

PRAXIS

πραξις



Ministry to the Elderly



This seventeenth-century Russian icon depicts the meeting of Joachim and Anna. The Church celebrates their feast on September 9, the day after the Nativity of the Theotokos. According to tradition, their meeting took place at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem. We find the description of the event in the *Protoevangelion of James*:

And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by, saying, "Anna, Anna, the Lord has heard your prayer, and you shall conceive, and shall bring forth; and your seed shall be spoken of in all the world."

And Anna said, "As the Lord my God lives, if I beget either male or female, I will bring it as a gift to the Lord my God; and it shall minister to Him in holy things all the days of its life."

And, behold, two angels came, saying to her, "Behold, Joachim your husband is coming with his flocks. For an angel of the Lord went down to him, saying, 'Joachim, Joachim, the Lord God has heard your prayer. Go down hence; for, behold, your wife Anna shall conceive.'"

...And behold, Joachim came with his flocks; and Anna stood by the gate, and saw Joachim coming, and she ran and hung upon his neck, saying, "Now I know that the Lord God has blessed me exceedingly, for behold, the widow no longer a widow, and I, the childless, shall conceive." (From the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 8, translated by Alexander Walker)

The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness.

Proverbs 16:31

You rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord.

Leviticus 19:32

Age should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.

Job 32:7

Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been upheld by Me from birth, who have been carried from the womb: Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

Isaiah 46:3-4

[The righteous] shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing.

Psalms 92:14

Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails.

Psalms 71:9

Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding.

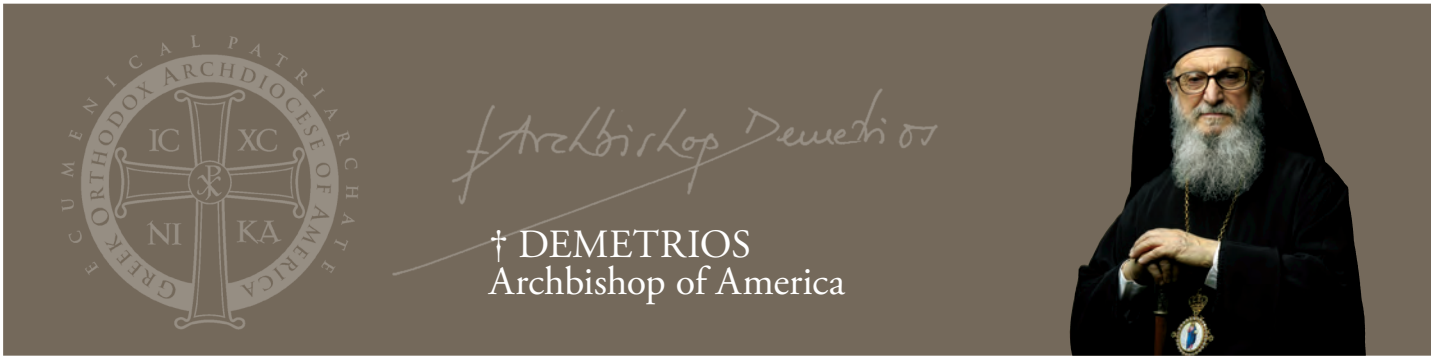
Job 12:12

Remember, Lord, the people here present as well as those who are absent for good reason, and have compassion on them and on us according to your abundant mercy. Fill their households with every good thing; sustain their marriages in peace and harmony; nurture the infants; guide the youth; and support the elderly.

– *Prayer of St. Basil the Great*



**WISDOM,
ANCIENT
AND
MODERN**



Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the Body of Christ, we are called to offer ministry in so many significant ways. One of the most important callings we have is to care for the elderly. This was a priority of the early Church when, among other actions, the Apostles appointed deacons to care for widows (Acts 6:1–5). This ministry continued to be a focus of many communities of believers and of saints such as St. Basil, who organized hospices and resources for the care of the elderly. Down through the centuries, this service has continued through local parishes, in the organization of retirement and assisted living centers and a variety of special programs and activities that have offered the compassion and strength of Christ.

When we reflect on the importance of ministry to the elderly, we must also affirm that senior adults are a vital part of offering ministry. In fact, a significant part of the leadership in our parishes and at all levels of our Holy Archdiocese is provided by older generations. These faithful servants of God offer experience, wisdom and a witness of the priority of faith, worship and prayer in our lives as Orthodox Christians. They also serve as examples to young adults and youth in relating faith to life.

Thus our ministry to the elderly is twofold. First, in our parishes and broader communities there are seniors who have physical, emotional and spiritual needs. They may not be able to participate regularly in the services of the Church. They may lack basic resources or the ability to care for their daily needs. Some may be lonely, needing the comfort of someone who will listen and offer assistance. Others may need encouraging or grateful words, affirming that they are loved and valued as persons. To all of these, we are called to share the grace of God and the fellowship of the Church. This means that we often have to take the Church to them through care programs, visits and outreach.

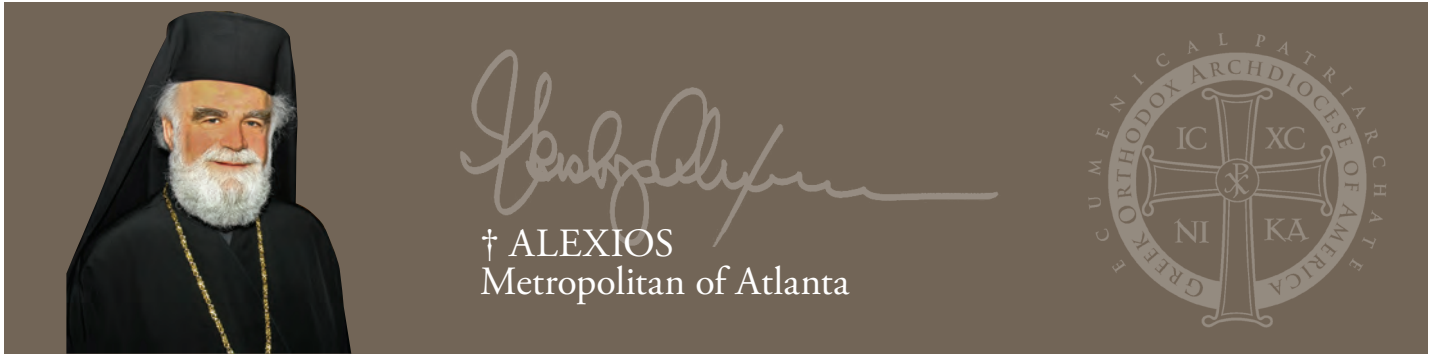
Second, our task is to engage senior adults in the ministries of the parish. As stated above, they are and should continue to be a vital part of what is accomplished in the parish. Further, the clergy and lay leadership should focus on cultivating this tremendous resource, identifying the gifts and skills of senior adults and engaging them with a variety of ministry opportunities.

Our ministry to and with the elderly in our parishes is related to our work as religious educators. In all of our instruction and guidance, our focus is on spiritual growth in Christ so that the faithful are ready to offer compassionate service to anyone in need. Our teaching should encourage a life of awareness and response, a readiness and willingness to follow the will of God at any moment. Further, our teaching about ministry should also focus on praxis. We are not called to sit and wait for those with needs to come to us. We are called to go out and find them and bring the love and comfort of Christ to them, and through our witness invite them to the banquet of grace and salvation. Finally, we should encourage prayerful reflection on ministry in our parishes. Are the needs of the elderly being met? Could additional efforts and services be offered to reach out to seniors in your community? Are senior adults recognized as vital to the life of the parish and its outreach?

As you read the articles and features in this issue, I encourage you to reflect on how you teach and offer an example of ministry. Also, consider how you address awareness of the needs of the elderly and the calling of the Body of Christ to offer to any in need. May you be blessed with the strength and wisdom of God in your continued service for His people, especially the elderly in our communities.

With paternal love in Christ,


† DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America



† ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

Do not cast me off in time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails.

– Psalm 71:9

Dear Readers of *PRAXIS*,

In our modern culture, we often forget that as a society we have the responsibility to take care of our parents and older citizens, and not just in retirement or nursing homes. It is literally the least that we can do for those who have devoted their lives to our country, especially those who have served in the armed forces, preserving the freedoms that we enjoy today. People in their thirties and forties must realize that one day, God willing, they too will be older, with all the opportunities and difficulties that age brings.

For, perhaps unknowingly, we seem to have cultivated a spirit of the modern era of independence, privacy and isolation. Consequently, we have also created loneliness and alienation, particularly for our elders. This is a situation that our grandparents never faced. The institution of the family—the foundation of our society and civilization—has been changed to the point that we no longer recognize that the happiness of one is the happiness of all.

Statistics tell us that we are wrong if we think of the United States as a young country: in our Greek Orthodox communities, one in four of our parish members are sixty years of age or older, and the fastest-growing segment of our society as a whole is people older than eighty-five. Of course, many of these older people will suffer from the limitations and troubles associated with aging. We hear about so many unfortunate situations around us that we tend to forget that aging is a natural part of life. However, growing older is not synonymous with misery and loneliness. After retirement, most people have many productive, healthy years to devote their skills, experience and gifts to the ministries of our parishes and our Church. They can be a valuable resource for offering and supporting ministries rather than simply being passive beneficiaries. St. John Chrysostom reminds us, “The most basic task of the Church leader is to discern the spiritual gifts of all those under his authority, and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full for the benefit of all.” After all, the Church is the Body of Christ in which we all participate, regardless of age.

