

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH Parish Newsletter

New Parish Center: 20937 Ashburn Rd., #110, Ashburn, VA February 2018

FEBRUARY—DAY 11 HOURS, NIGHT 13

THE WEEKS OF MARK

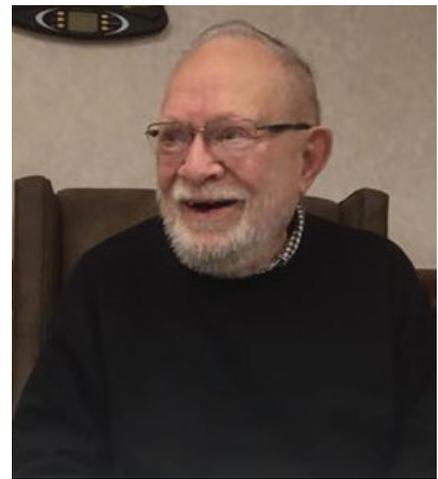
Н НЕДЕЛИ ТЕСАРАКОСТИ • ВЕЛИКАЯ ЧЕТЫРЕДЕСЯТНИЦА
QUADRAGESIMA

BEGIN THE GREAT FORTY DAYS

- 19 Mon *Day I*
- 21 Wed 7:00 p.m. Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts *followed by a pot-luck meal.*
- 25 Sun **SUNDAY I: CHRIST, MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN** (John 1.43–51)
 10:00 a.m. Communal Confession Rite—*first of two*
 10:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Ellmore**
 5:00 p.m. Penitential Vespers
- 28 Wed 7:00 p.m. PreSanctified Liturgy *followed by a pot-luck meal.*

MARCH—DAY 12 HOURS, NIGHT 12 (THE VERNAL EQUINOX FALLS ON 20 MARCH)

- 2 Fri 7:00 p.m. Parástasis—*Coming to the side of the deceased*
- 3 Sat Saturday^{II} of Souls
- 4 Sun **SUNDAY II: CHRIST, SOURCE OF FORGIVENESS AND HEALING** (Mark 2.1–12)
 10:00 a.m. Communal Confession Rite—*second of two*
 10:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Hawkins**
 5:00 p.m. Penitential Vespers
- 7 Wed 7:00 p.m. PreSanctified Liturgy, *followed by a pot-luck meal.*
- 9 Fri 7:00 p.m. Parástasis—*Coming to the side of the deceased*
- 10 Sat Saturday^{III} of Souls **Daylight Saving Time begins tomorrow**
- 11 Sun **SUNDAY III: CROSS OF CHRIST, COMPASSIONATE HIGH PRIEST** (Mark 8.34–9.1)
 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Krisa**
 6:00 p.m. Penitential Vespers
- 14 Wed 7:00 p.m. PreSanctified Liturgy, *followed by a pot-luck meal.*
- 16 Fri 7:00 p.m. Parástasis—*Coming to the side of the deceased*
- 17 Sat Saturday^{IV} of Souls
- 18 Sun **SUNDAY IV: CHRIST, WITH THE FATHER, OUR SURE HOPE** (Mark 9.17–31)
 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Matyuf**
 6:00 p.m. Penitential Vespers
- 21 Wed 7:00 p.m. PreSanctified Liturgy, *followed by a pot-luck meal.*
- 23 Fri 7:00 p.m. Akathist Hymn
- 24 Sat Saturday^V of the Akathist Hymn (*the Annunciation celebrated*)
- 25 Sun **SUNDAY V: CHRIST, SACRIFICE SEALING A NEW COVENANT** (Mark 10.32–45)
 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Miller**
 6:00 p.m. Penitential Vespers
- 30 Fri **DAY 40—END THE GREAT FORTY DAYS. The 14th of Nissan (=full moon),**
at sundown begins the Pasch of the Law
 7:00 p.m. PreSanctified Liturgy, *followed by a pot-luck meal.*
- 31 Sat Saturday^{VI} of Lazarus (John 11.1–45)

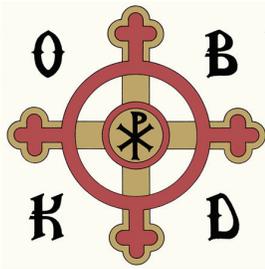


So what did we do yesterday [January 14] after Liturgy?

