in all its aspects, I see myself delving with you into the Antiochian spirituality that has emerged in the lives of each saint, in different parts of the world. This Antiochian spirituality continues to mark our Antiochian See and your God-protected Archdiocese.

Saint Joseph of Damascus, originally from Beirut and living in Damascus, was canonized by the Holy Synod of Antioch in 1993. He was a man of renaissance in the Church of Antioch in the nineteenth century. His poverty and immersion in work to provide for his family's living did not prevent him from self-education. He spent nights reading books and studying the Word of God, until the time when the Church decided to summon him to serve as the priest of the Mariamite Cathedral and the director of the patriarchal school. In his era, the school produced a generation of clergy and laity who initiated a renaissance in the See of Antioch at the beginning of the twentieth century. Father Joseph's life culminated in martyrdom in the year 1860, when Christians in Damascus and in other cities and villages of the See of Antioch

were subjected to massacres. However, these Christians have surmounted these massacres since they are resurrectional.

Divine providence wished that Saint *Raphael Hawaweeny* be born in Beirut in the same year that Father Joseph was martyred. The Hawaweeny family took refuge in Beirut. Later on, Saint Raphael joined the patriarchal school founded by Saint Joseph of Damascus, before moving to Constantinople, and then to Russia. From the latter, he moved to this continent in order to shepherd the Arab community. He became the first Orthodox Bishop to be consecrated on American soil and preach in it.

It is true that the credit for laying the solid foundations of the Antiochian presence in America goes to Saint Raphael. He especially cared for the Antiochian immigrants. However, he was a bishop to care not only for the Arabs, but also for all the Orthodox faithful scattered throughout the American continent. He endured the hardships of traveling long distances to gather the flock, construct new churches and provide priests for their care. He also preached to them the Word of God in the language of the land in which they lived, in order for them to remain steadfast in the faith, staying in their church and understanding her teachings.

What Saint Raphael expressed is an incarnation of the uniqueness of Antioch. This uniqueness which is centuries old is the result of the encounter of all civilizations and its respect of all cultures and lifestyles, as exemplified by the different languages used in liturgical worship in the lands within the historic borders of the See of Antioch. Thus, Antioch has relayed this experience to her Archdioceses abroad. These Archdioceses are deeply rooted in the countries where they exist, open to all, and embracing all.

Beloved, at the beginning of my speech, I spoke about the life of the Hieromartyr Joseph of Damascus. Let us remember that we are both witnesses and martyrs. We do not know when the hour will come, or when persecution will strike us, so we always strive to keep our oil lamps burning, awaiting the Bridegroom. Yes, we in the Mother Church have never known a form of Christianity that is either triumphant or imperialistic. In fact, we have been subjected to empires that have made our history difficult and tragic. This experience has distanced us from the "illusions of Rome" or Roman supremacy

and made us understand that our only need is for people of the Resurrection, for sanctified humans who bear witness to the Light and work “for the life of the world”, its resurrection from sin and death.

Our reality is worsening. It is getting more difficult and complicated by the wars in our lands, life crises and economic hardship, in addition to natural disasters. In the context of this reality, we have become more aware of the other and the sin of neglecting to care for him or her. We are also more aware that we are the church of the poor, a church that daily discovers Christ in every vulnerable person, in all the homeless, in all those who have been neglected and are unable to sustain themselves or obtain medicine and receive education.

However, in the midst of all these present difficulties, we still endeavor to show the world that Orthodoxy is the church of beauty and joy, the Church of the Resurrection and victory over death. We continue to realize, despite all the surrounding challenges, that it is our responsibility to be peace-makers and witnesses of the creative meekness of Christ in the face of the arrogance of the powerful.

We recognize that our responsibility is to remain courageous in the face of whatever challenges we face and to express our originality through initiatives that testify here and now that Christ lives and enlivens. We are called not to worship the past but to move forward because Christ is coming, and He is in our midst, with us, before us, and not just behind us. We persist in bearing witness to Christ naked and raised on the Cross and strive to cleave to Him and anoint His body as did the myrrh-bearers. We stand firm in not allowing anyone or anything to take away our hope from us.

Here I return with you to Saint Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn, and patron saint of this Archdiocese, who understood the meaning of the apostolic and missionary role of Antioch. Thus, he spent his life traveling on the paths of the Lord throughout this continent in order to construct churches, build up the believers, and transmit to them the faith of their ancestors, which was “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3) with new frames appropriate for the new life setting in the new lands. Saint Raphael realized that his task was not to dwell on the past but to fill the present with the Spirit of the Lord and His enriching Gospel. In this Antiochian apostolicity, his successor, Bishop Victor Abu Asali, the first bishop elected by the Synod to this Archdiocese af-

ter its official establishment in 1923, took care of this diocese with holiness and love. He strove to heal the wounds experienced by the Archdiocese as a result of the political and complex upheavals of World War I, and the changes that accompanied it with the fall of Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire. As for Archbishop Anthony Bashir, he established the Antiochian presence in American and Canadian societies and worked to activate cooperation between the Orthodox in this country in order to unite its witness. He made the ancient Antiochian dream come true by building the Saint John of Damascus Institute of Theology, which gave back to the See of Antioch its theological school. The same Antiochian apostolicity led Archbishop PHILIP Saliba of thrice-blessed memory, to know how to be open to others, to receive in this Archdiocese our brothers and sisters who have become today witnesses of Orthodoxy and apostles of Antioch in this country. With Metropolitan PHILIP, this Archdiocese expanded from eighty parishes to include more than 250 parishes.

My Beloved,

You are Antioch, and Antioch is you. We are one body, no matter how far physically apart we may be. We rejoice together, we grieve together, we grow together, and we ascend together. What befalls us befalls you and what befalls you befalls us. Therefore, I take this opportunity to thank your sincere love and your deep sympathy which you showed in your offering to your affected brothers and sisters in the Mother Church, especially after the Beirut Port explosion and the recent earthquake. With you, we will rebuild what has been destroyed, and we will strengthen our presence in the city of Antioch and its environs.

As for the future vision of this Archdiocese, we will work together to formulate a vision inspired by your experience and needs, respond to your concerns, and conform to the aspirations of the Holy Synod Fathers and the uniqueness of Antioch. This will be done in an atmosphere of loving consultation and openness to what the Spirit inspires in us, through prayer and devotion to what we have received from the saints.

In conclusion, I must express my immense joy in you and my confidence in your cooperation with the shepherd of this Archdiocese, who was summoned by the Spirit to be among you and in your midst.

Metropolitan SABA is a living witness to the

uniqueness of Antioch. His Eminence had cared for an Archdiocese that suffered so much, raising it from its slumber. He achieved this in cooperation with your Archdiocese and with all the benevolent people. Sayedna is faithful to the Apostolic Antiochian mission, which we hope will mark his archbishopric, so that he will be the best successor to Archbishop Hawaweeny. We hope that he will collaborate with you to establish the next centennial presence of the Antiochian Orthodox in this country as an effective witness to Christ. This presence strengthens our presence in the Mother Church, and is strengthened from what we have, through cooperation, interaction, and openness to our common heritage and to the accumulated experiences throughout the vast Antiochian scope.

Do not forget, beloved, that Christ is for all people, and the Christian faith is for all the world. However, Christ lived in the East. He was buried and rose in the East. Thus, it is our responsibility to preserve His Church and to do everything to bear witness to Him in this East. No distance or circumstances can separate us.

May God bless you and may His Grace abound in you. May He empower you to become witnesses to His Resurrection. To Him be glory, forever and ever, Amen.

## ELECTIONS HELD FOR ARCHDIOCESE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

On Friday, July 28, the General Assembly of the 56th Biennial Archdiocese Convention in Phoenix, Ariz. elected ten members to the Archdiocese Board of Trustees: Mr. James Bach, Mr. Roger David, Dr. Ayham Farha, Mr. Khalil Kardous, Dr. Nawar Mansour, Mr. Nick Massad, Dr. Fadi Metri, Mr. Kameel Najjar, Mr. Philip Saliba, and Mr. Rami Younes.

As Chairman of the board, His Eminence Metropolitan SABA named Dr. Elias Hebeke and Mr. Majed Nesheiwat as honorary members of the Board.

Also as Chairman, His Eminence appointed five additional members: Dn. Christian Manasseh, Mr. Salim Abboud, Mr. Bassam Assad, Mr. George Laham, and Mr. Emil Sayegh (not to be confused with Archdn. Emile Sayegh, the Archdiocese's Chancellor).

On Saturday, July 29, the Board of Trustees met and re-elected its officers: Mr. Fawaz El Khoury, Vice Chairman; Mr. Salim Abboud, Treasurer and CFO; and Ms. Mary Winstanley-O'Connor, Secretary.

