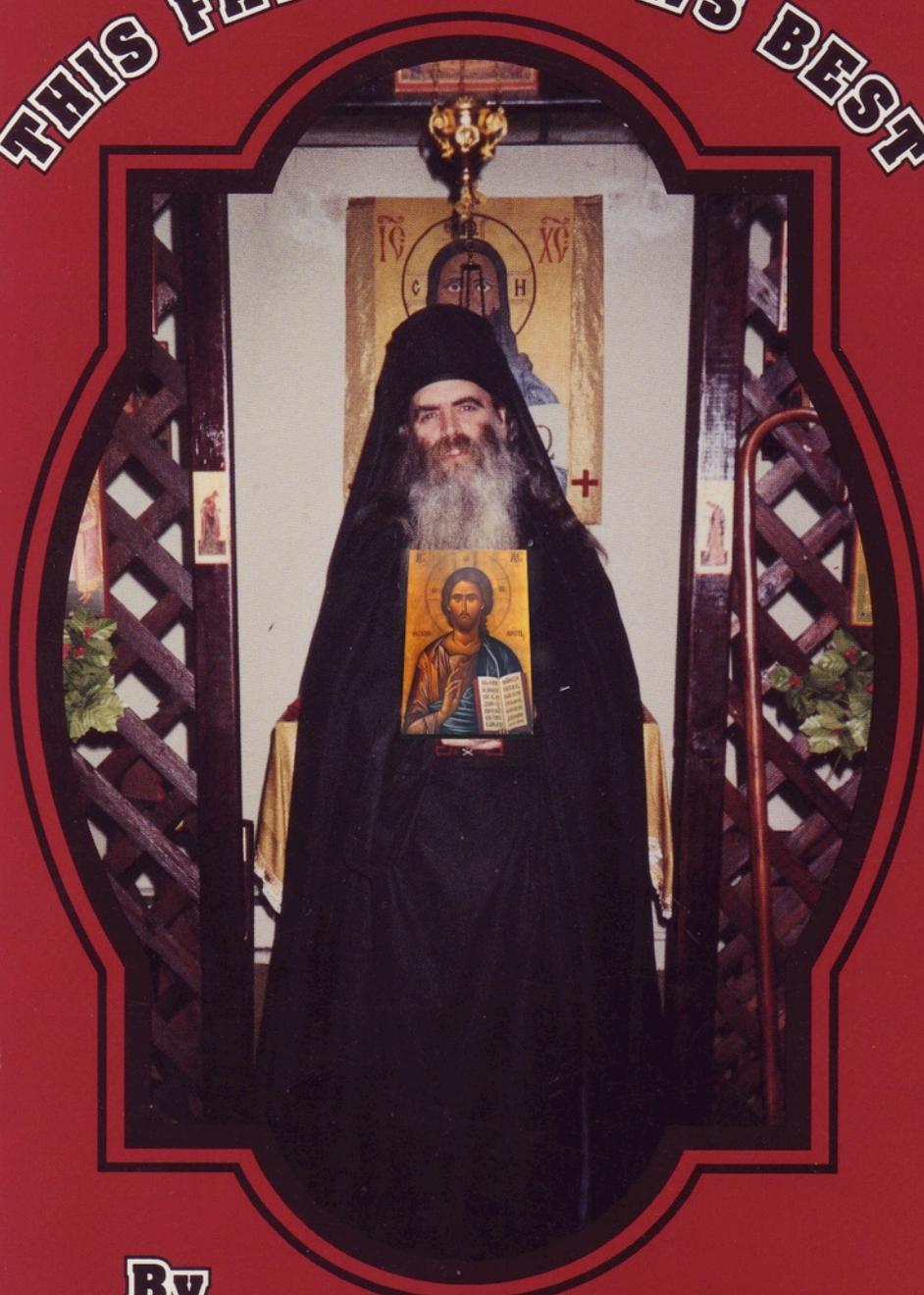


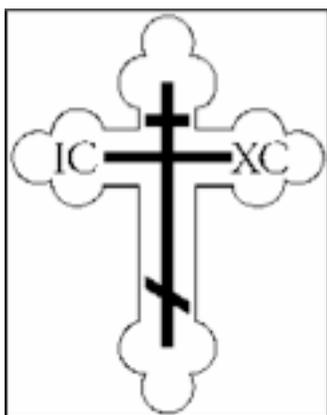
**THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST**



**By**  
**Father Anthony Good**  
**with Mike Christopoulos**



# THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST



by  
Father Anthony Good  
with Mike Christopulos

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## FATHER ADTHONY'S NOTES

The purpose of this book is not meant to be a biography or an autobiography of this monk's life. Nor is it intended to be a book of theology, an introduction to the Orthodox Christian faith nor a book dealing with solutions to problems facing Orthodoxy.