We drove to Canonsburg, PA, to visit with his Beatitude Metropolitan Theodosius (retired First Hierarch of the Orthodox Church in America) whom I have know since I was 5 years old, and had the distinct honor, blessing and humble experience of being his Personal Aide and Sub-deacon for 7 years! Thank you, Dear *Vladýko* [Master], for your continued love, prayers, support, guidance and service. We love you and pray for you. Many Years! Axios! [*Things were different when Kyr Theodosius was First Hierarch of the OCA. —Ed.*]
 —Jason Vansuch

Annual Business Meeting

The OCA Front Office in Syosset, New York, will be pleased to learn our community approved a new set of by-laws that in effect bring our parish into conformity with other parishes in this jurisdiction. At that January 28 meeting we also approved a 2018 budget of \$106,000, less than a grand more than we took in last year. Generous as our parishioners are, we are still operating a tad in the red. And regarding our participation in the OCA convention in St. Louis in July (sending a delegate and peddling our books), and just how to mark our fortieth anniversary we left to a later date. Also, we elected Matthew Matyuf, Gregory Honshul, and Nancy Williams to the Parish Council



ORTHODOXE BISCHOFSKONFERENZ IN DEUTSCHLAND

A Letter from the Bishops of the Orthodox Church in Germany to Young People concerning Love – Sexuality – Marriage

*On the day that God made Adam,
he made him in the likeness of God.
Male and female he made them,
he blessed them and he named them 'man.'
(Genesis 5.1–2)*

Dear young Orthodox Christians in Germany,

As bishops of your Church in Germany we wish to speak about some topical issues in this letter which is written specifically for you. The world is moving ever closer together. And the burning issues of our time come increasingly to the fore. They are of profound concern to human existence – your existence: God places the present and the future in your hands.

1. We live in a country in which the individual has the opportunity to develop in freedom and dignity. In the course of human history that was not always the case. In many countries of the earth it is still not the case today. The fact that we live in Germany, where peace, freedom, democracy and human rights are taken for granted, can be considered as God's blessing.

Against the background of religious extremism, which in many places is threatening to intensify, we are called as Christians to do all in our power to defend those values. They are in accord with the concept of man which is expressed in Holy Scripture and in the Tradition of our Church: that man was made in the image of God (Gen 1:27). In the ability of human beings to decide for themselves, we see one of the characteristics of this divine image.

2. This freedom is a gift of immense value which is necessarily associated with complete responsibility. Responsibility is inseparably bound up with freedom. This applies to all areas of life, including the question of whether to live one's life alone or within a partnership, and of course to the search for a partner. With that is connected a series of questions, e.g. concerning sexuality, marriage, the difference between marriage at a registry office and marriage in the Church, etc. These questions concern each one of us profoundly and personally, since everyone

has the freedom to determine his or her own way in life.

The following considerations are intended to provide support, since every individual ought to be free to decide his or her own way in life. They encourage a responsible approach to tackling these questions and promote the dialogue within our Church.

3. One of the best-known and best-loved passages in the Bible is Chapter 13 of the First Epistle of the holy Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, also called the 'Song of Love'. There, the holy Apostle describes love as a power which leads to the overcoming of a person's own egoism. How? «Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails». (1 Corinthians 13.4–8) Consequently love leads to the perfection of one's own personhood and to recognition of the truth. So it is more valuable than every other virtue: «And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love». (1 Corinthians 13.13)

In this spirit, love towards another person is an unconditional gift: When I love, I no longer place myself at the centre of my existence. Love is entire and dynamic and more than 'butterflies in the tummy.' It assumes and translates into action the following words of Christ: «For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So then, they are no longer two but one flesh». (cf. Matthew 19.5–6)

4. In modern times many young men and women have sexual relations before marriage. Against this background, many people ask how the Orthodox Church judges the situation. The role of our Church is to accompany her faithful with spiritual advice, not to formulate rules in a mechanical way. This is not a charter for sexual permissiveness. We emphasise: It is very important to behave with responsibility; responsibility concerning one's own sexuality, the sexuality of one's partner, and also the consequences of sexual life; responsibility towards oneself, to society and before God. In this spirit the holy Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians: «Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own». (1 Corinthians 6.19)

This chapter of the letter to the Corinthians is devoted to the freedom which comes from association with Christ and which can be lived in marriage which is blessed by God. Thus we wish that your love will be crowned by a church wedding, that in consequence a Christian family will come into being, and that you will learn to honour, protect and support life, including newly developing life. In



Miniature, Wedding Feast at Cana, Syriac, ca.1220 A.D.

this context we point out that from the time of conception the embryo is a human being.

We appeal to you: Don't withhold your questions. Give them voice. Discuss them with competent people. Open discussions can help us to know ourselves better and to arrive at a decision. Talking is beneficial for the soul. We call upon you especially to seek a dialogue with an experienced spiritual adviser. Our Orthodox Church has a long tradition of spiritual and therapeutic dialogue. Today also, in an age of electronic media, this can be a great help.