At this meeting, His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X, His Eminence and the Board thanked the following members who are stepping down, having completed their terms of service: Mr. Michael "Mickey" Homsey, Mrs. Karen Kinan, Mr. William Morrison, and Mr. Elias Shaheen.



# “WITH MY BODY I THEE WORSHIP”

Fr. John Fenton

The word *worship* is a very imprecise way to describe what we do in the liturgy. It is too broad to describe the adoration, or act of faith, offered to God alone. At the same time, this word is too narrow since it refers to the worth-ness or worthiness not only of God, but any possible human. As we use it, both inside and outside the church, the word *worship* means any of the following: respect, adoration, veneration, honor, admiration, endearment, homage, adulation, and devotion.

Etymologically, *worship* is the updated version of the Old English *weorthscipe*, which means “worthiness, acknowledgment of worth.” To say “worship” is to say, “You are worthy.” Hence, although it’s not very common, in some places certain persons are (still) called “Your Worship.” There is no thought that these persons are God or even godly. But that they have a dignity or honor, usually due to their role or position of authority.

That is the context of the word *worship* in the Rite of Holy Matrimony used in some of our Western Rite parishes.<sup>1</sup> After the vows, when the husband gives the newly blessed ring to his bride, he says, “With this ring I thee wed: this gold and silver I thee give: with my body I thee worship: and with all my worldly goods I thee endow.”<sup>2</sup> Among other things, the husband is saying that his bride is worthy of respect, honor, and dignity, precisely because she is an icon of the Church. Hence, she is not chattel or merely a member of his household. Rather, to her husband the bride is “Your Worship.”

In the context of the Marriage Rite, the word *worship* means “honor, respect, venerate, admire.” It is a term of endearment. In this way, *worship* is used in the same way that we may speak of “worshipping the saints” when we honor and respect them by venerating their icons or pleading their prayers. Yet here is the rub: to our ears the phrase “worshipping the saints” seems wrong. Depending on our background, we might have been trained to use the word *worship* exclusively for God. In this context, *worship* refers to devotions or prayers to God alone.

That’s how we use the word in the *Gloria in excelsis* when we sing: “We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory.” In this instance, *worship* clearly refers to praise for God alone. In a sense, we are saying that the Lord God is more than “Your Worship.” He is, most precisely, the Most High or Highest Worship (that is, the superlative worshipfulness). This understanding is supported by the Latin, which is foundational text for the Western Rite. The phrase “we worship Thee” translates the Latin “*adoramus te*.” *Adoratio* (adoration) is the Latin word used for *latria*.<sup>3</sup>

Notice, then, that the context shifts the meaning of *worship*. This means that *worship* is not one-size-fits-all, that it can’t be flattened solely to describe prayers or a liturgy to God alone. In one instance, the word *worship* refers to adoration to God alone, and in another instance, it refers to veneration or honor to other persons.

In theological language, there is a significant distinction between veneration (*veneratio/dulia*) and adoration (*adoratio/latria*). Veneration is respect or honor given to a human, while adoration is the sacrifice of praise and devotion offered to God alone.

The two examples above – from the Marriage Rite and the Mass – perfectly illustrate this distinction. The husband venerates or honors his bride when he says, “with my body I thee worship.” And we adore or praise God alone when we say “we worship Thee” in the *Gloria in excelsis* at the beginning of the Mass. In both instances, we use the word *worship*, but we mean two very different things. Why? Because *worship* is an imprecise word. It is an umbrella word which gathers under its covering both veneration (*dulia*) and adoration (*latria*). Recognizing this broad understanding of the word *worship* allows us to describe its use in each instance according to context.

1. These words and practice described are not known in the traditional Marriage Rite in Rome. The Marriage service has always had episcopally approved adjustments based on local/national practices handed down through the ages.
2. The practice of a bride giving a ring to her husband is quite recent. When that occurs, it is not wrong but seems incongruous to say some or all of these words.
3. The Greek version of this same phrase, sung at the end of Orthros, is προσκυνούμεν σε which literally means “we prostrate or do obeisance to you.” In the New Testament this Greek word is used for God alone. (See *proskynēō* in TDNT.)

Fr. John Fenton  
Pastor of St. Michael  
Church, Whittier, California  
and Assistant to the  
Bishop Overseer of the  
Western Rite churches of  
our Archdiocese.



SUNDAY, JULY 30, 2023

# THE 56TH BIENNIAL ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION

*Photos and stories by Deacon Peter Samore*



From July 24 to 30th, His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X, His Eminence Metropolitan SABA, Mother Macrina of Dormition Monastery in Blemmana, Syria and their delegation met thousands of clergy and laity at the Archdiocese Convention. They gathered for meetings, fellowship and the divine services.

See [Antiochian.org](http://Antiochian.org), plus the Archdiocese's Facebook and Instagram pages, for photos and stories.

**Tuesday, July 25: "This Archdiocese is blessed by the presence of His Beatitude. We are blessed to hear his wisdom and advice."**

On Tuesday, July 25, His Eminence Metropolitan



SABA officially welcomed His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X of Antioch and All the East to the Archdiocese Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. “Axios on your election as the spiritual father of the Archdiocese,” His Beatitude said in reply to His Eminence. “May God give you strength to lead this flock.”

Turning to the clergy and laity, His Beatitude said, “As Christians, we always start with worship of God to pray for a successful convention.” The day began with Orthros, followed by meetings of the clergy wives and the clergy. In the first meeting, His Beatitude said that we have Orthodoxy and *Orthopraxis*. We rightly practice what we rightly believe.

In the clergy meeting, His Beatitude thanked the clergy and their parishes for raising \$2 million for earthquake relief in Syria and Turkey – historic Antioch.

“We are one Faith, one holy Orthodox Church of Antioch,” His Beatitude said. “We are members of this one family. No distance can separate us.”

He reminded the clergy how to acquire the Holy Spirit in our lives. “The world is full of challenges and difficulties: ethics, economics, injustices that hit the family. But if we want to be fishers of men, we

must remember that we do that in the name of the Lord. We think that, through our degrees and intelligence, we attract people to Christ. This is not true. Christ himself will attract people to Church. We plant and God cultivates. Every priest faces this temptation. We have to rely on God and he gives the fruits.”

**Wednesday, July 26: A full, beautiful third day at the Antiochian Archdiocese Convention!**

“It is the Lord God who opens our hearts to understand the gospel. Our Lord’s breaking of the bread with the disciples opened their eyes (Luke 24:35). Trampling down the desires of the flesh, we will achieve purity and hear God’s message.”

On Wednesday, July 26, His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X celebrated the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy at the Archdiocese Convention in Phoenix. Joining

him were His Eminence Metropolitan SABA and a score of clergy at the holy altar, with hundreds of faithful looking on.

As an extra blessing, the liturgy was celebrated in the presence of the miraculous Hawaiian Myrrh-Streaming Iveron Icon of the Theotokos, which streamed myrrh all morning.

His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X and His Eminence Metropolitan SABA met with the Antiochian Women, Teen SOYO and Young Adult Ministry on Wednesday, July 26.

His Beatitude reminded the Antiochian Women of their vital role in the life of the Orthodox Church. He recalled how the Roman Emperor Nero had tried to crush Christianity in the First Century. But one of his top commanders told him he would fail as long as Christian mothers would raise their children in the faith. His Beatitude and His Eminence asked the women's prayers that God

will bless the Archdiocese with a monastery in the near future.

Teen SOYO asked our fathers in Christ some serious questions. In his answers, His Beatitude said Orthodoxy is the same in North America and the Middle East. We may come from different places, but we are all one in Christ, as St. Paul says. He added that we pray for the unity of Christians, but this requires more time. Different churches respect each other, in spite of differences.

His Beatitude reminded the young adults that every generation has "fashions" displayed everywhere and we can be tempted to imitate them. But we must have faith in our God, morals and tradition, and not move according to fashions. Some of our friends don't have Christian practices, yet we could want to imitate them. Let others imitate us and our Orthodoxy.

Congratulations to St. George Church of Cicero, Illinois! Representing the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest, the parish's Bible Bowl team won







the Archdiocesan competition. Finishing second was St. Michael Church of Cotuit, Massachusetts. The champions win scholarships from Mr. Fawaz El Khoury, Vice-Chairman of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees. The second-place team wins scholarships from Mr. Eli Haig, member of the Archdiocese Board.

**Thursday, July 27: General Assembly, Day One**

“We recognize that our responsibility is to remain courageous in the face of whatever challenges we face and to express our originality through initiatives that testify here and now that Christ lives and enlivens.”

On Thursday, July 27, His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X gave his address to the General Assembly of the Antiochian Archdiocese Convention. He said that the uniqueness of Antioch results from the unifying of people of different languages and cultures. This has happened from antiquity until present time.

