

Summer/Fall 2013

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*"Give me this water,
that I may not thirst . . ."*
John 4:15

Published with the
Blessing of His Grace,
The Right Reverend Michael,
Bishop of New York and the
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Where is the Puck Going?

by Fr. John Shimchick

The legendary hockey player, Wayne Gretzky, once said: "I skate to where the puck is going, not where it has been." A favorite quote of many business leaders, particularly Steve Jobs, it describes a phenomenon characteristic of not only the greatest athletes, but also of those who have achieved success in almost every endeavor. But how did Gretzky and others know where to go and what to do?

In his book, *The Sports Gene* (recently summarized in *Sports Illustrated*, July 24, 2013), David Epstein has shown that in fact there is no one gene which guarantees success nor is it based solely on physical traits or finely-tuned reflexes. Rather, what usually takes place is a combination of factors including sustained training and preparatory effort (the so called "10,000 hour rule") which results in a highly developed and sensitive perceptual ability. He points out that:

Studies that track the eye movements of experienced performers, whether chess players, pianists, surgeons or athletes, have found that as they gain experience, they are quicker to sift through visual information and separate the wheat from the chaff. Experts swiftly discard irrelevant input and cut to the data that are most important in determining their next move. While novices dwell on individual pieces or players, experts focus more attention on spaces between pieces or players that are relevant to the unifying relationship of parts in the whole.

An examination of just a few athletes will confirm this insight: Larry Bird, of the Boston Celtics, acquired the nickname, "Kodak" from his coach Bill Fitch, "because his mind is constantly taking pictures of the whole court." Both Bird and his rival, Magic Johnson, were known to see things "before they happened." Michael Jordan, now in his 50's, while watching basketball games on television seems to know more about what will happen than even the players in the game. LeBron James "has talked about being able to see plays before they happen and not just being able to see where everybody is but also where everybody is going" (Gary Andrew Poole).

In this issue we want to explore Gretzky's quote and ask: "Where does the Church need to be going? Where should it be, if it's not there already? Is there something that must re-examined, re-acquired, or

re-emphasized?" We are convinced that both these questions and the acquisition of a discerning vision of the whole, formed by experience, are closely interrelated.

One might say that what is necessary foremost is to re-claim the Church's vision of Tradition. To be "traditional" as understood by Fr. John Meyendorff is to be "consistent" with the Scriptures and the "experience of the Fathers," imitating "their creative work in discernment." This dynamic sense builds on the earlier expression of Vladimir Lossky, who emphasized that Tradition should be understood not just as "revealed content, but as the unique mode of Revelation, a faculty owed to the Holy Spirit." Tradition, from the time of St. Irenaeus (2nd century) to the present when expressed this way is not about unconscious repetition, but the "living" engagement with the issues of one's age as perceived from the "well-grounded system" and "harmonious melody" of the Apostolic Faith. For St. Athanasius it was wrong and misleading to quote isolated texts and passages of Scriptures, for the "correct" interpretation required an understanding of the complete "scope of the Divine Scripture" and "was only possible in the total perspective of faith" (Florovsky).

Our goal is to examine the Church's life and even its problems not as reactions to isolated conditions, but indeed from this living vision of what its whole life is called to and can be. In an effort to draw from broader experience, we have asked clergy and lay people from around the country to participate in our exploration of "where the Church should be going." Their contributions will be noted throughout this issue by the special logo located in the right sidebar of this article.

On Pentecost we hear the text from the Prophecy of Joel: "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (2:28). Studies of successful people have shown that talent, determination, commitment, and experience can develop the ability to see things that are not apparent to others - and that can make all the difference. We in the Church, formed by the living experience of Tradition as guided by the Holy Spirit, should desire nothing less. And that can make all the difference for us as well.

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Guest
Contributors

The Dreams of a Pastor – 35 Years Later

by Bishop Michael

Looking through a program book from a church celebration in 1978, held in my first parish when I had been a priest just five years, I re-discovered on the final page a “spiritual wish list” I had composed for my parishioners to reflect upon. I had entitled it, “The Dreams of A Pastor.”

Thirty-five years later, having been asked to write a piece for this issue on the theme, “where is the puck going?” – I thought I would re-examine the “dreams” of my youth and see how, or if, they “fit” within the environment of our Church life today ... and how they can be applied to our continuing pursuit of a Vision for the Future of our Diocese. Here, from 1978, is my “Top Ten List,” with a few reflections on each point:

1. **Better Church Attendance.** As my seminary students might say, this is a “no-brainer.” While we struggle to grow our census totals, recent research shows that one-quarter of Americans have no religious affiliation whatsoever – that means one in every four of your coworkers, classmates, neighbors, and possibly even your relatives, has no spiritual affiliation at all! Can we still assume that “our people” will fill our churches, or is it time to start living a Christian life that is contagious – so that others outside the Faith will want to “come and see” the Source of our life?
2. **More Frequent Sacramental Participation.** The options, costs, and utilization of medicines – both chemical and natural – continue to climb. Are we accompanying our “intake” of man-made medicines for the healing of the body, with the spiritual therapy of Unction, Confession, and Communion – to treat and heal the hurts within us that no earthly physician can help? The promise of Our Lord is as applicable today as it was when He spoke these words: “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (John 6:56).
3. **Greater Knowledge of the Faith.** The influx of information from all sides – screens, smartphones, satellite radio – inundates us with an ever growing intensity. Perhaps we even pride ourselves on knowing the latest science, or sports stats, or stock market trends. But do we read a page of Holy Scripture for every web page

we visit? Are we content with knowing the latest facts – or do we strive to know the living Truth revealed to us in the Tradition of the Church? Religious education is as necessary for seniors as for youngsters. We should want to know as fully as possible the One who loves us more than we love ourselves.

4. **Deeper Love Among Our Parishioners.** Jesus taught the Law of Love – “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). Seeking to justify his own lack of love, the young lawyer asked Him, “And who is my neighbor?” Who is standing to our left and to our right in church? If we don’t already know them – if they are not from the same village or country or color as we are, then are we asking them their stories? Calling them when they miss church? Coming to their family baptisms and funerals? Inviting them to ours? Embracing them at the Vespers of Forgiveness – even if our only sin against them is neglecting to get to know them?
5. **Greater Pride in One’s Religious Identity.** For those – like me – who come from ethnic backgrounds that were historically Orthodox, it is easy to identify ourselves as Russian, or Carpatho-Russian, or Serbian, or Syrian, and so on. We might even describe ourselves as “Russian Orthodox.” But do we as readily proclaim, “I am an Orthodox Christian”? In a secular society that insists we keep our faith private, do we cross ourselves when we eat in public? Do we refrain from using God’s name in vain even when surrounded by irreverent conversation? Do we talk about the good things God has done for us? If I died tomorrow, would my coworkers and neighbors be surprised to read in my obituary that I belonged to the Orthodox Church? As the saying goes, “If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?”
6. **A More Active Participation in the Diocese.** As a young parish priest, I always tried to teach my people that the Church was much bigger than our one parish... that if our parish was like a family, then the Diocese is our extended family – and that we were all working together as one body to spread the Gospel. As a bishop, I try to share that

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Christianity is Not Just About Morality

by Fr. John Garvey

“If Christianity is morality, then Socrates is the Savior.” William Blake

There are a lot of ideas floating around out there about what the Church should do next, what it needs to do to advance whatever it is supposed to be about. I would like to suggest that the Church worries far too much about morals and behavior and the laws (ecclesiastical and legal) that cover them.

These matter, but ultimately have very little to do with what the Church is about. The notion that Christianity is about “family values” and a certain culturally conservative view of what that means has to contend with Jesus’ frequently stated insistence that anything – including father, mother, brother or sister – that stands between you and God must be rejected. Children are to be cherished, divorce (less important, oddly, to anti-gay politicians than homosexuality, about which the gospels say nothing) is condemned, but family itself isn’t the point, nor are values – if this means morality.

A young Roman Catholic I talked to years ago told me that he was attracted to eastern religion because the Catholicism he grew up with made the distance between humanity and God so absolute, whereas Hinduism spoke of the divine in all of us. He had no acquaintance at all with the theology of Catholic mysticism, with John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, or *The Letter of Private Direction*. In the latter we read of God, “He is being both to himself and to all, and in that only is he separate from all. Look then lightly to thy Lord and say, that that I am, I offer unto Thee, for Thou it art.” This understanding of deification or theosis is central to Orthodoxy, and is one of the things we should rejoice in, preach, and celebrate. But this joy – this understanding that our every breath is a gift and joins us to God, and it is our life’s task to know this – is not what we usually hear preached.

Christianity is ultimately about being transformed, about becoming capable of receiving new life, a deeper way of knowing. One reason Buddhism has grown in its appeal to many seekers is that it doesn’t shy away from the disciplined and serious internal work necessary for the transformation (metanoia) of our ordinary perceptions that we need.

Among the things we should be doing, and

often are not, is making it clear that a rule of prayer is not optional, or a nice thing you can do if you have time for it. It is absolutely essential. And it doesn’t mean time reading pious or moving works, or even loads of Scripture and the Fathers (though we should read these). It means sitting down every day in silence and concentration, real attention in the moment.

Your ability to do this changes with life’s circumstances. Obviously a young mother with small children has less time to devote to this sort of attention than someone who has retired and has hours to spare (like me). But taking time in silence and attention matters deeply. The inability to sit in silence for half an hour is, as Pascal wrote, the source of all our misfortune.

I want to make the maybe outrageous claim that morality gets in the way of this essential understanding. We have been taught – even sometimes slapped around – to be good, to behave well. For many Christians morality means not committing sins, not doing bad things. And of course we shouldn’t – but we expect moral behavior of our agnostic and atheistic neighbors, and we should. The idea that religion is valuable for creating social morality and peace was beloved by fascists who, while not believing themselves, loved the notion that other, less enlightened people, did. (You can look up the history of an interesting and dreadful movement called *L’Action Francaise* to see more of this.)

This notion of religion in the service of social order is a horror.

Christ came to show us a vision of what we are meant to be: “When Christ, who is your life, appears, you will also appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4).

We can only come to this through a path which depends on prayer and meditation and interior stillness. Everything else – including being morally and politically correct – is noise.

Fr. John Garvey is attached to Holy Resurrection Church, in Tacoma, Washington. He is a columnist for *Commonweal* and the author of *Seeds of the Word* (SVS Press) and *Orthodoxy for the Non-Orthodox* (Templegate), among other books.

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idea throughout the more than 60 communities that form this Diocesan family. And I would like our parishes to reach out and help one another in the ways that are needed – particularly, for those parishes who have money in the bank, or able-bodied workers, to lend money – or muscle – to those parishes who are in need of financial or physical revitalization. I'd like us to unlock the resources to help more than one parish at a time to revitalize, with interest free loans and "Operation: Buffalo" type events. And with the palpable excitement in growing brand-new churches, newly planted in places like Lansing, Oneonta and Potsdam, why should we not work toward the goal of planting one new mission community every two years, somewhere in the vast portions of the Diocese where no Orthodox church exists within a two-hour drive?

7. Larger Membership in Parish Organizations.

How wide could the "reach" of our parishes be if there were lay-led groups within them, focusing on teaching the Faith... visiting the sick... running a local OCF college-ministry chapter... feeding the poor... providing grief support... assisting women in crisis pregnancies... and so on? These are not the job of the clergy alone! "Going where the puck is going to be" means not just responding to, but predicting what pastoral needs our communities are going to be facing – and being ready when those needs emerge.

8. A Greater Participation in Divine Services.

Are we offering our voices, and our children's, as readers and singers – or in other ways where God has gifted us, such as altar servers and greeters? It has never been the goal of the Church to have our liturgical services be "performances"... everyone has something to do! Are our parishes offering opportunities for people to be not merely

spectators but participants? Might we consider a "Youth Sunday" once a month, when our young people take over the roles they will one day need to assume as leaders in our parishes?

9. Greater Generosity in Contributing. Financial stewardship has been an often-heard refrain in our Diocese these past few years, to be sure. And certainly we can expect the struggle for fiscal solvency to continue in our parishes as the costs of running our churches grows ever greater. But many individuals, and some parishes, have turned the corner to percentage giving ... and have been blessed richly by God, Who invites us to "see if I will not open for you the floodgates of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it is overflowing" (Malachi 3:10). Are we telling the stories of how giving in gratitude to God has made us not poorer, but richer? Have we told the success stories of the work our Diocese has been able to do – supporting existing parishes, establishing missions, and offering scholarships to our seminarians, through the generosity of the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors (DDB), individuals who have shared their blessings even more faithfully?

