

PRAXIS

πραξις



Theology Matters



The icon of the Elevation of the Holy Cross recalls the moment in 335 AD on the day after the consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, when Bishop Macarius lifted the cross as high as he could to bless the four cardinal points (north, south, east and west) and the faithful gathered in the church. In the icon we see Macarius in the ambo of the new church. He is assisted by deacons, and, in some icons, they are also holding the cross. We also see St. Helen looking at the cross. Although she had died before the event, her presence in the icon reminds us that she had led the search for Christ's tomb and cross in 326. During the period of Christian persecution, a pagan temple had been built over the site. St. Constantine ordered the temple destroyed.

...Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

– 2 Peter 1:5–8

If the mystical experience is a personal working out of the content of the common faith, theology is an expression, for the profit of all, of that which can be experienced by everyone.

– Vladimir Lossky

If you do not listen to theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you will have a lot of wrong ones.

– C. S. Lewis

The first stage [of the spiritual life] is *praktiki* or the practice of the virtues; the second stage is *physiki* or the contemplation of nature; the third and final stage, our journey's end, is *theologia* or “theology” in the strict sense of the word, that is, the contemplation of God himself...At this third stage, no longer does the Christian experience God solely through the intermediary of his conscience or of created things, but he meets the Creator face to face in an unmediated union of love.

– Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

– 2 Timothy 3:16–17

Such is the strictness we wish you to show in regard to the dogmas of the Church, and we desire you to keep them fast fixed in your minds. It is also fitting that those who manifest such faith shine forth by their good conduct.

– St. John Chrysostom

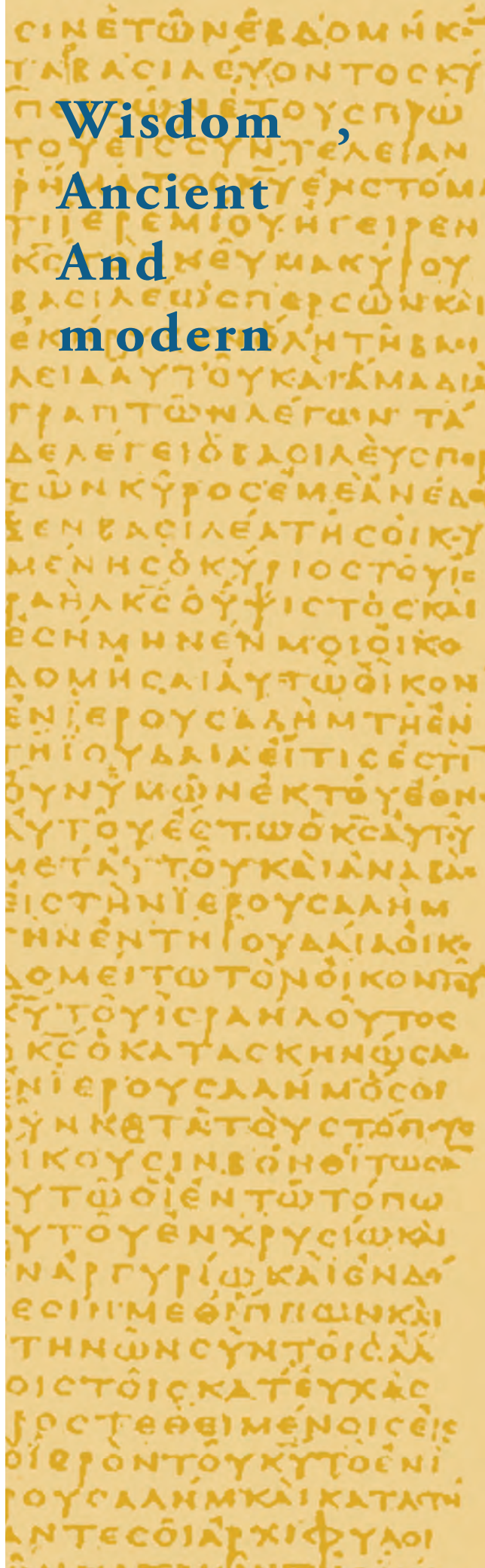
I believe that many who find that “nothing happens” when they sit down, or kneel down, to a book of devotion, would find that the heart sings unbidden while they are working their way through a tough bit of theology with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand.

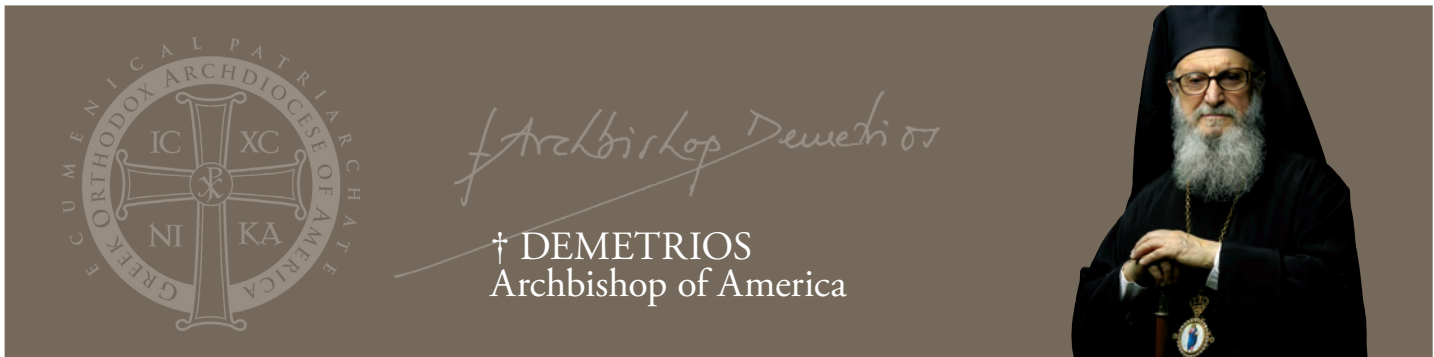
– C. S. Lewis

Theology is really at the heart of the life of the congregation. It helps clarify why a congregation has come together in the first place, why it stays together through good times and bad, and how it responds to challenges that come its way.

– Robert J. Schreiter

Wisdom, Ancient And modern





Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The theme of this issue of *PRAXIS*, “Theology Matters,” and the articles and reflections that follow emphasize a very essential aspect of our Orthodox faith, our mission as the Church of Christ, and our role as religious educators. First, theology matters to any person who has the calling of teaching our faith to our children, youth and adults. It is not possible to accomplish this task in the parish or nurture the spiritual lives of the faithful without a firm grounding in theology. In addition, this foundation for spiritual development necessitates both prayer and regular engagement with the Holy Scriptures and the wealth of theological resources we have as the Church.

Second, theology matters for our children. It matters because we have a tremendous responsibility to guide them in truth through both our words and our lives. We are called to offer them the very precise and genuine fullness of our Orthodox faith, so that as recipients of a good religious education and firmly established on a lifelong path of spiritual growth, they are able to live in the truth as revealed by Christ and in the freedom of the grace and assurance we find in Him (John 8:32). Great joy and fulfillment comes from instilling the theology of our faith in a growing child.

Third, theology matters in the contemporary environment in which we live. Not only are people confronted by numerous challenges and distractions that direct their hearts and minds away from God, but they also encounter a multitude of religions and faith communities. A firm grounding in our Orthodox theology, in sound doctrine (Titus 2:1), helps those we teach to develop discernment, equips them to engage in beneficial and comparative studies of differences, and guides them in coexistence within a pluralistic society in a manner that offers the truth of our faith in love.

I encourage you as teachers and educators to take seriously the teaching of theology, both in your own spiritual growth and in your sacred calling to guide our children, youth and adults. In the pages that follow, may you find guidance for this work of ministry, and may you be inspired to a deeper level of engagement and understanding of the sound doctrine that leads us to truth and life.

With paternal love in Christ,


† DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America



Beloved in the Lord,

It is good to teach, if he who teaches also acts with good example.

– *Saint Ignatius*

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology began its life in the midst of the Great Depression and at the threshold of a world war. It was a bold, visionary step on the part of Archbishop (later Ecumenical Patriarch) Athenagoras to open Holy Cross at that time, with the belief that the Church in America would need to be served by American-born and American-educated clergy. Although its beginnings were humble, in seventy-five years Holy Cross has become the most important institution of our Archdiocese and a center of theological thought for the Orthodox Church globally.

During the great trinitarian and christological controversies of the fourth century, St. Gregory of Nyssa once remarked that he heard theological debate in the marketplaces and street corners. Common people discussed detailed and “academic” theological questions, so when asked about the price of a loaf of bread, they would tell you about the relationship among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Theology has never ceased being as important as it was in the fourth century. Although the great debates of that time have been settled, there are still many important theological questions before us. Theology wrestles with questions at the heart of human life and our relationship to our Creator. What can we say about God in a secular and religiously plural world? What can we say about life when science unlocks many of its secrets? What does it mean to be a human being created in the image and likeness of God?

An important but often overlooked element of our religious education ministry is this focus on theology—especially for the adult members of our community. Rightly we have focused on children and youth, but we have taken our eyes off of adults, where theology would be “front and center,” replacing the crayons and glitter of childhood with deep and intense discussions of the important questions. My congratulations to *PRAXIS* for raising theology in this issue, not only to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, but also to raise the significance of theology in our communities.

Holy Cross, which has educated virtually all of the clergy of our Archdiocese, will continue to work to insist that our clergy be men of theology, knowledgeable of our Orthodox Faith and Tradition, to be sure, but also capable of communicating them accurately and clearly to an adult congregation. The faculty of Holy Cross should be as bold and as visionary as the school’s founders to explore the most important and still unanswered questions.

May He who is the Teacher of all good things be our constant guide on our journey toward salvation.

With love in Christ,

† GERASIMOS
Metropolitan of San Francisco

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submissions should be 1,000–2,000 words in length and directly discuss education in the theology and tradition of the Orthodox Christian churches. Lesson aids or graphic enhancements may accompany the articles submitted. We also encourage the submission of photographs relevant to parish life (praxis). Please also provide a biographical sketch of the author not exceeding fifty words.

PRAXIS Magazine is seeking submissions of lesson plans based on articles from previous or current issues of PRAXIS. Submissions should use the article as the text/background of the lesson plan. Lesson plans are welcome for any or several age groups. Please send submissions in a Word document with a length of 1,000–2,000 words to tvrame@goarch.org.