Following his address, His Beatitude presented an *engolpion* and cross to His Eminence Metropolitan SABA, *engolpia* to Their Graces the bishops of the Archdiocese, and a cross to Fr. Chris Salamy, the host pastor from St. George Church of Phoenix, Arizona.

The General Assembly learned of the completion of the first external audit of its finances in its history to ensure transparency and best practices. The Department of Finance pledges more external and internal audits, as well as more communications with the parishes about the Archdiocese’s finances.

Khouria Suzanne Murphy, outgoing President of the Antiochian Women, announced that the ladies of the Archdiocese quickly switched its annual project and raised over \$143,000 for earthquake relief in historic Antioch.

Youth Ministry updated the General Assembly about unifying curriculum in the Sunday Schools,



festivals, and vacation bible schools and camps, the better to help teens in the churches. The department is also teaching teens to embrace the sacraments like confession and providing them with more mental health resources.

**Friday, July 28: General Assembly, Day Two**

“Enough with the challenges. Let us look to the future and some of the visions and aspirations so that we may begin to build the comprehensive action plan needed to achieve our goals.”

On Friday, July 28, His Eminence Metropolitan SABA gave a theological address to His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X, Their Graces the auxiliary bishops and the General Assembly of the Archdiocese Convention. His Eminence elaborated on the convention theme (Genesis 1:26), and the challenges and the blessings of the Archdiocese.

“Every human being is unique, but each, in his uniqueness, is created to be in communion with others,” His Eminence said. “Hence the Orthodox tradition recognizes the communal priesthood, not the isolated.”

After the address, His Eminence presented His Beatitude with a new liturgical staff. Then, the Archdiocese presented His Eminence with a new *epigonation* (shield) and bishop’s candlesticks (*trikiri* and

*dikiri*) in honor of the 35th anniversary of his ordination to the holy priesthood.

As a special surprise, the General Assembly “Zoomed” with the beloved Archdeacon Hans El-Hayek, the longtime assistant and travel companion to His Eminence Metropolitan Philip of thrice-blessed memory. The General Assembly read him a resolution honoring his decades of service. “I am most blessed for your confidence and love, and I was blessed to serve you through Metropolitan Philip,” Archdeacon Hans said.

Earlier in the day, His Beatitude and His Eminence greeted and thanked the Executive Committee of the convention hosts at St. George Church of Phoenix.

**Saturday, July 29: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, Oratorical and Choir Festival, Francis Maria Scholarship Presentations, Grand Banquet**

ducted or upgraded 25 members of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch.

This year’s judges’ choice for the Oratorical Festival is Sarah Alamir of St. George Church in Cicero, Illinois, representing the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest. Her church won the Bible Bowl competition on Wednesday night.

Sarah receives a \$1,000 scholarship from His Eminence Metropolitan SABA. The other six competitors each receive \$500 scholarships from the Bob and Gladys Laham family.

During the festival, Fr. Joseph and Khouria Kathleen Purpura awarded Francis Maria scholarships to six teens from across the Archdiocese. Present to receive them were Anthony Haddad of St. Mary Church, Palos Heights, Illinois, and Sophia Salamy of St. George Church, Phoenix, Arizona.

This year’s festival marked the debut of the Arch-



“When we deny Christ, we commit the greatest sin. But we come back to him when we repent.”

His Eminence Metropolitan SABA celebrated the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy at the Archdiocese Convention in Phoenix. Joining him were His Grace Bishop JOHN and more than a dozen clergy.

Sayidna SABA preached on the day’s gospel reading from St. Matthew (12:30–37), in which our Lord issues strong words about sin and blasphemy.

“We don’t fear God in a negative way, but we stand in his presence in awe,” he said. “We hear in the liturgy before communion: ‘With the fear of God, and with faith and love, draw near.’”

“Our God is working in this world. When we don’t see that, we must ask what is not working in us.”

Before the liturgy, His Eminence made Elias Deeb a sub-deacon, and seminary graduate Mark Sultani a reader. After the liturgy, His Eminence in-

diocese National Choir, a collection of some of the best singers who auditioned for their roles. Under the direction of Mrs. Mareena Boosamra-Ball and Fr. John El Massih, the choir sang beautiful hymns of choral and chant traditions.

“We are the successors to Peter and Paul, and they gave us a great deposit of faith. We do not get our faith from books, but from Christ himself. We have this faith in our minds and hearts.”

On Saturday night, July 29, His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X broke bread with His Eminence Metropolitan SABA and all the bishops, clergy and laity attending the Archdiocese Convention in Phoenix.

“I am very proud of this Archdiocese,” His Beatitude said. “I will share my wonderful experiences with the people of Syria and Lebanon. We struggle there, but we remain committed to living in that



land of our ancestors.”

Earlier that day, His Beatitude and His Eminence attended the meeting of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees, which elected its Executive, and thanked the outgoing members for their service.

His Beatitude offered his congratulations to His Eminence and the Board. He stressed the concept of ecclesiastical unity that is not separated by languages or distances, stressing the importance of the message of the Church of Antioch in bearing witness to Christ in the past, present, and future.



Corinthians 1:10–17), His Beatitude said, “If we don’t have this Spirit, then we have divisions. But we must join together to have the same mind.

“Today, we pray in one heart and one mind. Then we will have peace, first in myself, and then in my family, my community, and my entire church. We must listen to each other, in love, in truth, and in Christ.”

### **Sunday, July 30: Patriarchal Divine Liturgy**

“We avoid divisions by letting the Holy Spirit dwell in us. If we have the fear of God, then we ask him to sanctify our minds and our words before we say them.”

On Sunday, July 30, His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X celebrated the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy with His Eminence Metropolitan SABA, Their Graces the auxiliary bishops of the Archdiocese, and more than two dozen priests and deacons. The liturgy concluded the Archdiocese Convention.

Preaching on the day’s epistle reading (1

"FROM THESE STONES"

DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

# IT'S OKAY TO BE ITTY-BITTY, BUT ...



Fr. Joseph Huneycutt

**I**n several Gospel accounts, Jesus uses the mustard seed as an example. The mustard seed is tiny, but if mere tininess were key, our Lord could just as well have used specki or an iota*i* as an illustration. What's up with the mustard seed? "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (Matthew 13:31-32).

Although there was a saying among the Jews at that time – "*small as a mustard seed*" – Christ is comparing the Kingdom of Heaven *not with the size* of the mustard seed, but with the process of its growth. This tiny seed grows into a big, bushy tree, in whose branches flocks of birds find shelter. In other words, the birds (the people of God) find a home (are saved) in the mustard tree (the Church). Christ told this parable immediately after the parable of the sower and the tares, for they are tied together. In the parable of the sower, it is said that of all the seed sown, three parts perish, and only the fourth

part comes up (is saved); the parable of the tares explains that from the tares a great danger threatens even this fourth part of sown seed. On listening to these parables, the disciples might have despaired, because such a small number of people would find salvation.

That is why He offers them the example of the mustard seed. Christ is the mustard seed. In Him alone, as in a seed itself, the whole Church was originally contained, and from Him it spread throughout the whole world. Christ is the one, eternal Head of the Church; without Him there is no Church. Christ is the sower as well, who willingly gave Himself over to death and through this death gave life to His Church, to all who believe on Him. He said of Himself: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24).

Christ was born in li'l ol' Judea which, in political terms, was an insignificant and remote land. Having lived thirty years in obscure Nazareth, in despised Galilee, in the home of a carpenter, He later attracted a small group of simple fishermen and publicans by His teachings. Finally, having given Himself over

into the hands of enemies, he died a shameful death on the cross. But He rose from the dead, ascended to the Father, and from Him – *as from a mustard seed* – His Church spread throughout the world through that same handful of unlearned men.

This same process takes place in the soul of everyone who responds to the teaching of the Gospel. That is, the spark of God's grace, in conjunction with our efforts, gradually enflames the whole soul, perfecting it and making it a *temple of God*.

Although the mustard seed is tiny, it has warmth and flavor in it. As an ingredient, it affects a whole

How are prayer and fasting related to the mustard seed? The mustard seed, when it grows, is battered by winds, and in danger for much of its life as a seedling, but it grows into a great tree, and there is abundant fruit from it. Good soil and proper nurturing are crucial, however. Alas, brothers and sisters, it is the same with us. Without prayer and fasting, we have no faith.

“Where there is no prayer and fasting, there are the demons,” observed St. Theophan the Recluse.

We can understand the instability of the demoniac in our own struggle in today's world. Each day



dish with its pungent flavor. When placed in the ground, it grows into a great tree. This is how our faith should be. It need not be big in a worldly sense, but it needs to be hot, pungent, strong – and it needs to grow.