5. We live in a country in which, as a rule, an Orthodox Christian marriage only takes place after the couple have been married at a registry office. The civil marriage has the purpose of giving the husband and wife the protection of the civil law.

For us Christians, marriage is to do with God's love which Jesus Christ showed by his incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. Therefore for a person who believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, marriage is more than a worldly matter, and obviously much more than the wedding celebrations. It actually requires a promise of lifelong faithfulness, and that the relationship between the marriage partners should be brought into a union with Christ. Marriage partners are called upon to accept

their relationship as a gift from God, and to perceive it as one form of expression of the mutual love which is to be lived in the Church of Christ. The extent of this is made clear in the wedding service as well, by the crowning of bride and bridegroom with each other and for each other. In order to give expression to this understanding, the Holy Apostle Paul goes back to the image of the union between Christ and His Church, and calls it a mystery: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (from the Apostle reading at the Rite of Crowning, Ephesians 5.32).

In a wedding service there are also prayers at several points that God will grant fruitfulness to the married couple. Our Orthodox Church blesses the desire for children and regards the child as a gift from God. However, even without children a marriage is holy and complete. We are of the opinion that it is a necessary part of a responsible Christian life to consider the size of one's family. It must be remembered here that for Orthodox Christians, abortion, i.e. the killing of a living organism, cannot and must not come into consideration, either in family planning or otherwise.

Marriage preparation with the parish priest will cover all these aspects. Such conversations are more than a formality before the wedding and should take place before starting to make practical preparations for the marriage celebrations.

6. In a pluralistic society such as Germany, marriages between Orthodox and other Christians are not uncommon. These are described as 'inter-denominational'. In recent decades such marriages have contributed to meetings and mutual acquaintance. Furthermore they show that it is possible to bring up children with respect towards differing traditions. Practical questions concerning inter-denominational marriages were dealt with in the documents that we have approved together with the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church in Germany. But they also require the accompanying discussion.

These marriages also have their challenges: thus, in the documents just mentioned, the question of reception of Holy Communion together remains unresolved. The position of our Church is still: Such reception is only possible if there is complete unity in faith. Such unity is not present in inter-denominational marriages. Here we are all confronted with a situation which is painful and manifests itself as a theological challenge. This has to be acknowledged in all honesty. And so we ask God to help us soon to overcome the separation and to find our way to the unity of all.

7. The situation is still more complicated with the question of a marriage with a non-Christian partner. Such marriages are called 'inter-faith.' Here a common Christian foundation is lacking. In some cases inter-faith partnerships

and marriages trigger conflicts which can lead to the exclusion of the affected person. Here again the treasure of the freedom which God has given to human beings should be called to mind. The compulsion to distance oneself on religious grounds from the person one loves is not in keeping with the freedom which every human being has received because he or she was made in the image of God. (Genesis 1.27) For inter-faith partnerships, civil marriage forms a practicable way. It represents a legal safeguard and guarantees that the marriage partners have the same rights. But for people who believe in God and are of the view that their marriage should stand under the blessing of God, civil marriage is as a rule too little. They long for a religious ceremony through which it becomes definite that God blesses their relationship. Such a ceremony on the part of our Church is in fact not possible, because the basis of the celebration of the mystery of marriage is faith in the Triune God. But we regard this longing as fully justified. For this reason the Orthodox Church in Germany will also accompany inter-faith couples on their journey through life, provided that this is welcome, and is always ready to support them with word and deed. Furthermore we encourage these couples to talk completely openly and constructively with each other, before and after the wedding, about questions which arise out of their religious difference, e.g. bringing up children.

8. A burning issue today is the question of homosexuality and homosexual partnerships. That this topic is discussed openly in our society can in principle be seen as a good thing. For homosexual men and women were ignored for centuries, and even oppressed and persecuted, as for instance in the time of National Socialism.

In Holy Scripture, both in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament, there are statements against homosexuality [*It is true that the Scriptures here and there condemn certain same-sex activity, but the concept, the -ality of homosexuality, is a modern concept, unknown to the sacred authors, the term being coined in the 1890s.—Ed.*]. The value of these statements is the subject of controversial debate today. In the tradition of our Church too, numerous expressions [*these fall into the area of opinion—Ed.*] against homosexuality are to be found. Like any physical inclination, this one too is overcome by exercising restraint, the moderation of unbridled passions, and chaste asceticism, such as we learn in fasting. What is certain is that we are largely in ignorance about how homosexuality arises. It is possible that, for instance, genetic, psychological and cultural factors might be involved, but **in reality** there is no clarity about what role these factors play or what relationship they have one to another.