Speaking for our Church and our Faith, no matter what our age, we want to continue to grow spiritually through a variety of activities, service and personal relationships, striving to be a living example to following generations, proving that faith and trust in our Lord God is a lifelong journey. Our young people, in particular, need examples and mentors in the Faith. Especially as elders in the Faith, we are called to model this kind of healthy and committed spiritual life, not only because our youth need examples but also, and more importantly, because they need relationships with other adults who are striving to lead a Christ-like life. St. Paul advises that Titus teach the following:

...that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned...
(Titus 2:2–8)

All this happens when we protect the institution of marriage and the family and the Faith. The two are not separate entities, not isolated from one another. Marriage is not a civil contract, as some consider it, but a blessing from God Himself.

Continued on page 8

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.

Address submissions to: Anton C. Vrame, PhD.

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Copyeditor	Aimee Cox Ehlers
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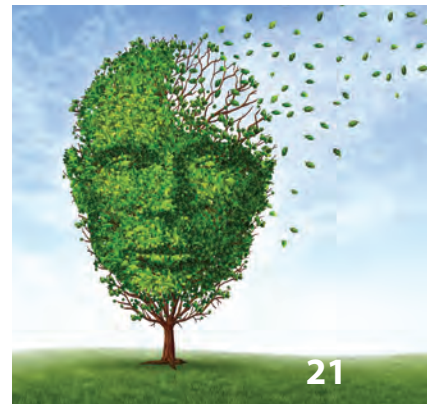


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Anton C. Vrame





THE SILVER TSUNAMI AND THE CHURCH

ANTON C. VRAME, PHD

If my grandmother were alive this year, she would have turned 100 years old. When she turned eighty, I remember her saying that she refused to be “old” just because she had reached this milestone of age, one that our society clearly would consider “elderly.” She maintained her youthfulness until the end of her life nearly six years later.

Experts call the growing number of senior citizens in the United States the “silver tsunami.” With the Baby Boomers turning sixty-five and our increased longevity, sociologists expect the number of people over sixty-five in the United States to double in the next twenty years. Because of the sheer numbers of Baby Boomers, every stage of their lives has affected American life.

These are not senior citizens as we might typically think about them. Our stereotype of senior citizens is “the rocking chair” or the nursing home. This is not the Baby Boom generation of seniors, at least not yet. Today’s senior citizens are healthier and thus live longer. While not the longest in the world, the typical life expectancy in the United States is nearly eighty years. They are more active physically and socially. They are better educated. They are wealthier than previous generations and they are often still working, for years, in many cases; the idea of retirement has changed dramatically as a result.

This demographic change in our society will also affect the life of the Church. Very simply, the number of senior citizens will rise substantially. They will have the potential for being more active, more generous and more involved than previous generations of seniors. Their dynamic approach to faith and life will also have the potential for shaping the life of the Church over the next few decades.

The Orthodox Tradition has a rich language of “elder.” In 1 Peter 5:5, we read, “you that are younger be subject to the elders.” In monasticism, we find the *geronda* or *gerondissa* not only as a term for the abbot, to whom the monks owe their obedience, but also a term of respect for these elders. *Geronda* simply means “old man.” Many of the popular writings in our Church today were composed by some of these “elders.” It is not uncommon to call a bishop “*geronda*” as a term of deep respect.

Although this term emanates from one dimension of Church life, “*geronda*” does remind us of the significance of the elders for our Church life. They can be the bearers of wisdom. (We seldom say a young person is wise.) Elders carry the memory of the community, the “institutional memory,” as we could say. They are experienced, well practiced, and, as such, wise because of their years of life and reflection. They’ve had time to both learn life lessons and share them. Not too long ago, I learned at a conference that when young people have a good relationship with their grandparents, the elders of their family, they are more empathic. Although the researcher didn’t want to speculate about the reasons for this, this finding points to the importance of having our elders around and interacting with them.

In Church or home life, this means of course honoring our elders, but it also means creating opportunities for all the generations to interact. Families have traditionally done this, but in our mobile world, many families live far apart, creating fewer opportunities for young and old to be together. Families need to work on this.

OUR STEREOTYPE OF
SENIOR CITIZENS IS
“THE ROCKING CHAIR”
OR THE NURSING HOME.

Parishes likewise should be finding ways to incorporate the elders into various ministries, especially those with the young. Sunday schools can easily involve elders as

helpers and story readers with the young. Perhaps some dimension of summer camps would benefit from the presence of senior citizens.

Teens and young adults could benefit from the wisdom of elders, and elders might benefit from the energy and tech-savvy life of the young. I watched my mother learn “Guitar Hero” from her teenage grandson a few years ago. They both had a wonderful time and bonded in a new way, well beyond the memories of the bedtime stories they had shared when he was much younger.

There are other ministries and programs that the Church should consider as we move forward into the silver tsunami. Keeping seniors connected is important. As we age, the dangers of social isolation increase. The Church can find ways to meet this need, but perhaps without the stigma of the “old age” group, especially considering the vitality of the Baby Boom generation. The Church will probably need to invest in senior residences of independent and assisted living. The coming generation of seniors is healthier and may not need as much nursing home care, but the Church probably should be investing more in this area, too.

Sociologists have noted that as we age, we return to Church. While we are unsure about whether today’s young adults will return to Church, so far today’s aging Boomers seem to be staying connected with the Church and the sources of their faith. Those who had been absent often return. Religious “switches” (that is, conversions) also decline as we age, meaning that once we reach a certain age, usually around fifty-five, we tend to remain in our spiritual home.

This should remind us that religious education and retreats are not just for the young. The Church can offer instruction to

seniors and provide the time and opportunity for prayer and reflection in retreats and other programs. These opportunities can be quite enriching for all, because of the vast amounts of life experience that this audience possesses. Their ability to question, study, reflect and make new rich and meaningful commitments, far more mature than those of a teenager, offer unique opportunities for the community itself to grow in wisdom. Here we should be reminded of St. Paul's words to the Ephesians, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles" (Ephesians 4:13, RSV). Or even better, His words to the Corinthians, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 Corinthians 13:11-12).

...RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
AND RETREATS ARE NOT
JUST FOR THE YOUNG.

Aging does come with medical issues, to be sure. The Church should begin discussing the distinct medical issues related to aging from an ethical standpoint, from living wills and advance medical directives, to a range of illnesses and end-of-life questions. Clergy will increasingly be asked about these matters by individuals and their family members.

This points to clerical preparation. Tomorrow's clergy will still need to be prepared for youth ministry, but they will also need to be much more versed in senior citizen ministry, as they will be dealing with not only issues of death and dying, but also with engaging this very active group so that they can maximize their participation and contribution to the life of the Church.

Anton C. Vrame, PhD, is Director of the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Continued from page 3

Our Orthodox Faith teaches us that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. This is the foundation of our belief in the dignity of each individual. Each person is our sister or brother, so that when people are poor, ill, old or lonely, we are obligated, out of love, to help them to live life with dignity. Of course, if we understand this, our elderly parishioners will not be forgotten. We will encourage ministries of compassion and friendship, particularly to seniors who can no longer drive or who are homebound and for whom it is difficult to remain in contact with their friends and church family. As children of elderly parents, or members of our extended church family, and citizens of a healthy society, we will go out of our way to stay in touch, especially with today's technology. We will make it a priority to assist our seniors in coming to church and to our homes, or to visit them in their homes. Particularly we will encourage our children to come with us, so that both can benefit from the special relationship between older adults and children.

I believe that God has given us many wonderful opportunities to offer compassionate and caring service to our elders, and to benefit from their wisdom and experience. After all, the combined experience and wisdom of our seniors is a great resource, a treasure that may be often underestimated or unrecognized, but which is of great benefit to the Church.

This is the way we are thinking in our Metropolis of Atlanta. In the spirit of St. Basil and with God's grace, we will begin building a retirement village at our Diakonia Retreat Center in the near future. We already have the property at the Retreat Center and a generous donation to get started. We hope and pray that many will join us in this important and historical endeavor for our elder Orthodox Faithful.

I pray that we will have a healthy and productive year, and that we will always be thinking of others to ensure that our parishes will be a refuge and blessing for our elder Faithful!



† ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

The Elderly and the Greek Orthodox Community



HIS GRACE BISHOP ANDONIOS OF PHASIANE

Just twenty minutes north of the heart of Manhattan, in a bucolic neighborhood of Yonkers, St. Michael's Home is one of the institutions of our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Self-sufficient and not receiving subsidies from any outside entities or the Archdiocese itself, the facility, which accepts only Greek Orthodox individuals, has offered quality care to countless elderly of the community for more than fifty-five years. In addition to being a home-away-from-home for our seniors, part of the mission of the Home has been to make our community aware of the changing reality of the world we live in as it relates to the issue of "elder care."

During the last few years, we have especially noticed the subtle changes occurring in the way people view the elderly... Whereas we once lived in a youth-oriented society where the virtues of being young and vibrant were continuously extolled, the rapid aging of the baby boomers has shifted the emphasis, and more attention is being focused on the elderly, not only because the baby boomers are getting older, but also because they are having to deal with their own aging parents. Certainly, one of the challenges that our Orthodox Church in the United States must face is the issue of caring for these elderly members of the community. Individuals who spent their lives working on behalf of and supporting the parishes and institutions of our Archdiocese deserve to be provided for and ministered to by the Church.

According to national statistics, one of the fastest growing segments of the population in the United States is the group of people 65 or older. By 2020, it is estimated that more than 25 percent of the population will be in that age group, which is growing three times faster than the number of young people. In 1900, the number of people 65 and older was 3.1 million; in 2000, it was 34 million; and in 2030, it is estimated to reach 72 million. The question is how to meet the needs of these individuals. They have the highest level of disposal income, and a growing number of them are opting to live in housing specifically built for people in their age group...whether a nursing home, an adult home or an age-restricted retirement community.