In Matthew 17:19–21, after Jesus healed a demon-possessed boy, His disciples asked: “Why could we not cast it out?” “He said to them, ‘Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. However, this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting.’”

brings us news of some new instability, some new disaster and misfortune, some plague or crisis. Whenever we are faithless and cease to pray and fast, we lose the protection of the grace of God, and we are tossed to and fro by the demons of the world. Yet, where there is true faith, there the demons cannot go. For even itty-bitty faith – with prayer and fasting – moves mountains.

Fr. Joseph Huneycutt, Vice-Chairman  
The Department of Missions and Evangelism

SCREENS, PICTURES, FUN:

# WE BECOME WHAT WE CONTEMPLATE

Fr. Peter Andrew Kavanaugh

“SO WHEN THE WOMAN SAW THAT THE TREE WAS GOOD FOR FOOD, WAS PLEASANT TO THE EYES, AND A TREE BEAUTIFUL TO CONTEMPLATE, SHE TOOK ITS FRUIT AND ATE” (GENESIS 3:6).

We become what we contemplate. Eve fixed her eyes on the fruit of the forbidden tree and contemplated its beauty. In the way a painting or sunset can mesmerize a person, or a beautiful woman dumbfound a man, Eve was caught up in a worshipful spell when she contemplated the apple. From the eyes, to the heart, to the soul. What do we spend our time looking at, listening to, touching, or tasting – God, nature, art, television, video games, pictures? We become what we contemplate. What we contemplate becomes our worship. What we worship, determines our eternity.

“When he had finished speaking, [Our Lord] said to Simon, ‘Launch out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.’ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break” (Luke 5:4-6).

Fishing is a transcendental experience, and every fisherman knows it (though he may not put it this way). Something moves the soul deep down, when you get “in the zone,” sitting quietly on a boat, waiting and watching. You almost become one with the water. Well, Simon had been in that zone. He had watched. He had contemplated, and what were the results? “All is vanity and a striving after wind”



(Ecclesiastes 1:14). “We have worked all night long but have caught nothing.”

Then, our Lord told the fisherman: “Launch out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”

ἐπανάγαγε εἰς τὸ βάθος

Launch out. Push yourself forward. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr.: “If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.” In what direction do we launch forward? Into the deep – εἰς τὸ βάθος. When the earth was void and without form, all creation was one abysmal depth, a great βάθος. St. Paul expounds on the βάθος in God: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Romans 11:33; 1 Corinthians 2:10).

To launch out into the depth: this is the definition of contemplation.

Look beyond the surface. Strain your soul into the depth of things. Gaze. Listen. Ponder. Ruminant. Celebrate. “Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air ... their beauty is their confession,” St. Augustine insisted. To be human is to contemplate, Aristotle taught us; to look beyond the appearance of things. A medieval manuscript says it all: “*Ubi amor ibi oculus*” — “Where love is, there the eye is also.” We can only know what we love, and we only love what we

first touch, taste, smell, hear, and see.

We become what we contemplate, but this poses a challenge. St. Paul discussed the βᾰθος of God. In his Revelation, St. John discussed the βᾰθος of Satan (2:24). Eve contemplated, but what did she contemplate. “When she saw that the tree was good for food, was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree beautiful to contemplate, she took its fruit and ate” (Genesis 3:6). Jesus Christ warns us plainly: “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.”

We live in a crisis today of contemplation. We contemplate all the wrong things. From morning to evening, we are bombarded with noise, images, and distorted reality.

The CDC reports that children between the ages of 8 and 18 spend an average of 7.5 hours daily in front of a screen. Over half of that is spent watching television. Teenagers spend nearly 9 hours a day on social media. Across the world, other surveys suggest, the human race now dedicates about *44 percent* of waking hours to phones, computers, televisions, and screens – 44 percent. So people spend nearly half of the day “plugged in.” This statistic does not include time spent listening to music or the radio, looking at billboards and advertisements, being entertained, or otherwise being cut off from reality.

Meanwhile, what do we see happening across our culture?

Christianity in the West is imploding. Our children are abandoning the Christian faith by the droves. It is not unusual to find professors or grade school teachers, politicians or car mechanics – normal people – espousing sin and perversion. At the same time, we Christians mosey along. We talk a lot, but what are we doing?

In the 1970s, philosopher John Senior wrote about a crisis in modern education. His students showed up to college with plenty of information in their head, but no real contact with reality. They had not learned to gaze at the stars. They did not know how to appreciate classical music and poetry. They did not know logic. They could regurgitate, but not think. His biographer writes: “Fed on materialism, impregnated by Relativism and blasé, the average student escaped into cheap enjoyments. Not recognizing the deep hunger for truth within themselves, like starving people who are not given healthy food, they gulped down spiritual junk food that made

them fall into the illusion that their hunger had been satisfied. Students suffered from a sickness that we might call ‘spiritual obesity,’ which prevented them from growing wings, and ascending toward the stars” (Fr. Francis Bethel).

That was the 1970’s. Where are we now? Are we in touch with reality?

We can talk all day long about sending our children to youth camps once a year, or Sunday School on occasion. We can pride ourselves for showing up at church on a feast day, giving up a burger on Friday, or saying a couple of prayers before bed. Perhaps we will dedicate hours to the bickering and pontificating on Orthodox internet forums about theological topics we do not understand.

How are we living? What is really filling and shaping our souls? What are we soaking in, bathing in, drinking in, all day long in those moments when we are not “being religious”?

Whether aware of it or not, we are all in a constant state of contemplation. Our soul is absorbing and being transformed by everything we encounter. To say we are *homo-connecticus* or *homo-adorans* is one and the same thing. We become what we contemplate. What we contemplate becomes our worship. What we worship, determines our eternity.

We may live in a crisis, but we also live with hope. It does not matter if it is the Twenty-first Century or the First Century, or whether we live in a city or a little country homestead. Wherever we are, we have a choice to make. Will we allow our focus to get sucked up into our screens? Will we allow the entertainment industry and consumeristic gurus dictate how we spend our time, where we give our attention, the loves and idols of our heart?

Will we, as John Senior puts it, choose to smash our televisions? Will we choose to unplug, to sit in silence, to fast from stimulation and intoxication? Will we choose to fix our hearts on God in Reality?

We have a choice, and the choice is urgent. Who will we contemplate? Who will we worship?

“He said to Simon, ‘Launch out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.’ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break” (Luke 5:4–6).

# ORATORICAL FESTIVAL JUDGES' CHOICE

SARAH ALAMIR, DIOCESE OF TOLEDO AND THE MIDWEST



Among my earliest memories is staring out the car window. I loved looking at the trees and seeing what shapes I could find in the clouds of the infinite blue sky. It felt as if all of creation was chanting from the Divine Liturgy, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of thy glory.” Every time I think about eternity, I cannot help but think about this image – my mother, father, and I all in the car, together with my siblings, staring out the window, witnessing so much of creation all within the blink of an eye, all during one car ride.

In Genesis 1:26, God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” The book of Genesis presents the foundational structure in which God designs mankind. “Male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27). We learn that this image is not only one of the family, but it is one of responsibility, because God gave us, unlike all the animals, dominion over all of creation. So that must mean that there is something special about being human. It is only humans who, as St. John Chrysostom says, have “been honored with reason.” We are the only ones who create ideas and objects

out of love, not just out of a necessity for survival. St. Paisios of Mount Athos says, “Man’s soul is an angelic nature. It is given the power to move the body, to express its desires, and to act according to its desires.”

With the power of choice, however, there comes a capacity for either good or evil. When Adam and Eve fell, it wasn’t just because they disobeyed God and ate a piece of fruit. Rather, it was that their disobedience reflected the belief that they did not need God; they thought they could become “gods” all on their own. St. Paul teaches in his First Letter to Timothy, “Everything God created is good” (4:4); however, everything also has fallen.

Earlier this year, I lost three of my best friends for my faith. They couldn’t reconcile their deep hatred for Christianity with the love they thought they had for me, so they decided to reject me altogether. I developed a feeling of loneliness that constantly followed me around. Even now, I let my anxiety decide who I am, I go months without reading my Bible, and sometimes I can’t bear to receive Communion because I am overwhelmed by the shame of my absence. It’s really hard not to think



of my old friends and wonder what may have become of us had anything gone differently. I dream of a day when Orthodox Christian youth never feel alone. I want them to have churches and community centers that feel like home. I want them to know that we all wander, but Christ patiently awaits our repentance. In the end, He just wants His children to come home.