Since according to Orthodox understanding the mystery of marriage requires a union between man and woman,

and goes beyond a purely social view, the marriage of homosexual couples is not possible in our Church. Frank questions relating to homosexual men and women belong in the realm of spiritual welfare and tactful guidance by the Church. For all men are made in the image of God. Therefore all people are to be accorded that respect which is in keeping with the existence of this divine image in mankind. This applies also to **our parishes, which are requested to show love and respect to all men and women.**

Conclusion

9. In the society in which we live, there are constantly changes taking place. Those ones in which we see the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we welcome. Today, though, the traditional family faces radical challenges. Faithful to the word of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians: “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5.21), we are all, dear young Orthodox Christians, continually called upon afresh to represent, and above all to live out, the human image of our Orthodox faith.

The description of the family as the ‘Church in miniature,’ the primordial cell of the Church in its totality, is still for us forward-looking.

God bless you!

Frankfurt am Main, 12th December 2017

Kyr Augoustinos of [Bonn] Germany, Patriarchal Ex-arch of Central Europe, Chairman, and the other members of the Orthodox Bishops’ Conference in Germany.

—Brought to our attention
by Father Valery Shemchuk, St. Nicholas

Father Laurence of New Skete, of blessed memory: His reflection on the import of the Great Forty Days.

The greatest, by far the most important, celebration of the Christian year is, of course, the paschal *triduum*. This solemn three-day festival is itself preceded by the Great Fast, the penitential period wherein the Church presents us with the opportunity for further spiritual growth and understanding. The Forty Days draws each believer to a renewed nourishment of faith through the practices of the penitential season. Sincerity for Christians committed to the Lord and the kingdom is underlined as crucial to this journey we make toward greater growth and development as Christians. We are confronted once more by the questions of who God is and what is the nature and quality of our ongoing relationship with him. It is, then, a time of serious meditation and reflection, as well as an intense time for carrying out all the corrections necessary to increase our life in the spirit, to facilitate this growth. The whole of this period is exemplified for us, first and foremost, in the person of Jesus Christ himself. From the moment of his testing in the desert to his crucifixion and

death, his life prompts us to greater effort in seeking God and the establishment of his kingdom within our individual souls first, and then, in the community. He is, of course, the ultimate example leading us toward more abundant life, for he manifests his love for us in every aspect of his life. The whole message, then, of the penitential season is that we must, in fact, put on Christ. There is no room here for equivocation. It is simply a matter of perceiving the reality, coming to understand what it really involves, and engaging with all the means at our disposal to bring it about. Here, we might note that many seem to misunderstand the meaning of putting on Christ. The loss or obliteration of our personalities is certainly not what this is about, nor does it involve some sort of affected religiosity. The basic shape of our character remains stable, but the whole of our person is still somehow reformed, refined, and integrated. As we grow in this process, a transformation of our whole reality gradually comes about and the moral and spiritual quality of our growth in Christ is clearly visible to those who really know us. There is not the slightest hint of religious fanaticism present here, nor does our behavior smack of any kind of showing off. It is clear—to us, first of all—that we have accorded God his proper place of priority in our lives; we no longer think of him simply accidentally, as an aside. We become more and more conscious of being in his presence, though in no way does this distract us from the necessary concerns of life. This consciousness is something that grows in its own quiet way. Our being good Christians, good human beings has nothing exaggerated or artificial about it. Therefore, our religious practice, if and when visible to others, does not repel them or cause them embarrassment, for it is something totally part of us. It is not something that we try in any way to impose on others. We are still who we were, gregarious perhaps and full of fun, but there is something else about us now that the observant eye can discern. Indeed, any exterior changes that are manifest in our person have come about only because of the deep-seated interior conversion that we have undergone, though this conversion has not been anything dramatic. At the core of our being, where we are who we are—this is where the new person has been born. Putting on Christ, then, is what the Great Fast is about. It is not about some sort of competitiveness, whether with others or ourselves. It is not a contest to stand out among fellow believers. All the practices of the period are simply means to the end of putting on Christ. The entire penitential period incites us to rise up from our lethargy, to do something mature and adult about all that we have learned and are learning about being Christians. It urges us to put all this into an intense and living practice. It is not sufficient simply to be present at the services physically, while our minds and hearts are elsewhere. It is not sufficient to mouth prayers with-