10. A Harvest of Vocations From This Parish.

Naturally, my dream as a diocesan bishop is now to have a harvest of vocations – theologically educated, spiritually formed priests and deacons – from throughout this Diocese! Presently, thanks to the generosity of our DDB donors, we have been able to fund scholarships for all the sons of this Diocese who have attended seminary as full-time students since I became the ruling Bishop. But... we have only two diocesan seminarians

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METROPOLITAN TIKHON

Metropolitan Tikhon's dominant theme for the Church now and in the future is mission. But in thinking about the question he wanted to be more precise about where he would like to put special emphasis in coming years:

We tend to wait until people come to us with questions, until they take the initiative and show interest in the Church. But we need much more to engage with people who are not churchly, who have no idea about the Church, or who have rejected it. We need to ask ourselves questions about how to engage these people and the culture that gives rise to them while also remaining faithful to the Church's Tradition. We need to consider how best to transmit this Tradition to those who may be unaware, indifferent, or hostile.

“...along with the women, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus”

by Deborah (Malacky) Belonick

They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. (Acts 1:13-15)

For centuries, the “place” of women in the Orthodox Church has been the subject of commentary and, often, controversy. Opinions have been varied and myriad.

Ancient Christian writers and present day biblical scholars alike have written explanations about women’s relegation to silence and submission (I Corinthians 11:2-16; I Timothy 2:15). As well, they have written much about women’s common inheritance within “a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9).

Church hymnographers likewise have sung the praises of women, but at times, have also noted their particular dastardly part in the fall of humankind:

On this day Thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, leading us from the gates of death. On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices; with the prophets and patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power!¹

Adam was cast out of Paradise through eating from the tree. Seated before the gates he wept, lamenting with a pitiful voice and saying:

Woe is me, what have I suffered in misery! I transgressed one commandment of the Master, and now I am deprived of every blessing. O most holy Paradise, planted for my sake and shut because of Eve, pray to Him that made you and fashioned me, that once more I may take pleasure in your flowers.²

Experts in canon law still debate whether “menstruous women” may or may not partake of the Eucharist. *The Letter from Athanasius to Amun* (c. AD 354), seems to contradict another ancient canon on the subject, in favorably endorsing reception of Holy Communion:

But when any bodily excretion takes place independently of will, then we experience this, like other things, by a necessity of nature...

Moreover, one might reasonably say no natural secretion will bring us before Him for punishment...What sin, then, is there in God’s name, elder most beloved of God, if the Master who made the body willed and made these parts to have such passages?³

Almost universally accepted in Orthodox Christian communities is the practice of not allowing women into the altar area.⁴ However, in his essay *On His Sister Gorgonia*, Gregory of Nazianzus writes about his sister’s dependence on the altar and its Holy Gifts, during an illness:

Despairing of all other aid, she betook herself to the Physician of all, and awaiting the silent hours of the night, during a slight intermission of the disease, she approached the altar with faith, and, calling upon Him Who is honoured thereon, with a mighty cry, and every kind of invocation, calling to mind all His former works of power...at last she ventured on an act of pious and splendid effrontery: she imitated the woman whose fountain of blood was dried up by the hem of Christ’s garment. What did she do? Resting her head with another cry upon the altar, and with a wealth of tears, as she who once bedewed the feet of Christ, and declaring that she would not loose her hold until she was made whole, she then applied her medicine to her whole body, viz. [*vide licet*, “that is to say”], such a portion of the antitypes of the Precious Body and Blood as she treasured in her hand, mingling therewith her tears, and O, the wonder, she went away feeling at once she was saved, and with the lightness of health in body, soul, and mind, having received, as the reward of her hope, that which she hoped for, and having gained bodily by means of spiritual strength.⁵

Scholars (and priests and laity!) continue to pour through writings of church fathers, sometimes searching for snippets to use as proof texts for the “place” or “role” of women in the Church. However, note: just as St. John Chrysostom (4th century) said:

There are in the world a great many situations that weaken the conscientiousness of the soul.

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First and foremost of these is dealings with women. In his concern for the male sex, the superior may not forget the females, who need greater care precisely because of their ready inclination to sin. – *On the Priesthood*, VI.8.

He also said:

Indeed nothing – nothing, I repeat – is more potent than a good and prudent woman in molding a man and his soul in whatever way she desires. He will not bear with friends, or teachers, or magistrates in the same way as with his wife, when she admonishes and advises him...She is devoted to him in all things and is closely bound to him as the body is fastened to the head...Therefore, I beseech women to carry this out in practice and to give their husbands only the proper advice. Just as a woman has great power for good, so also she has it for evil. [Homily 61, trans. Sr. Thomas Aquinas Goggin, *Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 41 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1960), 161-2 (PG 59.340-341)].

Liturgical art (and architecture) in Orthodox Christian churches universally celebrates women of faith. Icons of women saints recall their righteous deeds and attainment to spiritual heights: St. Mary Magdalene, among the myrrh-bearing women who first proclaimed Christ's resurrection and earned the title "Equal to the Apostles"; St. Nina, "Equal to the Apostles and Enlightener of Georgia" (c. 296-c. 338/340), who preached Christianity, performed miraculous healings, and converted the Georgian queen, Nana, and eventually the pagan king Mirian III of Iberia to the faith; St. Justinia of Antioch, who foiled the spiritual attacks of the heathen magician Cyprian and converted him to the faith, and who then suffered martyrdom with him during the persecution of Diocletian at Nicomedia (AD 304); St. Helen, the empress of Constantinople (c. 246/50-330), credited with going on pilgrimage to find the relics of the True Cross (at age 80!); St. Irene, Byzantine empress, (AD 752-803), noted for her liberality, her freeing of prisoners and, above all, for her convening of the Second Council of Nicaea in her efforts to restore the veneration of sacred images; St. Xenia patron saint of St. Petersburg

(c._1719/1730-c._1803), who was given spiritual gifts of prayer and prophecy, and who gave all her possessions to the poor after her husband died.

The fortitude and holiness of women is also attested by the lives of recent saints. St. Elizabeth the New Martyr (1864-1918), was the wife of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich of Russia. After the assassination of her husband, she went on to found a convent; for many years she helped the poor and orphans in this Moscow home, where there arose a new vision of a diaconate for women, one that combined intercession and action in a disordered world. She was martyred by the Bolsheviks. Similarly, St. Maria Skobtsova of Paris (1891-1945) Russian noblewoman, poet, and nun, was a member of the French Resistance during World War II. For her part in hiding Jews in Nazi-occupied France, she was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp and died on Holy Saturday, 1945.



St. Nina

All the writings, music, hagiography, and art about women in the Orthodox Church provide a plethora of opinions about the "mystery" of their sex and gender and their "role." Indeed, these various opinions may account for the multitude of "local" customs regarding women and their ministries within their own parishes and/or dioceses.

However, within received Orthodox Christian tradition, it appears one may safely state at least two things: woman is the same as man, and woman is different than man! As an example, let us ponder the person of the Virgin Mary, "blessed among women" (Luke 1:42).

Most prominent in Orthodox churches are the icons of the Mother of God (Greek=*Theotokos*), the Virgin Mary, who models the hope of all Christians: to be able to hear the Word of God and keep it (Luke 11:28) and to become filled with God's Grace (Luke 1:28). She, by obedience to God and through the Cross of her Son, became the first human to experience salvation and the bodily resurrection. We as Christians – women and men – are to emulate her.

Nevertheless, one cannot dismiss the Virgin Mary as "simply human"; as sexless, genderless. Her womanhood and her motherhood both are

celebrated in Scripture⁶ and in Orthodox Christian Tradition. The hymnography to the Mother of God glorifies both her personal holiness and life, as well as her common example to all Christians.

In this sense, she signals to us humans that gender and sex are not meaningless. The material body (hormones, glands, anatomy, genetic makeup, brain structure) is every bit a part of our “good” created being (Genesis 1:31), and it is within and through our bodies that we “work out our salvation” in Christ (Philippians 2:12) and “walk in His footsteps” (2 Corinthians 12:18). Although women and men are fellow heirs in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:17), they also are flesh and blood, daughters and sons, wives and husbands, sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers.

Within received Orthodox Christian Tradition, gender and sex are regarded as essential to our human nature, deeply ingrained in body and psyche, and valued as created by God and necessary for human relationships. Although the Orthodox Christian Church maintains an equality between women and men in terms of salvation and spiritual attainment, it also maintains a distinction between them as regards their sex and gender, most apparent in the Church’s unaltered tradition of ordaining to the priestly orders only men.⁷

Given the depth and gravity of gender and sex issues in twenty-first century culture, it might be better to begin to reframe the discussion about the “place” or “role” of women within the Orthodox

Church. Perhaps, concentrating on, meditating upon, and praying about what it means, essentially, to *be woman*, to *be man* – with all the spiritual and scientific wealth available to us – would be a good starting point.

¹ Kontakion, Resurrection, Tone 3 [emphasis added]

² Vespers of the Sunday of Forgiveness in *The Lenten Triodion*, trans. from the original Greek by Mother Mary and Bishop Kallistos Ware (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), 170 [emphasis added]

³ A non-conciliar canon, originally written as a private letter but then accepted into the body of canons in Canon II of the Synod in Trullo (Quinisext Council), AD 692; see NPNF, vol. 14, second series, 602-603. This canonical letter seemingly contradicts another often-quoted canonical letter that restricts women from partaking of the Eucharist during their menses: that of the Blessed Dionysius, Archbishop of Alexandria, to Basileides the Bishop, also accepted in Canon II of the Synod in Trullo 692 A.D. (Quinisext Council) and subsequently at the Seventh Ecumenical Council in its first canon. See more: *Feminism in Christianity: An Orthodox Christian Response*, Deborah (Malacky) Belonick (SVS Press, 2011).

⁴ Abbesses, however, regularly are permitted to stand in the altar area of their monasteries.

⁵ NPNF, vol. 7, second series, section 18, 243.

⁶ Particularly in her representing the New Israel, the Bride of Christ, at the marriage of Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-12); and in her becoming the Mother of the Church and of all believers at the Cross of Christ (John 19:25-27).

⁷ At the forefront of current discussions about the all-male priesthood in Orthodox Christian circles is the relevance of gender and sex to the person of Jesus Christ and His High Priesthood.

Deborah (Malacky) Belonick holds an M.Div. from St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, and is author of *Feminism in Christianity: An Orthodox Christian Response* (SVS Press, 2011).

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this fall semester, and no one who will graduate and be ready to serve a parish for the next two years. If we’re going to grow the Church, we will have to have pastors to feed the sheep! Are parents encouraging their sons to pursue the priesthood? Are parishes treating their priests with the kind of love and respect that makes young men in their midst say to themselves, “I want to do that!”?

Certainly the dreams of priests and bishops will not come to fruition until the Kingdom is realized; but by God’s grace, souls will be saved in the process. Like Peter struggling to stay afloat in the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee, we are buffeted by the winds of changing family dynamics, financial realities, working conditions, and numberless other temptations.

But our loving God grows and shapes and saves us, in a process of *theosis* which is not fickle, like the weather or the stock market or the political arena. Rather, the process is deliberate, step-by-step, Confession by Confession and Communion after Communion, forged by our continual turning and re-turning toward God in repentance.

The real answer to the question – “Where should we be going?” – has been given by Our Lord. He told His disciples and He tells us too: “Where I am going you know, and the way you know” (John 14: 4). Like the Saints before us, let us follow the path paved by Christ, Who is the beginning and the fulfillment of our journey, the Light of our sojourn through this life and the Provision for our journey to the next.

Reviewing Life at St. Andrew's Church, Dix Hills, NY by Fr. John Klingel

Regarding life at our Parish, we've been blessed by God in so many ways. The year began with a number of visitors who showed signs of interest. By Great Lent we had four catechumens, three of whom were chrismated at the Vespers Liturgy on Great and Holy Saturday. Their presence and energy has inspired us and reminded us why we are members of this community. The weekly conferences we held with the catechumens have now segued into a discussion group open to all the parishioners.

Other things that have occurred: a singing workshop for young children lead by David Lucs; a visit from St. Vladimir's Seminary Octet Choir, whose members sang the responses for Liturgy and Mission Vespers; an inspiring retreat led by

Fr. Nathan Preston, a neighboring OCA pastor; a wine tasting event paired with a show featuring the work of several local artists and a published author (some of whom are also parishioners); a major Flea Market event bringing vendors and many people from the area to our church, an opportunity to meet and evangelize; our 9th annual Parish Mini-Picnic, the highlights of which were a rousing volleyball game and a delicious lunch. One of the most memorable things recently was the

gathering of faithful from several area parishes for the joint celebration of Holy Unction on Great and Holy Wednesday, celebrated by His Grace, Bishop Michael, who was assisted by six priests. We've hosted the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors' Thank You Dinner, a visit by Fr. Constantine Nasr



PROTOPRESBYTER THOMAS HOPKO; Dean Emeritus, St. Vladimir's Seminary



As an epigraph to his brilliant book The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death, which is based on his two earlier volumes about the development of the early Church's experience and understanding of Christ that led to the Symbol of Faith formulated at the Church's first Ecumenical Council, Fr. John Behr uses Soren Kierkegaard's saying that human beings live forward, "but only understand life backwards."