St. Gregory of Nyssa emphasized this idea that, since we were all created “in the likeness and image of God,” we are called towards an eternal relationship with Him, a continual stretching forth toward Him who is eternal. I thought about eternity a lot. Even the ocean in all of its glory eventually meets the shore and bows to God. If you look at the waves, they almost resemble the same image of someone prostrating. I think I could speak about the vastness of the ocean for hours, but words could never give it justice. In his *Hexaemeron*, St. Basil the Great says, “For the visible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, and His power and divinity are eternal. Thus earth, air, sky, water, day, night, all visible things, remind us of Him who is our Benefactor.” Throughout this year, anytime I looked out at the ocean, or felt the wind beneath my fingertips, or saw the icon of the resurrection of Christ, that which is eternal has echoed in my mind. I can feel God reaching out to me, calling me to speak about what my generation is hungry for. I wish I could take this feeling and share it with my friends who are suffering. I want to share grace the same way the Apostle Paul teaches in his letters: “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:3), because, contrary to popular belief, my generation wants something that transcends reason. They want “to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19). I don’t believe there’s such a thing as atheism in the modern world, because everyone worships something. This is so because when God created us, He did so in His image. We were created for the eternal, and so we constantly search for Him who is eternal.

There’s a quote that I love from a book called *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. It reads, “Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, ‘Abba, as far as I can, I say my little office. I fast a little. I pray. I meditate. I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else am I to do?’ Then

the old man stood up, stretched his hands towards heaven and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire, and he said to him, ‘If you will, you can become all flame.’ Fifty days after the resurrection of Christ, when the Holy Spirit filled the Apostles, “there appeared to them tongues as of *fire* distributed and resting on each one of them” (Acts 2:3). In Matthew 3:11, St. John the Baptist said about Christ, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” To become in the likeness of the image of God is to become all flame. It’s giving up everything that is ours so that Christ may fill us. As St. Paul says in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” When I lost my friends, Christ took me out into the desert to remind me of who I was, that my identity isn’t found in anyone except for Him. He was crucified and resurrected to restore our image. We are called to be an all-consuming fire of love. We hold a responsibility to carry the image in which He created us and to project His likeness as a light for the world.

So this must mean that becoming the likeness and image of God isn’t about us; it’s about everyone else. It’s about every future generation that comes after us, to teach them the Word of God so that one day they may bear witness to Him who is eternal. It is our responsibility by faith to follow Christ’s command in Matthew 28:19 to “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.” God created us in the image of the family, because that represents eternity: male and female together represent past, present, and future through the generations.

Today, I still look out the car window and this is what I see: the Tree of Life, the Living Water, the Wind of God, the All-Consuming Fire, Him who is eternal, the One who in my deepest feelings of abandonment never abandoned me. I hope my eyes are always glued to the horizon, reaching out to a future I dream of for Orthodox Christian youth. I like to believe that there is something inside of us that knows we weren’t meant for this world, because God created us in His image and a part of Him dwells in us. It’s tethered to us in a way I cannot explain, that we came from God, who has always been, and to Him may we one day return.

Sarah, Alamir, 19, representing the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest  
Sarah is from St. George Church, Cicero, Illinois.

# ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

## ORDINATIONS

BIRDSALL, Sub-deacon Joshua, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan SABA on Sunday, May 14, 2023, at St. George Church, Little Falls, New Jersey.

BURGER, Lawrence, to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN on August 5, 2023, at our Lady of Walsingham, Mesquite, Texas, where he is assigned.

FLOWERS, Jason, to the holy diaconate by Bishop THOMAS on July 1, 2023, at the Eastern Dioceses Parish Life Conference at the Antiochian Village Conference Center. He is assigned to St. John Chrysostom Church, York, Pennsylvania.

HARGRAVE, Deacon James, to the holy priesthood by Bishop ANTHONY on Sunday, June 18, 2023, at St. John the Damascene Church in Delta, British Columbia. He is assigned as Interim Pastor of the parish.

HAWTHORNE, Christopher, to the holy diaconate by Bishop ANTHONY on Sunday, June 18, 2023, at St. John the Damascene Church in Delta, British Columbia. He is attached to Holy Nativity Church, Langley, British Columbia.

KOURI, Sub-deacon Jason, to the holy diaconate by Bishop ALEXANDER on June 25, 2023, at St. George Orthodox Church, Montreal, Quebec. He will serve with Fr. Nektarios in Ottawa, Ontario.

MATHIS, Sub-deacon Innocent, to the holy diaconate by Bishop ANTHONY on May 28, 2023, at St. Mary, Iron Mountain, Michigan. He is attached to the parish.

NEWMAN, Sub-deacon Nicholas, to the holy diaconate by Bishop THOMAS on May 31, 2023, at the Cathedral of St. George in Charleston, West Virginia.

## ELEVATIONS

ALEXANDER, Father David, to the rank and dignity of Archpriest by Bishop JOHN on June 4, 2023, at St. Patrick Church, Bealeton, Virginia.

KISHLER, Fr. Andrew, to the rank and dignity of Archpriest by His Grace Bishop ANTHONY on June 25, 2023, at All Saints Church, Chicago, Illi-

nois, where he is the pastor.

VALENTINE, Fr. Ignatius, to the rank and dignity of Archpriest by His Grace Bishop Anthony on April 30, 2023, at St. Raphael of Brooklyn Church, Iowa City, Iowa, where he is the pastor.

## RETIREMENT

COOK, Fr. David, effective July 1, 2023.

WILHELM, Fr. Dionysios, effective September 1, 2023.

## DEPOSED

NISHIEWAT, Mr. Munther (former-deacon Bassilios), effective July 11, 2023.

## ASSIGNED

HANNA, Fr. Nicholas, as Pastor of St. Elias Church, La Crosse, Wisconsin, effective September 1, 2023.

HARGRAVE, Fr. James, as Interim Pastor of St. Joseph the Damascene Church, Delta, British Columbia, effective June 18, 2023.

## REPOSED

**Peter S. Dcales**, 95, of Waldwick, New Jersey, on May 28, 2023. He was born in North Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Speros and Chrisanthe Dcales of Valimitika, Greece. He attended the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and graduated in 1950 with a B.S. in Economics. In 1950, he married the love of his life, Thelma Peters.

Peter served in the U.S. Army, did his basic training at Camp Breckenridge, and went to finance school at Camp Benjamin Harrison, graduating second in his class. Peter served in the 2nd Armored Division in Bad Kreuznach, Germany. He was honorably discharged in 1954, returned to work for GMAC in Philadelphia, was transferred to New York City in 1958 and settled in Waldwick, New Jersey. Peter retired from GMAC after 30 years, and then held several key positions in administering the finances of the Archdiocese and the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, working at the Archdiocese headquarters for another 30 years. At 61, he became a certified financial planner and supported friends

and family with financial advice and tax filings up through age 94.

Peter was active in St. Anthony Church in Bergenfield, New Jersey, where he managed the church's finances for 50 years. He was a member of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, and served as Chairman of Boy Scout Troop 88 for many years.

**Fr. Gregory Francis Desmarais**, 81, on June 6, 2023. Fr. Gregory served as pastor of St. George Church of Albany, New York, from 2010–22.

Fr. Gregory, even as a young man, was always dedicated to the teachings of the Church. For many years he was a Roman Catholic church organist, music director, and choir instructor in the Capital Region. He was renowned for his beautiful singing voice, his pitch-perfect ear and his detailed knowledge and deep love of liturgical music. His desire to be a priest in his journey through life lead him to spend significant time in various countries, including Germany, France, and Bulgaria, as well as the United States.

At the age of 50, he reached his goal of priesthood with the guidance of our Lord and was able to combine his talent and love of liturgical music with serving God's people at the altar. His passing to the Kingdom of God is a great loss to his family, his former parishioners, and his many friends in New York, France and Bulgaria.

Born in Worcester, Massachusetts, Fr. Gregory was a son of the late Arsene and Alice DesMarais, and brother to Theresa Fiorino, Alexander and John Joseph DesMarais, all of whom predeceased him. Survivors include nephews and nieces Peter (Donna) Fiorino, Robert (Karen) Fiorino, Dawna Fiorino, Charles (Mindy) Fiorino Jr., Teri (Tony) Santarelli and their families.

**Mother Nektaria**, 72, on Aug. 9, 2023. Mother lived the last 27 years of her monastic life at St. Paul Skete, an Antiochian monastic community in Grand Junction, Tennessee.

Mother Nektaria entered the monastic life at age 36 in 1987 at Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in Elwood City, Pennsylvania after 10 years of teaching high school English. She was tonsured as a nun in 1993 at Dormition of the Mother of God Orthodox Monastery in Rives Junction, Michigan.

Mother Nektaria's life at the Skete began in 1996 at a residence in Memphis, Tennessee, a block

away from St. John Church. She created a small chapel there where she faithfully prayed with the many who came to pray with her. In 2001, she relocated the Skete property to Grand Junction, about 75 minutes east of St. John Church. She hosted visitors for years and was regularly invited to speak and lead retreats at parishes all over the Eastern U.S.

The majority of Mother Nektaria's years at the skete were spent in solitude. Nevertheless, she endeared herself to many, not only in our Archdiocese, but also to individuals and parishes in all the Orthodox Christian jurisdictions in the U.S. She was especially loved by the faithful of all the parishes in the Mid-South. Her prayers have been a great consolation to many, and she is already missed.