Material previously published or under consideration for publication elsewhere will not be considered without prior consent of the editor. We reserve the right to edit for usage and style; all accepted manuscripts are subject to editorial modification. Articles sent by mail should be accompanied by an electronic version on CD-ROM in Microsoft Word for Windows or for Macintosh. Articles in Microsoft Word may also be e-mailed as an attachment to tvrame@goarch.org.

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Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

A Center for Theological Education and Formation

REV. DR. THOMAS FITZGERALD

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary of service to the Church and society. Founded in 1937 by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Holy Cross is now the oldest and largest Orthodox theological school in the Americas. Holy Cross is closely related to the undergraduate school, Hellenic College, with which it shares a campus in Brookline, MA. Our School carries on the rich appreciation for learning that has characterized the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The students and faculty of Holy Cross are devoted to the study and promotion of Orthodox theology in a manner that honors God and serves others.

As a fully accredited graduate school, Holy Cross is a unique center of faith, education and service where men and women come to study the various disciplines of Orthodox theology. Students at Holy Cross study within a community that is rooted in a common commitment to Christ, a commitment that is nurtured by prayer, shared Christian values and a deep appreciation of the rich inheritance of the Orthodox faith.

What is theology about?

Orthodox theology is the reflection on the revelation of God expressed especially in the person of Jesus Christ and His Gospel, and embodied in the Scripture and Tradition of the Church. The Risen Lord is “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). He is the One who reveals the loving Father and who heralds the



coming of the Spirit. Rooted in these convictions, Orthodox theology is concerned with our understanding of our Triune God's love, the human person as God's treasured son or daughter, and the world about us as the context for salvation.

The Orthodox Church has a rich and profound inheritance of theological reflection on the Christian Faith that dates back to the Apostles. This treasury is expressed today through a number of theological disciplines that are distinct yet interrelated. These include the Old and New Testaments, Church History, Patristics, Dogmatics, Liturgics, Canon Law, Ethics and Pastoral Care. This last discipline includes studies in Preaching, Administration, Leadership, Counseling and Religious Education.

The study of Orthodox theology is oriented toward both the past and the present. We look to the past to gain perspective and insight from the great teachers of the Faith. These instructors are the Fathers, Mothers and saints of every age who bear witness to the truth of Christ and His Gospel through their lives and writings.

At the same time, however, Orthodox theology is concerned with applying these insights to contemporary concerns about the loving God, the dignity of the human person and the blessing of creation. The message of the Gospel must have contemporary application. With the guidance of the Spirit, authentic theology must provide perspectives on our relationships and responsibilities as believers today. Authentic theology expresses the healing and reconciling activity of the Living God who "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

So Orthodox theology is also oriented toward the future. It celebrates God's ultimate victory in Christ over all forces of brokenness and alienation. It affirms the loving actions of God the Father who seeks the salvation of all in Christ through the activity of the Holy Spirit. St. Irenaeus affirmed this when he said: "The Word of God, in His boundless love, became what we are that He might make us what He himself is...The glory of God is the human person fully alive, and the life of the human person is the vision of God" (*Against Heresies* 5, preface; 4.20.6).

Holy Cross offers three graduate degree programs: the Master of Divinity (MDiv), the Master of Theological Studies (MTS) and the Master of Theology (MTh). The School also offers two summer programs: the Diaconate Program and the Kallinikeion Intensive Modern Greek Language Program. The degree programs are enhanced by the activities of the Pappas Patristic Institute, the Mary Jaharis Center for Byzantine Art and Culture, and the Missions Institute.

Educational and Formation For Future Clergy and Lay Leaders

Holy Cross has always had a particular responsibility of preparing future clergy for the Church. This is a sacred responsibility that is taken very seriously. The mission and well-being of the Church requires clergy who have a strong devotion to Christ, which is enhanced by theological education, spiritual disciplines, pastoral insights and leadership skills. Clergy are called to lead worship, to teach the faith and to assist others in their growth in holiness within the believing community. The clergy have the responsibility "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). The call to the ordained ministry is a voca-

“Theological education and formation are essential to fruitful ministry in today’s church and society.”

tion, one that must be nurtured and supported by a faithful community. The program of theological education and formation for future clergy generally takes four years of study.

Holy Cross also has the responsibility of preparing other men and women who seek to serve the Church and society with the benefit of Orthodox theological education and spiritual formation. Many look to serving in positions such as pastoral assistants, chaplains, theologians, missionaries, administrators, religious educators, counselors, iconographers and musicians. Indeed, as St. Paul says, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:4-5). The Church will benefit greatly from their talents and ministries, which complement and support the leadership of the clergy.

Theological education and formation are essential to fruitful ministry in today's church and society. We expect our future clergy and lay leaders to be persons of faith who appreciate our rich heritage of Orthodox Christian faith, learning, culture and philanthropy. We also expect them to be caring persons who are well aware of the pastoral needs of all God's people. We expect them to be thoughtful people who are aware of the realities of today's society. The expectations of our clergy and lay leaders are great because the needs of the Church are great.

The study of Orthodox theology is not simply the reading of texts. Holy Cross provides a distinctive context in which students and teachers meet to pray and learn. The study of the theological disciplines at Holy Cross is supported by the daily celebrations of Orthros and Vespers. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated every Sunday and on some weekdays. Students also have the opportunity to participate in special retreats and to meet regularly with their spiritual fathers. In addition, students participate in the Supervised Field Education Program, which exposes them to various ministerial settings.

A Center of Theological Reflection

For seventy-five years, Holy Cross has had a significant and distinctive influence on the Church and its parishes. Graduates of Holy Cross, both clergy and lay leaders, have nurtured the faith of countless believers both in this country and in many other countries. The influence of Holy Cross reaches far beyond the borders of its campus.

At the same time, Holy Cross and its faculty and graduates have also contributed to a renaissance of Orthodox theology, especially in the past fifty years. With insight from the rich treasury of the historic Orthodox faith, this renewal is reflected in a theological engagement with many of the contemporary challenges facing the Church and society.

Holy Cross is a center for theological reflection and inquiry aimed at strengthening the unity and witness of the Orthodox Church today. The School provides a focal point where faculty, graduates and visiting scholars can meet and reflect on the critical challenges facing the Church and society. Bearing witness to the rich inheritance of Orthodox teachings, these reflections are then shared with clergy and laity through lectures, retreats, books and articles.

Holy Cross is a center for ecumenical dialogue and interfaith consultations. Recognizing the historic witness of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in these areas, the administration and faculty recognize an obligation to advance the cause of dialogue among Christians and mutual understanding among all religions. Christian disunity remains a demanding challenge for the churches. Religious diversity and the engagement of the great monotheistic religions cannot be ignored in our day and age. By sponsoring consultations, meetings and lectures, Holy Cross plays a leading role in the process of overcoming religious misunderstanding and bigotry.

Holy Cross is related to other theological schools. It is fully accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the New England Association of Schools and



Colleges (NEASC). In addition, Holy Cross is a member of the Boston Theological Institute (BTI), a consortium of ten graduate schools of theology or departments in the Greater Boston area. This association is unique in the world.


Our Publications

Over the past seventy-five years, Holy Cross Orthodox Press has published more than 600 scholarly books and liturgical texts. These books have been authored by many of the most widely read contemporary Orthodox theologians. Established in 1954, the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* has published hundreds of scholarly articles and book reviews. It has also published notable texts documenting Church life. The *Review* is received by individuals and theological libraries throughout the world. Through its publications, Holy Cross has profoundly contributed to the projection of Orthodox theology in this country and throughout the world.

A Witness to Faith, Learning And Service

Holy Cross affirms the interrelationship of faith, learning and service in the name of Christ. The School is engaged in a singular ministry of providing theological education and formation for future clergy and lay leaders. This ministry is essential to the well-being and development of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese as well as being essential to the witness of Orthodox Christianity in our own society and in other parts of the world. As a unique center of Orthodox theological education and formation, Holy Cross has a profound influence both within our Church in this country and far beyond it.

Rev. Dr. Thomas FitzGerald, Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, is Dean of Holy Cross. He is also Professor of Church History and Historical Theology.

A photograph of a man with dark, curly hair and a beard, wearing a dark suit, lighting a candle in a large, ornate brass candelabrum. The candelabrum has several lit candles. The background is a church interior with other people and a warm, golden light.

THE FORGOTTEN CONNECTION BETWEEN LITURGY AND THEOLOGY

REV. DR. PHILIP ZYMARIS

Since the theme of this issue of *PRAXIS* is the application of theology in real life, I have decided to write on this subject from the point of view of liturgics, the study of liturgy. Our Orthodox liturgy, our communal worship services and especially the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist, are the best reflection of this “lived theology.” At first sight this statement might seem surprising, because most people seem to perceive going to church on Sunday as a mere Christian “duty” and not as real “theology.” As it turns out, however, nothing could be further from the truth. This popular

conception that divorces theology from what we do in church has emerged relatively recently due to theological developments in western Christianity that have little to do with our own Orthodox teachings, history and traditions. Unfortunately we have been so deeply influenced by these developments that this mentality has taken root even in Orthodox circles today. In the lines that follow, I will try to trace and explain this fundamental connection between liturgy and theology by way of a few examples taken from the way we worship and especially the way we celebrate our sacraments.

Going back to the era of early Christianity, it becomes evident that the Church of Christ in both the East and the West, that is to say, in the one, undivided “holy, catholic and apostolic Church” (to quote the Creed that we repeat at each liturgy), did not distinguish between theology and liturgy as we tend to do today. In other words, theology in the early Church was not conceived of as a discipline or an abstract exercise for special people with specific training. Rather, theology in the sense of liturgical participation was the prerogative of every baptized Christian. This is clear even in the etymology of the word “theology.” The Greek word for “theology” is composed of *theos* (God) and *logos* (word), and therefore may be translated as “words appropriate to God,” i.e., communication and relationship with God, which means prayer and especially the prayer of the assembly, the *synaxis*, as identified with the Eucharist celebrated by baptized Christians, i.e., the communal worship experience of the faithful “in one place” mentioned by St. Paul. Interestingly enough, the earliest theological defini-

tion of the Church verifies this. St. Nicholas Cabasilas in the fourteenth century wrote that the “Church is made known in the sacraments” (the mysteries). We know that all sacraments were actually celebrated in the context of the Eucharist, and therefore the eucharistic gathering was considered to be the “sacrament of sacraments,” that which “constituted the Church” theologically. Indeed, regarding the Eucharist, Cabasilas wrote: “it is not possible to go beyond it or add anything to it...for in it we obtain God Himself and God is united with us in the most perfect union.” The fact that these definitions of Cabasilas come to us at such a late date is witness to the fact that no such theological definition was required for the early Christians precisely because they knew through the common worship experience what Church—*ecclesia*—really meant.