Perhaps this is the significance of Wayne Gretzky's conviction.

In order to be a successful hockey player one needs to perceive where the puck is heading and to be there to meet it. He can do this only by discerning where the puck is now, where it has come from, how it got there and where the particular skater handling the puck is going to send it. Only a player possessing a rare charisma of discernment can do this. And he can do it only by enhancing his God-given gifts with an understanding of the game, and a knowledge of the player handling the puck, and an exact perception of the circumstances of the given contest. These necessary qualities come from having competent teachers and coaches, long hours of training, plenty of hard work, the endurance of much pain and suffering, and the willingness – and the freedom – to see things as they really are, and not as one desires or imagines them to be.

Where has the OCA come from? Where is it now? Where is it heading? Who are its gifted players? Who has the gift of discernment? Who are the teachers and coaches? Who is providing the training? Who is now playing the game? What are its specific circumstances? And what exactly are the hard work, and the suffering and pain, and the willingness – and the freedom – to overcome one's passions and fantasies in order to see and to do what leads to victory?

May God help the OCA to recognize the gifts, do the work and pay the price necessary for the fruitful use of what God provides for His glory and the good of all.

for the Parish Council Conference (NYC Deanery), and most recently, the Deanery Clergy Families' Picnic. We've been pleased to be able to offer



hospitality and to share the pleasant surroundings that grace our humble parish. A new swing-set, donated by a generous parishioner, has kept our children happy.

On a personal note, thanks to a change in our Deanery's schedule, I am now able to attend the regular Deanery Meetings, when they are held in the evenings (since I hold a full-time job away from the parish). The improved communication, increased activity, and the inspired leadership by Bishop Michael have revitalized our Deanery. The fellowship that results from these contacts is a wonderful thing.



We recently buried a former member of our parish, Deacon John Protopapas. Well known for his work in the Church, Deacon John's funeral brought us together with St. John the Theologian Parish in Shirley, where he served. Bishop Michael

and clergy concelebrated, and although Fr. John's repose was both sad and very unexpected, coming together as we did was a beautiful thing. It seems that in broadening our focus beyond the parish, we have come to appreciate the parish, much more, as the local church.

Upcoming events include a visit by Lou Zagami, Development Director of the IOCC (September 22), a return visit from Fr. Nathan for a Fall/Winter retreat, and we are hoping to bring Stephen Lloyd-Moffett (author of *Beauty for Ashes*) to Long Island, to speak to us personally about Metropolitan Meletios (Kalamaran) and his legacy in the Church of Greece. David Lucs will also hold a follow-up to his children's singing workshop on December 7.

Keeping a suburban parish focused and together is not easy. Long Island features a fast paced, secular culture, rampant commercialism, and varied events which compete with the church at every turn. A newsletter, a weekly bulletin with announcements, readings and prayer list, a monthly calendar, website updates, articles and pictures, and weekly email reminders, help greatly but also take a great deal of time. Our subdeacon, Nilus Klingel, has made time for all of these things and more, and we are grateful to him for all his assistance. Our parish council president, Mark Guyer, has also given greatly of his time and talent, to make this year a truly unforgettable one.



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ARCHPRIEST JOHN BEHR; Dean, St. Vladimir's Seminary - from his talk,

"Orthodox Theological Education in the Twenty-First Century," Anaphora Institute, Egypt (June, 2013)

We should be aware that however difficult we think our situation is now, we are not preparing our students for today's world, but for tomorrow's! Their most effective ministry will be some 15 or 20 years after they finish the school, once they have served a number of years, acquired experience, and grown in that experience....There is a truly prophetic dimension in the work of theological schools. I will say it one more time: we are not preparing our students to sort out the current problems that beset the Church (that is the task of bishops and priests now!), but we are forming our students for whatever might emerge in the decades to come.

It is a prophetic ministry: we need to discern the signs of the times; discern where things are heading; discern the movement of the world, so that we can do all we can to equip our students. We must never sell our students short!



Keeping it Real: Isaiah 41:10 2013 Diocesan Lenten Youth Retreat

by Danielle Geeza

“Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; Yes, I will help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

With the blessing of Bishop Michael, under the direction of Fr. Jason Vansuch (Chairperson, Department of Youth Ministry), teenagers gathered for an overnight retreat April 19-20, 2013 at Holy Resurrection Church in Wayne NJ. This has become an annual tradition for 7th-12th grade students during their Lenten journey to Pascha. Parishes from Long Island, Manhattan, and throughout New Jersey were represented.



The theme of the retreat was *“Keeping it Real: Isaiah 41:10.”* Session topics focused on contemporary issues facing teens every day of their lives and how God and our Orthodox Faith can help them persevere through anything.

Participants arrived on Friday evening and were greeted with pizza and icebreaker activities. This was followed by a movie: *“The Blind Side.”* Shortly before midnight, Bishop Michael made a special appearance and spent an hour with the group, fielding questions and reminding them to keep God close to their hearts when faced with difficult situations. After saying evening prayers together, it was off to bed.

In honor of the 5th Saturday of Great Lent, Fr. Jason celebrated an Akathist to the Theotokos on Saturday morning with the teens singing the responses. Three learning sessions followed: (1) God and Fear, (2) God and Hope, and (3) God and Love. Each lesson expanded on the Church’s understanding of fear, hope, and love. Examples were drawn from Holy Scripture as well as real-life experiences. Intermittently, participants broke-out into small groups led by Fr. Jason, Sub-deacon Mark Federoff, Juliana Mecera, and Danielle Geeza. The teens were given the opportunity to reflect on

current circumstances in their lives, the choices they make, and how they can center themselves in God when serving others, the Church, and nurturing their own spiritual well-being. Fr. Jason brought the discussion back to an Orthodox Christian context:

“The scripture verse from the Prophet Isaiah shows us that through our faith, trust, and hope in God, we will prevail over every persecution. This faith, trust, and hope are the same that the Disciples had when they were sent by Our Lord into the towns and communities to preach the Gospel. Even though they faced difficult challenges and situations, they still prevailed. They did not allow their fear of others to define who they were and what they were called to do and be. So, we too should not allow our fears define who we are called to be. In Christianity, hope is the anticipation of a favorable outcome under God’s guidance, the confidence that what God has done for us in the past guarantees our participation in what God will do in the future. Love for God



is a burning desire for Him to be the center of our life. By the invitation of the Church, we are called to partake and become one with Him through the Chalice. Not only are we summoned to join with Christ, but also to become one with all who share it. This is true love, to become part of each other. Christ became one of us and shared our nature because of His love. By sharing Him, we share each other.”

After a few riveting rounds of “Orthodox Jeopardy” and “Catch Phrase,” the event concluded with Vespers. It truly was a wonderful weekend spent in prayer, fellowship, education, and fun!

Bookends: In Celebration of the Love and Ministry of Fr. Joseph and Shirley Lickwar

by Susan Lukianov

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Fr. Joseph and Shirley Lickwar celebrated 50 years of marriage and of his ordination to the priesthood on Sunday June 9, 2013. Their daughter, Susan, presented these remarks during the banquet.

Your Grace, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Beloved Matushki, Family and Friends, Christ is Risen!

Today we honor Fr. Joseph and Matushka Shirley. We celebrate and congratulate them on 50 years of marriage and 50 years of ordination to the priesthood. Anniversary parties and birthday celebrations for certain milestones are typical in our society. But there is nothing “typical” about this couple.

To achieve 50 years of marriage in this day and age is not the norm. And 50 years of successful marriage coupled with 50 years of service to the Church make them atypical; make them special! To fully understand this, we must hear their story.

The Meeting

Most of us have experienced our own parish event. Specifically I am referring to the church hall luncheon. Everyone is buzzing – ladies in the kitchen cooking and serving, clergy welcoming honored guests and visitors, men adding tables and chairs for perhaps a bigger crowd than expected.

At such a parish event in March of 1963 (in East Pittsburgh, PA) through all this buzzing, a young seminarian sees a young lady. Perhaps he is too shy to introduce himself, perhaps she is too busy to allow for an introduction; perhaps parishioners are dedicated to their regular self-assigned seats thus preventing new people from mingling with regulars. Whatever the reason, he does not actually meet her that day.

Clearly she made an impression. For on the next day, a special delivery letter arrives for her. In this letter the young man introduces himself and explains that he would like to meet her, get to know her. So they begin to correspond and eventually meet.

Now for those of you paying attention—remember I said they met in March of 1963. And if you're good

with numbers perhaps you have already figured out that 50 years ago today, was June 9, 1963.

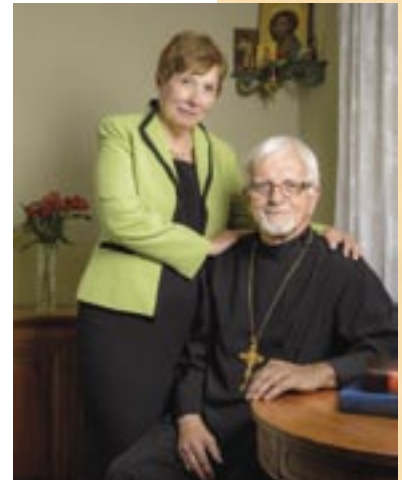
Yes, they met in March and married in June. For the record, they had only a few dates before the proposal; rumor has it that there were only 3 or 4. Now, in their defense, you also have to take into consideration that this was a really busy time of the Liturgical year (Great Lent, Pascha). And this young man was still at seminary, about 2 hours away, and without a car.

The proposal is accepted and they immediately go tell her mom the news. Then that very same evening they make a visit to her parish priest. The priest has company, but he takes them into his office and discusses the details with them. Now in light of the fact that Pascha was April 14 and Pentecost was June 2 – June 9 became the day. This leaves them 2 weeks to plan a wedding. (On a side note, their next stop was the Moose Hall to book the reception.)

I am sure some of you are thinking, why not wait until after the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, or later in the year. Well, times were different back then and his Ordination date was already set – July 7, 1963. Obviously there was a very limited window of time here.

But even with only two weeks, they pulled it off. Her brother returned from his one year tour of duty (in South Korea) two days before the wedding; ALL and I mean ALL of his relatives took an overnight train from East Chicago to Pittsburgh to be in attendance.

This is a sweet story and one that we like to recount a lot among family. We enjoy the details of the young lady changing her mind on a regular



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basis (getting married – not getting married, getting married – not getting married); of his mother and sister asking him to postpone his ordination so that they can really think this through and have more time to plan; of this young man saying that he won't change the date – if she doesn't want to marry he will simply be a celibate priest; of her mother writing to the young seminarian asking him to postpone his ordination so he can find a more suitable wife; of him responding it is her or no one; and of this young lady thinking if I don't marry him now, I probably won't marry him ever."

But what I have yet to mention is the most important detail – both will say that prayer is what led them to each other and to their decision to begin a life together.



The Wedding

The information about the actual day is limited. When family are asked about this day the first thing anyone mentions is HOW HOT IT WAS. The second thing they mention is how hot it was. The third thing they mention is that it was so hot, the three priests kept having to take out handkerchiefs to wipe their brows. That and the fact that they forgot to serve the hams at the reception. But this is followed by how beautiful it was, how much fun it was, etc. We've been told that if you have seen *The Deer Hunter*, then you

have been to their reception.

But all know the significance – it was about two young people joining their LIVES in the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, to begin their new LIFE together.

The Ordination

July 7, 1963. Barely married a month, the next

chapter unfolds. A young man, called to serve Christ, takes that next step. And with him, by his side (albeit a little late because those driving her got lost on the way to the Church) is his new wife.

Parish Assignment

August 1, 1963 – Barely married 2 months, barely ordained 1 month – they move to Akron, Ohio (far from their family and friends) for their first parish assignment. Sure there is excitement and nervousness with this next chapter, but they approached it with a positive attitude. Even upon seeing their new home, the parish rectory (which had been condemned, that day), they continued on their path.

When you think about their start – their young ages (he 23, she 19), their short courtship, their quick move; a condemned house – most, by today's standards, would say this was a recipe for disaster. But they are not the norm; they are not typical. This couple lives their lives with a devotion to Christ and His Church which has guided them through all. But I think it is important to understand what this devotion looks like (from a daughter's perspective):

There is their personal relationship/devotion to Christ and His Church and their relationship to Christ as a married couple;

him as a husband; her as a wife;
him as a priest; her as a matushka;
him as a dad; her as a mom.

The Church teaches that each of those "roles" has its own set of responsibilities and at times makes suggestions of what one must do in each role. But there is one common thread among all of these and that is sacrifice:

ARCHPRIEST ERIC GEORGE TOSI; Secretary – Orthodox Church in America



Fr. Alexander Schmemmann wrote in 1959, "To recover the missionary dimension of the Church is today's greatest imperative." Those words ring true today as they did over 50 years ago. We must continue to recover that missionary imperative; it is our very lifeblood as the Orthodox Church in America. This is why St. Herman and the early missionaries came to America, why St. Innocent trekked throughout Alaska and challenged the Russian Church to continue its support, why St. Tikhon traveled throughout the country establishing parishes, and why even to this day our dedicated clergy and laity continue to grow the Church. Every action and activity of the Church must be focused in that singular direction....to be missionaries to ourselves, our families, our communities and the world around us. If we can recognize and honor this singular fact, then our Church will fulfill its calling to be the Orthodox Church planted in this land and know exactly where it is going.