As Greek-Americans, with our especially strong emphasis on family and obligation to our parents, this may mean a total

had to deal with the guilt they feel about placing their parents in a home for the elderly. A number of years ago, St. Michael's even received a phone call inquiring about the Home from a woman who initially refused to reveal her identity because she was embarrassed about placing her mother in a facility.

In addition to helping people realize that placing a parent in an elder care facility not only no longer carries a stigma but in all reality may be the best for that parent, we have the obligation to provide the elderly members of the community with a viable alternative to the countless (for-profit) facilities that are opening to meet the needs of this fastest growing segment of the population. Regardless of how "Americanized" we are, those of us who are of Greek ancestry still strongly relate to our identity as Greek-Americans. A few years ago, the unexpected



change in what is acceptable or the norm for caring for the elderly. The tremendous demands and stressors placed on people have altered these realities, and expectations of "aging in place" may no longer be possible or realistic. People are living longer: adults who are in their seventies may barely be able to care for themselves, let alone elderly parents who are in their nineties. Couples are working, and so even if a parent is living with them, that person is alone most of the day, which is both isolating and potentially dangerous to the parent, who may need assistance and supervision. Families are scattered. Children may be far away, or, if only one sibling lives nearby, he or she can be overwhelmed by shouldering more of the burden of providing for an elderly parent. Lastly, if, because of diminished intellectual or physical abilities, an elderly person is confined to the home, unable to socialize with others, attend church or social events, this can lead to depression.

All of these factors present difficult emotional situations for parents and children. In my ministry, many family members have

box-office hit "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" speaks to this reality (notwithstanding the negative way in which the yiayia was portrayed). Thus it is essential to provide our seniors with an environment that affords them the opportunity to live in a Greek Orthodox setting with the ability to be able to worship on a regular basis, observe traditions, enjoy foods and maintain their ties with the community. Certainly, this is not the case in non-Orthodox institutions.

As a society and as a community, we must realize that advanced age does not diminish our value as human beings. It does not mean that we sit around waiting for death as our grandparents and the generations before them may have. Whether in their seventies, eighties or nineties, senior citizens continue to be full human beings with the same physical, emotional and spiritual needs as those in other age groups. They have the same rights and should be entitled to the same respect, love and pastoral concern that others enjoy; and they can contribute to the community and should enjoy life to its fullest until the time comes to depart.

Moreover, these individuals have needs, both spiritual and emotional, that must be addressed by the Orthodox community and society as a whole. Many have outlived spouses, their contemporaries and sometimes even their own children. Others are completely alone in life. All are at the sunset of their life and dealing with their own mortality. When a parish is looking for a “new” priest, it now cannot limit itself to just asking “How good is he with the youth?”—it must also take into account its fastest growing population. We must, as an Archdiocese, a District, Metropolises and parishes, be concerned with ministering to our elderly.

As a Greek–American community we have not accorded to this segment of our population the time, talents and treasures that it deserves. In the immediate vicinity of St. Michael’s,

As a result of the limited number of facilities specifically serving our community, people have limited options. Whereas once upon a time, all residents of St. Michael’s were from the tri-state area, we have witnessed a growing number coming from other states. The Home has recently admitted individuals from Indiana, Florida, Michigan, Colorado and elsewhere. In its ongoing efforts to meet the needs of the elderly, the Home has boldly decided to purchase a new 11-acre site in close proximity to New York City on which to establish a state-of-the-art continuum care facility. The new facility will be able to house more than 150 residents. It will offer all levels of care, from independent living one-bedroom apartments, to single bedrooms offering independent or assisted living, to wings devoted to those suffering dementia or in need of more intensive nursing care.



which is located in a predominately Jewish area, there are at least four or five “Jewish facilities” serving the needs of their elderly. One can extrapolate the total number of these facilities in the tri-state area (New York, New Jersey & Connecticut), let alone nationally. What a sad commentary on the Greek–American community that in the whole of the United States, there are only four licensed facilities offering care to their residents. (I have omitted from this count the various “senior residences,” which in essence provide subsidized apartments but are not licensed by state-level agencies to offer various types of care, e.g., assisted living or nursing.) With the exception of St. Michael’s, which was envisioned by the late Archbishop Michael, who worked closely with the local clergy syndesmos to open the Home in 1958, the other three are not officially part of the Archdiocese (albeit closely connected to the community). They are the fruit of the efforts by well-intended members of the community. We are indebted to them for their initiative and their continued efforts.

In closing, let us recall the central roles played by individuals of “advanced years” in the life of the Church...the Righteous Simeon and Prophetess Anna, Sts. Joachim and Anna, Sts. Elizabeth and Zacharias, St. Haralambos and so many others. Faithful people, they were chosen by God for a sacred task despite their age and earned for themselves the honor accorded to them by Orthodoxy throughout the ages. As surely as we honor those elderly mothers and fathers of the Faith, the elderly of our own day warrant a place of honor within the life of the community. We must do whatever we can to offer them the care they so deserve!

His Grace Bishop Andonios is Chancellor of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and he has been Director of St. Michael’s Home since 1996. For more information about St. Michael’s, please visit www.stmichaelshome.org

TRANSFORMED BY AGING & DEATH

V. REV. FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

I was a fairly young man when I was given my first parish assignment at twenty-nine. As it has turned out, this was not only my first parish, but also my only parish. And, to complete the picture, this was my mother's parish, so I was related to half of the people, and the other half had known me from infancy. At that time, it was also a very aged parish. Most of the younger people either no longer attended services or had married outside the faith and were making their new lives in another religious environment. In the first six months as pastor, I had five funerals before finally celebrating a marriage and then a baptism. That pattern persisted for a number of years. Without desiring it or seeking it out, I became very intimate with ministry to the elderly.

Writing in the first person singular is a little awkward, at least for me. I usually like to keep a professional distance between myself—my emotions—and whatever subject matter I am reflecting on or writing about. The subject of “caring for the elderly” is different in a variety of ways, mostly because it became personal and very real in the care of my parents and in-laws. While I was in seminary, we were given the opportunity to listen to an experienced priest reflect on his many years of ministry. Someone asked him what the most difficult pastoral situation he had encountered was. Some of us knew that he had faced many tragedies, including the death of a child. Without direct reference to that or any other incident, he said simply, “The personal ones; it's always the personal ones.” I've never forgotten what he said, and have meditated on it often.

During the past fifteen years or so, my wife and I had to take increasing responsibility for the care of our parents. Last year both my mother and mother-in-law fell asleep, our respective fathers having died over a decade before. Not only was this personal, in every sense of the word, but each situation was unique. Each parent had a different illness and needed a different type of care. But each also dealt with their changing condition differently and so elicited a different response from me. What I knew intellectually before, I began to truly apprehend

as each of them gradually faced the limitations imposed by aging and illness, what St. John of Damascus expresses in one funeral hymn when he asks, “What is this mystery concerning us? How have we been yoked to corruption?”

My introduction to the real situations that our elderly face, though, began early in my ministry. As I mentioned, when I started out, my parish was heavily skewed toward the elderly. I spent a lot of time in



nursing homes and other long-term facilities, as well as hospitals and rehab centers. Although it's hard not to ache for each of the suffering people residing in these places, I felt particularly grieved for our own Orthodox population, in this specific sense. Generally they were spread over dozens of institutions and were consequently very isolated. What they had expected as they aged was not only to be at home, but also to be in a familiar community, where they could pass the time with others who shared their language and life experiences, surrounded by relatives and friends who they knew and who knew them. Instead, they found themselves alone in an essentially foreign cultural context. They were in places where not only were their stories not known, but also where they could

hardly communicate with the people charged with their care. I found it heartbreaking.

It was then that I thought we should try to establish our own Orthodox Christian facility. Other religious and ethnic groups had done it for precisely the reason that I observed. It seemed like an impossible task, but with God's help and the intercessions of the Theotokos, Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehab Center was opened in 1994. We don't have space here to go through the details. Suffice it to say that it took much struggle, much convincing, and much sacrifice on the part of the Orthodox communities in central Massachusetts to realize this project. We like to speak of it as a unique project in American Orthodoxy, and perhaps it is. But in my opinion its most important quality should not be its uniqueness, but rather its ability to be replicated in other parts of the nation. Like so many other pan-Orthodox efforts, it was and is meant to be an example of what is possible together in our Lord's name. It is also present as a witness to the Orthodox Church's commitment to engage with and help the larger society.

It wasn't too long after opening that many of my own parishioners came to use the facility. Both of my parents were rehab patients following various surgeries that weren't life-threatening. Some other parishioners became long-term residents. Others, part of our larger Orthodox community who were initially skeptical of the project, took advantage of the facility and were converted to the need for it. All in all, it was a bittersweet experience. Although it was a blessing for us to have a place where our people in need could be helped and cared for while still feeling connected to their community of family and friends, the hard

reality of our frail and all-too-limited nature cast a hard shadow.

However, let me return to my family's story. My father-in-law fell asleep in spring 1994. Holy Trinity wouldn't open until August of that year. But no matter—he wasn't one for hospitals, not to mention nursing homes. He was a tradesman. In Greece he worked wrought iron. In America he became a plumber. He was a smoker, like many of his generation, but the smoke and fumes of his trade led to a severe respiratory condition that caused at least one heart attack. Slowly the diminishing

capacity of his lungs caused his body to fail him. I can't say that he was an extraordinarily pious man, in the way we usually mean it, but he *was* a man of faith. He knew what it meant to sacrifice, and he did it for family. I can't say that we were close; we weren't. He did not understand me and I really didn't understand him. What I have felt, though, is guilt for having underestimated him in a variety of ways. First, his illness: I'm told that the emphysema he



suffered is like drowning. One is always short of breath, but I was short on empathy. Second, his real sacrifices: He constantly set his own interests aside for his family. I don't think I ever appreciated how much. I reflect on these and other things often, and how easily and unfairly I judged him.