This notion of worship as “lived out” theology that was so natural to the early Christians is preserved to this day in the very structure of our services and even in the particular way our church buildings are set up and decorated. Anyone who



has conducted church tours during their parish festival knows how people of other faiths are always struck by the mere experience of entering into an Orthodox church building. Our place of worship is indeed a “feast for the senses,” and there is a clear theological reason for this. All five senses and our whole psychosomatic being, not only the mind, somehow participate in worship, and this is how real theology—the true experience of God—is communicated to us in our worship. We see and touch icons and rich, colorful church furniture; we smell

“All five senses and our whole psychosomatic being, not only the mind, somehow participate in worship...”

incense and hear chanting; we taste communion. Through the sermon we receive spiritual food for mind and soul, and at Holy Communion we are offered physical–spiritual food for our body, mind and soul. This way of worshipping actually is a lived out expression of a basic Christian theological teaching, the uniquely Christian dogma of the incarnation, i.e., the fact that Christ took on a human body just like ours and thus blessed our body, our senses and all matter. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), and therefore all of these participate in worship.

This theological emphasis on the incarnation as foundational for the way we worship has been somewhat forgotten in some other Christian denominations, and this has resulted in clear differences in the venue and style of Orthodox and non-Orthodox worship. For example, some Western churches are reminiscent of a classroom: the proverbial stark chapel, devoid of icons and church furniture except for pews and a pulpit in a prominent position in view of all in the place where an Orthodox church would have the altar table. The message given is that the main aim of worship is only the intellectual “teaching” of the Bible—the principle of “sola scriptura.” On the other hand, our Orthodox churches and worship experience clearly cater to the whole human being. For example, although in the United States most Orthodox churches now have seating for all attendants, this was not the case in church buildings in most traditionally Orthodox countries in the past. In

such traditional church buildings, although there usually would be some “stalls” along the walls for people to rest in, the greater part of the nave would be free of all obstructions so the people could walk around, prostrate themselves and venerate icons at any time in the service. In short, they were free to pray using their whole body and not only their mind. This is in keeping with the theological teaching of the incarnation. For this same reason we baptize, chrismate and offer Holy Communion to infants. Again, participation in the sacraments is clearly something that concerns the whole human being—not only the mind—and infants are full human beings according to our theology. Consequently, there is no “age of reason” more appropriate for receiving these sacraments. All of the above Orthodox liturgical practices in fact express a basic theological teaching connected to the incarnation: since the body is as much an icon of God as is the soul, both participate fully in worship. Indeed, the human being as a whole is made in the “image and likeness of God.” This teaching leads us to another basic theological tenet that affects the way we worship, a clearly biblical teaching sadly forgotten by many Christians today: the uniquely Christian teaching on the general resurrection in the flesh (in the body) of all human beings and the transfiguration of all material and immaterial creation in the end times in the Kingdom of God. Because the human being is a psychosomatic reality, in the same way that the total human being now participates in the worship of God, this same total human being will participate in the Kingdom of God.

To offer one more example of this connection between theology and liturgy, one may note how the theological teaching on the incarnation referred to above is especially evident in the way we celebrate our Orthodox sacraments. There is a sense that our sacraments are more real and “physical” than what is observed in some other Christian communities. We make ample use of matter and we do everything in a real, literal sense; we don’t “pretend.” This sometimes makes a strange impression in a religious culture where sacraments often have been made so “symbolic” to the point of “de-materializing” them and “spiritualizing” them, as if too much “matter” takes away from the “spiritual” experience. (Of course, some Christian communities have practically done away with sacraments altogether.) This alteration in worship practice actually comes once again from an alteration in theology, from a de-emphasizing of the basic theological teaching on the incarnation and the general resurrection referred to above. In our sacraments we emphasize

the use of matter precisely because of this Orthodox stress on the incarnation, the resurrection and the resulting theological affirmation of the goodness of matter because Christ took on a material body and in the resurrection our material bodies so that they may participate in the glory of the Kingdom. Therefore matter as created by God is good (“And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good,” Genesis 1:31), and it is used in the sacraments (especially the Eucharist) as a vehicle for communication of the divine. For example, in our Orthodox baptismal service we have a true, threefold immersion of the neophyte in water rather than a “symbolic” sprinkling. Continuing with the example of baptism, one can note that in the Byzantine service we also totally anoint the neophyte in oil and chrism. One may further observe that in the catechism/exorcism part of this service (the first part), when the sponsors (godparents) or the prospective Christian himself or herself renounces Satan, they actually spit toward the West. (It is interesting to note that this liturgical practice has even passed into popular Orthodox culture, i.e., the practice of spitting in some Orthodox circles, as reflected in the movie “My Big Fat Greek Wedding” actually comes from this very



literal, physical liturgical practice!) In the Sacrament of Holy Unction, once again there is a true anointing with oil. The Sacrament of Confession is done face-to-face with the priest, and the body participates by kneeling at the absolution prayer. In the marriage service, rings, crowns and wine are employed as well as a liturgical dance, an ancient practice found in the Old Testament involving the whole person in joyful, celebratory worship. Finally, the Orthodox method of distributing Holy Communion is still to offer both bread and wine to clergy and laity alike. Indeed, up until the ninth century, there was no spoon. All of the faithful received the Body in their hands exactly as the clergy still do

*“...what we pray is what we believe;
what we do in church is precisely what
we teach in our theology books.”*

today. Hence, by the way we celebrate our sacramental life, the participation of the whole human being, of one’s body, mind and soul, is clearly evident, and this participation is a derivative of basic Christian theology.

The few examples offered above hopefully can be seen as a confirmation of what the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann so often quoted: *Lex orandi lex credendi*, the rule of prayer is the rule of faith. In other words, what we pray is what we believe; what we do in church is precisely what we teach in our theology books. The very structure and way we do our worship services (our “typicon”) makes it clear that this is the case in our Orthodox tradition. The fact that this evident connection between theology and worship found in our liturgical life has been forgotten today is unfortunate but not irreparable. All we need to do to rediscover these treasures is to begin actively participating in our services rather than merely attending them, for the theological basis of our worship is still manifestly embedded in these services and especially in the sacraments and in the sacrament of sacraments, the Eucharist. In this way we can once again experience and live out what we believe to be the basic tenets of the good news of Christianity and become true theologians, that is to say, prayerful, liturgical beings truly united to Christ “in spirit and truth.” Only then can this experience overflow to the “liturgy after the liturgy,” i.e., to our everyday life, so that we may become living witnesses, a desperate need in our world today, which thirsts so much for spiritual truth. In this way we can demonstrate to the whole world what the psalm so often quoted in our services exclaims: “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 33/34:9)!

Rev. Dr. Philip Zymaris is Assistant Professor of Liturgics at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He earned an MDiv from Holy Cross in 1991 and a ThD from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2000. Fr. Philip and his wife, Xanthippi, have five children. He is Presbyterian at Assumption Church in Pawtucket, RI.



*The Bible is a scented garden,
delightful, and beautiful...*

*Let us seek in the fountain of this garden
“a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
We shall taste a joy that will never dry up,
because the grace of the Bible garden is
inexhaustible.*

– ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *AN EXACT EXPOSITION OF THE
ORTHODOX FAITH*, 4.17

REV. DR. EUGEN J. PENTIUC

The fourth-century exegete and theologian St. Gregory of Nyssa passionately urges his audience, “Let the inspired Scriptures be our umpire, and the vote of truth will be given to those whose dogmas are found to agree with the divine words” (*On the Holy Trinity, And of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit*). This is a powerful statement on the centrality of Scripture as an arbiter and criterion of truth of the Church’s doctrinal fabric.

Several centuries before Gregory, Papias, a “hearer” of the Apostle John, speaks rather differently: “For I did not think that the information from books would help me as much as that from a living and surviving voice” (in Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39). Papias’s statement is a clear testimony to the importance of the oral teaching in the transmission and interpretation of the apostolic *kerygma* (proclamation) throughout the centuries—the same *kerygma* that would eventually develop into the Church’s Holy Tradition. As Paul D. Hanson notices, “The most appropriate context for the theological interpretation of the Bible is the living community of faith, which for Christians is of course the church.”¹

How is this centrality of Scripture to be reconciled with the guidance of Holy Tradition? Unlike those post-Reformation Western theologies, which have resorted either to the binomial formula of “Scripture and Tradition” (i.e., the Roman Catholic view in the period from the Council of Trent to the Second Vatican Council) or to the plain reductionism inscribed in the formula of *sola scriptura* (by Scripture alone, i.e., the classical Reformation view), Eastern Orthodox theological discourse is dominated by an integrative model: “Scripture within Tradition.”

The Untamable Textbook and Its Handouts

Ruminations on Scripture—Tradition Relationship

A caveat is warranted at this point: asserting the “centrality”—even “sufficiency”—of Scripture does not indicate a self-sufficiency. As Fr. Georges Florovsky writes, “We cannot assert that Scripture is self-sufficient; and this not because it is incomplete, or inexact, or has any defects, but because Scripture in its very essence does not lay claim to self-sufficiency. We can say that Scripture is a God-inspired scheme or image (*eikon*) of truth, but not truth itself...If we declare Scripture to be self-

“In contrast with Tradition’s greater tendency to define, Scripture has invariably remained always the same untamed, and untamable, source of wonder.”

sufficient, we only expose it to subjective, arbitrary interpretation, thus cutting it away from its sacred source.”²

If it is true that Tradition is, in the view of more than one Orthodox theologian, the very life of the Holy Spirit in the Church, then Scripture might be imaged as the Church’s pulsating heart, the center, always radiating life and sustenance to other facets of the body, giving concrete content to the textual, aural and visual manifestations of Tradition.

For a better understanding of the Orthodox view on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, consider the following analogy: Scripture may be likened to a textbook; Tradition may be compared to a set of explanatory handouts.

Scripture, most especially the Old Testament, is an untamable textbook. Holy Tradition in all its avatars—conciliar statements, writings of Church Fathers, liturgy, iconography, ascetic teaching, etc.—functions as its guiding handouts. Following this analogy, one may note a certain complementarity. Handouts summarize and explain the salient points of a textbook. Similarly, Tradition, based on Scripture, complements the latter by condensing and illuminating its content. Nevertheless, the handouts, however complete they may appear, will never be able to exhaustively elucidate all the angles of scriptural trove or provide an all-encompassing summary of Holy Writ. The handouts do necessarily depend on a textbook. If the latter can stand by itself, the handouts always need the textbook as their irreducible point of departure and reference.