The wife sacrifices for the husband,
the husband for the wife;
the parents for the child;
the priest for his flock.

It is clear that throughout their entire 50 years together, neither one of them ever put their own needs first. And their sacrifice was selfless; done in secret; never lorded over each other or those they willingly sacrificed for.

And more importantly, everything they did, they did together. The daily routines of family life were shared equally; from housework, to childcare, to cleaning the church, to hospital visits, to grocery shopping to church events – they were always together.

Many would call them a team. We know that they are simply living as one flesh.

My sister and I are often asked; “what kept you in the Church?” That is a loaded question. For me personally, I’d like to be able to answer my love of Christ, my faith, my desire to work on my salvation... but what I know – what has kept me – is my parents and the example they have set.

In living lives devoted to Christ, they also lived lives that were consistent in their devotion to Christ. And with their children, they practiced what they preached.

They never asked anything of us as children that they themselves would not do. And more importantly,

what stays with a child are the things you see adults do when they think no one is watching.

This day is uncomfortable for them, perhaps even difficult for them. Not because they don’t love each other, not because they don’t want to be surrounded by loved ones, not because 50 years is a long time – but because they do not like being the center of attention.

In marriage, it seems that two come together. But it is not two, it is three. The man marries the woman, and the woman marries the man, but the two together also marry Christ. So three take part in the mystery, and three remain together in life [paraphrased from a Sermon by Archimandrite Aimilianos of Simonopetra, Mount Athos, delivered in the Church of St. Nicholas, Trikala, Greece, January 17, 1971]. God has blessed them with 50 years of marriage and 50 years of priesthood.

“According to Christ, in order for the love of a man and woman to be that which God has perfectly created it to be, it must be: unique, indestructible, unending and divine.” (OCA website: Fr. Thomas Hopko, *The Orthodox Faith, Volume II-Worship-The Sacraments*).

This is the love they have for each other.

Fr. Joseph and Matushka Shirley wanted to express their gratefulness to their daughters Matushka Christina Tosi and Suan Lukianov.

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FR. MICHAEL PLEKON; St. Gregory the Theologian Church, Wappingers Falls, NY



Today for reasons of sweeping demographic changes and many other transformations, we see our parishes shrinking, our Diocese growing smaller. There is an expression that I am using as the title for a collection of ecumenical first person accounts of parish life and pastoral ministry in the 21st century – “The Church has left the building.” In many cases, literally, parishes who long ago sold the rectory and cannot support a pastor will before long find they can no longer keep the building heated, cooled, open. If I have the expression right however, still “the Church is in the house.” Meaning that people gathered around the Eucharist and the scriptures, seeking to live in communion with God and each other and to serve their neighbors – if this is Church, then it’s here to stay.

We, however, formerly a church of immigrants, often located close to mines, mills and factories, formerly united by a language and places of origin in Eastern Europe – things have changed dramatically. We have to find a way of being merciful, hospitable, and caring – marks of what St. Mother Maria Skobtsova called “the sacrament of the sister/brother,” of the “liturgy outside the sanctuary.”

The Church as we’ve known it, is heading away from tribal, very local rooting. We have to learn to be citizens of the Kingdom, but also of a larger society and world.

St. George's Gazebo: Scout Project Survives Sandy!

by Symeon Combs, Sr. Warden

During 2012, Saints Peter and Paul Church in Manville was blessed by an unusual project that started with one teenage parishioner – altar server Zachary Sokol – and expanded to include most of the parish in one way or another. Zach, a Boy Scout, decided to seek his Eagle Scout award by a project that would benefit his parish – the construction of a gazebo between the Church and the Social Hall. Bishop Michael dedicated our new gazebo to St. George on September 30, 2012, and only two months later the gazebo “rode



out” Hurricane Sandy with no damage! – actually, it was the only parish facility that suffered no storm damage.

Eagle Service projects present unique challenges to scouts because they require leadership skills and strategies more commonly used by adults. Zach, in effect, had to become the coach and the team manager, rather than just a player or team member. The Parish Council approved the project early in the year and assigned Council member Peter Parsells as liaison with Zach.

Over the next six months, Zach determined the design for the gazebo, negotiated its exact location and husbanded the project through the local municipal zoning and construction approval processes. Under his direction, an ever-growing band of volunteers held fundraisers for materials and participated in site preparation and construction. Peter Parsells kept the Parish Council updated on the process and worked with Zach on any decisions that needed to be made by Fr. James or the Council.



The Saint George Gazebo was completed without any expense to the parish. The funds were raised by two fundraisers that took place in February 2012. The first was a pre-Lenten Spaghetti and Meatball sale that was organized by Zach and Council Member Jill

Peterson. The second was a very successful parish-wide bake sale in which members of the parish volunteered to bring various baked goods. The fundraisers saw over \$1,500 in revenue, nearly twice as high as expected and covering all expenses of the project.

The gazebo was blessed by Bishop Michael in a dedication service with many non-Orthodox guests, including Eagle Scouts and Zach's scoutmaster. Zach's letter of thanks to the parish is included below. Through this successful service project Zach showed leadership, fortitude and a love of the Holy Faith. Our picturesque gazebo, bedecked with flowers, is a lovely addition to the parish grounds, inviting relaxation and quiet conversation for parishioners. On July 28, 2013, Zach will be awarded his Eagle Scout badge in a special ceremony at the gazebo.

Letter of Thanks to the Parish: Zachary Sokol
Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus
Dear Parishioners,

As you probably know, the gazebo for behind the church has been completed. During his pastoral visit on September 30th, Bishop Michael blessed the structure and it was dedicated to the great martyr George.

Although I proposed and worked on this project as my Eagle Scout Service Project, it could not have been completed without the help of many, many people in the church. I would like to thank everybody in the community who helped in any way, from buying spaghetti or baking baked goods, to leveling the roof plates. I would especially like to thank Mrs. (Jill) Peterson for kicking off the fundraising, and Mr. (Bob) Graver, father-in-law of Peter Parsells, for all of his expert work and advice.

After the construction was completed, the Summer Day Camp sponsored by St. Mary and St. Athanasius Coptic Church used funds they secured for beautification to landscape the area around the gazebo so that it would fit in with the landscaping around the church and the church hall.

The gazebo is dedicated to St. George, the patron saint of Boy Scouts around the world. Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of Boy

Scouts, chose St. George to be the movement's Patron Saint because the qualities of this saint reflect good Scouting:

- * Responsibility
- * Truthfulness
- * Devotion to duty
- * A brave heart
- * A noble spirit
- * Dedication to helping others



When asked where religion came into Scouting, Lord Baden-Powell replied, "It does not come in at all. It is already there. It is a fundamental factor underlying Scouting..." (Religion and the Boy Scout and Girl Guides Movement-an address, 1926).

I hope that the gazebo will be used and enjoyed for many years.

Yours in Christ,
Zachary Sokol

MATUSHKA JULIANNA SCHMEMANN



I have spent a very long life in our Church in America and at St. Vladimir's Seminary. We lived through the birth of the Orthodox Church in America, through liturgical renewal, through many disturbing administrative upheavals. And through it all our Church came out stronger; our leaders, both lay and clergy, emerged more conscious of their responsibilities.

And yet people are always wondering, "Where should the Church be going?"

Wayne Gretzky's approach does seem temptingly simple: go where the puck is and reach it. Our task seems so much more complex. But is it? And should it be?

The Old Testament, the Gospels and the Epistles are so clear. Look in 1 Kings 19: Elijah is standing on the mount, "and behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a STILL SMALL VOICE." And Elijah heard it.... Or St. John 4: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know Me..."

So does the Church need to be "going" anywhere?

We already have it all in the Church. But we need to live in it, with it; we need to realize that no fire, earthquake or wind are needed to discover what the Church is, but only to listen with a still heart to that voice which fills the Scriptures. Again and again we try to find a new way to reach the Kingdom, though Jesus was sent by His Father precisely to show the way. "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know Me."

Let us first of all thank the Lord for the present stability of our Church and enjoy it with trust and confidence. Let us, each of us, deepen our mutual love, since in love alone can our Church make earthly decisions in truth – not based on rules, but in individual love and hope.

Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow. The same eternal Father Who takes care of us today will take care of us tomorrow.

Instead of finding new ways and thereby creating divisions and doubt, let us listen to the still small voice of the Lord, and to the love of Jesus for us.

With peace and complete trust.

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Hearing and Seeing: Introducing Children to Hymnography through Iconography

by David Lucs

The liturgical life of our Orthodox Christian Faith is meant to be full of life, engaging, and reflecting Christ's commission to His apostles to "Go and baptize all nations...." (Matthew 28:19). This is not a passive command, but an active one, which we are called to accept as our own. To aid us in our efforts, the Church provides us with the liturgical arts: icons, which adorn the walls of our churches, providing visual instruction about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and the hymns which we sing, expounding on the same events as portrayed in the icons.



As windows into the Kingdom, iconography and hymnography reveal the glory and majesty of God. Whether used independently of each other or together, icons and hymns enable our relationship with God to deepen, making the feasts and saints present for us today. For Orthodox Christian parents, who also have the responsibility of raising their children in the Faith, they must establish a firm foundation for their children to develop their own relationship with God the Father.

Our kids are constantly bombarded by visual and auditory messages in society – many which contradict the teachings of the church – and children need a firm foundation rooted in the love of God, to understand right from wrong, and discern what will benefit their relationship with Christ and His holy Church. It is critical the hymns and icons of the Church have a place in the lives of children, as a guide for their growth and development.

To help children understand the importance and usefulness of the liturgical arts – and singing in particular – a series of workshops has been established by the Diocesan Liturgical Music Commission with the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Michael. These workshops provide an opportunity for children to discover the basics of music theory, examples of liturgical music, and inspire kids of all ages to take a more active role in the life of the Church through liturgical music, glorifying God.

fun for the children, stressing the importance and beauty of singing while in church and at home. A selection of hymns shared with the kids and their parents make it possible to bring the liturgical arts into their homes. We may have icons in our homes, but do we also sing the hymns of the church year at home? Parents can encourage kids by having their families say morning and evening prayers together, or by singing the Lord's Prayer or the festal apolytikion (or troparion) before meals. Even if it's not the most harmonious experience, it can be an expression of a family's love for and relationship with God.

The importance of making these moments enjoyable as well as educational for the children cannot be overemphasized. The "fun" which is possible when sharing the happiness of Christianity makes me think of the evening hymn "Gladsome Light" – or as translated by others – O joyous Light! Christ is the Light of the world, and we want the children to experience the joy of encountering Christ through liturgical music, so they will continue to develop and raise their voices to God throughout their lives.

The Diocesan workshops are done prayerfully and for the glory of God, in hopes of increasing the number of singers, readers, directors, poets, composers and educators to lead the next generation of faithful in singing praises to God. Participation in the workshops is open to kids from ages five to fifteen, regardless of their musical background or ability. The workshops are designed to work both with those who have no previous musical training and those who have previously sung or played instruments, expanding their understanding of music in the life of the Church.

The workshops are held in the church, usually in front of the iconostasis, to create a setting where the children are surrounded by Christ and His saints. Invariably, kids have already learned any number of songs – from nursery rhymes at home or in day care programs, to songs they hear on the radio, or those taught in school. The goal is to help the children realize music is all around them, and the church hymns can also be theirs to sing.

These day-long workshops are structured to be

Troparia are liturgical "theme songs" which

serve as great starting points to introduce children to church music, because they encapsulate core theological topics, lend themselves musically for the kids to learn, and are relatively short and memorable. These hymns represent the most important feasts and celebrations of the Church, and time is set aside during the workshop to ensure the meaning and message of each hymn is outlined and explained, using the festal icons adorning the walls of the church.



Keeping the atmosphere of the workshop informal and engaging, a scavenger hunt begins, where everyone is sent to find the icon which best represents the text of the hymn, allowing the children to look more closely at the icons which adorn the walls of the church, and to enable them to become more comfortable in God's house. Like the hymns we sing, the icons which surround us are not static or passive, but meant to be engaging and bring us closer to God.

Throughout the workshop, the kids are encouraged to get involved, either by answering questions, helping others to sing, or volunteering to read the texts. This provides them with an opportunity to share what they know. Children who attend the workshop receive copies of the hymns to potentially sing in their homes, making the feasts more present in their lives. What frequently seems appropriate only for worship can be extended beyond the doors of the church and be used in the homes of believers, making the feasts of the Church real in our daily lives. For example, these hymns may be sung before meals, before going to bed, or with morning prayers.