Nathan Leads David to Repentance, miniature, *Psalter* (Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, gr. 139, Constantinople, X century)

out entering into them in the deepest manner to make them part of our very being. It incites us to stop being mere believers and to be believers in the most radical sense, believers who live their faith. This is, of course, the call sent out to each of us and to which we must each respond as individuals. Without this response of the individual, there cannot be a community response. And yet, the individual is called to respond personally within the context of the believing community. And what are the methods that the Church uses in calling us to this radical change of our lives? The first, traditional, practice is of fasting. Fasting from food and drink has always been a significant aspect of religious practice in all religions of any seriousness. The physical abstinence from food certainly induces in the very chemistry of life a severe disruption of the ordinary, a kind of violence that is not part of our normal everyday routine. This, in turn, jolts us into waking up, into finally becoming conscious in more than a simply biological way. It is the violent, says Jesus, who bear away the kingdom of heaven, and this ascetic practice of lessening our intake of food and drink is a sure way of enabling us to take the kingdom by force, for it brings the body, first of all, into obedience to the spirit. Still, fasting is not something that should be allowed to impair our health, much less to destroy our physical lives. All fasting has to be done in moderation, determined by wisdom. Exaggerated practices are to be assiduously avoided, for the Fast is not a call to irrationality, much less an invitation to ruin our health, physical or mental. Nor are we called to competition with others. The Fast is

not an exercise in pride or self-satisfaction! As a matter of fact, the whole spiritual life calls us to the eminent and correct use of our reason. Fasting, of course, is both formal and informal. To begin with, the Church presents us with a pattern for daily fasting. This is observed publicly by all who take the penitential period seriously, according to the traditions of the local church and insofar as their overall health permits. But there are other patterns of physical fasting, *i.e.*, when each of us personally, and in the secrecy of our own personal, private world, practice small but meaningful acts of self-denial from food and drink. All of which is geared to heightening the control we have over our entire selves. Fasting is, then, a conspicuous feature of the season's topography. But it is not the only feature. For fasting itself can be understood in more ways than the physical, than the simple and literal abstention from food and drink. We are positively directed to other kinds of fasting. The first such other form of fasting is the authentic change of mind called repentance, the "queen of virtues." Here is the cornerstone, the first change that must take place in us. Repentance is a process, a dynamism that is ongoing throughout our life. By repentance, we are brought face to face with formerly unsuspected aspects of everything. We are called to change our minds and our ways of acting with reference to everything we think and do. It is indeed the queen of virtues, for it holds the key to the development of all the other virtues. It was the first invitation of Jesus: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! We are further called to self-control and moderation on a variety of other levels, both physical and spiritual, both external and internal. Included in fasting is the control of the mind, of learning how to exercise greater and greater mastery of one's thoughts as well as actions. This latter form of self-denial, the refusal to allow the mind to wander wherever it pleases, the control of one's thoughts, is extremely necessary to growth in the spiritual life. It is something that we all find lacking in ourselves though it is a crucial lynchpin in building an authentic inner life, because it is the key to learning discretion and attaining emotional maturation. Self-control and self-denial in all forms, then, are the domain of fasting. A further physical practice employed during the days of the Fast is the prostration (in Greek, *metánia*; in Slavonic, *poklón*). These extreme bows whereby one falls to the floor are another method of bringing the body under control. If we have never exercised sufficient control over the body, we find it extremely difficult to exercise the control required for these prostrations. This is one of the costs of having consumed food and drink indiscriminately and having failed to engage in moderate exercise on a regular basis. The Great Fast is, then, an opportunity to correct this, as far as our health permits, for the season is not aimed solely at the

inner life, but at the renovation of the whole person. But another of the great features of the season's landscape is the call to authenticate our prayer life. By this we understand not so much a call to more prayers as a call to a better, deeper, more intense and more consciously conscious relationship with God. During this time, we are asked to reconsider our whole life and the way we relate to God as we meet him in the person of our neighbor. Here, after all, is the arena in which the authenticity of our love is verified. For this reason, the texts of the penitential services are rich with poetic images to inspire us toward this process of advancement in prayer, which is simply another way of describing the spiritual life. Some of these poetic texts, by their references to various Scriptural passages, especially those that show the Lord in action, draw us into the dynamic of living for and in the kingdom of God. Others may call our attention to the various ways in which we consciously or otherwise fail to live as we should before God. The individual's participation in the communal celebration of services creates an atmosphere or tonality of life whereby the penitential struggle is made more palatable and palpable, less onerous and therefore more acceptable, precisely because we do it all of us together. The services are a continual reminder to us of what the season is about and of how crucial it is for us to engage in this period sincerely and with determination. These services bring us to a better knowledge of God through a growing knowledge of Christ, and this colors, elevates, and increases our knowledge of ourselves. Thus we are able to form ourselves according to the pattern we find in Christ. In other words, we actually put on Christ. It preserves repentance as a true labor of love, preventing it from degenerating into some kind of grim self-disdain and joylessness. We see the prodigal in ourselves and we recognize the loving and forgiving Father as described by his Son, the only true theologian. All this, then, provides a texture and fabric created by the threads of repentance, vigilance, watchfulness, self-control, conscientious worship, and an experience of living in a community characterized by the concern of the members for each other. It is an incentive and reminder of the courage needed to live out a meaningful and fruitful life, and it draws us away from the dangers and pitfalls of laziness, forgetfulness, and discouragement. The whole season, then, is a blessing from the Lord, just as one of the hymns describes it, and it is ours from which to draw the greatest profit. In closing this very brief consideration of the nature of the penitential experience, it is of paramount importance to recall that we are not simply dealing with something that we do for forty days and then go back to our old ways of living. The idea of the season is to make lasting changes in our life. Thus, lent is not unlike the unrolling of a long carpet that stretches out into the