The chapter headings were not my personal choice, but rather were issues about which I was asked to express an opinion. However, the material contained in the chapters were my own personal thoughts and feelings in response to subjects presented to me. The only exception to this was the chapter on 'pigeons'. It was my decision to include this chapter in the book.

I have been open and honest in answering each topic placed before me. None of my opinions or words are meant to be critical, for the sake of being critical. Nor is it my intention to claim I have knowledge, expertise and answers to solving all the problems in our society and the Church.

In writing this book, it was my intention that the book's contents remain faithful to Church Tradition as much as humanly possible while being totally open and honest. My vocation and station in life is that of a monk and hermit. I am not a theologian, teacher or pastor. My personal views and opinions hopefully will be received and read from this perspective.

It is my prayer and hope that these thoughts will help Orthodox Christians, clergy and laity alike, come closer to Christ our God.

I pray that those people who are victims of child abuse or who abuse themselves and read of my own experiences will realize that there are solutions and answers to their problems. Those answers and solutions are found in faith in Jesus Christ and in the Truth and Tradition which He established in His Church about 2,000 years ago.

If some of my observations seem critical or negative to any person, group or organization, they aren't meant to be judgmental. Rather, they are conclusions that there are problems and issues in our society, our Church and our world which must be dealt with and not swept under the rug. Perhaps in some small way, some of these observations may contribute to help individuals and our Church deal with these issues and help in the cause of unity of the Orthodox Christians in Western countries.

There are parts of this book that deal with my own experiences of being a victim of child abuse. It is important that readers know that I hold no malice against those who abused me. That's not because of any personal virtue on my part or that I am so forgiving. It's simply that I've become fully aware that those people who victimized me were victims themselves and didn't have the tools of Faith in Christ to deal with their own violence.

This fact came home to me when my stepfather who abused me the most became a victim of his own hand when he fatally shot himself in the head. Since then, I've come to realize his personal pain and agony. It would be less than human and certainly unchristian of me not to pray for him and have compassion for him and his misery.

This conclusion didn't come easy for me. Nor do I have any presumption or claim that my past didn't scar me. My own personal recovery has gone on for years and continues. In many ways, my mother suffered and was far more a victim than I was. I had to completely cease all contact with my family in order to cope or deal with life on its own terms.



In conclusion, I wish to express my deep appreciation to Paul Ebeling and his mother, Helen Ebeling, and Mike Christopulos and Janet Christopulos for their support in order to make this publication possible.

Without them and their personal sacrifices of time and money, even my own monastic life would have been greatly limited.

THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

I also wish to acknowledge Archbishop Walter Xavier Brown of the Orthodox Catholic Church in America for his continued support of all my efforts over the past 20-plus years. In the best of times and in the worst of times, he has always been there for me. His witness and dedication to the Orthodox Faith in his ministry to victims of alcohol and drug abuse problems in Milwaukee, Wis., are an outstanding witness and example for all Christians to emulate.

May Christ-God reward all of you in His Kingdom!

*Father Anthony Good*

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## FATHER ANTHONY'S COLLABORATOR MIKE CHRISTOPULOS

A 1954 graduate of the University of Wyoming, Christopulos recently was elected to the Brown Deer, Wisconsin School Board to a three-year term. He is a member of the St. Nicholas Orthodox Mission church in Mequon, Wisconsin and has been very active in Orthodox lay circles in the Milwaukee area and a former Sunday School and Vacation Bible School teacher, and Sunday School supervisor. He is married to the former Janet Kons of Menomonee Falls, a former Roman Catholic nun, and the couple has two teenage daughters, Elaine, 16, and Eileen, 14.

Two of his nephews, Dan and Louis Christopulos, are Greek Orthodox priests in Minneapolis and Houston, respectively. Christopulos retired in September 1992 following a 30-year career with the Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Sentinel. Most of his time at the Sentinel was spent as a sportswriter. At the Sentinel, he covered the Green Bay Packers, Marquette Warriors and the University of Wisconsin football and basketball teams. Christopulos covered Bart Starr both as a star quarterback and head coach with the Packers. Christopulos covered the famous 16 degrees Ice Bowl game in Green Bay that saw Starr score a last-second touchdown which enabled the Packers to defeat the Dallas Cowboys, and go on to a Super Bowl triumph. While with the Sentinel, Christopulos' story on Marquette basketball Coach Al McGuire won first place in Wisconsin in a United Press International sports writing contest. Prior to joining the Sentinel, Christopulos served as sports editor of several Wyoming newspapers.

## THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

He is a second vice president of the North Suburban Kiwanis Club, membership chairman of the Brown Deer Senior Citizens Club, a former vice president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and is a member of AHEPA (A Greek fraternal lodge.) He was the co-author of the book, "Burned to Life," which told the gripping story of Mel Kenyon, a well-known race driver who was taken from near death to a glorious life in Christ.

