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LEADING TOGETHER by Archpriest Eric G. Tosi

“Labor together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; rest together; and wake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God.”

– St. Ignatius of Antioch

*Glory to Jesus Christ!
Glory Forever!*

One of the first principles of leadership I learned as a young officer in the U.S. Army was that you could do nothing on your own. You needed a team of people around you to lead. You came to rely on your non-commissioned officers who had valuable experience, and you learned to trust those you commanded. It was not an easy lesson, nor was it easy to implement. You had to train them, know them, and form an effective community. You could not do everything yourself – nor should you even try, because you would fail.

Christian leadership in a community is very similar.



A Christian community must forge a tight unit, in which everyone has a role and everyone has a vested interest. When your community takes an active interest in the personal welfare and spiritual growth of each of its members, then you have taken a huge leap forward in being able to witness your faith to those around you.

You cannot take on every task yourself, neither as clergy nor as laity. You need to be able to draw all people and utilize each unique gift that has been given to each member of the community. Listen to

what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the fullness of Christ.”

(Ephesians 4:11-13)

So in order to effectively evangelize as a community, you must actually create a community in which participation is encouraged and the gifts that are bestowed by God are utilized by every member. It is very easy to rely on a few people who can be counted on to accomplish a task, but that is not always the best way. Better to empower each member of the community to be a uniquely contributing, visibly valued, part of the whole.

Stewardship: A Way of Life

“Rather we are stewards of Jesus Christ, Whom we have the privilege of serving in His vineyard.”

If the Christian life could be reduced to one principle, to one way of living, what would it be? To be a good steward. Why is this so? Because stewardship is a way of life, as taught by our Lord, His Apostles, and the Fathers. It requires responsibility and love. It is characterized by maturity and caring.. It is informed by vision and fulfills a mission – that of our Lord. None of us are our own stewards (as if that were even possible). Rather, we are stewards of Jesus Christ, Whom we have the privilege of

servicing in His vineyard, which is the Kingdom. St. Ignatius of Antioch said in the early second century: “Toil together, wrestle together, run together, suffer together, rest together, rise together, since you are stewards in God’s house, members of His household and His servants.” One test of leadership is “Does it serve?”

Most of us don’t clearly know what leadership is even though we live in a culture that is rife with books on success and leadership. Why?

Because the underlaying assumption is that leadership is either some rare and arcane ability with which only the few are blessed, or it’s a technical skill we can master simply by taking the right classes or reading the right books.

*Excerpt from Benjamin Williams and Michael McKibben’s **Oriented Leadership: Why Every Christian Needs It.** (Wayne, NJ; Orthodox Christian Publications Center, 1994), p. 4.*

Working With Others Toward the Kingdom

“Leadership is not something done in isolation from others. It needs to be done within a community, with mutual activity on all sides.”

According to the Scriptures and the teaching of the Orthodox Church, the goal of the Christian life is union with God and eternal life in His Kingdom, as persons and as a community. Persons and community go together. Jesus Christ declared that love for others is central to discipleship: “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The early Church assumed that “one Christian is no Christian” (*Unus Christianus – nullus Christianus*). St. Seraphim of Sarov, a Russian elder of the late eighteenth century, stressed the importance of the personal acquisition of the Holy Spirit and also saw the

enormous impact this could have on the community: “Acquire a peaceful spirit, and then thousands of others around you will be saved.”

Leadership is not something done in isolation from others. It needs to be done within a community, with mutual activity on all sides. The glue that binds everyone together is the recognition that we are all subject to the ultimate leadership of God.

God is the real and ultimate leader, since He is our Lord and Master and King. We are His subjects, and we are guided by His commandments. We accepted

those commandments when we entered the Church. We recommit to them every time we participate in the sacramental life of the Church. Each time we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we say: “Our Father, Who art in heaven ... Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” This commitment reaffirms that we are subjects of His Kingship and members of His Kingdom.

*Excerpt from Protodeacon Peter Danilchick’s **Thy Will Be Done: Strategic Leadership, Planning and Management for Christians.** (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2016), p. 17.*

From the Fathers: Epistle to Polycarp by St. Ignatius of Antioch

Having obtained good proof that thy mind is fixed in God as upon an immoveable rock, I loudly glorify His name, that I have been thought worthy to behold thy blameless face, which may I ever enjoy in God! I entreat thee, by the grace with which thou art clothed, to press forward in thy course, and to exhort all that they may be saved. Maintain thy position with all care, both in the flesh and spirit. Have a regard to preserve unity, than which nothing is better. Bear with all, even as the Lord does with thee. Support all in love, as also thou doest.

Give thyself to prayer without ceasing. Implore additional understanding to what thou already hast. Be watchful, possessing a sleepless spirit. Speak to every man separately, as God enables thee. Bear the infirmities of all, as being a perfect athlete in the Christian life: where the labor is great, the gain is all the more.