Hence, one may speak, as St. Gregory of Nyssa did, of the centrality of Scripture. Scripture is central not just because it is the basis for all the further handouts, i.e., the manifestations of Tradition. The centrality of Scripture consists also in its very nature—namely, its “untamable” character. The “handouts” of Tradition are counterparts to an unbridled textbook. Of course, there are “sections” of the Tradition that come closer to Scripture in their untamable depths. For instance, in some contrast with the discursive vein of conciliar statements and most patristic commentaries, iconography and hymnography may be regarded the most flexible, creative and poetic expressions of Church Tradition. Yet the truth remains that there are two rhetorical modes, one of Scripture and one of Tradition. The rhetorical mode of Scripture is based on ambiguities, apparent contrasting statements, and anecdotic language, whereas the rhetoric of Tradition has often tended toward reductive organizational schemes and precise definitions.

In contrast with Tradition’s greater tendency to define, Scripture has invariably remained always the same untamed, and untamable, source of wonder. It does not explain so much as it offers a lavish array of ways of thinking and doing. Scripture is an open textbook, an endless reservoir of wisdom in the making. But above all Scripture is a living and ever-refreshing means of communication with God, its *primus auctor* (first/primary author). According to St. Paul’s statement, the “whole Scripture is God-breathing” (2 Timothy 3:16). The verbal adjective, *theopneustos*, usually rendered “inspired,” has an active meaning, hence my translation “God-breathing.” Scripture is not, nor does it claim to be, a complete “recording” of God’s mind. Rather, it is a means through which God re-creates us each time when we approach the Scripture, as he did on the sixth day when he breathed his breathing of life on the dust and the dust became a “living breath” of God (Genesis 2:7). The Lord re-creates each reader of Scripture as a partner in dialogue with Him, the source of life.

Let us consider an example of this untamable character of Scripture and its relation to the guidance offered by Tradition. The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) has always been a central part of Christian theological discourse. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed states, regarding God the Father, that He is the creator of “all things visible and invisible.” *Creatio ex nihilo* is implied by the use of Hebrew verb *bāra*, “to create” (always referring to God as the subject of creation) in Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created (*bāra*) the heavens and the earth.” Clearly stated, this idea appears later on in the second book of Maccabees (dated second-century BC).

In 2 Maccabees 7:28, a mother urges her son facing persecution, “I implore you, my child, look at the earth and sky and everything in them, and consider how God made them out of what did not exist (*ouk ex ontōn*), and that human beings come into being in the same way.” In fact, the phrase *ex nihilo* originates here, drawn from Jerome’s rendition of the Greek phrase *ouk ex ontōn* in his Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate.

Creatio ex nihilo, a good example of biblical interpretation in the form of a long-lasting and influential theological idea, presents God as the omnipotent being who created everything out of nothingness, as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed proclaims it. Nevertheless, this is only one dimension of the teaching on creation found in the Old Testament.

Just prior to the first powerful *fiat* (Genesis 1:3, “let there be...”), we are informed rather abruptly of some enigmatic realities whose origins are unexplained. “Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, with God’s Spirit hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:2). According to the Priestly author, “darkness,” “deep” and “water” were neither created by God nor had any existence of themselves. In both preeminent texts of the passage, Hebrew and Greek, verb “to be” is conspicuously absent, pointing to the “nonexistent” character of these ghostly yet menacing realities. This chaotic state of things before the starting moment of creation was kept under control only by God’s Spirit. The primordial chaos of Genesis 1:2 is almost impossible to describe in words. It is not created and it has no existence by itself. Then how could one express its “attending” status in the eve of the first day of creation?



This chaos cannot be described, nonetheless Genesis 1:2 generated a number of interpretations within the Old Testament itself. Thus, Yahweh declares through the exilic prophet that scholars label “Deutero-Isaiah” (the author of the second of three sections that comprise the book of Isaiah), “I form the light and I create the darkness (*chōsbek*), I make well-being, and I create evil (*rāʾ*), I, Yahweh, do all these things” (Isaiah 45:7).

Before the clear statement of 2 Maccabees 7:28 and its Christian interpretation in the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, the first attempt to reduce the biblical polyphony to one voice may be found in Isaiah 45. Yahweh’s emphatic statement was intended as an explicative gloss on the difficult and ambiguous *locus* (example) of Genesis 1:2. The use of participial forms in this text allows one to render the statements regarding the darkness and evil as, “I *can* create darkness...I *can* create evil.” As one may notice, the text does *not* state that God *created* the primordial darkness. It says only that God *can* create, namely, He has the absolute power over things whose origin is explained or unexplained (as with the “darkness” in Genesis 1:2). Isaiah 45:7 is also an illustration of what

biblical scholars consider as “the Bible interpreting itself.”

Even this piece of “inner biblical exegesis” is unable to tame the untamable, however, and other biblical writings give alternative answers to the problems raised by the same Genesis 1:2. As time passed, this *crux interpretum* (torment of interpreters) was debated within a wider and more intricate context of questions regarding the origin of evil and suffering of the just—*theodicy*; note Jeremiah 12:1–3 as a *locus classicus* (well-known example). With the primordial watery deep wrapped

in a mysterious darkness (Genesis 1:2), two “sea-beasts” were associated, the Behemoth and Leviathan. These sea-beasts, or rather aquatic monsters, were considered as the very personification of evil and the primary source or cause of all the trials and sufferings human beings can bear.

In keeping with God’s mastery or lordship, theologically expressed in the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, Yahweh dominated the “flood dragon” (*mabbûl*; Psalm 29:10). Psalm 68:22–23 praises God who is victorious over the “deep sea” and the “serpent.” Psalm 74:13–14 informs us that Yahweh defeated the sea-beasts (*tannînîm*) and the Leviathan. In Isaiah 27:1, the Leviathan is depicted as a sea-beast (*tannîn*) and a fleeing and twisting serpent. Yet the clearest testimony of God’s prowess over the primordial hostile powers is the hymn of Isaiah 51:9–11: Yahweh is the one who “split Rahab,” “pierced the sea-beast (*tannîn*),” and “dried up the ‘Great Deep’ (*têhôm rabbâ*).” The basic idea of these texts is that Yahweh is the one who defeated the primordial sea-beasts associated with chaos and established in place of them the order of creation.

Still, there are biblical writers who are not satisfied with such a quick fix to man’s cry of inquiry regarding suffering and evil. For instance, the author of Job 40–41 suggests that God Himself created these monstrous creatures that are to be blamed for all sufferings because He wanted to be challenged so that His power might be eventually made manifest. This is God’s puzzling answer to the lengthy complaints of a suffering Job who struggles to solve the fundamental question: “Why do the just suffer and the unjust prosper?” God’s answer un-

derscores the cruel reality of evil in this world, responsible for both social and personal trials. Nevertheless, God who allowed Himself to be challenged by the two monsters (Behemoth and Leviathan) is more powerful than them.

Here precisely we begin to plumb the “untamable” depths. We learn that, unlike some conclusions that might be drawn from certain doctrinal developments in both Judaism and

Christianity, Scripture testifies to a continuous and dramatic situation where God’s mastery is not a simple and happy-ended show but rather a dynamic process. One can discern the final victory, but only through a complicated thicket of daily troubles, in which we hope always in the final victory as a reliable companion. Jon D. Levenson argues that the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) is not about God’s “omnipotence as a static attribute” but rather about “omnipotence as a dramatic enactment: the absolute power of God realizing itself in achievement and relationship.”³ Emphasizing the static omnipotence translates in a downplaying of creation’s “vulnerability to chaos.” In contrast, in the very realization that creation is in jeopardy, the believer can find a serious and genuine



pastoral resource. As Walter Brueggemann remarks, such a recognition “is not, moreover, a diminishment of Yahweh. To the contrary, it is an assertion of how urgently indispensable Yahweh is to a viable life in the world.”⁴

Finally, another biblical author (Psalm 104:26) looks at Leviathan as to a mere toy that God created to sport with. Here, *creatio ex nihilo* turns the source of evil and suffering into a caricature whose *raison d'être* is to entertain its Maker. But alas, with what great cost!

Now one question may still bother some readers of this beautiful, rich and untamable textbook that is the Bible: “Why do we need the handouts if they are reductionist in nature?” That is, why do we need the doctrinal encapsulations of Holy Tradition? We need them because they are simple, quick guides for busy travelers in a world filled with temptations, sorrows and fleeting joys. The Church reminds us through these hand-

*“It is the continuous responsibility
of the Church to interact
with the sacred text
in order to keep the Tradition alive.”*

outs about God’s presence in this world and his final victory over what is wrong and unjust.

A similar question may be raised by those faithful to the Holy Tradition: “Why do we need a Scripture when everything important for salvation might be condensed in Tradition?” The answer to this pertinent question lies with the complexity and changeability of human life, in terms of challenges, priorities or trials. Only such an untamable and multifaceted textbook is able to alleviate the unanswered “Why?” nailed on the cross on a Friday afternoon as a perennial testimony of human frailty and divine power.

Scripture’s polyphony is a pastorally more efficient way to cope with the tough questions of the suffering of the just and the silence of God than any flat statement such as *creatio ex nihilo*. When Tradition fails to give an adequate explanation, untamable Scripture through its ambiguous, enigmatic language and imagery offers us alternative routes of inquiry and further meditation that may at least provide an authorized word on the reality of evil.

As does R. W. L. Moberly, we may characterize the relationship between Scripture and Tradition observed here in these ruminations in terms of a “hermeneutical dialectic of biblical text and post-biblical faith.”⁵ Tradition, notices Moberly, is moribund unless vitalized by a frequent return to Scripture. The Church has been formed and informed by the Scripture since her inception. It is the continuous responsibility of the Church to interact with the sacred text in order to keep the Tradition alive.

Perhaps ironically, it is precisely such deep engagement with Scripture—never a mere drone-like parroting of doctrinal formulas—that we find as the model provided to us by the greatest Fathers of the Church, whose examples deserve to be imitated even more than they are quoted. That is to say: Orthodox *Tradition* itself urges us to give central place to the reading and interpretation Scripture. To conclude, we may take to heart the following insightful words of Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos:

The Church does not possess the Bible in such a way that it can do whatever it pleases with it, for example through virtual neglect or excessive allegorization...In its canonical status, Scripture occupies the primacy among the Church’s traditions...The Bible as the supreme record of revelation is the indisputable norm of the Church’s faith and practice...The neglect of the Bible and the silencing of its prophetic witness are inimical to the Church’s evangelical vibrancy and sense of mission in the world...The Church in every generation is called to maintain the primacy and centrality of the Bible in its life, always attentive, repentant and obedient to God’s word.⁶

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1. “Biblical Authority Reconsidered,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 11, no. 1 (January 1989): 76.
2. *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1972), 48.
3. *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton University Press, 1994), xvi, xxix.
4. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Fortress Press, 1997), 537.
5. *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6–7.
6. “Scripture and Tradition in the Church,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, edited by M. M. Cunningham and E. Theokritoff (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 25.