The venerable archpriest and composer, Fr. Sergei Glagolev (born 1927, Gary, Indiana) said, "If you want to know what the Church teaches,

come to church and listen to what we sing!" The stichera, troparia, and irmoi which we sing or hear in church confirm this idea, as they recount the events of Christ's earthly ministry and teachings. I believe it is critical for the education of children to see the divine services as active and not passive experiences, and the hymns and icons help make that a reality. This is also critical for parents to understand, as the liturgical services of the Church are there as a means to help each of us – adults and children alike – to draw closer to God. By singing the responses in church, or singing/reciting the texts at home, the feasts become a part of each of our lives and our shared experience in the Church.

We live in a world which stresses the importance of communication with new technology enabling us to stay connected with each other. If we as Orthodox Christians want to raise our children in the Faith, then we need to also make use of the timeless resources of the Church – icons and hymns, prayer and fasting – to aid our efforts to strengthen the connection our kids have with the Church. The icons we venerate in church and at home allow God to be a part of our families, and the hymns we sing express our love for Christ and His holy Church.

We need to pray to God, asking Him to send the Holy Spirit to guide our labors, especially in the lives of our children. And, if we have faith in God, He may bless our collective efforts, inspire others to join us, and possibly establish a new period of "glory days" for our parish choirs for the glory of His Name.



David Lucs, a Long Island-based composer, arranger, and choir director (www.dlucscollection.com), has led Children's Music Workshops in OCA parishes over the past year. He presented material from the above article at "Church Music and Icons: Windows to Heaven" – the Fifth Conference of The International Society for Orthodox Church Music, held in Joensuu, Finland, June 3-9, 2013 (www.isocm.com). The Diocesan Commission on Liturgical Music encourages parishes to invite David (dlucs@verizon.net) for future workshops.

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Operation Princeton Building a New Orthodox Church in Princeton

"Operation Princeton" is a diocesan-wide project to help build a permanent place of worship for Mother of God Orthodox Church in Princeton, NJ. Mother of God Orthodox Mission was established in March of 1998 and recently purchased 8.5 acres of land (in close proximity to Princeton University). There is a building on the property that is being renovated in order to construct a new Orthodox Christian Temple for worshippers in the Princeton area.



Threefold Vision

Presently, the Mother of God community is seeking support for new worship space which is at the center of our Orthodox Christian ethos. Our community also envisions a privately funded senior living facility situated on the property that will host retired theologians, hierarchs, clergy, and Orthodox laity. We also plan to establish an Orthodox Christian school open to all in the local community interested in academic excellence and effective Christian formation. The goal is to build up the Orthodox Christian presence in Princeton, helping

to ensure a foundation of Orthodox Christian ministry and witness for years to come.

The Mother of God Orthodox Community has been successful in raising over one million dollars from within our own ranks. Yet, we still need to raise approximately \$700,000 to complete construction and a new parking lot. Construction is underway with the work being accomplished by professionals, parishioners and other volunteers.

We invite you to partner with us! You are invited to join us in this blessed effort to help build a new Orthodox Christian house of worship in Princeton, NJ. We are making history! You can help by making a donation or by joining a volunteer work session. Operation Princeton kicked off with landscape work on Friday, September 20th and Saturday, September 21st and then a painting gathering on Friday, October 25th and Saturday, October 26th.

To offer assistance, obtain more information or to receive regular email updates on the construction progress, contact: Fr. John Cassar at (609) 306-4168 or john.cassar@verizon.net. Those interested in donating to the capital campaign can find more information at the following link <http://www.mogoca.org/capital-campaign.html>.

We the faithful of the Mother of God Church are grateful for the prayerful, financial, and physical support of all the faithful of our Diocese. We remain grateful for your continuing financial support, and we look forward to welcoming all to our newly constructed spiritual home!

JUDGE E.R. LANIER; *Chair, Legal Committee – Metropolitan Council / Orthodox Church in America*

The past decade, for all the tumult which it witnessed in the life of our Church, was fruitful in generating forces which will, I believe, reap a tremendous harvest for the Kingdom of Christ in our near-term future. We have a youthful and energetic Metropolitan, a true monastic, and one who has shown a healthy sensitivity to the canonical responsibilities of his office, tempered by a keen sense of his need to work harmoniously with the hierarchs of our Holy Synod, the chief officers of the Church, and the world beyond Syosset. In time he will bring an increasingly integrated vision of the higher levels of church leadership with our dioceses and their parishes, resulting ultimately in a Church which more accurately reflects our nature as an autocephalous Orthodox Church, having both an effective and efficient national and international presence, balanced by respect and appreciation for and support of the life of the Church at the diocesan level and beyond.



SS. Peter and Paul Church, Bayonne Involved in Local Outreach

The parish of SS. Peter and Paul Orthodox church was very proud to sponsor an exhibit of books as well as religious and cultural artifacts of Eastern Europe at the main branch of the Bayonne Public Library during the month of July. The exhibit contained a broad range of books on the topic of Orthodox Christian spirituality.

The books represent a collection entitled "*The Antonia Rotko Collection on Orthodox Spirituality*," and their purchase was made possible through a generous donation made to Sts. Peter and Paul Church by Antonia Rotko after her passing in December of 2010. Antonia was a lifelong member of the parish, and was also an avid reader of books on the topic of Orthodox Christian spirituality. In light of this, it was agreed that a collection of books donated to the library in her name would be a fitting testament to her memory.

It is hoped by everyone at the church that this collection of books will increase awareness of Christian Orthodoxy among readers and spiritual seekers alike.

The parishioners also gathered together during the months of April and July to make over 700 sandwiches and bag lunches per month for the needy of Hudson County. Sandwiches were

brought weekly to the St. Lucy Shelter in Jersey City, and 100 bag lunches – containing sandwiches, water and a snack – were handed out each Saturday to the guests of the Cluster Soup Kitchen housed at Our Lady of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church in Bayonne, NJ.

The parishioners of SS. Peter and Paul wish to express their gratitude to the warm and welcoming volunteers from St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Church who oversaw the administration of the soup kitchen during both months. The parish plans to continue this worthwhile initiative in the future. It is very inspiring for all involved to be able to work in the spirit of Christian unity with our brothers and sisters from another Christian tradition, but it is the needy of Bayonne who benefit the most.



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A priest of 39 years from a Midwest parish said...

Three things to ponder...

1. At all times, ask yourself, "What is God calling me to do right NOW, right HERE, with THOSE with whom I find myself, and with the RESOURCES we have at our disposal." And then do it.

2. At all times, ask yourself how you can be "all things to all men that, by all means, you might save SOME."

3. "Have no cause to look over your shoulder." A child enjoys looking out the back window of the car on a Sunday drive, to see where he or she has been. But the first lesson he or she needs to learn when given a learner's permit is to look out the windshield, not the back window or the rear view mirror. The child says, "that's where I've been." The driver says, "that's where I'm going."



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Our Mighty Holy Land Pilgrimage Or How I Came to Hold Hyssop

by Deacon Mark Hoeplinger

My wife and I travelled on a Holy Land Pilgrimage with about 25 others, including His Grace Bishop Michael, and Fr. David Cowan his secretary. The trip, which took place between May 12 - 24, was organized and led by Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky through his company, Orthodox Tours, (visit www.orthodoxtours.com). Each day we saw amazing things!



Last Sunday, as I am now writing, was the Sunday of the Paralytic and as I heard this very familiar gospel, it had new and special meaning for me because of our visit to the pool of Bethsaida, where we stood at the Sheep's Gate. By the way, in the garden alongside the pool of Bethsaida, I was introduced to Hyssop which grows there, and I held it in my hand. At our home parish in Buffalo, I read the hours every Sunday, including Psalm 51, but until the pilgrimage, I did not understand that Hyssop is an herb that has existed in the Middle East since antiquity. It is a small herb that grows there, and is felt to have special cleansing powers, as one sees, at least since the time of King David who wrote Psalm 50 about a thousand years before Christ.



Other particularly memorable sites included the cave of the 10 lepers. In this gospel (Luke 17:11-19) it is recorded that 10 lepers lived in a cave (all of Palestine is riddled with them) isolated, of course, from society. From "afar off," in the

valley down below they saw Jesus walking with the disciples and they called to him: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." He told them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests" (according to Levitical law), and on the way they were cleansed. Their cave is still there

today and within it has been hewn a tiny Orthodox church, a most lovely and spiritual church. While inside we chanted, Bishop Michael read the Gospel passage to us, and he anointed us with Holy Oil. I believe that church dates to the 4th Century. And yes, standing in the courtyard of the church, that is the mouth of the cave, one can look down into the valley just below and see where Jesus had walked with His disciples.

Other unforgettable experiences included a visit to Nablus (a city of about 3 million on the West Bank), and a truly beautiful church built there over Jacob's Well, still in existence from more than nineteen centuries before Christ. We drank water from Jacob's Well, and I even brought some back



for my priest back home. Christ sat at that well with the Samaritan woman, who said to Him, "Our Father. Jacob worshipped on that mountain". As I looked up, I could see the mountain. Christ told her entire life's story and she was able to recognize Him as God. She ran into the town to tell everyone there, and she later became known as St. Photini. (As I write this article, today is the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman.)

We sang and chanted at the Altar which is directly above the well, Bishop Michael read us the gospel of the Samaritan Woman, and we met the venerable priest there, Fr. Justinus, who had completed the church in 2008 (begun 100 years earlier). We saw the marks of the tank shells from the Six Day War in its tower. We sat in the garden outside the church, having tea, cakes and sweets served by the nuns, as we talked with Fr. Justinus.

One reads about the Desert Fathers of antiquity, of how St. Anthony and many others lived an ascetic life of continuous prayer, of how monasteries abounded in the 3rd and 4th centuries (especially in Egypt). Desert Fathers are still there today. We met them at the Monastery of St. Sabbas in the Jordanian desert. There are 17 of them, and they still pray continuously, and all night long. Fr. Ilya took us to these remote places which are not a part of any other Holy Land tour. We are forever grateful.

As I was on the pilgrimage, caught up in the daily activities of making it to the bus on time



each morning, walking here, climbing there, I was not quite able to digest the meaning of all I had seen there. Now that I am back in Buffalo, I feel I have connected directly with the origins of our Faith. Finally, as I turn 60 years of age, I believe I am getting it for the first time, that God became Man, the Word became Flesh, and dwelt among us. It seems now as if nothing else matters. The daily perplexities of my profession, my office, my life, are no longer cause to worry. The Lord came to earth in the form of man, and no matter what, everything is going to be all right. I feel I have been purged

with Hyssop.

Deacon Mark Hoeplinger, a graduate of the Diocesan Diaconate Formation Program, was ordained by Bishop Michael to the Holy Diaconate on August 10, 2013 at his home parish, St. George Church, Buffalo, NY.



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ANDREW BOYD; *Director of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministries for the Orthodox Church in America*



"Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel."
1 Cor 9:14

There is nothing more important to the mission of our Church now and in the near future than the content of our preaching. So often what we say and do publicly, obscures the icon of Jesus Christ, instead of revealing it. Humble self-examination of what we "preach" day in and day out through our collective and individual actions reveals so often the "gospel" of ego, of fear, of insecurity. My "gospel," my story, really isn't good news until Jesus Christ enters the picture. It's mostly a recitation of me making the same mistakes over and over, or falling into sinful patterns of behavior to assuage fear and insecurity and blaming other people all along the way. Ask my priest, he knows all too well.

As we try to transform the Gospel into something that it is not (a tagline for a lobbying group, a call to "cultural" preservation, an addendum to complaining about "persecution" in modern America) we deprive it of its power, and deprive our Church of its claim to be Apostolic (we're Apostolic because of the content of what we preach, not because of vestments and incense). Preaching the Gospel means living the Gospel, and living the Gospel isn't as hard as we think it is. There's a friend of mine who I always make fun of because he's often trying to live the "Yuppie" life, drinking only designer coffee and buying vintage bicycles. I was walking in his neighborhood with him and his two boys, and he accidentally proved to me how much he lived the Gospel. Every homeless person knew his name, and knew his kids. One thanked him for pointing him towards local drug addiction resources. The future of our Church is predicated on preaching and living the Gospel, the good news that all human beings are worthwhile, loved, and capable of finding salvation in Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord.

Contributions of Financial Assets

In response to a number of requests, the Diocese of New York and New Jersey has established a securities account to facilitate the contribution of financial stocks and other financial investments.

To make a gift of stocks, please inform the Diocesan Treasurer of the company stock/mutual fund you intend to transfer and the approximate value of your gift as well as your stock broker's name and telephone number, and the purpose in the Diocese your gift should go towards.