Not long after my father-in-law's death, my own father started to fail. He had developed a liver cancer, although it would be a while before it was identified as such. It gradually overtook him, but he saw the situation entirely differently. For him his illness was the natural progression of life, but he was unwilling to simply give up. He asked for and received treatments that astounded me—treatments that I personally would never have asked for—but it wasn't because he feared death,

but rather because he saw it as a kind of science experiment; he was advancing the medical cause. He wanted to be cutting edge in this, as he had often been in his work life. He was the epitome of the American progressive. He believed in human ingenuity and determination. Yet he was the most faithful person I have known. As he was getting sicker, we had a moment alone and I was tearing up. He looked up at me and said, "Nick, don't cry. I've lived longer than I thought I ever would. God has been good to me, and I'll take what He gives me." One of the hardest decisions I've had to make was to ask the doctor in those last few days to up the morphine dosage to help the pain; and, of course this hastens the process. But I feel no guilt about this. To be alive is to be with God. Science and medicine can make our earthly existence better, but in the end our life is elsewhere. This is what my father believed. This is what I believe.

My mother was a real challenge. She was having memory issues long before my father died, along with increasing dementia. We didn't realize how much my father had been covering for her until he died. Without putting too fine a point on it, it was an excruciating experience for the entire family. We were able to keep her at home for a number of years, but finally she became a danger to herself and others. She spent her last years at Holy Trinity, with extended stays at the local geriatric psych clinic in a vain search for medication and treatments that would ameliorate her anxiety and hallucinations. There was an unending stream of guilt. This period of caring for her was, and perhaps still is, one of the greatest spiritual challenges of my life. I visited at least once a day, often more than once. I usually went at lunchtime and served the tables, not only hers but also many others. It was an askesis, a way to be of use. They say that men and women deal with this sort of situation differently. Women talk it through. Men need something physical to do; they want to fix it. I could certainly relate to this. I waited on tables and brought out the food.

Not only at Holy Trinity, but also in the rest of my ministry, I became acutely aware that people were looking to me for cues on how to deal with their own similar situations. I began to understand what I think St. Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians that he felt that God had made him and the other apostles into a kind of spectacle, before people and angels (1 Corinthians 4:9). People would tell me what a good son I

was. My usual reply was that I didn't feel good, and that was the truth. All I felt was how I was failing: failing my mother, failing my family, failing myself, and failing God. I felt helpless and inadequate. I saw into myself in a way that I never had before, and I didn't like what I saw. I was stripped of any pretension to piety or nobleness. I called on the Lord constantly. I begged His mother for her help. I know I was deeply changed by this experience, and I am grateful to God for having been given it.

When my mother finally fell asleep, all I felt was numbness and guilt. I pray every day that she and God will forgive me.

My mother-in-law was a remarkable woman. She endured so much in her life: fleeing Russia as an infant during the Communist revolution; enduring the hardship and famine of the German occupation during World War II and the Greek Civil War that followed; and finally coming here to start a new life, with all that that entailed. She never complained. She was a faithful and devout person. God blessed her with good health and a clear mind until she fell asleep at ninety-three. It was sad to say goodbye, but we all were comforted in the knowledge that she is resting in Abraham's bosom.

What did I learn? Death is our enemy, not our friend. God has really conquered death, and I don't know how people without a faith in the resurrection endure something like this. I've also learned that I have no love, no patience, no empathy, nothing. I only pretend to them.

I would read statements like this in the spiritual writing and think them pious hyperbole. Put to the test, I found out how true they are. People ask, understandably, if God is good and loving, then why does He allow suffering? This is a big question, but here's my short answer: it changes us. I can't speak for my parents or in-laws, but I can speak for myself: I am not the same person today as I was twenty years ago. Thank God!

V. Rev. Fr. Nicholas Apostola is the pastor of St. Nicholas Romanian Orthodox Church in Shrewsbury, MA, and Administrative Vicar of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada. He has been an articulate voice for the Orthodox Church at ecumenical gatherings and in the World Council of Churches. He earned an MDiv from Holy Cross and an MA in Social Ethics from Boston University.



Faith in Action:

An Interview with Peter Valessares, Executive Director of the Hellenic Foundation

TELL US ABOUT HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION STARTED.

The Hellenic Foundation was founded by Fr. George Mastrantonis, an Orthodox priest of blessed memory, and a group of civic-minded and caring community leaders, in 1953. The Foundation was organized as an independent, Illinois not-for-profit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation, whose mission was to address the needs of the elderly, youth and families of the community.

WHAT ARE ITS GUIDING PRINCIPLES?

Although the focus of the Foundation was originally directed to the housing needs of the elderly, its mission and goals have evolved over the years into a multifaceted and dynamic social service organization.

Hellenic Foundation's mission today is to identify and address the social service needs of families and individuals of the Hellenic-American community. Our board of directors and

staff are dedicated to researching and fulfilling ways to help individuals and families achieve success, independence and greater happiness. As Executive Director, along with our Director of Social Programs, Sophia Stamatis, I am responsible for creating and implementing the programs that will fulfill the board's principles and vision.

WHOM DO YOU SERVE AND HOW? HOW ARE YOU FUNDED?

The Hellenic Foundation serves the social needs of the Greek and Orthodox Christian community of Chicago by providing service programs and through city and state-funded programs. In 1973, the Foundation was able to purchase the Hollywood House, a senior citizen retirement facility across the street from St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church, at Hollywood Avenue and Sheridan Road along Chicago's lakefront, in order to provide affordable housing to seniors. In 1974, in response to a community survey, the social service agency Hellenic Family & Community Services was created to provide referrals, advocacy, translations and informational services, as well as assistance with immigration issues. In 1980, a senior citizen recreational program, the Hellenic Golden Circle, was established.

As the community's needs evolved, two things became apparent: first, the demand within the Hellenic-American community for the type of retirement housing offered at Hollywood House was not sufficient to justify the resources the Foundation had invested in the property; and, second, that although the building was "grandfathered" in with respect to the Chicago code requirement for a sprinkler system to be installed throughout the building, the Foundation did not consider it prudent to continue to own and operate the building without installing such a system or making other required upgrades. Rather than incur the sizeable debt that would have been needed to undertake the improvements, the board decided to sell the property to the Heartland Foundation, a senior citizens nonprofit. The Heartland Foundation made all of the improvements needed and continues to operate the property as a senior citizen affordable housing facility serving the needs of the wider community, including those Hellenic-American residents who choose to live there.

The proceeds from the sale of Hollywood House have been invested in such a way that the Hellenic Foundation's board of directors and staff are no longer consumed with fundraising to cover operating expenses. We can now concentrate our efforts on providing services to our community.



WHAT CHALLENGES AND CHANGES DO YOU SEE IN THE FUTURE OF ELDER CARE?

The Greek community of Chicago has matured into its fourth and fifth generations, hence, there are a large number of senior citizens within the community. The current economic conditions at the state and national levels have had a severe impact on individuals of all ages. The effect on seniors has been dramatic, especially on those who can no longer care for themselves. With the maturity of the Greek community, certain social changes have evolved. No longer is it certain that family members will be providing the care necessary to maintain a senior's quality of life. Therefore, the Hellenic Foundation, in collaboration with Church organizations such as the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos, is committed to providing programs and services that assist our seniors at such a vulnerable stage of their lives.

The Hellenic Foundation provides home care for more than 135 seniors through its Community Care Program. CCP is designed to help senior citizens retain their dignity and quality of life by providing assistance with the basic functions of life. The program is funded and regulated by the Illinois Department of Aging. As a provider, the Hellenic Foundation is guided by the Illinois Administrative Code regulations in providing in-home care for senior clients through its team of home care aides. In order to qualify for free home care through CCP, senior citizens must qualify for Medicaid benefits. Due to the impact of the economic downturn and the aging of the Orthodox Christian population in Chicago, CCP is an important vehicle for assisting those seniors in our community who are most in need. Hellenic Foundation home care aides, specially trained and supervised, provide general nonmedical support to CCP-qualified senior citizens. Each individual's "Plan of Care" determines the specific homecare aide services provided.

In an effort to minimize the anxieties that accompany the changes of life, the Hellenic Foundation provides Greek-speaking homecare aides to clients who prefer speaking in Greek. An aide's ability to communicate in Greek is a proven comfort, thus avoiding a client's potentially stressful concern. In addition, the presence of a bilingual home aide plays an important role in ensuring that the needs of the client are properly addressed in times of emergency or sickness.

The CCP program also provides for "preferred home aides." These aides are family members or friends of the family who are trained to provide the services required by an individual's care plan. Through this initiative, individuals who may already be providing such care might have the opportunity to receive compensation for those efforts. The Hellenic Foundation assists in the application and training for the program.

Because the Greek-speaking population in Chicago is aging, there is a demand for home care for seniors of all economic strata. Therefore, the Hellenic Foundation is expanding its home care service to meet those demands. As an extension to the Community Care Program, Hellenic Foundation will be soon enrolled in the Illinois Department on Aging's Community Care Referral Program (CARP), which utilizes certified providers to refer seniors who otherwise do not qualify for Community Care. The program allows individuals who meet certain asset criteria to secure private pay service at the lower state-provider level. Individuals will be referred through the Illinois Department on Aging or through Church organizations, such as Philoptochos. In addition, the Hellenic Foundation will be able to provide quality home care for members of our community with the economic means to receive private-pay homecare aide services.