rest of our time here on earth. We lay down, as it were, a new carpet with new aspects of ongoing repentance each year, and, with our own determination reinforced by the help of God, we grow constantly as the weeks and months go by. And this, after all is said and done, is what human life is about—to grow into what the Lord expects of us.

—From his Preface to *Hymns fo Repentance*,
New Skete 2000

**REPORT:
ALMOST HALF OF OUR BISHOPS IN THE USA
REJECT ORTHODOX UNITY**

by Giacomo Sanfilippo

February 15, 2018

8th Annual Assembly, October 2017, Garfield NJ

On January 30 the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America announced the release of a study entitled “Orthodox Christian Churches in 21st Century America: A Parish Life Study” by Alexei Krindatch, the Assembly’s research coordinator. The announcement includes the link for both the 4-page Executive Summary and the 163-page Full Report.

Yesterday I had a look to see if the report had (a) anything to say about the growing spectre of white supremacy in the American Church (it doesn’t), and (b) information useful for a conference paper that I might propose, tentatively entitled “Orthodox Ecclesiology vs. Lived Experience: Some Thoughts on the Ethnic Fragmentation of the Orthodox Church in North America.” What I found on the latter topic was frankly shocking.

On page 2 of the Executive Summary my eyes fastened on this sentence:

A significantly higher percentage of American Orthodox priests (71%) than bishops (58%) envision the future of Orthodoxy in America in the form of an administratively united Church.

On page 45 of the Full Report we read the following statement:

In the Antiochian Archdiocese, there is a discrepancy between the attitudes of priests and hierarchs towards Church unity in America. 78% of AOCA parish clergy support the creation of an administratively united Church in comparison with only 28% of AOCA bishops [emphasis mine].

These statistics stand in sharp contrast to the following from the About page on the Assembly’s website:

The purpose of the Assembly of Bishops of the United States of America is to preserve and contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church.... To accomplish this, the Assembly has...as an express goal...the organization of the Church in the United States in accordance with the ecclesiological and the canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church.

...[T]he Assembly is a transitional body. If it achieves its goal, it will make itself obsolete by developing a proposal for the canonical organization of the Church in the United States. [...T]he Assembly of Bishops will then come to an end, ultimately to be succeeded by a governing Synod of a united Church in the United States.

Herein lies the question that cries out for an answer: How can 42% of the Assembly’s member bishops, and a whopping 72% of the bishops of one of the two most evangelism-minded jurisdictions in the US, reject the Assembly’s goal of a canonically organized territorial Orthodox Church of the United States?



These statistics may explain the surprisingly small number of bishops in the photo above. As reported here by the Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, a mere 32 bishops attended the October 2017 Assembly. I believe (but cannot now locate my source) that there are between 50 and 60 Orthodox bishops serving in canonical jurisdictions in the United States.

The situation in Canada is much worse. Here in Toronto alone, I can count 9 or 10 canonical bishops off the top of my head—some of them resident somewhere in Canada, some not—who have one or more parishes under their omophorion. The bishop of a canonical old calendar diocese once informed me personally that it was absurd (his word) for a member of his flock to attend—even as an occasional visitor—divine services in the parish of a canonical new calendar diocese: to be clear, we are talking about parishes in two jurisdictions which are in full communion with each other.