Please email this information to the Diocesan Treasurer:

Matushka Mary Buletza Breton
MaryB@rrllp.com (732) 295-1000

Follow the instructions below for the type of asset you are using and then forward all to:

Diocese of New York and New Jersey
P O Box 730
Point Pleasant, NJ 08742-0730

Attn: Matushka Mary Buletza, CPA, Treasurer

Securities registered in book form/street name at a broker: The gift of securities can be transferred to the Diocese of NY & NJ account by providing the following transfer instructions to your broker exactly as follows:

* National Financial Services LLC (dba Fidelity Investments)

DTC clearing #0226 for further credit to account #Z49953571

Account Name: Diocese of New York and New Jersey of the Orthodox Church in America

Gift date is the date of receipt in Diocese of NY & NJ's account.

Securities held as physical certificates in your name: You should also sign the backside of the stock certificate or an irrevocable stock power transferring ownership to the Diocese of New York and New Jersey. The signature on the stock power must be guaranteed by an eligible guarantor institution such as a commercial bank, trust company, securities broker dealer, credit union, or savings institution participating in a STAMP Medallion program approved by the Securities Transfer Association, Inc.

You should send the stock certificate(s) along with a transmittal letter by certified mail to the Diocesan Treasurer. Gift date is the postmark date as mailed to Diocese of New York and New Jersey.

Transferring mutual funds: Most mutual funds can be transferred directly to our broker. The

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BE THE CHURCH by Fr. John Shimchick



After days of meetings, many reports, and thousands of words between participants over what we have or have not done, what we can or should do – I left the Fall Session of the Metropolitan Council encouraged by one thought shared by someone who was not even there. The hierarch of another Orthodox Church told one of our clergy, "You in the OCA are always trying to defend your autocephaly. Don't spend so much time explaining: just be an Autocephalous Church."

Coming from New Jersey, there is always a sense of adventure in getting to and back from Long Island where the meetings are held. But coming to the Chancery in Syosset there is also a sense that something worthwhile has been reclaimed and the adventure is worth it. For me, this is the renewal of what is called, "The Metropolitan Leonty Room." It's not so much the restoration of a place and the presence of various items which have a certain historical significance. Rather, it is the reclaiming of who and what Metropolitan Leonty represents in the life and the vision of what Orthodoxy in America could be. Raised in the Russian Church, a representative from America to the dramatic All Russian Council (Sobor) of 1917, his importance to our Church is summed up well by Fr. Thomas Hopko who said: "We know that he, perhaps, more than any other in our history, was a spokesperson for the particular calling of our mission here in America that began in Alaska. It was to be the Church here for everyone who wants to be saved and be in it. So be the Church here in this place, in this time, following our calling to be what God has asked us to be."

By the way we act and live, let's stop talking and just be the Orthodox Church in America.

Caring for the Most Vulnerable: A Coalition for Life

“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” James 1:2

James, the “brother” of the Lord, was an eyewitness to, and an important participant in, the Christian religion in its purest manifestation in the first century (see Acts 15). Commenting on James 1:27 on Ancient Faith Radio, Fr. Lawrence Farley points out that St. James uses orphans and widows as an illustration of Christ’s call to care for the most vulnerable members of society. In the first century, long before Social Security and child welfare, orphans and widows were clearly the most vulnerable members of society.

A footnote on James 1:27 in the Orthodox Study Bible points out that the orphans and widows had “lost their natural guardians.” Now, in the twenty-first century, is it not the babies in the womb that have “lost their natural guardians” and that are the most vulnerable? In fact, is it not the mother and father, the “natural guardians” of the baby, who are deceived by the world, the flesh and the devil to go against God and their own nature and kill the baby they have been given to protect and nurture?

Today, the baby in the womb is the “orphan” who needs protection; and the wounded mother who is considering, or has had, an abortion is the “widow” in need of care, support and guidance.

St. Innocent Orthodox Christian Mission in Oneonta, NY is an active part of the Central New York Coalition for Life that is reaching out to these modern day American orphans and widows. Most recently the Coalition provided a colorful and very visible presence with an educational booth at the Otsego County Fair in Morris, New York. On August 4th Bishop Michael visited and blessed the booth and its workers. His Grace offered support and guidance to members of St. Innocent Orthodox Christian

Mission and commended them for teaching about fetal development in a God-centered, positive, and life-affirming way. Bishop Michael helped get the Central New York Coalition for Life off the ground, offering counsel during the group’s formative period in 2011. His Grace is also a frequent, visible presence at the March for Life in Washington each year.

Young people responded well to the positive, factual messages. Videos with beautiful photography that showed the development of a baby in the womb drew attention and led to heartfelt questions and discussions. Visitors to the booth went away with over 500 “take-home” items including life-size fetal models, bracelets designed especially for young people (the “Worth Waiting For” bracelet for girls was the most popular) and helium-filled Pro-Life balloons for younger children. The last night of the fair provided a visual witness as the audience watching the “Demolition Derby” included about 100 children holding Pro-Life balloons.

On October 19, 2013 the Central New York Coalition for Life will be hosting the New York State Right to Life Convention at the Holiday Inn in Oneonta, New York. As we all seek to follow Christ and the Apostles’ Doctrine, we hope many Christians will take the words of St. James to heart, witness locally, and also join us at this inspirational and educational event. For further information contact Reader John Koch at 315-855-7505 or johnkoch@frontiernet.net.

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details of the transaction – number of shares and name and CUSIP of the mutual fund, broker’s name and contact information – should be provided to the Diocesan Treasurer. Gift date is the date of receipt in the National Financial Services House account.

Transferring Government Bonds: Most bonds can be transferred directly to our broker. The details

of the transaction – denomination of the bond and name and CUSIP of the bond, broker’s name and contact information – should be provided to the Diocesan Treasurer. Gift date is the date of receipt in the National Financial Services Account.

Spiritual, But Not Religious

by Fr. John Diamantis

If you live in the United States and have any sort of discussion about beliefs, morals, or faith, the sentiment of being “spiritual, but not religious” (SBNR) will likely make a quick entrance into your conversation. This is all the more likely if the conversation happens to be with someone in their 30s or younger.

The Pew Research Organization reported in December 2012 that the “Nones” – those who self-identify as having no religious affiliation – now represent 20% of the population. For those under thirty, it is 30%. Pew data consistently show an upward curve in the number of people in the United States who are “None.”¹ In April 2010, the front page of USA Today reported that 72% percent of Generation Y (those born from the late 1970s to early 2000s) claim to be “more spiritual than religious.”²

Two questions this raises are: “What does being ‘SBNR’ mean?” and “What is an Orthodox Christian response?”

SBNR

At its core, claiming to be SBNR is a way of saying “I can’t be judged,” “I can’t be told what to do,” or “I am my own god.” When pressed on their religious views SBNRs may retort “I respect your beliefs, why don’t you respect mine?” and claim that “everyone’s belief is equally valid in their own eyes.” Buddha is the same as Jesus is the same as an Ishvara or an angel or pagan fairy. “They all lead to the same place,” you may be told. “This is my truth” will be the message. If you ask them why they believe such a thing, they will likely appeal to a feeling. To the SBNR, God is meant to be used and invoked for “serenity now,” my personal benefit. He cannot be known. They’ll frequently say that you cannot know the true God either (should He exist). After all, if they don’t know, how could anyone else, right?

Sadly, the faithful of the Orthodox Church, particularly our youth, are also susceptible to the divisive and juvenile SBNR ideology. What should be an Orthodox Christian response?

Truth & Religion

As described above, the SBNR mantra equates truth to relativism. This raises the question asked by Pontius Pilate: “What is truth?” (John 18:38) An Orthodox Christian can only respond to that question in one way. Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) and “in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). But what has truth, in the person of Jesus Christ, to do with religion?

The word religion means the reconnecting of what was separated (re+ligio). We Orthodox know very well that God and man are separated because of Adam’s sin and because of our own – a point hammered home during Lent. We know also that Jesus Christ has come to reunite (re-connect) us with Him by reversing our former error and making death the passage to life – which is what Pascha is all about.

For Orthodox Christians, true religion is that which God reveals – what the Church refers to as “tradition.” This is the life of the Spirit embodied in the Church. Expressions of Orthodox Christian tradition include (but are not limited to) the compilation of the scriptures in the Bible, the core doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, use of liturgical services, morality and our purpose in life as humans.

Truth and Spirituality

It is through the Church that we live in the Holy Spirit most fully. Someone who is “not religious” dissents from what the Church teaches, which may open them up to spirits, while separating them from, or diluting their relationship with, the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Truth. True religion is spiritual. To be an Orthodox Christian means to participate in the tradition and be transformed by it – not to convert truth to one’s whims, but be converted by truth. “Thy will be done” (Mt 6:9-13) becomes our motto and way of life.

As Orthodox Christians, our religion informs and guides the do’s and do not’s of our every day public and personal lives. Beyond merely

Religion is not
opposed to
spirituality;
in fact, for
Christians the
two should be
inseparable.

being a moral code, however, true religion is that which keeps us on the path to progressively know, live in communion with, and become like God. Simultaneously, when we adhere to our Christian religion it prevents us from straying away from God through false theology, from behaving in a manner unpleasing to Him, and thereby distancing ourselves from Him. True religion acts as those lines and guardrails on a road, keeping us on the straight and narrow, headed in the right direction and safely guiding us through oncoming traffic that could otherwise be fatal.

Without true religion we can still drive but it's much more dangerous, even potentially deadly. We are more likely to be lost, to veer into oncoming traffic, or to navigate ourselves off the road altogether. We become vagabonds asking other wanderers for directions.

If we are interested in salvation, true religion is necessary because our manner of worship dictates what we believe about God. To know what the Orthodox Christian religion professes about truth one should especially attend the Church's worship services. They immerse us in the invocation of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we invoke the Trinity we invoke a specific God, the God Who created us and loves us in a personal, communal, and knowable way. We can know God outside the Church but come to know Him most intimately through the Church.

Religion and Spirituality

Religion is not opposed to spirituality; in fact,

We can know
God outside the
Church but come
to know Him most
intimately through
the Church.

for Christians the two should be inseparable. Jesus (who is God) Himself says "God is spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24) Notice that our Lord does not word this as a suggestion. He does not say "worship Me only in truth and be without spirit," nor does He say "worship Me only in spirit; truth makes no difference." But His expectation is that we "must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Why both? Without spirit we become RBNS (religious but not spiritual), conforming to the letter of the law but nullifying the spirit. And without truth we become accessible to many spirits (Luke 8:26-39).

Orthodoxy embraces spirituality, when practiced in truth as given by the religion of our Church. Perhaps no prayer better illustrates this point than

"O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, come and abide in us, cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One!"

Let this prayer spring from our hearts to our minds and lips. This is Orthodox Christian spirituality.

¹ <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2012/12/16/4-ways-to-embrace-and-understand-your-piritual-but-not-religious-family-members/>

² "Survey: 72% of Millennials 'more spiritual than religious'". USA Today. 2010-10-14.

Fr. John is the pastor of St. Vladimir Church, Trenton, NJ and is the chairman of our Diocesan Department of College Ministry.

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FR. TIMOTHY HOJNICKI; *Holy Apostles Misson – Mechanicsburg, PA*

Our Church doesn't necessarily have to "go" anywhere. I fear more that we are so often tempted to take the Church into different places that are not part of our tradition or universal experience. Too often the OCA tries to be something it is not. We are not a majority Church, we do not have millions of people (or dollars for that matter), and so I think we need to just be who we are, and be that well. We have so much to offer in being the Church in North America, and not trying to reclaim Imperial Russia, or Byzantium or some such thing. We need to remember who we are as the Orthodox Church in this land charged to bring the Gospel message, as only we can tell it, to the people here and now. We don't need gimmicks and programs and all sorts of things to "bring us into the 21st century." We need to remember the eternal and unchanging truths of the faith and know our tradition, and better manifest this to the world around us. Then people will see, and then the Church will "be" to where it needs to be, ministering to these people.

Note: This is the second part of Fr. Degyansky's recommendations for ministry to veterans.

Coming Home 2: Identifying and Understanding Effects of Trauma

by Fr. Daniel Degyansky

Introduction

Somebody you know has returned from another tour of duty in Afghanistan. You have known him or her for most of their life. Whatever it was that they were exposed to when they were deployed has somehow changed them. You sometimes wonder if this is the same person you once knew: your family member, neighbor, parishioner, co-worker or friend. Exposure to trauma on the battlefield has its consequences, which may result in lasting mental and physical effects. Trauma can be defined as any injury, whether emotionally or physically inflicted. How a person reacts to the traumatic event may be manifested in a variety of symptoms.

Reactions

Trauma reactions are normal reactions to abnormal circumstances. Initial exposure to combat trauma will produce an acute stress reaction: fight, flight or freeze. It is a psychological condition that arises in response to a terrifying event. Repeated exposure to combat trauma may result in Combat Operational Stress (COS) for the warrior, from which he or she may manifest symptoms that include: hyper-alertness, anxiety, frustration, anger, confusion, intolerance of "stupid behavior," and sleep disruption.