**Archpriest Joseph Shaheen**, 91, on Friday, August 4, 2023, in Naples, Florida. Since his priestly ordination in 1959, Fr. Joseph pastored four communities: St. George Church, Upper Darby, Pennsylvania; St. George Church, Indianapolis (now Fishers), Indiana; St. Nicholas Church, Montreal, Quebec; and St. Paul Church, Naples, Florida, where he retired from active ministry in 2017.

His tenure covered the construction or renovation of three of those churches. Additionally, Fr. Joseph served as ecclesiarch at Archdiocese Conventions, overseeing the operations of the hotel chapels.

"Dear ones, it is essential that we understand that the departing of Fr. Joseph Shaheen truly marks the 'end' of a foundational era for our Archdiocese here in America," said Fr. Paul Girgis, Fr. Joseph's successor in Naples. "In fact, he was among the last living men to have been ordained to the holy priesthood by His Eminence Metropolitan ANTHONY (Bashir) of blessed memory. That is three metropolitans ago!

"Fr. Joseph was a man that had been involved in building up so much of what we have in the Antiochian Archdiocese today, not to mention our parish here in Naples, and several before! May the Lord grant him Paradise."

Fr. Joseph graduated St. Vladimir's Orthodox





Theological Seminary in 1960. In addition to his pastoral duties, he served as spiritual advisor for regional chapters of Teen SOYO, the Fellowship of St. John the Divine (now Young Adult Ministry), and the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Fr. Joseph was elevated to the dignity of Archpriest in 1977.

**Mr. Khalil "Kal" Kardous**, 81, on Wednesday, August 2, 2023. A faithful Orthodox Christian and long-time member of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees, Mr. Kardous had just returned home to Charlotte, North Carolina after attending the 56th Biennial Archdiocese Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, where the General Assembly re-elected him to the board.

Khalil was born in Damascus, Syria on June 12, 1942, the oldest of four children born to Elias and Shahira Kardous. He studied at the Orthodox School of Damascus and came to the U.S. in 1965.



He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in 1969 with a degree in Business Administration and Economics. Khalil moved to Chicago and worked for an office equipment company, gaining knowledge about the industry. In 1973, he moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, and opened Charlotte Copy Data Company in 1984. Khalil built the company into a fifty-million-dollar company with 250 employees in six locations. He sold the company in 2008 and retired. He was revered in the Charlotte business community and renowned for his generosity.

Khalil is survived by his wife, Dr. Marie-Claire Marroum, and their son, Paul. In addition to the Board of Trustees, he served for many years on the Balamand Educational Foundation as a board member. Khalil had also established several missions in the southeastern U.S.

**Vivian Nakash Saykaly**, on July 30, 2023. Born in Sherbrooke, Quebec, the eldest daughter of the late George and Florence Nakash; sister of Lally Aziz, (the late William) and Gay (Emsey Elkas).



Mrs. Sakay was the adored wife of the late Ernest Saykaly (Vice-Chairman of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees 1979–1999), cherished mother of Mark (Louise Lepage), Nancy (John Souaid), and Janet (David Dussault). Proud and loving grandmother of David (Mia), Nicole (John), Patrick (Ali), Elizabeth, Michelle (Eric), Christine (Yohann), as well as twelve precious great-grandchildren: Lauren, Amanda, Daniella, Kate, Jack, Téa, Cole, Reid, Adele, Maggie, Juliette and Arianne.

Vivian lived an extremely blessed and fulfilling life that she never took for granted. She was very community-oriented and a devoted and active parishioner of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church of Montreal. However, her greatest commitment was her drive to help those stricken with cancer. This was the motivation for her becoming a founding member of the Cedars Cancer Foundation. This dedication was surpassed only by her love for family and friends. Mom derived great pleasure in welcoming all to her home.

Her last years, though difficult, were faced with her usual grace and elegance. She will be greatly missed, and forever loved.

**Zinetta Marie Nassif** (née Meherg), 79, on August 5, 2023 at 10:24 p.m. at her home in La Jolla, California. She was born in Fairmont, West Virginia, on June 3, 1944, to parents John and Iva Meherg. She was the youngest of sisters Alma Ree and DeLois.

Imbued as she was with an incredible passion for her family, her unending loving and giving spirit will be greatly missed, along with her never-ending supply of costumes, flair for the colorful, a larger-than-life personality, and her infectious laugh. Zinetta was an incredible artist and photographer, as well as the most fun person to have at any event.

At the age of 20, she moved to Ocean Beach, California where she lived next door to a law school student. They became friends and two years later became a couple. She and Protodeacon Thomas Nassif were married on September 14, 1968, and had two children.

Zinetta began her professional career as a dental hygienist and soon decided to focus her efforts on raising their children. She was one of the founding members of St. Anthony the Great Church in San Diego, California, and dedicated countless hours to the church as the church mother. She also provided day-care for both her of her grandchildren during

their first years. Anthony and Hunter were the joy of her life.

During their 55-year marriage, Zinetta and Protopodeacon Tom lived in California, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Morocco, finally settling in La Jolla. She spent her final days, exactly as she wanted, at home with her family. During those final days, she was visited by many friends and family who showered her with love.

In addition to her loving husband, Zinetta is survived by her incredibly grateful children, Jaisa and Christian, her two adoring grandchildren, Anthony and Hunter, her sister DeLois, niece Renee, and scores of relatives, church members, and countless friends.

“The obituary is rather modest, as it does not mention that she was with her husband at the Reagan White House where he served as a protocol officer and then later was appointed by President Reagan to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Morocco,” added V. Rev. John Reimann, Pastor of St. Anthony the Great Church.

“But their greatest work, they have always said, aside from their children and grandchildren, was their constant participation and support of St. Anthony the Great Orthodox Church,” Fr. John continued. “They have been faithful stewards, constant communicants, and dedicated members of our holy parish, our Archdiocese, and the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. She struggled valiantly through multiple health issues the last several years and yet remained steadfast in her faith and commitment to Christ and His Holy Church.”

### SOLAR-POWERED SYSTEM REVIVES A CHARITY KITCHEN

Over the past few years, Lebanon’s economic crisis has only deepened. Exacerbated by the



Reliable solar-powered energy for this Church-run kitchen in Lebanon enables volunteers to continue critical meal delivery to 130 families each week.

pandemic and the explosion in Beirut in 2020, Lebanon faces continuing currency depreciation, frequent electrical cuts, and rising fuel costs.

The electricity cuts were particularly problematic at a charity kitchen in the town of Mansourieh, in Mount Lebanon. In July 2020, the Orthodox Youth Movement at St. Mary Orthodox Church opened a charity kitchen, which, with the support of the parish and volunteers, prepares and distributes hot meals to people in need across the surrounding neighborhoods.

As long blackouts became common and the price of diesel fuel for generators increased, however, and despite everyone’s best efforts, by 2021 the kitchen could no longer afford to operate.

Thankfully, an IOCC program revitalized the kitchen by installing a solar-energy system that provides continuous power for cooking and safer food storage. IOCC also helped to repair the kitchen and install new equipment. The initiative was developed in close coordination with His Eminence Metropolitan SILOUAN Moussi of Mount Lebanon, who provided valuable input and blessed this work.

Now, volunteers are serving 130 families per week, preparing hot meals and bread for people like 74-year-old Josephine. She visits St. Mary’s every Thursday, getting food for herself, her sick husband, and her chronically ill 42-year-old daughter.

Josephine, who suffers from high blood pressure and kidney problems, deeply appreciates the meals she receives. “Food has become so expensive,” Josephine said. “At least my husband and I can secure food for two days [each week]. It helps us in this difficult time.”

While parishioners help cover the cost of ingredients, IOCC’s assistance revived the kitchen.



Solar panels provide a consistent power source despite the frequent blackouts and high fuel costs affecting Lebanon.



As St. Mary's priest, Fr. Younes, said, without help from IOCC, "it would have been impossible to cook and operate." Today, with its new solar-powered system, the kitchen is again giving food – and hope – to the people of Mansourieh and nearby neighborhoods in Mount Lebanon.

**PATRIARCH JOHN X VISITS  
ST. ANTHONY'S GREEK  
ORTHODOX MONASTERY**

*Story and photos by Deacon Peter Samore*

"We are all one in Orthodoxy, in faith and belief. The Athonite monks taught us how to live in love and peace."

On Monday, July 24, His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X of Antioch and All the East made a historic visit to St. Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery in Florence, Arizona. It was established by Elder Ephraim of Athos and Arizona of blessed memory, whom His Beatitude had known at Philoutheou Monastery.

Joining His Beatitude were His Eminence Metropolitan SABA Esper, and Their Graces Bishop THOMAS, Bishop JOHN and Bishop ANTHONY.