In addition, for seniors qualifying for Medicaid, we are able to provide free government-funded cell phones with 250 free minutes per month.

WHAT ARE THE NEW INNOVATIONS IN THE KIND OF WORK YOU DO? HOW WILL THIS AFFECT THE FUTURE IN YOUR OPINION?

Fr. Mastrantonis's founding mission was not limited to the concerns of the elderly. He was also concerned with needs of the youth and families in our community. The Hellenic Foundation now operates out of its headquarters on West Touhy Avenue in Chicago, where it has invested in a state-of-the-art information technology system and updated staff and meeting facilities, with audiovisual equipment for its lectures and seminars. As a result, we have been able to create and implement job training

and job placement programs. In addition, we are able to assist individuals and families who, having suffered a catastrophic event such as job loss or illness, are in danger of eviction or foreclosure and qualify for mortgage and rental assistance programs funded by the state.

Hellenic Foundation's Immigration Assistance Services offer valuable help to limited-English speaking individuals and families to facilitate U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services applications. As a result of the severe economic depression in Greece, there is a new wave of Greek immigrants coming to the United States. Other demographic changes affecting our community in the Chicago area have resulted in increasing numbers of limited-English speaking Orthodox Christians from eastern and southern Europe and former Soviet Union republics who require assistance. Such applications include permanent resident card renewals and replacements, extensions of non-immigrant visas, petitions for alien relatives as well as

The needs of our community continue to become more complex and demanding.

application for U.S. citizenship. The Hellenic Foundation staff assists in completing applications and reviews the required supporting documents and USCIS fees with the client. We have developed relationships with immigration attorneys and immigration specialists, with contacts in Greece, to assist on more complex issues as needed.

The needs of our community continue to become more complex and demanding. The Hellenic Foundation realizes the need to develop working relationships with other like-minded organizations. Our community is rich with talented, resourceful individuals and organizations. Collaborative efforts will be required if our communities needs are to be met.

WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH OUR ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN READERS?

Through our efforts at the Hellenic Foundation, I can only substantiate what Orthodox Christians already know: the inner joy that is derived through helping others far exceeds any pleasure realized from personal gain.

For more information about Hellenic Foundation Chicago, visit www.hellenicfoundation.org

THE JOYS OF RETIREMENT

REV. FR. NICHOLAS VIERON

First, allow me to introduce myself. I'm an 88-year-old retired Greek Orthodox priest who enjoys past memories and present activities. When asked how it feels to be retired, I usually reply with a smile, "It's great—no more meetings, no more paperwork," but the opportunity to serve as a priest is still there, as our Retired Clergy Association emblem indicates, "a priest forever." I'll tell you about my retirement years, but first allow me to share with you some of my memories. They are part of my retirement. I reflect on them often.

PRECIOUS MEMORIES

For many retirees, memories are all they have in their retirement years. Thank God, most retirees continue being active and create even more memories during their golden years.

For me, many of those precious memories began long ago, in New Orleans, where I was born and raised in the shadow of Holy Trinity, the first Greek Orthodox Church in the Americas. I lived right across the street from that historic church, where at the age of nine with my papou standing beside me, I offered the Epistle reading on August 15, 1934. Of course, everything was



in Greek in those days, and although I did not understand what I was saying, I was enjoying every minute of it at "the altar of my grandfather's knee." He was, without realizing it, preparing me for the priesthood.

While I was still a little boy, I recall a visit to New Orleans by Archbishop Athenagoras (Cavadas). I served as an altar boy that Sunday. Little did I realize that a few years later I would be coming face-to-face with him at Holy Cross Seminary in Pomfret, CT—the school that he founded in 1937. A few years later he would be blessing my engagement at St. Basil's Academy and later appointing me to my first parish.

My mother and grandmother taught me about love, while my dad instilled in me a work ethic that is still with me today. I enjoyed my boyhood friends, especially those of the Greek community, and I also enjoyed sports. It was part of my life and it still is now.

When I graduated from high school at the age of 16—don't ask me why so young—my priest, Fr. Bouterakos, suggested that I enroll at a school that prepares young men to become priests. I had never heard of it before. All our priests had been coming from Greece.

However, in 1942, I ventured into the unknown and left for Pomfret, where the five-year-old seminary was founded and was still located at the time. It was there that I came under the influence of Bishop Cavadas, the first dean of our seminary—a strict disciplinarian who, however, made every student feel special and loved. He, as Fr. George Poulos wrote, "took young boys and made them men and then made them priests."



It was at Pomfret that I made friendships that lasted all my life. There are not many of us Pomfret men left. Most of us have been embraced by God in His heavenly kingdom. I miss them, but I enjoy the memory of them. We Pomfret men refer to those years—1937 to 1947—as the Golden Decade. Holy Cross Seminary then moved to Brookline, MA, and it was there that I spent my last year before being ordained.

My precious memories continued into the years of my priesthood. Every priest can probably write a book on his memories. The only thing different for me was probably the 1968 struggle for equality that brought Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to Memphis. A small group of white ministers supported the sacred cause. I was honored to be among them. Some lost their position because of their involvement. My parish offered me silent support. I was so proud of all our people.

Another precious memory for me was my twenty-three years on the CBS television program “What Is Your Faith,” where I was a regular panelist and also served as moderator.

MY RETIREMENT YEARS: 1991 TO TODAY

I retired in 1991 from the Annunciation parish in Memphis, and I have been embraced in retirement not only with love but also with many manifestations and expressions of gratitude. All four priests who followed me at the parish have been most kind and gracious to me, especially Fr. Jim Berends, our present presiding pastor.



Immediately after my retirement, I started filling in at small parishes that did not have a permanent priest. I would fly out on Saturday and return on Sunday afternoon from places like Oklahoma City, Amarillo, Chattanooga and Jackson, Mississippi. On a more regular basis, I traveled to Wichita, KS, and Panama City, FL, where I served Christmas services and Holy Week for more than ten years. In the meantime, in Memphis I would fill in when the pastor was out of town.

BUT THERE WAS MORE, MUCH MORE

I enjoy continuing to teach a Greek language class for adults, which I started in 1972. The fourteen-week course is an introduction not only to the language of the New Testament and to modern spoken Greek, but also to the history and culture of that beautiful country. Last year I had forty-six students, all of them from outside the Greek speaking community—a cross-section of students, including several members of the clergy. It was a fun class where some learned a little, others a little less, but all enjoyed one hour a week of relaxation. It was and still is one of my greatest joys. I’m looking forward to the next class, which, God willing, begins this winter!

The highlight of my retirement was the seventeen years I served as editor of the Retired Clergy Association (RCA) monthly newsletter. A day would not pass without my hearing from some fellow retired priest, a widowed presvytera or an associate member. Some of them contributed articles. Many of them expressed gratitude for the newsletter. Among them was Archbishop Iakovos. His personal secretary, Paulette Poulos, would often tell me how the Archbishop looked forward to the monthly publication, more than any other mail, and especially enjoyed the corny jokes!

For the last twenty-five years, I’ve been serving as chaplain of the Memphis Touchdown Club, offering sports-related invitations at weekly dinner meetings during the college football season where the guest speakers are area coaches, such as Hugh Freeze of Ole Miss, James Franklin of Vanderbilt, Nick Saban of Alabama, and Archie Manning of the famous football family.

Because I’ve always enjoyed being ecumenically involved, churches and synagogues continue to invite me as a guest speaker and to participate in many of their occasions, such as clergy installations and retirement banquets. I enjoy every occasion and feel very honored.

Recently, I observed the sixty-fifth anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood by celebrating a Divine Liturgy in Memphis on October 26. I was ordained on the feast of St. Demetrios in 1948.

My wife, Bess, and I have been blessed with two sons: one lives in Memphis and practices medicine, and the other is a graduate of Holy Cross and lives in Rochester, NY. We enjoy our four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

We are indeed blessed and grateful to God and to all the people who have touched our lives and have been a blessing to us.

In 1992, after his retirement, Fr. Vieron designed the official emblem of the Retired Clergy Association.





The Joys of Retirement

A Presbytera's View

STELLA MAMANGAKIS

It was a wonderful life. I was blessed. When we were first married, my husband, Fr. George, was assigned to Astoria, NY, as an assistant priest to Fr. Frangos. We were there for two very busy and hectic years.

In 1956, we were sent to Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Orange, NJ. Our children were born and raised there. Those early years were happy but very busy. Father would leave in the morning, come home to join the family for dinner and return to his pastoral duties until 11:00 or 12:00 at night.

Sts. Constantine and Helen was a booming Greek Orthodox community. We had a PTA, Philoptochos, Mr. & Mrs. Club, Sunday school, GOYA and YAL, just to mention a few. It was a great church to bring up our four children in...they were good years!

By 1985, our children were grown. One had married, one was in college and two had begun their careers. Fr. George moved to a new parish in Ft. Pierce, FL. He was excited to join the St. Nicholas community, and he ministered to his flock lovingly. I too was happy, though hesitant to start a "new" life

with new people and new surroundings. The folks in Florida were more than welcoming, and we enjoyed developing new friendships.

I became involved in many ways by helping whenever I could, wherever I could. Always at my husband's side, I was content for others to lead the way. Our parish grew, and we built a new church with the help of God as well as that of diligent and generous parishioners.

In 1990, we went to Thessaloniki for one year to minister to the students of the American Farm School. Everyone was very kind and helpful. We loved Greece but missed our children and the warmth of Florida. Our year living in Greece like natives was a wonderful experience. God has blessed Greece. It is a wonderful country.