UNKNOWN TO GOD?

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM AND THE DIVINE IMPERATIVE TO CARE FOR OUR NEIGHBOR

REV. DR. ANTHONY STRATIS

Throughout the Gospels, we are reminded of the necessity of caring for our neighbor. Even so, it seems that this moral obligation is too often disregarded, dismissed or de-emphasized—and yet so much hangs in the balance. There is no question that our Lord has issued this divine imperative, nor was this teaching lost on St. John Chrysostom. Failure to fulfill this imperative leaves one's soul in a perilous state, awaiting dire consequences upon the dawning of the Day of Judgment. For one who does not heed this teaching—will he even be known by the Lord on that Day?

Spirit of Charity

We are taught by our Savior, at Matthew 6:1–4, that the required virtue of charity must not only be expressed, but expressed properly. Persons who delight in, rely on, or for some other reason seek the acknowledgment and praise of others “have already received their reward” and have no reason to expect further benefit from God for their good deeds. Due to their pursuit of worldly acknowledgment, they demonstrate that the Lord's commendation is of secondary importance—at best—for them. Therefore, they have no logical reason to anticipate divine recognition, especially since Christ Himself teaches us to offer charitable acts “in secret, and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you.” Divine approval, in and of itself, is the

appropriate motive for assisting our neighbor, which parallels our love for neighbor with our love for Christ.

In his homily on this passage (Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew 19, section 2), St. John warns, if we make a show of our good deed, our audience will be limited in number, “but if you take pains to lie hid now, God Himself will then proclaim you in the presence of the whole universe.” He describes as hypocritical someone acting, not out of pity for their neighbor, “but that they themselves may enjoy credit.” It is the utmost cruelty, “while another was perishing with hunger, to be seeking vainglory, and not putting an end to his suffering.”

Recognizing Social Need

Given the continuing economic challenges that confront contemporary society, nationally and globally, Christ's divine imperative to reach out to our neighbor becomes acute. In Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus teaches that, at the final judgment, the Lord will welcome, along with “the righteous people at His right hand,” those who addressed His needs when He was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick or imprisoned. When asked by both the “righteous” and the “cursed” as to when they actually saw Him and did or did not minister to Him, He reveals that just as one did unto one of the “least of My brethren” so they did unto Him. Clearly, Jesus highlights our need to accurately recognize and address the needs of our neighbor, even if among the “least,” as a prerequisite for entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. Notice two significant elements to this passage, recognition of the needy and clarity of the consequences. Jesus permits neither ignorance of our neighbors' plight nor indecisiveness in our response to their need; they are to be ministered to as if they were Christ Himself!

Chrysostom notes in a homily (79,1) that the “least” are viewed as His brethren “because they are lowly, because they are poor, because they are outcast.” For such people, indeed for all who believe, “should have the benefit of all this care.” St. John presents the challenge (79,2) that when we see a dog that is hungry, we are overcome; and when we see a wild beast, we are subdued; but, “seeing the Lord, are you not subdued?”

Those who respond to the needs of their neighbor will be permitted entry into the Kingdom, whereas those who fail to respond with the requisite compassion will face the consequence of anguishing among the accursed. There will be no recourse for callousness, says St. John (79,1), because those who fail to minister to their neighbor “are destitute not of one or two things only, but of all. For not only did they fail to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, but they did not even visit the sick, which was an easier thing.”

Lazarus and the Rich Man

At Luke 16:19–31, Christ presents us with the powerful parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. In St. John Chrysostom’s analysis (see *On Wealth and Poverty*, from which the following references are taken), we are given guidance on being compassionate toward our neighbor. St. John notes that the Rich Man had not been challenged by any misfortune. On the contrary, “everything flowed to him as if from a mountain” (21), yet, the Rich Man lived in wickedness. St. John cites two reasons: the Rich Man’s contempt for Lazarus, and that he was condemned to spend eternity in torment. St. John draws a parallel: “Just as the dogs licked the sores of the poor man, so demons licked the sins of the rich man; and just as the poor man lived in starvation of nourishment, so the Rich Man lived in starvation of every kind of virtue” (34). He warns that we ought to observe not just the appearance of comfort and leisure of the Rich Man, but also “unfold for me his conscience, and you will see inside a great tumult of sins, continual fear, storm, confusion, his mind approaching the imperial throne of his conscience as if in a courtroom...and crying aloud, with no witness but God who alone knows how to watch these inner dramas” (34).

Lazarus, on the other hand, being desperate for assistance, begs the Rich Man for an opportunity to be released from his hunger, if only for a little bit, as he so frequently appeared before the gate of his more affluent co-creature of the Lord, lying in silence. His righteousness was evident in the patient endurance of his poverty, even to such an extreme degree, yet he “did not become discouraged, blaspheme or complain” (28). “The dogs... showed more love of mankind than the man did when they licked

his wounds and cleaned and removed the infection” (105). St. John contrasts the fact of Lazarus’s torment made worse by his lying at the gate of one so prosperous with the Rich Man’s lying in hell while seeing Lazarus’s comfort. This situation was in order that the Rich Man “might have a more unendurable punishment not only by the nature of his torments but also by the comparison of the other man’s reward” (48).



What’s in a Name?

The Gospels often push us out of our comfort zones toward spiritual awakening and growth. In this parable, there are two main characters, one being Lazarus and the other who remains anonymous. What of that other one? What identity does he have? Besides his material comfort in life and having many relatives and friends, we know nothing! In his consequent status of torment, is he even recognized by the Lord?

St. John notes that the Rich Man “lost his nobility by the meanness of evil.” His wealth proved to be an illusion because it held no value for him. Thus, St. John asks, “And where is the name of the Rich Man? Nowhere; he is nameless. How much wealth? And his name is not found. What kind of wealth is this?” (105) The saint’s poignant questions bring to mind Jesus’s own words: “Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:23)

Of the dead, we always pray that their memory be eternal. What then, of the Rich Man? Will he remain unknown before the throne of the Judge of All? Clearly, the divine imperative to minister to our neighbor is not to be taken lightly nor ignored.

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You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church... and Rethinking Faith

Author: David Kinnaman (Baker Books, 2011)



“The ages eighteen to twenty-nine are the black hole of church attendance...There is a 43 percent drop-off between the teen and early adult years in terms of church engagement. These numbers represent about 8 million twenty-somethings who were active church-goers as teenagers but who will no longer be particularly engaged in a church by their thirtieth birthday.”

The numbers are pretty staggering. Young adults are absent from the church—and it leaves parents, religious educators and youth workers with many troubling questions. Why did they leave? Are they coming back? How can we prevent this from happening in the future?

Based on new research conducted by the Barna Group, author David Kinnaman tries to dissect why the church has failed to equip young adults to live “in but not of” the world in *You Lost Me*. Kinnaman makes great strides in cohesively addressing the recent technology-driven cultural shift and its spiritual implications for the Millennial generation and beyond. He spends a great deal of time evaluating data, drawing conclusions not only about how young adults perceive the church, but also defining why they are actually disconnecting. With research in hand, he challenges the efficacy of our current youth ministry models and offers hopeful solutions for future programming.

You Lost Me approaches youth ministry with an “every story matters” attitude—one that considers why each person’s journey is worthy of serious attention—while looking for patterns in data that help make sense of “the drop-out problem.” One of the greatest accomplishments of the book is that it describes

three types of disengaged young people: Nomads, who are disconnected but still consider themselves Christians; Prodigals, who have lost their faith and do not consider themselves Christians; and Exiles, who are still partially invested but feel stuck between culture and the church. These definitions help us understand that there is no single explanation that fully addresses every young adult’s dissatisfaction with the church—in other words, it’s complicated.

An underlying problem for many Millennials seems to be that they were not equipped to handle the real world on their own in the first place. Kinnaman states, “I think the next generation’s disconnection stems ultimately from the failure of the church to impart Christianity as a comprehensive way of understanding reality and living fully in today’s culture.”

You Lost Me offers the idea that the departure of our 16–29 year-olds happened long before they stepped out of the home. Their disconnection happened much earlier—when they were never encouraged to ask questions they cared about, when they were dismissed from participating in the life of the church because they were “too young,” or when they failed to form any meaningful or lasting relationships with Christian mentors.

Kinnaman concludes his analysis by offering a potential solution to this growing crisis: focusing on the importance of relational ministry. He stresses the importance of building real and deep-rooted relationships with young people by creating mentoring programs and community-wide events, making inter-generational relationships a priority. With the effectiveness of small-group learning in mind, he challenges us to shift our youth ministry paradigm from numbers to transformation: “The truth is that it is much easier to put on events for large groups of kids than it is to mentor each and every one of them into a mature and holistic walk with God.” When considering our own youth ministry programs, how do we evaluate success? Are we taking the easy way out with shallow programming, or are we undertaking the difficult task of transforming young people into deeply-rooted Orthodox Christians?

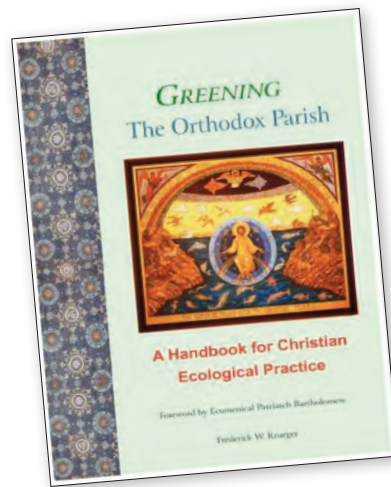
Although Kinnaman’s book does not specifically address the needs and ministries of the Orthodox Church, his thoughts about the current problems in youth ministry are universally relevant. In the end, it is important for us to recognize that we are not immune to these statistics...it is also our generation of lost young adults. *You Lost Me* offers great insight about the deep cultural disconnect of the Millennial generation, as well as thought-provoking solutions for cultivating actively engaged young adults in your parish.

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✠ David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church...and Rethinking Faith* (Baker Books, 2011), 256 pages.

Greening the Orthodox Parish: A Handbook for Christian Ecological Practice

Author: Frederick W. Krueger, with a foreword by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew



“As Orthodox Christians we are called by Scripture, by the saints and the fathers, and by all of our patriarchs speaking in unison, to live in harmony with God’s creation” (page 165). This probably should be the *first* sentence of this new publication by well-known Orthodox environmentalist Frederick Krueger. After this important affirmation, everything else in the book flows naturally and logically.