These symptoms are natural reactions to abnormal circumstances and their initial manifestation does not necessarily indicate that the veteran is suffering from Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). If a cluster of these symptoms occur chronically (usually beyond thirty days from exposure to the trauma), then a psychosocial and spiritual assessment for PTS is appropriate. Should a warrior be repeatedly exposed to the horror of combat for an extended period of time, the odds are that he or she will manifest some degree of PTS symptoms.

Types

There are seven types of reaction to trauma: psychological, physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, interpersonal and spiritual. Psychological reactions to trauma exposure are often re-experienced by the returning warrior. The veteran may experience recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the traumatic event;

including images, thoughts and perceptions. He or she may have recurring dreams or night-terrors of the traumatic event. Many times the returned warrior will act out or feel that the traumatic event is repeating itself in the present. The veteran might exhibit hyper vigilance: jumpiness, always being "on guard," sudden unprovoked outbursts of anger, and over-reaction to every day circumstances or situations.

Physical reactions to exposure to combat trauma may, or may not, be apparent until some time has passed since wounds were suffered on the battlefield. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is an injury suffered from the exposure to the severe concussion from the detonation of an improvised explosive device (IED) or combat ordinance. The injury suffered from such exposure is not initially evident: no blood or broken bones, but will manifest itself in other ways. Some physical reactions include eating disturbances, sleep disturbances, sexual dysfunction, low energy, and chronic or unexplained pain. Cognitive reactions to combat trauma exposure would include lapses of memory, difficulty in making decisions, feeling distracted and inability to concentrate. Emotional reactions to a traumatic event include a long list of such symptoms as feelings of despair or hopelessness, anxiety, panic attacks, fearfulness, feelings of being "out of control," irritability, anger, resentment, emotional numbness, detachment, amnesia, and guilt. Behavioral reactions to exposure to trauma are the most evident to those closest to the wounded warrior. These include spontaneous weeping, withdrawal from normal routines and relationships, avoidance of situations that may resemble the traumatic event [such as war films or fireworks displays], substance abuse, self-destructive and impulsive behavior, and the loss of previously sustained faith or beliefs. Interpersonal relationships are affected when the returning veteran is unable to continue to maintain close relationships. Other symptoms include sexual dysfunction, hostility, social withdrawal, paranoia and feeling detached from civilian life.

Spiritual

The six types of reaction to exposure to combat trauma previously mentioned are best addressed

by the healthcare and mental health communities. But there is also a spiritual dimension to reaction to exposure to combat trauma and should be addressed by the Faith Community. The returning warrior may feel confusion about his or her image of God. For many, the image of God they nurtured from childhood somehow “died” on the field of battle, along with many of their comrades-in-arms. Grief and loss issues are profound: the loss of a buddy, the loss of non-combatant civilian lives in the course of war, and the loss of innocence that the individual suffered as a result of his or her war experience.

Questions of Theodicy are raised: Why would an all-merciful and just God [the God we were taught to love as children] permit the atrocities associated with war to happen? Some combat veterans were witness to, participated in, or were aware of but failed to object to, malicious acts of cruelty in the war zone which resulted in personal Moral Injury. Those who were exposed to such conditions exhibit feelings of ineffectiveness, shame, despair and hopelessness. Under such circumstances the warrior may experience confusion about core ethical beliefs and often feel a loss of previously sustained beliefs. The most severe cases are those who believe that their psyche is permanently damaged on account of what they experienced in war.

Rebuilding

Spirituality can be basically defined as that

which gives a person meaning or purpose in his or her life. It is found in relationships with self, others, ideas, creation and God. These many relationships are prioritized according to an organizing principle, and form a network that encompasses a person’s sense of meaning or purpose. Spiritual distress arises when one of the relationships that provide purpose or meaning is threatened or broken. The more significant a particular relationship is, the greater the severity of spiritual distress if that relationship is threatened or broken. Having an understanding of how people react when exposed to combat trauma assists in the challenge for the returning veteran in “Resetting” back to civilian mode, which means struggling to “Turn Off” combat skills. Spiritual wholeness is restored when that which threatens or breaks the wounded warrior’s relational network of meaning is removed, transformed, integrated or transcended. This shall be addressed in the final article in this series.

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ARCHPRIEST ALEXIS VINOGRADOV; St. Gregory the Theologian Church, Wappingers Falls, NY

We Christians have two forces at work in us: the spirit of conviction and fullness, and the spirit of hope and movement. The first enables us to make of our lives Celebration, the Feast of Life over which Death has no claim. The second makes war with the forces of False Authority. It is the balance that makes us whole. Celebration is natural to us; we are liturgical beings. But vigilance over false authority is much harder because that authority hides under the apparatus of clerical power, which in itself is a divine gift to Fathers and Mothers in the faith, and is so readily abused. The war with false authority is not won with another power but by the relentless presence and freedom of saints in our midst, about whom it will be said: “No one ever spoke like this person!”

Saints must be contemporary because they are living in historical flesh, they are rescuing and offering to God the Time that God has given them. While being faithful to what they have received, they must not recreate a romantic era, neither Russian nor Byzantine. The Church is nourishing leaven for the world that is, not the dry crusts of museum exhibits of worlds that used to be.

Our time is once more the time for the prophetic Word given to the Church to become Flesh. Flesh is warm, it is human, it takes flight, it rises in the Body of Christ as yeast until the Bread reaches heaven. Let’s get off the ground of safe mimicry and slavery before power, and rise up into the rising of worthy human lives!

Amour and the “Good Death”

by Fr. John Culbreath-Frazier

Earlier this year, at the 85th Academy Awards, a work titled “*Amour*” won Best Foreign Language Film. It’s the story of an older couple, Anne and Georges, both retired piano teachers living in Paris, France. One morning, over breakfast, Anne suffers a mild stroke; so mild, in fact, that Georges fails to comprehend what has just occurred and begins to think that she is playing a cruel joke. It is not until she is unable to pour herself a drink that it becomes apparent that this is something far more serious. Anne then has surgery to clear a blocked carotid artery, a procedure that ultimately fails, and leaves her paralyzed along the right side of her body. Now confined to a wheelchair, her relationship with Georges begins a new tenor as he now becomes her primary caretaker, taking on the physical and emotional burden of this responsibility. In the midst of their new dynamic, one day Anne confides in Georges that she no longer has a desire to live; a statement that can easily be dismissed as one made from a place of profound loss now finds fertile ground in a grieving husband. Because of the emotional weight and the feelings of being easily overwhelmed, Georges seeks out a caregiver, ultimately cycling through two due to Anne being mistreated and the responsibility he feels for her; which becomes most visible when, sitting at Anne’s bedside, he tells her of his own childhood. This recollection puts her at peace. With a look of acceptance on her face, Georges wraps a pillow around her face and suffocates her.

Universally acclaimed, and hailed as “far from being a cold, scientific study from a filmmaker frequently accused of glass between his work and his viewers, this film emerges heartfelt and humane.”¹ It would seem ironic to describe a film in which the lead role is ended in such a dramatic fashion with such words as “humane,” much less to title it with the French word for “love,” but what this work conveys, and what is begged by those who have sat in a position close to Georges, is “how am I to respond to the suffering of one whom I love?”

Since the film’s release, lead actor Jean-Louis Trintignant has given several interviews, largely discussing his character Georges and why he chose to return to acting after such an extended hiatus. One question that is inevitably put forth is whether he is in favor of euthanasia, and although he has

answered in the affirmative, and at times arriving at indecision, there are always several seconds of silence before he responds and this says more about this topic than can be verbalized. However one feels about the topic, the truth is that the experience of suffering, and the subsequent grief felt at watching a loved one suffer, is overwhelmingly isolating; we feel as though there is a loss of support, not only of what we can give but what we are to receive from others, regardless of how much may actually be provided, and there is a profound silence in our lives.

The presence of a knowledgeable and supportive clergy, and a spiritual community, willing to “embrace” Anne and Georges, was clearly downplayed throughout the film; an aspect that only contributed to the couple’s despair and isolation. It would be a bit too easy to say that such a presence would have caused George to act differently, but what Georges and Anne do communicate is that this type of community is essential to the dying process. What if there had been a “team” with the knowledge and empathy to address not only the physical, social, and emotional needs of these two, but also recognize the isolation they feel from each other, others, and God? When considering such a complex issue as how to care for the dying, and those who love them, there is no “cookie cutter” answer that is to be applied to each situation, but what contributed to Georges finally grasping a pillow out of “love” was that sense of helplessness; an emotional and spiritual weight we are called to assist one another in shouldering.

On May 5, 1980, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a doctrinal mouthpiece of the Roman Catholic Church, headed by the recently retired Pontiff, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, issued a declaration on the specific issue of euthanasia, that “good death” sought by those suffering and those who care for them. It outlines three “truths” which guide their understanding of how human life, and any topic such as euthanasia, is to be approached; that “no one may attack the life of an innocent person without thereby resisting the love of God for that person”; that “all human beings must live their lives in accordance with God’s plan...given to them as a possession which must bear fruit here on earth, but must wait for eternal

life to achieve its full and absolute perfection”; and “intentional death or suicide is just as wrong as homicide.”²

Fr. John Breck, in the 33 years since this statement was issued, has written that ethicists, both Roman Catholic and Orthodox, are in basic agreement with this outline and even put forth, when considering euthanasia, that it is a “morally ‘licit’ decision to remove life-support systems in terminal cases, when such removal clearly represents the desire of the patient and continued usage would serve no demonstrable good.”² What he argues is the clear distinction between seeking to preserve a viable, and God-given, life and prolonging unnecessarily the dying process; in theological terms, if we say that we are made in the image of our Creator, and that He is aware of our suffering and accompanies us in it, and that as the Body of Christ we communally suffer with one another, how then are we to fulfill our desire to “commend ourselves and each other, and all our life, to Christ our God?” This dynamic

is one we continue to discern in our faith. Drawing from the foundational truths of the Christian faith, and looking to the initial outline provided by our Roman Catholic brethren, how we understand this “good death” is that “human life, created by God and bearing the divine image is sacred by its very nature and must always be protected as such;” “... stewardship demands that the moment of death, like that of conception, remains in the hands of God, that He alone is sovereign over death and the dying process;” “every effort must be made to restore the patient to an optimal state...[and] the patient’s life, however, retains its irreducible value and worth, even when full health cannot be restored;” “in cases of terminal illness (where the dying process is irreversible and death is imminent), it is nevertheless permissible to withhold or withdraw life-support that represents nothing more than a burden to the patient;” and “there can be no justification for the active taking of (innocent) human life, even cases of terminal illness accompanied by severe suffering.”⁴

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FR. IGUMEN SERGIUS; *Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery*

Feast of the Dormition 2013

The question has been asked by some: Where does the Church need to go today? How do we answer the “modern” questions that cause consternation and division among us even in the Church? The answer is difficult and yet simple: We need to return with our whole heart again yet again to our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ and to a life of humble repentance. This is the very first word out of our Lord’s mouth when He began His public ministry: Repent, change your mind, change your life, move towards life and virtue. Our task of repentance, which is accompanied by an uncompromising commitment to prayer, real fasting, almsgiving, tithing, seeking God with all our heart, reading the Gospel, etc. is a never ending journey away from ourselves, our thoughts, and our fallen desires towards the Lord and His ways, His thoughts, and His desire for us. Simply put, His will for all of us is union with Him and this is our salvation.

The Church needs all of the programs and committees and events that “administer” the Church’s external life. However, even more important is the inner life of each of Her members and the single hearted commitment that we ourselves must make each day of our lives to our Lord, to His commandments, and to His will. We must meet the challenges of today with the same medicine that the Church has always used: Repentance. Our world and all the people in it (including us) are fallen, fallible and imperfect. Humble repentance which is borne from seeking and really connecting with God will enable us to face our challenges and those whom we encounter with strength and love. And, it is this love that will cover the multitude of our sins as well as those around us. We need genuine inner spiritual life (above the externals, i.e., just ‘attending’ Church, etc.) and only God can give it to us. If we seek it with all our heart, we will lack for nothing. If we fail to fervently seek it above all, we will have nothing but lack of everything, an empty void that will drain us and those with whom we come into contact.

Let us turn again and again in peace, praying to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us all by His Grace. Let us return again and commit ourselves, each other, and all our life unto Christ our God. Amen.

As secure as such clearly defined terms may make us feel when discussing a topic like a “good death,” life seldom operates within such neat boundaries. Over the past few years, I’ve had the opportunity, through the role of a chaplain in a trauma hospital and hospice setting, to accompany individuals, and their loved ones, during what we Orthodox call the “blessed Pascha” as one approaches the eternal. Those caring for their loved one will sometimes ask “what the Church teaches,” regardless of whether they identify with me religiously, but what very often lies behind their questioning, or even their desire to have me there is the “amour” sought out by our film’s Anne and what likewise motivated Georges’ response; when we are staring into the unknown and the eternal, it matters less to us whether we have the right answers or intellectual control of our doubt, what seems to matter is that we are loved, by others and our God, and accompanied still. The means by which Georges expressed that love operates outside of our understanding of a “good death,” but the love he experienced was no different than our own for those closest to us; personally, I pray I never have to stand in the place of Georges and stare into the eyes of the love of my life in such overwhelming suffering. So perhaps a “good death” has less to do with whether or when we “pull the plug,” but how we accompany those suffering, out of a profound compassion and

hope, knowing that as God embraces this dying child in his already open arms, that the death that was brought upon us in Eden, conquered at His Resurrection, and clothed upon us at our baptism, truly is good.