These days I am here for my children and grandchildren. I encourage and support my four children, their spouses and eight grandchildren in any way possible.

I continue living my faith through my church attendance, making prosphoro and kolyva, visiting the sick at home and in health care centers, working with the Philoptochos, feeding the homeless, transporting the elderly and regularly volunteering at church events.





When a Family Member Suffers from Alzheimer's

ROSEMARY K. HENDRIX

One of the greatest challenges in my life and in the life of many others has been caring for a loved one who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's is a form of dementia, which is an umbrella term for many diseases. This article is less of a testimony of my experience of caring for my husband, however challenging and painful it may have been, and more of a map for those who are now confronting this disease.

Just as the body at rest tends to stiffen up and prefer to stay at rest, the affected mind would much prefer to stay at rest as well. There are several reasons for this, but the primary one is the increased frustration level common to those with Alzheimer's or any other form of dementia. In the beginning, the person's awareness of their memory loss often gets disregarded by family members, friends and coworkers as "just getting older." However, the person affected begins to realize that there is more to it. The frustration of trying to keep up appearances becomes frightening—thus the frustration level increases rapidly. When those who are close to the person affected with this disease reach the denial stage—a common reaction—they experience emotions they never thought existed. These emotions are often projected onto the person affected. It is during this stage that steps vital for a smooth transition into what is happening must begin.

If there has been a diagnosis by your primary physician but no definitive diagnosis by a neurologist, this is the time to get MRIs, CT scans and pencil-and-paper testing done by a neurology team. All medical information, including family history of dementia, needs to be given to the neurology team. Be sure that the neurologist makes (and informs you of) a definitive diagnosis. You might quickly seek a second or even a third opinion, so that the appropriate medicines may be prescribed without wasting precious time as the disease continues to negatively affect brain cells. There are just a few medications for Alzheimer's. Tragically, they are not curative. The medications widely used for Alzheimer's are pharmacologically designed only to slow the progress of the disease.

We have billions of brain cells. We use only a fraction of them to live our lives up to the time when dementia becomes evident. Which cells are affected? Which are we losing? Might some of the cells that are still alive be used as compensatory cells? Presently, no one knows. Autopsies of the brains of those few willing to offer their bodies for medical research are yielding some preliminary but inconclusive findings.

Since no one knows either the amount or exact location of brain cell death, it may be possible to employ unused cells in a compensatory manner, allowing persons suffering from Alzheimer's to potentially live within their family system, contribute to their own care, and contribute to their management and activities of daily living for as long as possible before their placement into a memory care facility.

With this in mind, I recommend taking immediate steps to exercise both the right and left sides of the brain with ap-

propriate activities. Left-sided exercises might include number games, such as Yahtzee or bingo. Right-sided activities include Scrabble, puzzles and art or any form of creative expression. These games may seem childish, but they are effective ways to stimulate the brain. However, caregivers can take steps to avoid and alleviate any frustration that may occur. For example, start working a jigsaw puzzle together and ask the person with dementia to sort out the edges or make color groupings. If the person does become frustrated, then take a short break, such as



taking a walk outdoors, getting a snack, surfing the net, watching a movie—whatever it takes to reduce the frustration.

I suggest implementing a schedule of activities at the time of definitive diagnosis of Alzheimer's. It shouldn't be rigid, but flexible and commensurate with the level of dementia and determined by the number of family members or professional caretakers involved in the ultimate goal: keeping those persons with any dementia, especially those with Alzheimer's, in their homes for as long as possible.

Caretakers—whether they are family members (who have the full support of other family members) or certified nursing assistants (CNAs) who have been trained in the care of those with dementia—are essential in accomplishing the goal of maintaining the mental, physical and emotional health of the person. The time will come when the affected person becomes obstreperous with any structure they determine to be rigid and demanding. At that time, a CNA, not a family member, should become the primary caretaker. This alleviates the heightened frustration and anger not only of affected persons but also of the family members who love them.

It is also important to make sure that those with Alzheimer's have a diet that is nutritionally sound. Research suggests that Alzheimer's is considered to be "diabetes 3." Blood tests to determine any nutritional deficiencies are helpful. Vitamins, including omega-3, minerals, high-protein shakes, low-sugar diets, fruit, vegetables, lean meats, fish and yogurt are vital to good health, especially for those who may forget to eat sufficiently.

Are these suggestions going to work for your family member? No one knows the answer, but what can you lose by trying?

As I reread this article, I was reminded of how my faith supported me during these and other trying times. I contracted paralytic polio when I was seventeen. My parents were told that I would never walk again. I prayed from my heart for the first time, asking that I be able not only to walk, but also to do all I wanted to do in my life, dedicating my life to God as His servant. My prayers were answered.

I relied on this same faith when my husband was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. It worked again. Yes, there were times when I was impatient with God. I was stressed, questioning Him, depressed, angry and unheeding of God's direction, often wanting to direct and make my own plans. For more than a year I sought an assisted living facility that would offer my husband the very best care. Various things, however, came up and prevented his admission—gout, prostate cancer, radiation proctitis, treatments for bleeding, dental issues. These were signals I didn't heed.

Even after Floyd's admission to a care facility, I had to deal with unpleasant incidents, medication mix-ups and even the theft of his clothing. After four weeks, I took him out of assisted living and brought him home for in-home care. I believe this was God's way of saying, "Floyd needs to be home, everything will be fine, someone both of you love will come forth to help you, relax, let Me help you as I did when you had polio, trust Me, I am there for you, for your husband and for Emma. Your prayers and your faith in Me have been answered."

Rosemary Kromidas Hendrix, CMFT, contributes to the work of the Department of Interfaith Marriage. Her husband, Floyd Hendrix, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of Plant Pathology at the University of Georgia. They are members of Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church in Marietta, GA.

A Dozen Tips for Caregivers

1. Begin each morning with prayer, asking God to teach you to deal with all that comes to you with patience, not embittering anyone and not forgetting why you are a caretaker.
2. Choose to take charge of your life and do not let your loved one's illness or disability always take center stage.
3. Remember to be good to yourself. Love, honor and value yourself. You are doing a very difficult job. You deserve some quality time, just for you.
4. Watch out for signs of depression in yourself and do not delay in seeking professional help when you need it.
5. When people offer to help, accept their offer and suggest specific things they can do.
6. Educate yourself about your loved one's condition. Information is empowering.
7. There is a difference in "caring" and "doing." Be open to technologies and ideas that promote your loved one's independence for as long as possible.
8. Trust your instincts. Most of the time, they'll lead you in the right direction.
9. Grieve for your losses and then allow yourself to dream new dreams.
10. Stand up for your rights as a caregiver and citizen.
11. Seek support from other caregivers. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.
12. Always advocate for your loved one's care if they must be placed in an assisted living or memory care facility—they cannot speak, so speak for them. Do not follow the status quo of facilities. Advocate!

The Takeaway

Applying the ideas and themes of this issue of *PRAXIS* to your parish's religious education programs

PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

Oral History of the Parish

Many communities of our Archdiocese have gathered old photos into yearbooks and online archives, especially as they are marking historic anniversaries. Enrich these archives with audio and video interviews. Such a project can connect tech-literate youth and young adults with community founders and leaders. For ideas about how to proceed, see the Spring 2008 issue of *PRAXIS*, which focused on the theme of "Local Church History" and included a review of *Listening Is an Act of Love*, a book about the StoryCorps project for collecting and preserving oral histories. In 2013, PBS created a short animated film of the same name and published a new book commemorating 10 years of StoryCorps (see www.pbs.org/pov/storycorpsspecial/).

Grandparent and Godparent Sundays

Many parishes honor grandparents and godparents on specific Sundays, sometimes with small tokens such as flowers, a brief music program or other type of recognition in the church itself, and perhaps a luncheon afterward. Give children and youth even more time dedicated to these elders (whether "elderly" or not!) by asking them to introduce their grandparents and godparents during their Sunday school classes. Prompting a child to ask, "What should I tell them about you, Grandma?" can lead to a valuable discussion.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION IDEAS

- What is wisdom? Is it gained only through age and experience?
- Why might we hope that our elders are our spiritual "betters"? What are our stereotypes about older people? Do they have prescribed roles in life and in the Church? Consider the following texts:

Titus 2 (notwithstanding verses 9–10, which are about slavery)

St. John Chrysostom (from *Homily 49 on Matthew 8*, NPNF1 10:309): "For this is in fact the marvelous thing, when temperance shines forth in youth, since he surely that is temperate in old age cannot have a great reward, having in perfection the security from his age."

- In the Bible and in the Church, we often see "old" people doing "young" things: Abraham and Sarah; Sts. Joachim and Anna; Sts. Elizabeth and Zacharias; and St. Haralambos. What might these stories tell us about God and about what He wants of us?
- Explore the intergenerational relationships of Moses and Joshua; Abraham and Lot; Elijah and Elisha; Ruth and Naomi; Elizabeth and Mary; Barnabas and Mark; Paul and Silas, Timothy and Titus; and Peter and John.