Krueger offers the reader a sweeping vision of Orthodox teaching on the environment and, importantly, a myriad of suggestions of what people can do at home and in their parishes to live in a more environmentally sustainable manner. Although it is titled a “handbook,” its sheer size and weight—500 pages—may intimidate some readers. Don’t be. While the reader will find plenty of Scripture, historic writings and contemporary scholarship in the book, it is a very accessible and practically minded.

The book is organized into five sections:

1. “Theological Foundations,” with the statements from the Ecumenical Patriarch and others on the environment, an excellent overview of environmental issues raised in the Bible; as a reference, some readers might want to obtain a copy of The Green Bible—a NRSV with relevant environmental passages highlighted

- 2. “Orthodox Environmental Perspectives,” which discusses issues ranging from toxic chemicals to endangered species
- 3. “Practical Ecological Responses,” which presents what a parish and homeowner can do, from starting a parish environmental ministry at the local parish, action items, perspectives on technology, and spiritual exercises that build ecological awareness
- 4. An anthology of articles for study groups
- 5. An Appendix of additional statements, liturgical resources (such as where to find the Vespers for the Protection of Creation, and an Akathist in Praise of God’s Creation), and a bibliography of print and electronic resources

Each section is well-researched and well-presented. For example, formal statements and theological articles can often be challenging to read. Krueger has lifted up and highlighted, often in bold type and in “pull quotes,” some of the most salient points, thus making these articles easier to read and comprehend. Additionally, Krueger usually presents his suggestions for practical application in short paragraphs and lists of bullet points that are well-organized into subtopics.

Parishes should strive to be as “green” as they can, but this book is not about

mere activism. It continually reminds the reader that living in harmony with God’s creation is an important dimension of living the life in Christ. Thus, learning about how the Orthodox Christian Faith thinks about environmental issues and ties theology and praxis is important. The book is a comprehensive introduction. Thus, the theological foundations section, the spiritual exercises, and the anthology of articles will be particularly helpful to Sunday Church school teachers who want to create lessons on environmental issues. A teacher will have to determine how best to translate these sections for younger students, and the questions at the end of the exercises and the anthology could be asked of any student, but high school and adult education groups will be able to handle them as they are presented. The practical activities sections will provide classes and parish groups with more than enough ideas about how to “green the parish” far beyond recycling paper.

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✉ Frederick W. Krueger, *Greening the Orthodox Parish: A Handbook for Christian Ecological Practice* (The Orthodox Fellowship of the Transfiguration, 2012).

When We Lose the Unthinkable - A Child

REV. DR. CHARLES JOANIDES

Dear Fr. Charles,

What happens when a medical doctor makes a fatal mistake and your five-year-old child dies on the operating table?...What happens when you know the doctor made a mistake and nobody will give you a straight answer as to why your child is not breathing?...What happens during the first year of grief when you have a hard time attending children's birthdays or baptisms and you have to leave early because you can't stop crying? What happens when your wife—the child's mother—has to be institutionalized with an eating disorder after your child's death? Finally, what happens when the legal costs of your lawsuit exceed the compensation you expected? After your child's death, is money really that important?

— E-mail Correspondent



When We Lose the Unthinkable - A Child

Christ is in our midst.

Based upon what you've written, I have decided to offer a few observations and suggestions that you may have already read or heard. Then again, perhaps something in the following suggestions may provide a little direction and a small amount of consolation to you, and perhaps others. Thank you for granting me permission to use excerpts from your e-mail. You shall remain in my humble prayers.

There is no greater loss that parents must adjust to than the one you've described. As your message suggests, such a loss has far-reaching effects on individual, marital and family well-being. I have counseled a number of families who have lost a child, and during the grieving process, the foundation of their family life was seriously shaken. One such a family comes to mind, one that lost a son to a drunk driver. It took this family many years to find some stability. They suffered interminable

*“Often it takes time
to learn how to struggle well.”*

pain and anguish that seriously compromised the individual, marital and family well-being. Through their efforts to find stability, the marriage nearly failed, one parent was hospitalized, and one of the three remaining children began to abuse drugs and alcohol, which led to a six-month incarceration. So, your questions are not unfamiliar to those who have lost a child. Sadly, the answers to such questions are very difficult to find.

All the literature on familial loss that I have found indicates that adapting to the loss of a child requires family members to actively cope with their loss. Learning to struggle well and forging strengths to meet the many challenges that parents and other family members encounter is essential. Often it takes time to learn how to struggle well. One father stated that he railed against God, fell into a deep depression and isolated himself for months before he began to adapt to the loss of his seven-year-old daughter. He stated, “This is something I will never forget. I suspect it will follow me to the grave. But thanks to God and my family, I have turned a corner and have begun to adapt and ‘struggle well.’ At one of my lowest points when I was thinking about taking my own life, the thought occurred to me that I didn’t want my other children and spouse to suffer yet another loss. So I decided to somehow continue.” As this father discovered, when parents sustain the unthinkable loss of a child, their world is seriously shaken. Intense feelings

overwhelm and retard their efforts to adapt and struggle well. Feelings like anger, resentment, guilt and shame precipitate prolonged bouts of depression, hopelessness and helplessness. In your case, I suspect you felt deep anger at the doctor, frustration with unanswered questions, regret and jealousy at other children’s birthday parties, helplessness at your wife’s eating disorder, and ambivalence at the financial settlement.

As you know, mourning and adaptation also have no timetable. Some parents may mourn for years while others require less time. You or your spouse may need a different amount of time to grieve the loss of your child. Unfortunately, well-meaning family members and friends often exhort those who need more time to simply “get busy and get your life back together. You owe it to yourself, your family and the memory of the child you lost.” Rediscovering purpose and meaning takes more time for some parents than others. Pushing yourself to get past the grief prematurely can lead to forms of pathology, like your wife’s eating disorder, and mood or anxiety disorders. Others suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly known as PTSD. So please remember that there is nothing inherently wrong with you if you need more time. One suffering parent put it this way: “People kept telling me to snap out of it and fight to reclaim my life. I wasn’t ready, and no amount of this type of encouragement really helped. I needed the time to grieve. Thankfully my husband—and eventually my faith in God—were there for me. I don’t know what I would have done without God and my husband’s support and understanding.”

Some grieving parents have suggested that their relationship with their deceased child changed from a physical presence to one where spiritual connections, memories and stories permitted a continuing bond. One parent’s words illustrate this. “After my fifteen-year-old was senselessly killed by a drunk driver, I visited her gravesite daily. She also appeared in my dreams for weeks. Eventually, home videos and family gatherings that included stories kept her memory alive and helped me cultivate a continuing spiritual bond with her. If these strategies help, I would certainly encourage grieving parents to use them.”

Coming to terms with loss requires that parents find ways to make meaning of the loss and weave the experience into the fabric of life. A parent I counseled who had lost a son as a result of a drive-by shooting decided to set up a foundation to help other parents that might sustain a similar loss. This helped this mother somehow give meaning to her son’s senseless death while also contributing greatly to her efforts to adapt and give meaning to his life. Another parent who lost a nineteen-year-old daughter to a drunk driver offered the following counsel:



“Sharing the lessons I learned from my daughter kept me going. To say that Francine taught me X, Y or Z and then teach others that same lesson—that honors her, gives her life purpose and blesses those who knew her. We all have a purpose. I couldn’t find a better way to honor my daughter’s memory than to acknowledge and carry on her message.”

Direct communication between family members often facilitates family adaptation and strengthens the family as a support system. Respectful communication is indispensable to families such as your own that are seeking to live beyond their loss. Since this can be challenging for some families, ongoing spiritual counseling and therapy can prove helpful. Another grieving father’s remarks validate this observation. He stated, “When our two-year-old was taken from us after a prolonged illness, I introverted and isolated myself. At one point I thought I was losing my mind, and we decided to meet with our pastor. He drew me out and allowed me to vent. This eventually led to some meaningful discussions with my wife and family. What I learned is that you can’t hold it in. You have to talk to people who love you and understand.”

Often parents need to deal with the ongoing implications of the loss, which often includes the loss of dreams and hopes. One mother whose elder daughter died after a long bout with cancer lamented this loss for months. “She was so talented. She wanted to study medicine and help kids. Kids warmed up to her naturally. Life is so unfair...there’s no justice in this world, and I’m so angry! I don’t know if life will ever be the same.” Like most of these parents, she lamented the fact that her daughter would never get a chance to fulfill some of her dreams and hopes. However, in time, as her youngest daughter matured, while honoring her oldest daughter’s memory, the mother’s focus slowly shifted and she began to take some satisfaction in watching her youngest daughter follow a path that was similar to her older sister’s dreams and aspirations.

Insurance settlements can never adequately ameliorate a parent’s pain. Still, it is important to pursue a settlement. One

parent whose twelve-year-old daughter was killed by a hit-and-run driver who was later caught, prosecuted and jailed, affirms this. “At first, the insurance settlement we received almost felt like ‘dirty money.’ In time, the compensation somehow felt right because it sort of made me feel like the guy who killed my daughter didn’t get away with it. The jail time he’s doing and the money we received will never, ever be adequate justice, but they somehow helped us move on.”

Parents who chose to engage their suffering and struggle well have informed me that within the pain and suffering they found a new normal. An excerpt from one father’s e-mail is appropriate here. He stated, “Quick fixes and feel-better strategies that didn’t permit me to deeply experience the pain weren’t helpful. It’s within the crucible of pain that I experienced transformation and healing; it’s in this place that a new relationship with God formed; it was in this place that a new normal began to emerge. The pain compelled me to find parts of myself that I had never known, which led to insights that inform the way I think about almost everything.”

Finally, ongoing spiritual and professional counseling can prove especially helpful to parents in their efforts to deal with the residual, lingering and painfully crippling regrets, anger, resentment, shame and guilt that are associated with the process of struggling well. A renewed prayer life, regular reception of the sacraments, and community and church involvement are all powerful resources that will help assuage your loss and transform the potentially destructive dynamics you described into opportunities for transformation, healing and growth.

You shall remain in my prayers. May your child’s memory be eternal.

– Fr. Charles

P.P.S. “O Lord, You watch over infants in this present life, while in the life to come, given their purity and innocence, You fill Abraham’s bosom, sheltering them in regions of light where righteous spirits dwell. Receive in peace the soul of Your servant, for You have said, ‘To such belongs the kingdom of God.’”