¹Jamie Graham. “*Amour review*”. Total Film. Future Publishing. <http://www.totalfilm.com/reviews/cinema/amour>.(October 26, 2012)

²John Paul II. *Euthanasia: Declaration of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*. (May 5, 1980). As cited in: Stephen E Lemmers and Alan Verhey, eds. *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1987) 441-442.

³John Breck. *The Sacred Gift of Life: Orthodox Christianity and Bioethics*. (Crestwood, Saint Vladimir’s Press. 2000) 225.

⁴Ibid. 223-224.

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ARCHPRIEST DANIEL KOVALAK; Elevation of the Holy Cross Church – Williamsport, PA



By all accounts, Gretzky is the greatest hockey player of all time. His strategy of “skating where the puck is going” is sound advice to aspiring players and a thought-provoking quotable quote. Yet there’s a more fundamental consideration: Gretzky’s love for and faithfulness to the sport. From whence did that derive? It began at age six when his father created a skating rink in his backyard where young Wayne would spend countless hours honing his skills with the constant encouragement of dad.

This reality, it seems to me, is a more relevant approach to this discussion regarding the Church. We all essentially know where the Church “should” be. God’s revelation and our sacred Tradition provide all the “data” we need to learn and understand this. Though we’re a bit fuzzy about the “strategies” of helping move her to where she should be, that’s part of our ongoing training and “honing of our skills.”

What must be our primary focus – individually and collectively – is our love for and faithfulness to Christ and His Church. For example, if every Orthodox parent trained their six-year-old child(ren) to love and be faithful to Christ and His Church and provided constant encouragement to this end, we’d pretty much know “where the puck is going.”

Fascinating, too, is the impact Gretzky has after retirement; not just celebrity endorsements but humanitarian efforts. He understands life to be more than hockey!

“Simon Peter answered [Jesus], “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life;” (John 6:68).

Arvo Pärt: A Bridge Between Orthodoxy and the World

by Nilus Klingel

It is hard to know where the needs of outreach and evangelism will take us, and where our labors and efforts will be most needed. The changing demographics of our Church have us working hard exploring avenues both familiar (charitable service projects, parish-neighborhood picnics, tables at music festivals, and college fairs) but also new. One thing I feel we have learned from our renewed Diocesan life these past three years is that these efforts need to be multiple and diverse. They will take us to outlets we might not have expected, ministering to different segments of society simultaneously. We also know that we need to be flexible and creative in reaching out to our culture.

With its *Arvo Pärt Project*, St. Vladimir's Seminary is exploring one such new outlet for dialogue with the world. The Project seeks to engage the famous Estonian-born composer, who with his wife converted to Orthodoxy in 1972, in a series of academic dialogues (including classes, lectures, and publications) and public performances of his work, the centerpiece being a concert at Carnegie Hall in the spring of 2014.

The rise of Arvo Pärt as a public figure could be described as a phenomenon, emerging over the past decade. He has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Der Spiegel*, and the *New Yorker*; his music has won numerous awards, and been featured in many films. He has won acclaim for his signature style of “tintinnabuli,” a pioneering compositional method which focuses on contrasting melodic lines which suggest the interplay of suffering and solace. The music features a great deal of silence, which Pärt embraces in a sort of musical form of hesychasm.

To my mind, Pärt's success has been made possible by his ability to bridge two worlds in a simultaneous and elegant manner – at once

thoroughly rooted in the contemporary movements in musical composition, yet also evoking something profoundly spiritual, ethereal, timeless: an encounter with something ancient yet ever-new.



Left to right: Nicholas Reeves, Peter Bouteneff, Arvo Pärt, Nora Pärt, Fr. Chad Hatfield.

His compositions are not ostentatious or fixated on novelty, they are not mechanical or soulless; many listeners marvel at their ancient or even otherworldly character. Yet it is music that is perfectly at home among the lineups of some of the world's top contemporary music festivals. That there exists such an acclaimed Orthodox Christian musician who is unknown to many Orthodox here in America is somewhat surprising; that his music has not been thoroughly examined for its Orthodox Christian spiritual content – is perhaps even more perplexing.

The *Arvo Pärt Project* seeks to address both of these needs, particularly, by enabling the public-at-large to get involved. One example was an extension class held at the Seminary this past spring, which I attended. The class taught by Professor Peter Bouteneff included guest lectures in Pärt's musical technique by Dr. Nicholas Reeves, and an exploration of Pärt's broader cultural significance by Professor Jeffers Engelhardt of Amherst College. The class, composed of seminarians, their families, and interested individuals from throughout the area, offered an overview of Pärt's biography, musical technique, and artistic outlook. However, taking place at the Seminary, the class wasn't a simple musical history. Instead, it challenged students to see Pärt not just in the context of contemporary artistic development (alongside composers such as Tavener, Górecki, Hovhannes, Glass), but also to place his music in the context of a deep Orthodox spirituality.

This spirituality is rooted in a relationship with the monastic spiritual tradition. For example, one of Pärt's most noteworthy influences is the late

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Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), the disciple and biographer of St Silouan the Athonite; the founder of the Monastery of St. John the Baptist in Essex, England; and like Pärt, a student of the arts and seeker of divinely-inspired creativity.

That Pärt bases some of his pieces on the texts of such a saintly and profound figure in our modern-day Orthodox landscape (among many other Orthodox influences on his work) is often overlooked by the journalists and academics writing on his music. This significance should not be understated, as interpreting Pärt's music in light of his Orthodoxy is largely outside the competence of the standard academic investigation – leaving a major hole in the common narrative of Pärt's life and motivation, but a great opportunity for us in the form of the Seminary's *Arvo Pärt Project*.



Providing this valuable contribution to the academic discourse of Pärt alone would be a great thing. But I believe that the Project's real benefit will span across a broad spectrum, from our individual parishes to the culture at large. As Orthodox in America, we have an opportunity to participate in a different form of outreach, engaging the world via the music of Arvo Pärt. We have the opportunity to witness to the profound beauty of these pieces, and testify to the Holy Faith of which they are expressions. Through this Project, I pray that we will be able to share our faith with the world, and by so doing, glorify our God, the True God, who suffuses our life and art with His Divine Wisdom, and who is "everywhere present and fillest all things."

DANIELLE GEEZA

Where does the Orthodox Church need to be going?

One thing that immediately comes to mind is the need to focus our attention to why Orthodox young people fall away from the Church, and what can be done in order to prevent this from happening.

I have a theory that once teenagers graduate from high school, many enter college with every intention of continuing their church going habits. I know from personal experience by watching peers of mine who I grew up with attending church together regularly, participating in youth group activities, and attending retreats – the sad reality is that after being nearly 4 years out of college, I am lucky to see them once a year on major feasts like Christmas or Pascha. It makes me wonder whether the hectic life of college led them to fall away without having an OCF presence on their campus or a church nearby, or if the models of Orthodox Christian education presented in 45 minutes of weekly church school classes for 12 years just were not enough to sustain a continued desire to deepen their Faith.

A new approach to Orthodox Christian education needs to be developed and instituted at a young age. Kids and parents in 2013 are faced with so many distractions, extra-curricular responsibilities, and work schedules that create a conflict of interest – how can we help the Church win?

I think this must begin in our parishes by asking our youth the simple questions of why you like coming to church, why you don't like coming to church, what would make you more excited to get involved, and what is something that you would like to learn more about in Our Faith. Tailor programs around the feedback received and input from our clergy – every parish is different, but creating some continuity within our diocese would be essential. Schedule youth activities for various age groups more than once a year, not only within your parish, but also by partnering with those nearby and, eventually, across deaneries. Start small and continue to build something greater.



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From my Baptism, I have never, over the many decades of my life, tasted such a thing... Like a sponge on a hyssop stalk, but so full of something that it soaked me like the water in the Garden, the first Garden.

Thy cup, how it inebriates me...

Home now six weeks. Walking again, slowly. Daily adventure to the second floor for clean socks. Employers and parishioners, hundreds of cards to answer, and edible flower arrangements to eat. Swamp People, American Pickers, Pawn Stars, and Here Comes Honey Boo-Boo while I eat oatmeal and prunes in my pajamas. We thought about going for that pizza, but figured, not yet. Maybe after Nativity Fast.

Finally after eight weeks I was able to attend Liturgy: The Who we are. The Where we're from. The Where we're going.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...

And by the prayers of our Holy Mother...

I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen.

[Note: The text of Psalm 22/23 is taken from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.]



ARCHPRIEST JOHN ERICKSON; from his lecture: *"Does Christian Tradition Have a Future?"*

Fr. John Meyendorff's Question Revisited, delivered at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary – September 15, 2013

Like Fr. John, I can offer no easy answer to the question that he posed: Does Christian Tradition have a future? Certainly the prospects for Christian Tradition – Tradition with a capital T – look bleaker now than they did when Fr. John was writing. Our world today – I fear – is marked simultaneously by gullibility and skepticism. This is a world with no overarching sense of history but rather more simultaneous narratives than can be found in a big-city multiplex...[It is a] world in which it also is meaningless to speak of the future, since history itself has lost its goal, its telos, thereby leaving the world pointless. In such a world, held fast by the tyranny of the moment, rendered immobile by present shock, what word of hope does Christian Tradition have to offer?

Were he alive today, Fr. John might suggest that the answer can be found in the sacramental life of the Church, and above all in the eucharist. As he observes, "the anticipated eschatology of the eucharist is ... the very experience of a victory already won, which gives credit to Christ's words: 'In the world you have tribulations; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (John 16.33)." The eucharist, he writes, "is not an escape from reality, but from slavery." It offers liberation from bondage to the powers and principalities of this world. It provides a foretaste of future unity, "which is not simply a human reconciliation and fellowship, but unity in God, in the fullness of truth, in the joy of the Kingdom."

In the closing words of the article that formed the point of departure for my own words this evening, he reminded us that "the New Testament itself gives no rosy picture of the success of the Christian message in history. It rather orients our minds and our hearts toward the eschaton, when, according to the promise, Christ will be all in all." Fr. John always kept in mind this big picture, this big story: this story that gives meaning to all our human strivings by orienting them to their ultimate goal, the Kingdom of God.

I hope that the generation now rising will also keep this big story in mind. The world today is very different from the one in which Fr. John labored – and, I believe, more challenging. But we are confident that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebr. 13:8). He remains constant, even in a world where familiar signposts are disappearing and ominous portents suggest the imminent end of the world as we know it. And He tells us, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28).

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One Beggar Telling Another Beggar Where to Find Bread

Where?

by Fr. Stephen Siniari

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures.

Out on the ground, on my back, on a grassy strip off the parking-lot. They'd pulled me out from behind the wheel and were cutting off my favorite shirt. We never made it into the pizza pub.

The guy who never drugged, drank, or smoked... Healthy diet... Three days a week, two hours each time, with the weights, pull-ups, cardio, core-training... Had to stay strong... Camden day and night, out chasing Lost-Boys and Lot-Girls... Just couldn't be still. And now there was no heart beat, no breath, finally still, on the ground and gone.

He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul.

Six times, three in the ambulance, three under the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, they restarted me so hard they thought maybe they'd broken my ribs.

My wife by the bedside sang More honorable... She said I raised my hand to make the Cross but couldn't complete it. Tubes in me everywhere, me trying to pull them out, me restrained. So she completed the Cross for me. She said I saw the Icon of the Theotokos and said, "I love her." That I'd make it was a long shot.

My wife said, "Either way I know God will take care of you."

He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.

I hate the cold. But the medically induced coma took my body temp down to 32 degrees. I was some time without oxygen and what they know about drowning victims is those who fall into cold water incur less brain damage from lack of oxygen. So they made me cold, like a man in a grave.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For Thou art with me.

It was the day of Saint Demetrios when it happened and by the time I emerged the clocks were turned back and it was mid-November. I said to my wife, apparently at each conversation for the first few days,

"Where am I?"

"In the hospital."

"Why?"

"You had a heart-attack."

"I had a heart-attack? Me?"

"Yes."

"Maybe it was the pepperoni."

She just laughed. "You never had the pepperoni."

Finally the idea of it stuck. But not the reality, until I made Job's confession my own:

"Though the Lord Himself slay me yet will I trust Him."

Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.

Many people came. Many people prayed. And then the Priest came. He prepared everything on the hospital table and intoned the prayers. He anointed me. My soul sat up in bed. He asked me if I'd seen anything. I only recollected who we were, where we're from, and where we're going. But I told him, "No, Father."

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil...

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