ADDITIONAL MINISTRY IDEAS

- Parish nurses may minister to all ages, of course, but they are often in contact with elderly community members. For more information, see www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/outreach/ministryprofiles/parishnurse
- Numerous publishers offer Bible studies *about* aging, as well as more general Bible studies *for* seniors.
- Ensure that the Silver Tsunami shares its experience with and contributes to the spiritual formation of the next generation of leaders and volunteers. (And, in turn, the elders will have an opportunity to appreciate youthful energy and innovation.) Informal but implicitly intergenerational activities and "coaching" might take the form of pairing experienced persons with novices during baking classes or "Introduction to Chant" sessions.
- Formal mentoring relationships among youth and older parish members might be established through initiatives such as Sunday Church school teacher aides or "Junior Parish Council" positions.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stanley Hauerwas, *Growing Old in Christ* (Eerdmans, 2003)

Dave Isay, *Listening Is an Act of Love* (Penguin, 2008)

Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology and Aging, Conference 2013: "The Clinical and Pastoral Care of the Aging Patient" (ocamp.org/conference/conference-2013/)



Many Orthodox parents whisper this common litany about college, and, really, who can blame them? We parents are investing family fortunes in our kids' college educations with no guarantee that they will graduate, move out of the house and live successfully on their own. The national college dropout rate is 50 percent; only half of students who enroll in college actually graduate with a bachelor's degree in four years, with one in every four dropping out before sophomore year. It's understandable that parents would do everything in their power to prevent their sons and daughters from becoming statistics, ensuring that they transition smoothly, positively, and successfully into and out of college.

With all the academic, economic and social pressures bearing down on their children, it's no surprise that parents might see taking time for church as antithetical to college success. Just going to church on Sunday for us Orthodox can be an all-day event—between travel and coffee hour, a student might not make it back to the library until after 3:00. How can students make that commitment to their faith in the midst of mountains of reading, papers and projects, not to mention sports and fun!

I would like to offer some solace for us parents wrestling with this tension with some stories from the field. I have had the privilege of working with college students across the United States and Canada, and I have heard and seen some remarkable outcomes for college students who connect with a local Orthodox parish and continue to practice their Orthodox Christian faith.

1. Going to Church improves academic performance.

I can't tell you how often students say that going to church before an exam or project results in better performance. Calling on the Holy Spirit to guide

ENHANCING THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE: THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

JENNIFER NAHAS

"My kid tries to get to church and participate in OCF, but he has so much school work, not to mention that he's on the swim team and part of the traveling chorus. Right now, being a student is his priority. Church takes time, and he needs to study!"



them to do their best helps, of course, but what might be less obvious is that regular prayer helps build good study habits. The practice of quieting the mind and centering oneself on God in prayer translates into an ability to focus with great concentration—a necessary skill for studying. Prayer builds this type of acuity, and, along with Christ’s mercy, will often result in better performance.

2. Fasting allows students to practice saying “no.”

And you know how important it is to be practiced at saying no in college! If our kids know what it’s like to pass on a burger during Lent, then they are better prepared to pass on alcohol, drugs and sexual advances. Fasting teaches us to control our passions and impulsivity, giving us strength and power to resist other temptations. It gives our children the resources to manage these social land mines.

3. Serving others in order to “see Christ” translates into a broader world perspective.

It’s not bad to work toward being a citizen of the world, but Orthodox Christians work toward being citizens of the Kingdom of God. One important way we do this is through serving unconditionally. Through good works, students mitigate the misery

and poverty of others; more importantly, by doing so, they seek to recognize Christ in the other. They prostrate themselves and wash the feet of the least of their brethren in order to humble themselves before Christ. Orthodox college students shine on their campus communities through their humility, empathy and grace. They see everyone as members of God’s community and treat them with respect and love.

Although prayer, fasting and service are important ways in which we move closer to God, college students also reap some immediate benefits—prayer steadies the mind, fasting develops strength of character, and service instills a broad sense of community. Crazy as it might seem, being an active and committed Orthodox Christian is one way to ensure success in college. This makes me pause, as a parent, wanting the best for my children. So often we are taught the Sunday morning soccer game or the Wednesday night school chorus rehearsal is what our high school students need if they are going to succeed in college. After three years as Executive Director of OCF, I seriously doubt that. Bringing our children to understand and practice our faith—being grounded in Christ—is more of a sure bet for success than a heap of extracurricular activities. The

strength of character that emerges from these practices allows our young students to succeed academically and socially, as well as grow up to be the next generation of a vibrant and flourishing Orthodox Church.

When a son or daughter packs up to go to college—that celebrated Western milestone—the experience is bittersweet for us Orthodox Christians. The strong bonds of the protecting, loving community of an Orthodox family and parish seem to be broken. OCF’s goal is to make sure that the transition to college includes a supportive new Orthodox peer group and a loving “home away from home.” Through the OCF chapter and the local parish, students can incorporate an Orthodox Christian practice into their college routine that not only brings them closer to God, but also provides them with tools to help them succeed in college and become leaders in their churches, communities and careers.

Jennifer Nahas is Executive Director of Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF). She has dedicated her career to improving the future prospects of youth, particularly in the field of college transition and retention. She is also the co-founder of Brigham Nahas Research Associates (BNRA), a firm specializing in providing evaluation, strategic planning and technical assistance to schools and organizations designed to help young people succeed in education. She has a Master’s of Management in Human Services. She and her family attend St. Mary Antiochian Church in Cambridge, MA.



HELPING CHILDREN UNDERSTAND & NAVIGATE AGING & DEATH

DESPINA STAVROS

Aging and death are inevitable and important parts of life that very few of us talk about with great enthusiasm. We are constantly bombarded with clichés like “40 is the new 30,” or, in my case, “50 is the new 40.” Advertisements are everywhere for the newest wrinkle creams, hair dyes, health supplements and even surgical procedures to help us look and feel younger. Aging and death are not exactly the part of life that our society embraces and looks forward to.

And yet children are witnesses to our aging and will learn how to embrace the process by watching how we relate to our own parents or grandparents, or how we respond when a close friend or loved one dies. It is important to keep our own insecurities, fears and maybe even negative experiences about death in check when we talk with our children. This article will attempt to focus on a parent’s role in helping a child understand aging and death.

When two of our daughters were young, we frequently drove past a local cemetery on our way to the mall. I recall feeling inadequate one cold winter day when Julianna, who was around six years old, pointed to the tombstones and asked, “Mommy, what are those things sticking out of the ground?” At this point in our life, we had not yet lost a loved one, and I began to feel a hot panic come over me. She persisted, and I quickly thought, “God help me. I want to be truthful, but I don’t want her to feel scared or overwhelmed with the answer I am about to give.” I also silently wondered why I had to be responsible for this huge answer, and not my husband! (But he did happen to get the “Where do babies come from?” question later on.)

I wasn’t prepared for that question, but the following words came to me. I told her that those were “memory stones,” and that they were special stones that have names written on them of people who had died and gone to heaven, so they would always be remembered. That was it. The conversation went no further at that time. That was enough information for my five- and six-year-old daughters in the back seat. And for the time being, I was extremely relieved.

It wasn’t until later, over time, that they fully learned about death. The death of our goldfish, seeing a squirrel dead on the road, attending the wake of a school friend’s dad, learning of their dance teacher’s son’s death, and the slow mental and physical deterioration of their very own papou. They learned that life on this earth is temporary, and that we would grieve and miss those who die. We also have learned to lean on the Orthodox Church, the saints, Holy Week and the memorial services to teach our children—and us adults. We are constantly reminded that those who pass on before us are still with us and God, and that we continue to pray for them, and ask that they pray for us. As parents, we don’t need to teach the very real concept of aging and death in an abstract way. This continued relationship becomes the reality.



Death is confusing for young children. Another experience we had was with our third daughter, Kyriaki, who was only seven at the time of her papou’s death. At the funeral, she clearly did not understand what was happening and why everyone was so sad. This was very stressful for her, and she cried. Her older cousin held her and gently explained to her what was happening and why we were so sad. She needed that hug and explanation and to be encouraged that Papou was okay and was with God now. There was no ideal way to talk to her, but the presence and comfort of her family made a huge impact.

Today, Kyriaki is ten and says she believes that “it’s important to know that everyone dies at some point, and not to be afraid of it...it’s not a bad thing.” Our youngest daughter, Georgia Faye (age five), added, “Yes, if you believe in God, you don’t die in heaven.” Out of the mouths of babes...

Despina Stavros is the mother of four daughters (ranging in age from five to twenty-two), a registered nurse, and the wife of Dr. George Stavros. They attend St. Gregory the Theologian Church in Mansfield, MA.



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Liturgy as Life: A Hands-on Experience



FOTIS PAPIRIS

One of the most challenging undertakings in working in Church, Sunday school, GOYA and camp programs is finding creative but simple ways to teach complex theological concepts. The following lesson is a way of teaching about the Holy Oblation (Proskomide) Service. Children—and adults—may find the service mysterious and likely know little about it.

The purpose of the Oblation service is to prepare the offerings of bread and wine given by members of the congregation for the purpose of being consecrated into the Body and Blood of Christ. The members of the congregation also bring in names of the Orthodox faithful, both living and dead. They are remembered in this service.

The Holy Oblation service is conducted during the Matins (Orthros) service, behind the iconostasis in the altar area. The service usually occurs in an apse on the left side of the altar. Here the priest or bishop prepares the offerings that will be consecrated later in the Liturgy. The faithful see the prepared gifts carried in a procession around the Church and into the altar during the Great Entrance, but the bread and the wine themselves are not visible because they are covered.

Although the session is a simple one, it can be used for all ages. It takes approximately forty-five minutes. It would be a good idea to have your parish priest take part in this activity. He can better explain the service and what each piece means.

Materials

- Plastic prosphoro seal
- Play-doh
- Plastic plates and knives
- Diskos, star, vessel cover and a finished prosphoro loaf

Directions

1. Give each student a ball of Play-doh, a plastic plate and a plastic knife.
2. Start by explaining what the prosphoro is: It is the offering made by the people. The prosphoron may be two pieces of dough baked on top of one another into a single loaf, representing how heaven and earth come together in the rite of the Divine Liturgy with the Holy Eucharist is offered.