Christopulos also wrote, directed and starred in a comedy, "Marriage Greek Style," which was presented in three Orthodox churches in the Midwest.



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# Dedication

I Wish to Dedicate These Written Thoughts  
to the  
Greater Honor and Glory of Christ-God.  
May All Who Read These Pages  
Find Something of Value  
Which Will Draw Them Closer to God  
and  
Convey a Better Understanding of the Divine  
Love which He Has for all of Us.

## PROLOGUE - THE POSITIVE ROLE OF A FATHER

**The following story by Richard L. Kenyon appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sunday Wisconsin Magazine. It is our pleasure to reprint it with their permission.**

When Jesus advised his followers, “In this world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer,” he must have had people like Father Anthony Good in mind. Trouble has come to this 51 year-old monk of the Orthodox Church in truckloads throughout his life: a childhood of broken homes and severe physical abuse, debilitating adult illnesses and dramatic family losses.

Still, he is buoyantly cheerful cheerful enough, in fact to have raised 47 children during the last 18 years and lived to tell of it.

“His story is unbelievable but true,” says Father Basil Stoyka, the Cleveland (Ohio) based Dean of the Orthodox Church in America. Father Anthony worked with Stoyka until Father Anthony moved to Milwaukee in 1990.

“I mean he is a single man who took in children other people were throwing away. He walked five or six miles to a third-shift job, and back, to meet their needs. He walked because he couldn’t drive. He couldn’t drive because he has seizures. The seizures are complications from brain surgery.”

“And his story goes on and on believe me. He has remarkable endurance. Just one or two of his experiences is more than most lives could tolerate.”

“He has had one thing after another. That he could go on after them is, well, just remarkable. He’s genuine.”

And he’s unusual! With a footlong, brownish-gray beard and shoulder-length hair tucked beneath the *klobak*, or headdress of Orthodox clergy,



## PROLOGUE - THE POSITIVE ROLE OF THE FATHER

Father Anthony makes an imposing figure even though he is only 5-foot-7. He has a thin nose, blue eyes and dark eyebrows.

Although he is a monk, and not an ordained priest<sup>1</sup>, he is called 'Father' according to the custom of the Eastern Orthodox Church that split from the Roman Catholic Church in 1054.



*Father Anthony wears the headdress and the heavy black robe, called a Riassa, of the Eastern Orthodox Church, in which he's a monk. Wherever he lives, he establishes a prayer room and covers the walls with religious icons.*

He works as a third-shift night supervisor and spiritual counselor for \$5 an hour at Holy Family Retreat Home, 2436 N. 50th Street, a halfway house for 68 alcohol and drug-dependent men. He took the Milwaukee job when his church in Ohio changed leadership. In March 1992, he and his adopted son, Stephen, were living in a flat next door to Holy Family.

He wears the heavy black Orthodox robe, called a *Riassa*, and a heavy chain and cross around his neck. He carries a knotted black prayer rope (like a rosary), on which he can count prayers

He is usually barefoot. He doesn't own shoes or socks but will travel in sandals, without socks, in all weather. On an icy February day, he walks

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<sup>1</sup> In the Orthodox Church monks and priests are both called 'Father', however, Fr. Anthony at the time was both a monk and an ordained priest. He is now an Archimandrite.

## THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

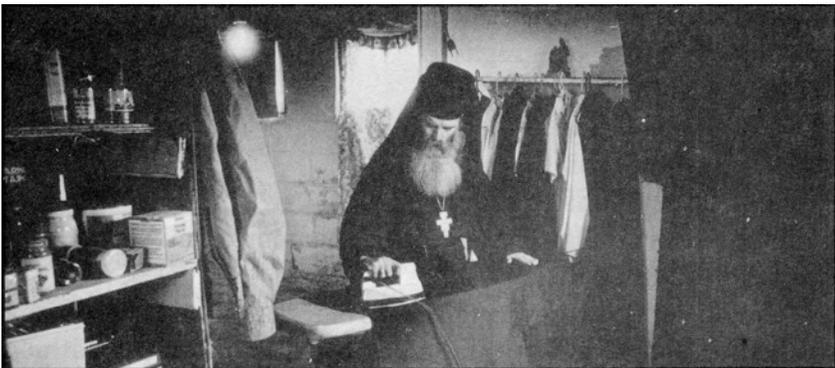
barefoot in the snow to get his mail. This not an Orthodox custom, but a custom of the Capuchin-Franciscans, a Roman Catholic religious order.