Welcoming them were His Eminence Metropolitan GERASIMOS and His Grace Bishop IOANNIS of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco, and Abbot Paisios of the monastery.

After the service of thanksgiving, Metropolitan GERASIMOS conveyed the fraternal love of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW and His Eminence Archbishop ELPIDOPHOROS of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

"Feel at home here among your brothers," Metropolitan GERASIMOS said. "Feel the blessings of the holy elder Ephraim who founded this many other monasteries."

Metropolitan GERASIMOS presented His Beatitude with an icon of St. John Maximovitch. Abbot Paisios gave him an icon of St. Joseph the Hesychast. His Beatitude presented them with gifts in return.

His Beatitude then prayed a trisagion service at the tomb of Elder Ephraim. Later, a group of children sang four hymns for His Beatitude.



# IMAGE AND LIKENESS IN EVERY GENERATION

Fr. Joseph Huneycutt

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Your Graces, Reverend Clergy, Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

It is fitting that we shall hear from our Father, His Eminence, Metropolitan SABA today as we worship the Holy Trinity and commemorate the Holy Apostle Timon of Bosra-Hauran:

O holy apostle Timon,  
Entreat the merciful God,  
To grant our souls forgiveness of transgressions.

It is likewise fitting – given the maddening times in which we live, and especially for our youth – that our theme for this year’s conference comes from Genesis: “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.”

Our young people are under tremendous pressure to conform to that which is not possible, seductive and shape-shifting evils which one could not have imagined in previous generations. Yet, given what I have heard from this year’s oratorical participants, the youth of this Archdiocese are encouraged by the teaching of the Church, and pious parents.

Where there is no struggle, there is no salvation. May these challenging times for children and parents alike be for our salvation! My wife and I have been blessed with three children. Everyone says my eldest daughter looks like me. Well, she got married a couple of weeks ago, and everyone keeps telling me how beautiful she looks! I know, right? How is that possible?

My son, on the other hand, is not like me at all. He is tall, thin, dark, and handsome. He is patient and pious. Yes, he is like his mother.

Recently, my youngest daughter and I were sitting on the couch engaged in, I must confess, some idle talk. She said something witty, stinging, and sarcastic. *A real zinger!* I said: “Why you like that?” She said: “Genetics?” As one of my parishioners says, “Sometimes I open my mouth and my father falls out!”

In the truest sense of the word, our children *are* our *generation*. By God’s providence, husband and wife come together and bring them into this world. For good or ill, they bear our likeness.

This is true – in every generation. We cherish their innocence; we lament their falls. We pick them up, bandage their wounds, comfort, correct, and console them.

We *raise* them, but, try as we may, we cannot give them *life*. We cannot, *by our likeness*, impart to them the *divine nature*. As we shall see from our young orators tomorrow, the image and likeness of parent and child are *not* the theme of our conference. For we all, male and female of every generation, are created in the image of God, after His likeness, only to *die* because of our misuse of freedom – even from the days of our first parents, Adam and Eve.

Alas, we cannot give our children *life*. But we can give them “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” We can raise them up in the faith in the God-Man, the Christ, the Second Adam – of Whom St. Gregory of Nyssa says that

Christ was like a man “who perceived a weak person carried away by a raging current. He knows that he himself will be sucked up by the whirlpool, wounded and lacerated by the rocks, swept away by the water. But pity for this man in danger stimulates him. He does not hesitate to throw himself into the current.” He enters, therefore, without reservations into the flow of duration. But in order to save the one who is drowning, he must “jump” from on high, that is to say, he must bring us the integrity of our own nature.<sup>1</sup>

This nature is antecedent to the *passions*. The only way that we can struggle toward this nature, this perfection, is through Christ who is Life. Adam was created potentially perfect; we are only perfected by grace through the Second Adam, the God-Man, Christ. Of course, our greatest struggle is that of *obedience*. For without obedience, we are

fallen. Yet, through our obedience to Christ and His Church, we may be saved.

And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38). This is the opposite of the disobedient transgression in the Garden of Eden. Both Eve and Mary were greeted by the words of an Archangel. The former fell through uniting her will with that of a deceptive creature; the latter is praised by all *generations* because she united her will with that of the first Eve, by her disobedience, bore the fruit of death to Adam, all Mankind. The new Eve, Mary, by her obedience, bears the Fruit of Life, the new Adam, her Son and God, to all mankind. This is the difference in the fruit born of disobedience and that brought forth in obedience. God created Man in His image and likeness to be in communion with Him. Man has free will to respond to this relationship. Although created in the image and after the likeness of God, he does not sustain communion with God. Though fashioned in God’s image, the likeness was lost and the image tarnished.

This great tragedy, brothers and sisters, is remedied by our adoption in the Father, by way of His Son and the grace of the Holy Spirit in the rebirth of holy baptism. In baptism, the image is washed clean, and through the Mysteries of the Church – the Body of Christ – we grow into His *likeness*.

What is this likeness to Christ that we are to put on? The likeness of Christ consists of truth, meekness, and righteousness, and together with them humility and love of mankind.<sup>2</sup> My mentor, Fr. Charles Caldwell – who, glory to God, became Dionysius, converting to Holy Orthodoxy on his deathbed – used to tell us in seminary, “When you are a priest, people expect a word of God from you, so give it! Like the prophets of old, we must speak the word of God to the current situation. We don’t need to beat people over the head with it – but we must speak the truth in love ... at least once!”

So, it seems, Our Lord does in today’s Gospel reading, wherein He laments: “O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?” (Matthew 17:10–18). It is not as if the God-Man knew not the answer. Even I know the answer! How long? Every generation.

How long am I to bear with you? Every generation, Lord. “From my youth up many passions have warred against me. But do Thou help and save

me, O my Savior” (*Anabathmoi* [Tone 4], Paraklesis Service). *In every generation*, the greatest gift we can give our children is that which we have been given, the Body of Christ, the Church. *In every generation*, this Pearl of Great Price resists, and the gates of hell shall not prevail. With all the madness in the world, we must believe – and pass on to the next generation – that where Christ is, even if He seems to be sleeping in the boat, there is peace. With all the darkness that surrounds us, believers are called *to be* that light reflecting the sweet mercy of our Good God, even to those who persecute us.

For He who is the image and likeness, the God-Man, Jesus Christ, endured all things for us: the accusations, the lies, the mockery, the spitting and scourging, even unto a humiliating death on the Cross.

*Every generation* to thy grave comes bringing, dear Christ, its dirge of praises.

Women bringing spices, came with loving forethought, thy due of myrrh to give thee.

Come, all things created, let us sing a dirge hymn to honor our Creator.

Him as dead though living, let us like the women, in love anoint with spices.

Holy Friday Lamentations service,  
Third Stasis

On that expectant eve of Holy Saturday, while the faithful sing, “The ointment-bearing women,” the priest sprinkles the joyfully mourning faithful with rosewater – for the redemption of our generation – and every generation – the Conqueror of Death, draws nigh!

Give this to your children. Nourish them in the sweetness of humility and sacrifice; the continually washed image struggling toward the likeness. And, God helping us, they shall – we shall *all* – be saved!

O my God, the Trinity, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, have mercy upon the world. Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. *Amen*.

Fr. Joseph Huneycutt, Vice-Chairman  
The Department of Missions and Evangelism

1. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought – An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995) pp.135-136.

2. St. Symeon the New Theologian, *The First-Created Man: Seven Homilies by St. Symeon the New Theologian*, trans. Seraphim Rose (Platina, California: Saint Herman Press, 1994) pp. 55.



# MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD: THE ICON FROM SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

When Archimandrite +Duane Pedersen of blessed memory, founder of Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry, began corresponding with Michael in prison, Michael was quick to say he preferred if Fr. Duane would stop writing about God. Despite showing no indication that his heart was changing, Fr. Duane faithfully wrote to him week after week, year after year. After twenty years of correspondence, Fr. Duane's commitment paid off: Michael sent a surprising letter: "I want to be baptized into the Orthodox Faith."

But this was only the beginning of what would become one of the most moving examples of Christ's work through the national prison ministry of the Orthodox Church. Soon Fr. Duane received something even more surprising than Michael's wish to be baptized: Michael's first icon. This was unlike any icon Fr. Duane had ever seen before, and not just because Michael had written it with a set of crayons, the only tools available to him. Michael lived in solitary confinement. To paint the Face of Christ he used the only model he had: his own face. And what did Michael name this icon? "God of All-Comfort."

Shortly after Fr. Duane received this icon, Michael's health rapidly declined, and soon he fell asleep in the Lord. In the wake of Michael's passing, Fr. Duane began printing copies of "God of All-Comfort" to send to other prisoners, many of whom were freed from years of drug and alcohol addictions by praying with it. Today, Michael's icon continues to touch the hearts of Orthodox Christians all across the U.S., those inside and outside of prison.