We hear rumours of the existence of an “Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of Canada,” which perhaps (or perhaps not) meets annually. The website of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto lists the member bishops of a “Canadian Conference of Orthodox Bishops (see the PDF for the full list); whether this is one of the episcopal assemblies established by the 4th Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in June 2009 in Chambésy, or some other organization, remains unclear. Google shows no trace of the Canadian bishops ever meeting or engaging in unified activities of any kind. A few years ago a photo of such a meeting appeared on the website of the Greek Metropolis, but I have not been able to find it again since the first time I saw it.

If an Assembly in fact exists in Canada, it is to be noted first and foremost for its invisibility.

I have no concluding remarks. Rather, it is my hope that sharing these facts will generate a robust debate among our bishops, clergy, monastics, theologians, and lay faithful on both sides of the US–Canada border.

—*Giacomo Sanfilippo is a PhD student in Theological Studies at Trinity College in the University of Toronto and an editor at Orthodoxy in Dialogue. American-born and a long-time resident of Canada, he maintains a deep interest in social, political, cultural, and ecclesiastical developments on both sides of the border.*

Regarding the Eucharistic fast for the PreSanctifieds, and related matters.

As we have been doing these many years, there will be potluck meals following the PreSanctifieds. Bring what you can, *if you can*. But come. There is always plenty of food.

Regarding the fast (these are the guidelines put forward so many years ago by Bishop Basil Rodzianko), keep the Eucharistic fast as best you can. If not from morning, at least from lunchtime. (Fasting for the entire day is not all that difficult, though some may disagree—*Ed.*) As for older children: let them have a small snack when they come home from school. (Fasting is not for younger children, the ill, or the elderly.) Common sense applies.

Keep it simple.

Here’s what a modern *Priest’s Service Book* (Church of Greece, Athens, 1962, pg. 211) has to say:

“The Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified, realized for the sanctification of the faithful, is served every Wednesday and Friday of the Great Forty Days, . . . Thursday of the Great Canon, [and] Great Monday, Great Tuesday, and Great Wednesday. . . .

“The Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified is served always after the Ninth Hour, at Vespers, **because of the all-day fast**. It is done usually by a single priest, alone, without a deacon. . . .

“While the Ninth Hour is being read, priestly ministers take leave and enter the sanctuary and put on simple **black vestments**, but **no** [pectoral] **crosses** or priestly awards. . . .”

Apostrophe on the word *fast*.

Fast is a Germanic word. Primarily it means abstaining from food; secondarily it means eating sparingly or abstaining from some foods. It comes into the Slavic languages as *пост*, *post*. The Greek word is *νηστεία*, *nēsteia*, and it means the same thing: not eating, and, secondarily, not eating some foods.

Everyone knows the basic meaning of the word *fast*. The doctor tells you he wants you to come in for a blood test *fasting*, you know he means that you should eat nothing when you get up on the morning and that you will have nothing to eat until after the test. Fasting is *not eating*. And, fasting is *from the morning*—*not the night before*.

From antiquity Christians would keep a fast by not eating all day and then taking a meal in the evening. It’s the original idea behind the Wednesday/Friday fast. This is biblical stuff.

One can imagine that whatever spiritual benefits derive from fasting would come to a person regardless of how he broke his fast; in other words, regardless of what he ate.

One can fast for a day. One can fast for a period of time. The Great Forty Days for example.

One may fast—not eat all day, then eat—Monday through Friday. One may not fast—not eat all day, then eat—on the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day. The Church nixes Saturdays and Sundays. Not at first, but very early in her history. It’s why the Liturgy is served Sunday *mornings*—to minimize and confine the Eucharistic fast. The first Ecumenical Council (Nikaia, 325 A.D.) makes

an exception for the Holy and Great Sabbath which, a thousand years ago, was a day of fasting that concluded in the evening with Vespers with the Divine Liturgy during which neophytes were baptized and the Resurrection celebrated—everyone took holy Communion. (One can appreciate that the fast on this Saturday—like the eves of the Nativity and Theophany—was a *Eucharistic* fast leading into the feast.)

So. One fasts—one does not eat all day, then eats—Monday through Friday. Additionally, at the same time, one abstains from certain foods—*e.g.*, meat, dairy, *etc.* This is the only aspect of a fast period that continues over Saturday and Sunday. To use more precise language for our situation today: one *fasts*—one does not eat, then eats—and one *abstains*—one does not eat certain foods. Together they make up the Orthodox Christian notion of keeping a fast. Interestingly enough, these terms turn up in the hymnography we sing during the time of the Great Fast.

Abstinence

For most of us today what “fasting” we do is better termed *abstinence*. Abstaining from meat. Abstaining from dairy. Unfortunately this has led to label reading as an exercise in seasonal piety. Furgedaboutit.