If thou lovest the good disciples, no thanks are due to thee on that account; but rather seek by meekness to subdue the more troublesome. Every kind of wound is not healed with the same plaster. Mitigate violent attacks [of disease] by gentle

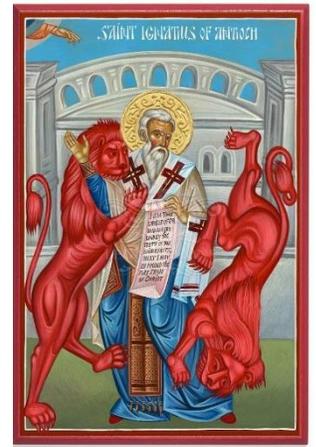
applications. Be in all things “wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove.” For this purpose thou art composed of both flesh and spirit, that thou mayest deal tenderly with those [evils] that present themselves visibly before thee. And as respects those that are not seen, pray that [God] would reveal them unto thee, in order that thou mayest be wanting in nothing, but mayest abound in every gift. The times call for thee, as pilots do for the winds, and as one tossed with tempest seeks for the haven, so that both thou [and those under thy care] may attain to God. Be sober as an athlete of God: the prize set before thee is immortality and eternal life, of which thou art also persuaded.

Let not those who seem worthy of credit, but teach strange doctrines, fill thee with apprehension. Stand firm, as does an anvil which is beaten. It is the part of a noble athlete to be wounded, and yet to conquer. And especially, we ought to bear all things for the sake of God, that He also may bear with us. Be ever becoming more zealous than what thou art. Weigh carefully the times. Look for Him who is above all time, eternal and

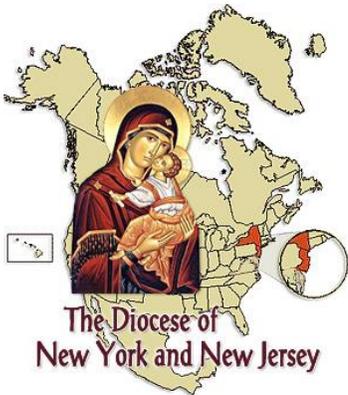
invisible, yet who became visible for our sakes; impalpable and impassible, yet who became passible on our account; and who in every kind of way suffered for our sakes...

Give ye heed to the bishop, that God also may give heed to you. My soul be for theirs that are submissive to the bishop, to the presbyters, and to the deacons, and may my portion be along with them in God! Labor together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; rest together; and wake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God. Please ye Him under whom ye fight, and from whom ye receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter. Let your baptism endure as your arms; your faith as your helmet; your love as your spear; your patience as a complete panoply. Let your works be the charge assigned to you, that ye may receive a worthy recompense. Be long-suffering, therefore, with one another, in meekness, as God is towards you. May I have joy of you forever!

*Excerpt from the Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp, Ch 2-6.
Translation available online at www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.viii.ii.html*



“Stand firm, as does an anvil which is beaten. It is the part of a noble athlete to be wounded, and yet to conquer.”



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Mission Priest Leads Retreat on the African Experience of the Church by Fr. Samuel Davis

As part of my effort to explore the African Orthodox experience, I received an invitation from Fr. Andrew Jarmus to share this message with his parish, St. Nicholas Church in Fort Wayne, IN. It was an incredible opportunity to share this missionary and healing message at the cathedral of the Bulgarian Diocese during Great Lent.

For the past two years, I have been researching the Nubian Church. Over the course of six centuries this tradition thrived in the Nubian empire – modern day Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia – under the leadership of such heroes of the Faith as Saint Athanasius the Great and the Emperor Saint Justinian. I am truly moved by the iconography and worship of the Nubian Church, which expressed the catholicity of the Orthodox Faith and Tradition.

As Orthodox Christians we share the same ecclesial life of the Church – joined in the same liturgical cycle, the same hymns, prayers, inspired by the same readings of Holy Scripture, following the same fasts and celebrating the same feasts. All Orthodox Christians throughout our history share a common Faith and Tradition, centered on Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ.



We often celebrate the fact that every culture which embraces our Faith makes its own contribution to the Church's numerous expressions of Her life in Christ. However, we have yet to develop an American tradition within the past 50 years of our autocephaly in general. I believe that his is particularly true of the Black American Orthodox experience.

What I have found unique to the Nubian Christian tradition that I personally believe will help develop an American tradition in the Church, is the unique experience of the melding of Nubian, Arab, and Greek expression that made up the Nubian Church. The Nubian tradition has its biblical roots as far back as our father Abraham; his father, Terah, was a Nubian. It was Nubians who established the five great Babylonian cities of antiquity.

In the effort to grow urban missions, we have the opportunity to uncover the origins of the children of Israel and their ties to Africa. Through our iconography at Saint Simon's Mission in New Brunswick, NJ, I hope that this experience unfolds as a missionary tool to Americans of all ethnicities, seeking the Orthodox Faith.

I believe our mission planting efforts should take care to include the iconography of the Saints of North America, Western Europe, Africa, and the Far East, as well as the Holy Apostles and the Patriarchs and Prophets of Israel. These Saints make up much of our national and cultural experience. Through these holy people, and through the Saints of cultures more widely associated with Orthodoxy, the life of the Church was fully lived. Our American Orthodoxy should follow their missionary example.