What is it, exactly, that is so special about this icon? Is it not that Michael's icon, in its stark depiction of both Christ and the artist in the same Face, speaks to what the Holy Church Fathers have always told us about the nature of icons and, thus

about ourselves?

St. Gregory of Nyssa, whose writings on beauty are among the richest treasures we have in our Holy Tradition, believed wholeheartedly that every man and woman is made in the image of God, regardless of where his or her life has taken them. Moreover, he believed in Christ's desire and power to return each person to their heavenly image. "Christ is the artist," he says, "tenderly wiping away all the grime of sin that disfigures the human face and restoring God's image to Its full beauty."

Surely that Micheal's icon was written from a man in solitary confinement is a challenge to all of us

to see the face of Christ in those in prison, but the challenge goes deeper, too. Are we willing to believe, as Michael did, that Christ dwells in each of us, as near to us as our own reflection? Do we sincerely believe — shown not in our words but in how we treat one another and in how we treat ourselves — that each one of us is an icon of Christ?

Perhaps we can't honestly answer "yes" to this question — yet. We can, however, pray in faith that Christ, little by little, day by day, is restoring His image in us. We can learn to recognize Him in our brothers and sisters around us and

ask for mercy when we do not. Like Michael, we can turn whatever we have — even if only our own reflections — into an offering to God.

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



# COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

## FROM A MISSION TO A BASILICA

The community of the St. Mary Orthodox Basilica, Livonia, Michigan, celebrated several fifti-



eth anniversaries on the weekend of November 11–13, 2022: the wedding of their pastor and his wife, Fr. George and Kh. Nouhad Shalhoub; Fr. George's ordination to the priesthood; and the establishment of St. Mary's Church Mission.

On Friday, November 11, we held a special banquet to thank all volunteers, past and present, in the presence of His Grace Bishop ANTHONY and all church organizations. Lily Kawwas and George Naser spoke on behalf of the founding fathers and mothers of St. Mary.

On Saturday, a special Vespers Service was held to celebrate the Feast of St. John Chrysostom, followed by an Anniversary Banquet, attended by over six hundred parishioners and friends. Those in attendance included our toastmaster, the Honorable Judge Karen Khalil Bouzas, the Parish Council Chairwoman Nancy Ghannam, the Banquet Chairwoman Dana Ansara, along with our special guest His Eminence Metropolitan NICHOLAS of the Greek Metropolis of Detroit, His Grace Bishop ANTHONY, and Fr. Jim King, who spoke and thanked Fr. George and Kh. Nouhad for their endurance and love over the last 50 years. Fr. George and Kh. Nouhad's children, Lila Lippert, Dr. Alex Shalhoub, Alexa Nassif, and Christa Hanley, all paid tribute to their parents, reminiscing about their childhood and life next door to the church, where the church parking lot was their backyard and playground.

The second half of the celebration was a presentation by the Mariam Center Co-Chairmen, Salim Sessine and Salem Samaan. They unfolded the dream and vision of Fr. George to build the Mariam Center, which is a combination of a Montessori School, a Family and Youth Center, and an Independent Senior Housing Facility. Please see the link: <https://fb.watch/gTu3baq5S/>

The evening ended with dancing and thanksgiving to God.

The highlight of the weekend was the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, led by His Grace Bishop ANTHONY, the clergy, deacons, sub-deacons and altar boys, with a thousand people attending. We were blessed to also have a long-time friend of the Basilica and Fr. George, the V. Rev. Joseph Rahal, with us for the weekend. At the Divine Liturgy, with the blessing of His Beatitude JOHN X and our newly appointed Patriarchal Vicar, His Eminence ANTONIOS (El Soury), special permission was granted to elevate Fr. Jim King to Archpriest and Deacon Dr. Dennis Bojrab to Protodeacon.

Following the Divine Liturgy, the clergy led all the parishioners in a groundbreaking ceremony for the Mariam Center, with our special guest, City of Livonia Mayor Maureen Brosnan.

# NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY

Fr. John Oliver

The year was 1923; the place, New England; the poet, Robert Frost. He was nearing fifty, and beginning to feel the weight of dreams unrealized and of hopes that would never come to be. There is a point in life when you begin to discover that so much you thought you could count on, you can't.

Frost loved the outdoors; many of his poems involve nature themes. But for all the magnificence nature delivers, it can also bring its own kind of melancholy. Close to fifty in 1923, he took in the shifting season around him – all this *change* – and it became a symbol of the impermanence of life, of youth, of beauty. Look around; everything is constantly changing and nothing lasts forever.

He noticed, for example, that buds first appear in spring as a lovely but fleeting gold, and that the hue quickly disappears. And he saw that flowers are quick to rise to glory, but they, too, die and do not last. He was seeing leaves develop beautifully, but eventually grow brittle and fall to the ground, just as humanity fell from Paradise in the Garden of Eden to the cold earth of exile from God. Each day begins with dawn light, with dawn hope, but even that fades into mundane daytime.

So, feeling life's fleetingness and the fragility of it all, Frost puts pensive pen to paper and writes this:

Nature's first green is gold,  
Her hardest hue to hold,

Her early leaf's a flower;  
But only so an hour.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.  
So Eden sank to grief,

So dawn goes down to day.  
Nothing gold can stay.

Nothing gold can stay.

Gallup is a polling and analytics company that recently released their *Mood of the Nation* survey. Unsurprising to any who have their nose to the wind, satisfaction with the state of our nation is the lowest it's been in two decades. In ten major areas – among them, overall quality of life, the opportunity for a person to get ahead by working hard, the moral atmosphere – Americans are feeling that it hasn't been this bad in a long time.

Why? Because for all our hope, all our optimism, nothing gold can stay. So much you thought you could count on, you grow to learn you can't. Everything is constantly changing, and nothing lasts forever. Just when we think we have something beautiful and lasting, life happens; when we think we found someone who will remain true, life happens; when we think we have finally gotten some financial breathing room, life happens; when we think our bodies are beginning to feel normal again, life happens; when we think we know what to expect, life happens. And the illu-

sion of control is revealed to be just that – an illusion.

So, if nothing gold can stay – if everything is constantly changing and we can't really count on the things we thought we could – what is a person to do?

That calls to mind the Divine Liturgy's Great Entrance: those moments when celebrants solemnly circle the Nave while carrying the chalice of wine and the *diskos* of bread, remembering Christ's own solemn journey through Jerusalem to His Passion and the Cross, where the Lamb would be slain and lay down His life for the life of the world.

Later, Christ the Bridegroom will emerge from the "bridal chamber" of the Sanctuary, to give Himself fully to His Bride, the Church, in Holy Communion.

Between those two moments, the Entrance and the Communion, a quiet prayer is offered in the Sanctuary, so important that it is uttered three times: "The Lord is my strength, my firm foundation, my refuge and my deliverer. The Lord is my strength, my firm foundation, my refuge and my deliverer. The Lord is my strength, my firm foundation, my refuge and my deliverer."

There is only one remedy for the inevitable disappointments of life, and He is found inside the Church. It is Christ, and the Holy Sacraments are the primary way we reach for Him and He reaches for us. We have no *personal* relationship with Christ apart from a *churchly* relationship with Christ. At every Matins service on Sunday mornings, we recite Psalm 63: "O God, my God, unto Thee I rise early at dawn. My soul hath thirsted for Thee; how often hath my flesh longed after Thee in a land barren and untrodden and unwatered. *So in the sanctuary* have I appeared before Thee to see Thy power and Thy glory." There is no churchless Christ and there is no Christless church.

We speak here not of brooding detachment or emotional deadness, but of *surrender*. Yes, we humans do get our hopes up – atmospherically high at times – but that's simply part of life. Yes, we get let down, sometimes crushingly low, which is part of life, too. We are, after all, human.

However, we don't give our whole heart – our identity, our security, our deepest faith – over to anything that was never designed to handle it. We open ourselves to life and to hope and to each other, but we reserve the priceless part of us for the Pearl of Great Price: Christ alone, as when the prophet Job cries out, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the Name of the Lord."

With autumn comes change. Nothing gold can stay? Thank God for that, for in our quiet pain amidst the shards of hopes dashed yet again, we are drawn toward the only Person who does.



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

# The Children's Relief Fund



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

This letter brings you our **"2023 New Year Appeal."** The purpose of this program within the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America is to provide funds for the children in need in Lebanon and Palestine, and the children of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

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

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

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

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

For those of you who are already sponsoring a child, we



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

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

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

You may donate through PayPal on our website at:  
<http://www.childrenrelieffund.org/donate-now.html>

Please make check payable to:  
**Children's Relief Fund**  
P.O. Box 90072  
Brooklyn, NY 11209