3. Have the participants flatten the Play-doh out on their plate and stamp it with the seal. Explain what each piece of the seal means, while the demonstrating the procedure using the actual prosphoron:
 - a. The center square, marked IC XC NI KA, is the Lamb of God, the piece that will become the Body of Christ. Have participants cut this piece out and place it in front of them.
 - b. The large triangle represents the Holy Virgin, the Mother of God. Cut the triangle out and place it to the left of the Lamb.
 - c. Explain how beautiful it is to know that in each Divine Liturgy, all of the saints and people are prayed for. The nine smaller triangles are used to commemorate the nine orders of saints and angels in heaven: the Prophets, Apostles, Hierarchs, Martyrs, Monastic saints, Heal-

ers and all the Saints of the Church, especially those celebrated on that day. Cut these out and set them to the right of the Lamb.

- d. Very small pieces are cut and offered for each person that the priest remembers and prays for at that time. These are placed in front of the Lamb. This is why we submit names with our offering of the prosforo. One pile is made for those still living, and one for those who have already died.
4. Show the students how the star is placed on the diskos and then covered.
5. Next, introduce them to the Consecration service of the Liturgy, letting them know that everything on the diskos is placed into the Holy Cup, uniting all those commemorated with the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Have the students take home the Play-doh prosphoro so that they will be reminded of this lesson every time they come to church.

Fotis Papiris grew up attending St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Astoria, NY. He is a graduate of Hellenic College and is now a first-year seminarian at Holy Cross. He has been a counselor at Camp Saint Paul, the summer camping ministry of the Direct Archdiocesan District. To learn more, go to www.campsaintpaul.org

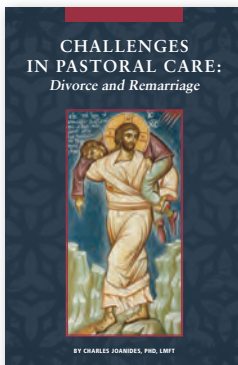
BOOK REVIEWS

REVIEWER: ANESTIS JORDANOGLOU

Challenges in Pastoral Care: Divorce and Remarriage

Rev. Dr. Charles Joanides

Father Charles Joanides's new book, *Challenges in Pastoral Care: Divorce and Remarriage* is a centered, sensible, informative and exceptionally helpful book for those interested in preserving their marriage in general. Its greatest value, however, is in the advice it holds for those who are on the verge of divorce and, through therapy, are hoping to avoid it. The book also appeals to a group not usually addressed by contemporary books on marriage: those who have recently remarried or are about to do so.



The book is broken into ten chapters, almost

all of which include case studies. All include questions for reflection and recommended readings, allowing the book to be used within a counseling context, or, at least for the first three chapters, for educational purposes.

The first three chapters, "Why Marriages Fail," "Myths about Divorce" and "Rethinking Divorce: Strategies that Can Help," establish the contextual framework of the remainder of the book. These chapters emphasize communication as central to recovering healthy relationships and reclaiming marital stability. They also systematically debunk much of the mythology surrounding divorce. Especially striking was Fr. Joanides's discrediting of the idea that divorce is a preferred option for unhappy couples and that it does limited collateral damage to the individuals, their families and especially their children.

The next five chapters engage the various pitfalls that can compromise a marriage, like financial mismanagement, or devastate a marriage, like infidelity and sexual addictions. The chapters are brief, coherent and, while not exhaustive, are meant to lead readers to resources that will help them progress along the path to recovery as a viable, loving couple.

The final two chapters, "Recovery from Divorce" and "Remarriage and Stepfamily Challenges," are a realistic examination of the grieving process once a divorce takes place and the challenges of the new family configurations that result. The challenges faced when remarriage occurs are especially interesting given the new family dynamics. If there were one weakness to this book, it would be that this chapter in particular needed to be longer.

Anestis Jordanoglou is Managing Editor of *PRAXIS*.

✠ Charles Joanides, *Challenges in Pastoral Care: Divorce and Remarriage* (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, 2013), 88 pages

The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity

Robert Louis Wilken

Christians are woefully ignorant of Christian history—especially the history of other Christians. Although it's a bit of a caricature to say so, Western Christians are woefully ignorant of Eastern Christianity (Orthodox, Oriental, etc.), and vice versa. Typically, Christian history is taught from the perspective on one side or the other, leaving the students with blinders about others. Occasionally Christian history becomes triumphalist. Seldom is Christian history taught from a holistic perspective, with East, West, Middle East, Asia, and so on taught as one story. Robert Louis Wilken has given us an accessible study of the first millennium of Christianity that includes all the sides. When the story is read as one, the reader leaves with a very different impression of Christian history that is not caught up with polemics, stereotypes or triumphalism.



Robert Louis Wilken was Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Virginia and the author of several other books on Christian history. The book is thorough, with thirty-six chapters. Each chapter covers one theme or element, such as “The Council of Nicaea and the Christian Creed” and “Architecture and Art.” The book is well documented and

rooted in many primary sources (supplemented by a timeline, maps, a bibliography and an index), but not so deeply as to overwhelm the nonspecialist.

In this presentation we see Christianity grow from a small community in Jerusalem to a global, world-shaping Church. As Wilken writes in the introduction, “The emergence of Christianity brought about one of the most profound revolutions the world has known, and the principal theme of this book is the slow drama of the building of a Christian civilization.” While the reader might at first think of this as a European phenomenon, Christianity spread throughout the world and was lived and practiced in lands that used Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Slavonic and Arabic, and even beyond into Central Asia, India and China.

Just as Philip Jenkins’s highly-praised *The Lost History of Christianity: The thousand-year Golden Age of the Church in Middle East, Africa, and Asia* opened the eyes to countless readers on a page of history that has been largely forgotten, Wilken’s text will enhance your perspective on the breadth and depth of Christianity. Of course, the rise of Islam, dealt with in many of the chapters, profoundly and permanently changed the course of Christian history in many of the places Wilken describes, but this too is part of the story.

As Wilken writes, “Christianity is transcultural and migratory, and each interaction

with a new people and language brought changes in how Christians practiced their faith. At the same time, Christian rituals such as baptism and the Eucharist, the Bible, the Nicene Creed, the office of bishop, and monasticism bound Christians in a spiritual unity that transcended the deep cultural differences.” Throughout the chapters, we see unity without uniformity. Christianity was different in all the places where it lived, and unless there were serious breaches of practice, the Churches largely lived harmoniously with one another. The reader will also see that the usual tale of a monolithic Christendom needs serious rethinking because the relationships among Churches were far more fluid than we realize. The author shows how the Christian world of the first 1,000 years was restricted in its ability to communicate—limited to letters, texts, personal visits of ambassadors and the like—a stark contrast to today’s highly networked world of instantaneous communication. As a result, Christianity was more of a network of communities than the highly-centralized institution most people imagine (something that would really only come about with the medieval Roman Catholic Church). These reflections and others make Wilken’s book and insightful and compelling read.

Anton C. Vrame, PhD, is Director of the Department of Religious Education.

✠ Robert Louis Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* (Yale University Press, 2012), 360 pages.

MINISTRY TO SENIOR CITIZENS: A GROWING OPPORTUNITY

DEAR READERS,

In a recent survey, Orthodox clergy were asked to describe how active their parishes were in various forms of ministry, such as Sunday school, youth work, service activities and so on. Absent from the list was ministry to the elderly. So unless the respondent considered “Fellowships and other social activities” as a ministry to the elderly, our parishes are underserving an already large and number of parishioners.

The intent of this issue of *PRAXIS* is to lift up this topic for discussion and possible action in the life of the Church. We also hope to remind our readers of the many retired clergy (bishops, priests and deacons) and *presvyteres* in our community. They still deserve our honor and respect for their contribution to the Church in America.

As we all know, the number of people over sixty years of age in our society is growing quickly. The Baby Boomers are reaching what our society has traditionally called old age, but with their better health and increased longevity, now sixty or seventy, and sometimes even eighty, is hardly an “old.” Ministry to the elderly is a growing opportunity for the Church in the next generation.

Some parishes are already involved with ministry to the elderly. There are “Golden Age” organizations in some parishes, regularly gathering seniors for fellowship and more. In some areas of the United States, the Orthodox community is cooperating to create retirement and nursing homes, such as the long-running St. Michael’s Home in Yonkers, NY, the Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehabilitation Center–Holy Trinity Hospice in Worcester, MA, or the Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre in Wheeling, IL. I’m sure there are others as well. But nursing homes are just a first step. There will be needs for other kinds of living arrangements (for example, independent senior and assisted living) and programs (education, service, retreats) that meet the unique needs of elders. Our Church has created a few of these already, but

the growing numbers of elderly in our society will only reveal that more will be needed.

The great psychologist Erik Erikson theorized that a key challenge of growing old is reflecting on one’s past and making sense of it all. The challenge is creating a sense of integrity, that is, integrating the pieces, connecting the dots and putting the pieces together so that a life has a sense of wholeness and fulfillment. Clearly the Church and the resources of our Orthodox Faith have an important role in that process. Our Faith is filled with wisdom about life, from its approach to forgiveness and reconciliation, its understanding of illness and death, and its powerful message of thanksgiving, hope and salvation.

Given the demographics of the aging Baby Boomers, the Church will include many more aging parishioners for the next twenty-five or thirty years, many with new needs and differing capabilities than earlier generations. The Church must be ready to meet the challenges and needs the Baby Boomers present.

Anton C. Vrame, PhD
Director



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.....ask PRAXIS

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