– From the Orthodox Funeral Service for Infants

Fr. Charles Joanides, PhD, LMFT, is a researcher for the Interfaith Marriage ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. He accepts e-mail questions about marital and family issues at frcharles@goarch.org. He responds confidentially, but he sometimes requests permission to anonymously publish excerpts of the correspondence.

Real Break



ARIANNA RANAHOSEINI

As the week was coming to an end and all were sitting in the dining hall, eating the typical meal of beans and tortillas, Anthony Jonas, a University of Illinois freshman, notices that Brayan has a sad face and is not touching his food. Jesus Brayan is one of the thirty-one young boys who live at the St. Innocent Orphanage in Rosarito, Mexico. Anthony says to him,

“¿Qué paso, Brayan?” (What’s wrong, Brayan?)

“Me duele el corazón.” (My heart hurts.)

“¿Porqué?” (Why?)

“Saldrán en pocos días.” (You all will leave in a few days.)

Anthony related to the team that night, during the debriefing session, that his heart had broken after his conversation with Brayan. Tears began to form in his eyes as he came to realize the importance of personal interaction and how much the very people he had come to serve had affected him.

The encounter Anthony had in Mexico is not the typical college spring break. Anthony, along with 54 other students from 36 universities across North America, chose to spend

his spring break loving others and serving their needs on one of Orthodox Christian Fellowship’s six Real Break trips offered in 2012.

Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF), the collegiate campus ministry organization of the Orthodox Church in North America, has provided such trips through its Real Break program for twelve years. Since the program’s beginning, more than a thousand college students have served numerous people all over the globe. Whether they are roofing in Mexico, building a home in Houston, feeding the homeless in Toronto, refurbishing a halfway home in Puerto Rico, caring for orphans in Guatemala, or restoring tombs in Constantinople, college students who participate in a Real Break have the opportunity to do something “real” during their spring break: to encounter Christ in a deep and profound way through serving the needs of others.

To provide such an encounter with Christ is crucial, especially in our day and age, where young adults often seek to answer the question, “Who am I and how do I fit in this world?” without reference to Jesus Christ and his Church. Real Break provides students an opportunity to explore who they are as Orthodox Christians by encountering Christ in the poor, the marginalized, the orphaned and the forgotten. By clothing the naked, feeding the hungry and visiting the sick, the college students who participate in Real Break have a chance to live out the faith described for us in Scripture (Matthew 25) and cultivate a deeper personal relationship with Christ by integrating their experience into their spiritual lives.



The OCF Real Break experience begins as soon as a student registers for the trip. The trips are not the cheap spring break getaways that cater to the average college-student budget. To offset trip costs ranging from \$700 to \$2000, students write letters, make announcements in their parishes, approach family members and friends, hold fundraisers on their campuses, and find other creative ways to fund their trips, giving them a taste of the life of a missionary and providing the whole Church with an opportunity to come together to support the incredible work our students do in service to Christ. This takes some time and effort, but the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Each Real Break trip is led by a priest with experience in campus ministry. He, along with a lay advisor who is also experienced in campus ministry, prepares the team for their service prior to the trip and leads them in orientation and debriefing sessions throughout the trip. This allows students a chance to process the experiences of each day, maintain a united community serving together in Christ, and come to a deeper understanding of how their service draws them closer to Christ. Having a clergy trip leader also

allows students to ask questions about their faith and seek guidance concerning some of the daily struggles they face on campus.

To counter the constant bombardment of distractions, negative influences, unorthodox ideologies and teachings which dominate many college campuses, OCF seeks to provide programs for students to lift the cloud of distraction and confusion in order to reveal the light of Christ in each moment and in each person. Anthony Jonas and the fifteen other students who participated in Real Break 2012 received this light and became lights themselves to the world through their service. It is our hope that this light continues to shine well after they return to their college campuses.

Arianna Ranahosseini is Media Coordinator for OCF (www.ocf.net). OCF's mission is to support fellowships on college campuses, whose members experience and witness to the Orthodox Christian Church through community life, prayer, service to others and study of the Faith. Headquartered in Brookline, MA, OCF supports more than 300 local university chapters across North America. In addition, OCF provides thoughtful and innovative programming, including regional training, annual conferences and domestic and international service programs.



Oratorical Festival Speakers Say, “Take a Leap of Faith”

It's Saturday morning; 7:45, to be precise. A group of teenagers and their families gathers in a hotel lobby in Bethesda, MD, a suburb of Washington, DC. They're wearing their "Sunday best." The vans that will take them to the church have just arrived. Entire families—parents, siblings, grandparents—and family friends begin loading into the vans for the short ride to the church to participate in the 2012 Archdiocese St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival.

At the host church, St. George, the breakfast buffet is waiting. After a short prayer and blessing, the speakers are first to get their meals, and then they sit as a group. The icebreaker from the night before has had its effect. The participants are already having a good time among themselves, seemingly forgetting that in about an hour they will be speaking before His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, an audience, and judges who will be scoring their presentations. When it's time, the speakers go into the church

for their orientation. There, they check out the podium and draw numbers to determine the order of speaking. Their families continue with breakfast.

Having now also arrived, the judges get their coffee and begin to mingle. Two clergymen, an attorney, a noted news anchor and an educator comprise the judges' panel this year. They have lots of questions about the festival: Where are all of these young people from? What did they do to get to this level? What can we expect from them? Fr. John and Presvytera Margaret Orfanakos, who have been leading the program for nearly thirty years, take the judges into another room to prepare them.

But the most important questions were ones we had asked of the speakers themselves. Why do they participate in the Oratorical Festival? How have they been preparing? A few weeks before the Archdiocese Festival this year, we put these questions and a couple of more to the finalists.

As one might expect, these speakers see clearly the benefits from their participation in the Festival. While most learn much more about their faith, and some treasure the opportunity to express their ideas and to develop public speaking skills, all say that they enjoy meeting new people and establishing new friendships.

A Junior Division speaker from Sts. Constantine and Helen Church in West Nyack, NY, Christina Hanos, wrote back, "I enjoy participating in the Oratorical Festival, because I learn so many new things about my faith, whether I research

and share my facts, or I hear them. It is a good opportunity to learn how to public speak and a good experience, because you meet new people!"

Senior Division speaker George Gemelas, from Holy Trinity Church in Indianapolis, said, "Participation in the Festival has allowed me to achieve several goals. I have been able to articulate my own opinions about theological thought, and I have developed my public speaking skills, which both benefit me for the future. Additionally, I have established friendships that otherwise I would have never gotten to create, and I know these friends will be ones that I see for the entirety of my life."

At the Archdiocese Festival, everyone is always impressed by the poise of the speakers and how they have developed their topics. Once they have reached the national level, these speakers have had plenty of time and experience to hone their presentations. They have participated at their parish festival, a district festival, and then the metropolis level. What, however, do these accomplished speakers do to prepare?

Senior Division speaker Eleni Giannopoulos, from Annunciation Church in Cranston, RI, wrote, "I'm always excited when the new topics for the next speech are released. Picking the right one out of the five always takes me longest out of all my preparations, because I know that I need to find that one subject that I really connect with. After I decide on one such topic, the process becomes somehow easier, because all I





“Public speaking is a scary thing. There’s no doubt about it.”

have to do then is find the right words to express what is already there in my heart. As far as tips (for preparation) go, just remember to practice, practice, practice, and that every little thing counts. It isn’t just your voice that will really bring your speech to life: it’s body language, eye contact, hand gestures and the amount of passion you put into your words. If you feel strongly about what you are saying, other will feel it, too.”

Junior Division speaker Athena Chapekis from St. Nicholas Church in Ann Arbor has some very specific ways to prepare. She told us, “I videotape myself presenting and critique my work, then present it to my parents to get their opinion. Before I present, I always remember to breathe and pretend I’m acting as a professional speech-giver. Whatever works, you know?”

Senior Division speaker Elias Selimos from St. Demetrios Church in Fort Lauderdale had one of the more unique and creative ways to prepare. He said, “My best tip is to print a copy of your speech and tape it to the outside of your shower door. Every time I practice is in the shower.”

The participants in the Archdiocese Oratorical Festival will inspire you. We all have to admit that the hardest part of

participating is agreeing to participate. Public speaking is challenging. Public speaking about issues of faith is even more challenging. There are a lot of hesitations. This is what some of the 2012 Archdiocese Festival speakers told us they would say to someone who isn’t sure about participating in the Festival.

Junior Division speaker Sophia Petrou from Annunciation Church in Cranston said, “Although we have many things going on, the Oratorical Festival aids your spiritual growth and public speaking skills very much.”

Eleni Giannopoulos: “Public speaking is a scary thing. There’s no doubt about it. And I know, as young people, we are so overloaded with the many things we have to do that it seems inconceivable to add another activity to the list. But this is completely worthwhile. It’s such a reprieve from all your schoolwork to be able to learn about and speak about your faith. And even when faced with the so commonly dreaded podium and microphone, nothing is even remotely frightening about it when you know you’re following in the steps of St. John Chrysostom.”

Elias Selimos: “There’s no harm in trying. The worst that can happen is you won’t advance, but at least you had the

guts to stand up there and deliver.”

Christina Hanos: “I would urge everyone to participate because you learn about your faith, meet new kids, see new churches, develop public speaking skills and maybe even get to travel!”

George Gemelas: “Take a leap of faith in order to establish your opinions. Expressing what you believe solidifies the belief and strengthens you as an Orthodox Christian.”

Athena Chapekis: “Do it! It’s so much fun, and you can expand your writing and speaking skills. It’s also a great opportunity to meet people from other Greek Orthodox churches if you move on past the parish level.”



ALEXA CRISTINA PAPPAS

Holy Trinity Cathedral, Salt Lake City, UT

In Matthew 18:21–22, Jesus tells Peter that one should forgive one’s brother not just seven times but “seventy times seven.” Discuss how and why we should forgive wrongdoers, even when something within us cries out for justice—especially if we’re the injured party.

“I’m sorry, I forgive you”: these are some of the most powerful words we will ever say. They hold the key to our salvation. The times we feel we have been wronged and want revenge or justice are the times St. Seraphim of Sarov says, “We must return to our heavenly Father. The cold desire for revenge comes from the devil. God is a fire that warms and kindles the heart.” St. John Cassian further explains that true compassion and forgiveness become possible when we ourselves experience God’s love.