Fr. Meyendorff came down heavily on label reading. He called label reading phariseeism. “Do what you can,” he would say. Want to do more? Do more of what the Church’s tradition counsels us to do. Enter more deeply

into what the Church around the world is doing. Prayer. Fasting. Almsgiving. Eschew silly—foreign—notions. Like “Giving up Coke.” Or “Giving up chocolate.” Or some such. Pious solipsism. What value can there be in that? Better, think of fasting as training for the race, for the Christian life. Think of it as the nourishment for a sovereign spirit (remember? Psalm 50? verse 14?): for self-control, for prudence, and perseverance

We are a community of dependent creatures. No food and we’re done for. Fasting and abstinence have worthwhile spiritual and moral goals. The Orthodox world is full of SOBs who fast by the book. And they are still SOBs. Let us do everything and anything to avoid that.

One last word.

Illness brings its own asceticism.

Fasting in the strict sense, as we said, is not for the old or the very young. Neither is it for the sick and those with chronic conditions. Some medications require food. Another example, a diabetic; his/her slowed-down digestion requires a number of small meals during the course of a day to ease up on one’s pancreas and help manage the disease. So, nix to fasting. But yes to the self-discipline needed to manage disease.

On the other hand, while young growing bodies and organs need nutrition, a child 12 or 13 should be able to keep the Eucharistic fast on a Sunday morning. There are unofficial canons that would punish parents with a real fast for failing to observe this. —pnh

As we have been doing, we will hold TWO Communal Confession Rites on two consecutive Sundays: February 25 and March 4.

The Pasch is coming (April 6,7,8) and the Church would prepare herself to celebrate the Death and Resurrection of the Lord by committing herself anew to the Baptism by which she is united to him. From time immemorial, through the reading of the Gospel, the Church has been calling her sons and daughters to renew themselves through confession and a season of penitence so that, come the Great and Holy Week, all come together with one heart and one mind in baptismal renewal with the same song on their lips.

So pick a Sunday. When we come together we evangelize one another. Come on time. Come in the right frame of mind. Bear witness to our younger members. Let us open our hearts to the word of Christ. And remember: children are welcome, but none under age 10.

An Exhortation from the Apostle.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in **running the race that lies before us** while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. **For the sake of the joy that lay before him** he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12.1–2)

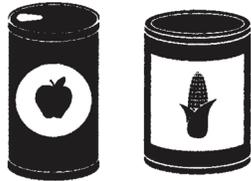


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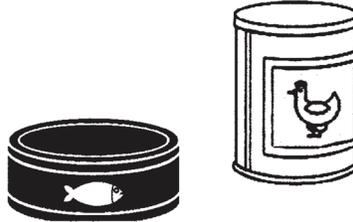
Food for today. Hope for tomorrow.

FOOD PANTRY MOST NEEDED ITEMS

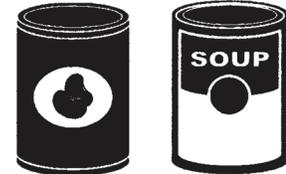
Canned Fruits & Veggies



Canned Meat



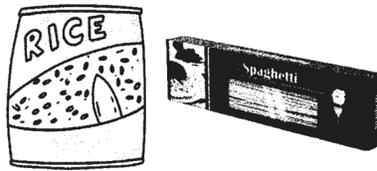
Canned Beans & Soup



Cereal



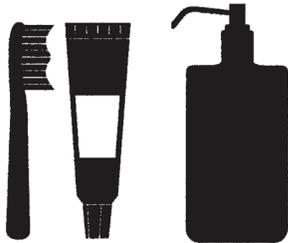
Whole Grain Pasta & Rice



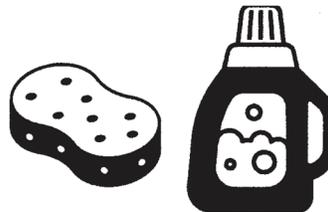
Peanut Butter



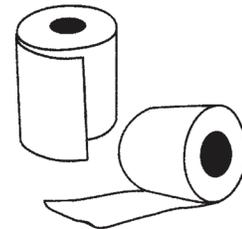
Hygiene Items



Household Items



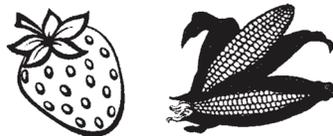
Paper Products



Cooking Oil



Fresh Fruits & Vegetables



Other

Diapers Fruit Cups
 Wipes Granola Bars
 Formula Popcorn
 Infant Cereal
 Nutritional Shakes
 and Drinks

PopTop Cans and Microwavable Cups Preferred
Low Sodium • Low Trans Fat • Sugar Free

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