The beginning of our spiritual life is our acceptance of God’s boundless forgiveness and mercy. Yet for God’s love to permeate our hearts, we must be able to truly repent for our mistakes and forgive others for theirs. As Christians we are challenged to strengthen our soul and body through forgiveness. The Fathers of the Church emphasize the principle that being forgiven and forgiving are the two sides of the same spiritual coin. This is made clear by the Greek words for “I forgive,” *συγχωρῶ* (*synchoro*) Literally translated, they mean “to come together into the same place.” From there, true forgiveness helps us walk forward as one with the person who sought our forgiveness. St. Maximos the Confessor teaches us, “We find the forgiveness of our tres-

passes in the forgiving of our brothers, and the mercy of God is hidden in mercyfulness to our neighbor.” To St. Maximos, the relationship between God’s forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others means that our salvation is in our hands. We have been given the choice to receive God’s mercy and forgiveness, and we exercise that choice by choosing to forgive.

Sometimes, however, this choice is difficult to make because a part of us cries out for justice against those who wrong us. We may even feel anger against God when we experience something bad or painful. If God doesn’t act as we think He should, we believe He has offended us, and therefore we must forgive Him. But the notion that we must forgive God is based on a false premise. God does not, and cannot, sin against us. He does not need to be forgiven. God allows us to experience pain because His goal is our growth and maturity. We complain of “bad things happening to good people,” but we live in a fallen world and bad things happen to people, period. The fact is, our own sin helped unbalance the world and make a climate of injustice possible. The real failure is not in God’s lack of performance, it is in our misperception of His character. So then how do we choose forgiveness, especially if we feel we have been wronged?

The Lord’s Prayer guides us with the words, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” It is an important lesson to learn that in order to receive we must first give. We must let go of all indignation. Because we believe in a merciful God, we realize He does not want us to perish, but rather He wants us to live a happy and fulfilled life. He is willing to cleanse us of every stain of sin. If He can do this for us, then we should learn from Him and be able to forgive others.

As we grow to understand forgiveness, we realize it has little to do with the other person; it has everything to do with ourselves, our own inner freedom and desire to move forward in our lives. Forgiveness is not just a thought, an idea or mental concept. True forgiveness is a process of greater understanding and analysis. It requires attention, healing and time. It does not occur instantaneously. In his book, *Five Steps to Spiritual Growth*, author Peter M. Kalellis states, “Forgiveness is a process that can be painful, and at times, seem unending.” True forgiveness is not denial and avoidance. It does not brush things under the rug without ever getting to the root of the problem. In order to truly forgive, each of us must process through the full range of emotions, lessons and feelings associated with the traumatic event in our life. Our goal is to retain the lesson and leave the pain behind.

The Apostle Peter asked Christ, “Master, how often shall we forgive; until seven times?” But Jesus answered, “I say to you, until seventy times seven” in order to show his abundant love and that his forgiveness is immeasurable. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann writes, “The triumph of sin, the main sign of its rule over the world, is division, opposition, separation, hatred. Therefore, the first break through this fortress of sin is forgiveness: the return to unity, solidarity, love. To forgive is to put between me and my ‘enemy’ the radiant forgiveness of God himself.”

ELENA BILOTTO

Kimisis Tis Theotokou, Aliquippa, PA

In our day, when people's lives have become more and more scheduled with events, how might we reclaim our understanding of Sunday (the Sabbath) as a day of rest and honoring the Lord?

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” It is the Fourth Commandment given to us by God. But how many of us really try to keep the Sabbath holy? After all, Sunday is my day to do what I want. I go to church. I take Holy Communion. That’s good enough. With all the things I have to do, keeping the entire day holy is just not practical. Sound familiar? I’m sure that none of us would say that the Sixth Commandment, “Thou shall not kill,” is not practical. So why is it so easy for us to ignore the Fourth Commandment? I am here to tell you that because it will bring you closer to God, and because it will improve your relationships with others, I want you to reclaim the Sabbath for what it is: a gift from God.

You’re already thinking that keeping the Sabbath is about all the things you can’t do. It’s a duty, a burden. But imagine for a moment that you are an Israelite slave, 2,500 years ago. You make bricks all day, every day, no days off, no rest. Now, God gives you one day of rest every week. Your attitude about the Sabbath would be much different. You could relate to the Gospel according to St. Mark (2:27), “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” You would see the Sabbath not as a burden, but as a gift.

Unfortunately, we have so much leisure time in America that we don’t

feel the need for the Sabbath rest. But we may actually need it more, because our Sabbath has become a day of entertainment, recreation and shopping. If we’re going to reclaim the Sabbath, we must keep it holy, which can only come from our relationship with God. So it is fitting that the Sabbath begins in God’s house, celebrating the Liturgy. As Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew (18:20), “Where two or three gather in my name, I am there with them.” The more time we spend with God, the more our character is changed, the more holy we become, and the more we will see the Sabbath as a gift.

Jesus not only honored the Sabbath by worshipping and teaching, but He also often performed miracles, demonstrating His love for us. In Chapter 12 of the Gospel of Matthew, Christ healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. He was condemned by the Pharisees for doing so. But Jesus said it is lawful to do what is good on the Sabbath. What is good are our relationships with

the people in our lives, not the things. When we spend our time with people we love, or people that need love, we reflect Christ healing the sick.

I remember that one Sunday, I was in a hurry to get home to see my friends, but my father made me stay with my Yiayia. It was that Sunday that she taught me how to make the avolemona soup her special way, with an extra egg to make the broth a little creamier. That day brought me closer to my Yiayia and gave me a piece of her. It was the same piece that was given to her by her Yiayia, I hope to pass it on to my grandchildren someday. This is the gift of the Sabbath.

When we free ourselves from our scheduled lives, we reclaim the Sabbath. When we worship and receive Holy Communion, we reclaim the Sabbath. When we share God’s love with others, we reclaim the Sabbath. The Fourth Commandment is really our weekly chance to repent and to do God’s will. I ask all of you to keep the Sabbath holy and accept God’s gift to you.

*“When we share God’s love with others,
we reclaim the Sabbath.”*

THEOLOGY MATTERS!

DEAR READERS,

About ten years ago, when I was teaching an introductory course on the Orthodox Church at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA, a student, after seeing the implication and connection of Trinitarian theology on ecclesiology and anthropology, remarked, “Theology matters in your tradition.” I recall answering, “Indeed, if the theology had gone a different direction, the Orthodox Church would be different.” For example, if the iconoclasts had won out at the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Church had stopped using icons, then Orthodox Tradition would have developed very differently. Ever since, the slogan “Theology matters!” has been part of my instructional vocabulary.

In this issue of *PRAXIS*, we hoped to accomplish two goals. The first goal was to acknowledge and celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. Holy Cross has been a hub of the life of our Archdiocese. So many dimensions of Archdiocese life trace back to Holy Cross. Most likely your parish priest is an alumnus of Holy Cross.

The work of the Department of Religious Education is enhanced by its location on the Holy Cross campus, where we are housed. We have access to the established thinkers of our Archdiocese on a daily basis. The articles in this issue by alumni and current faculty demonstrate that we must rely on the best theological thinking we can in our educational ministry. As with all topics, we could have done more and included essays from even more of the various theological disciplines. In addition to our connections with professional theologians, the DRE also has access to students and seminarians. Not only do they form part of our workforce—how many of our readers

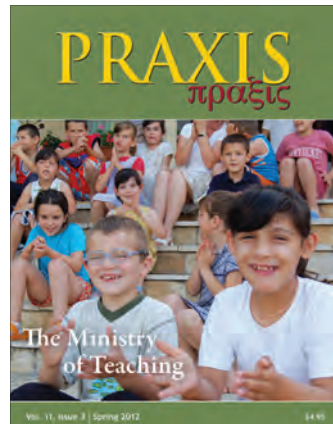
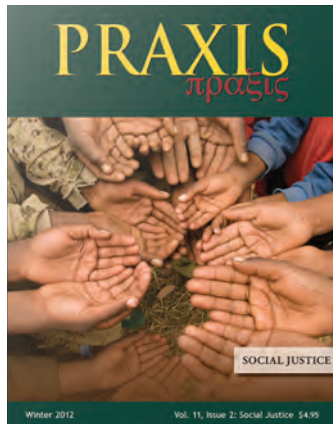
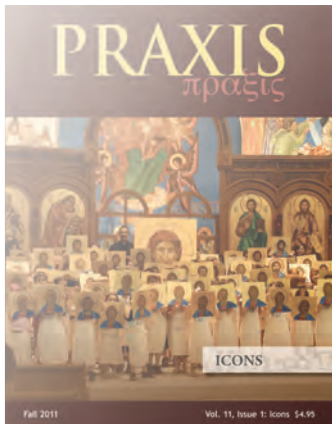
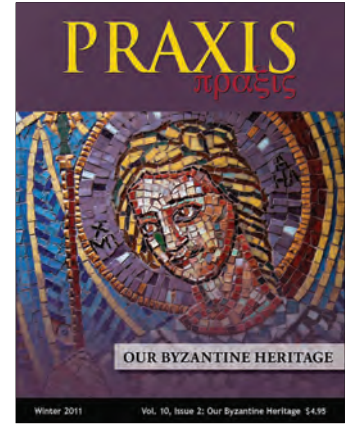
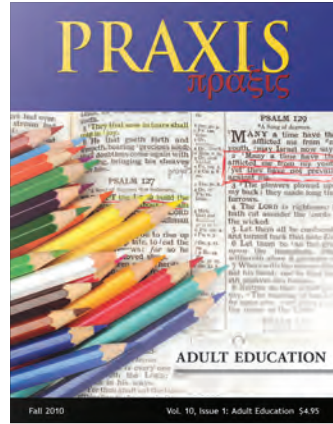
have worked at the DRE through the years!—but we also tap into their fresh insights and experiences of parish life and the lives of people today so that we may create Christian education resources that meet the needs of the Church.

The second goal of our theme was to remind the readers of *PRAXIS* of the centrality of theology and theological thought in our ministry of handing forward the Orthodox Christian Faith and way of life. Teaching the Faith accurately should be first on our list of concerns. Everyone involved in an educational ministry of the Church should be steadily and consistently studying the Faith to be able to teach the best of Orthodox Christian thought. This means reading the Scriptures and the commentaries and interpretation of them, studying the Church fathers and contemporary theological writers, becoming steeped in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church and our texts and rituals, knowing the history of the Church, and wrestling with the intersection of Church and contemporary American life. The list goes on and on.

Theology does matter. For seventy-five years, Holy Cross has been a global leader in theological thought. Our educational life and ministry depends on our ability to hand forward the best in our theological thinking. Holy Cross is at the center of this ability, but so is every one involved in the teaching of the Orthodox Christian Faith and way of life.



Anton C. Vrame, PhD
Director



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