*At the Holy Family Retreat Home for alcohol and drug dependent men Father Anthony answers a resident's question. His counseling is limited to spiritual matters.*

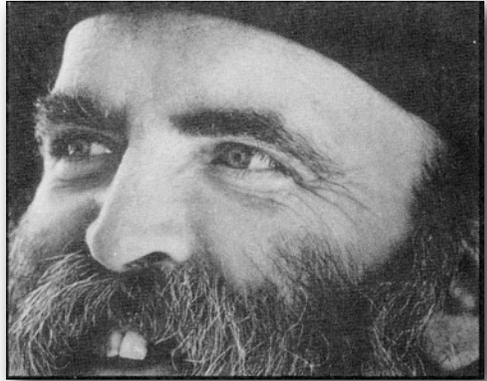
Anthony Good was a brother in the order from 1958 until he joined the Orthodox Church in America in 1970. He became a monk a year later.

Actually, he says, he never quit the Capuchins or the Roman Catholic Church. He just left in 1967 and never went back, although he continued to recite Roman Catholic prayers and hymns daily for the canonical hours (the prescribed seven periods of the day assigned to prayer and worship.)



*A self-reliant man, the monk makes and irons his own clothes. He lives a spare and simple life with the faith that God will provide.*

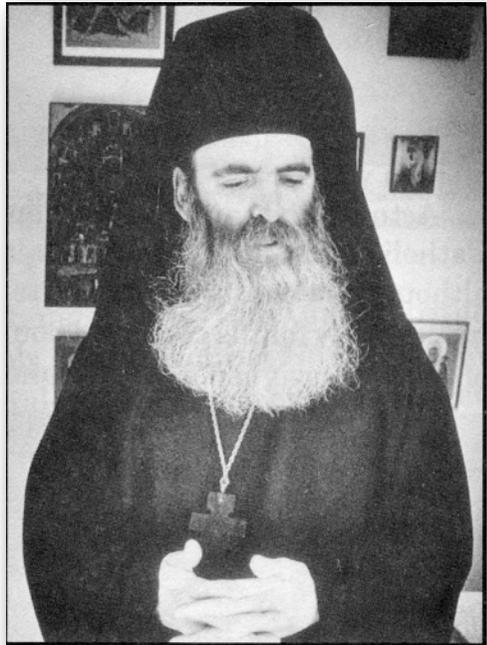
He talks fast, moving from one subject to another, in stream-of-consciousness fashion, without pause. In what seems like a single breath he moves from television evangelists to the genocide of Native Americans to the spirituality of George Washington to American greed.



But he comes back to one subject, the Roman Catholic Church and what he considers its betrayal of believers. He never went back to the Capuchins, he says, because there was nothing to go back to, as far as he was concerned.

“I don’t hate the Roman Catholic church or anything like that,” he says. “It’s just that they don’t know what they’re doing, where they’re going, who they are anymore. They lost their sense of Holy Tradition, obedience and discipline. Even the doctrine and their loyalty to their popes seem to be always under attack from within. This is so sad and unfortunate.”

He says the changes of the Second Vatican Council, held from 1962 to 1965, which replaced the Latin Mass with the vernacular and turned the priest toward the congregation (instead of having his back to them while facing the altar), among other things, confused people. Nuns traded their habits for civilian clothes and contemporary music replaced Gregorian chants.



“For all our lives they taught us to march around in obedience, obedience, obedience,” says Father Anthony, who attended Catholic schools and was raised by a mother, who though divorced and unable to partake of the sacraments, regularly went to church.

“Then all of a sudden they throw away the rule book and tell us it’s going to be different. It was a betrayal. They turned beliefs into myths and God into the tooth fairy who came around to make us all feel good.”

This isn’t said with anger, just passion.

For his past, the monk is remarkably free of anger although even he admits it has been a long journey getting there. It’s impossible to go into all the details of his early life, but here is a fraction of his story:

He was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on September 24, 1940<sup>2</sup>. His mother was white and his father whom he never knew was biracial, white and black, of Ethiopian extraction. Father Anthony looks more Irish than anything else.

“Home life was, what should I say, stormy and unstable,” says Father Anthony, with understatement.

His mother, a Catholic schoolteacher in Pittsburgh, was married many times. He refers to all the husbands by their surnames Mr. So and So, Mr. This and That.

“My legal father was Mr. Good, and he bitter about my mother and my biological father,” says the monk. “Mr. Good and his family called me the bastard child. When I went to school and was asked my name, I thought it was bastard.”

*When I went to school and was asked my name, I thought it was bastard.*

The worst part of his childhood came in his early teenage years, when his mother was married to a man named, appropriately Herbert Grimm, the fire chief of a Pittsburgh borough called Mount Oliver.

“Many of my mother’s husbands had alcohol problems, but Grimm was the worst of them,” Father Anthony says. “He was most abusive. He never hit my mother. Some of the other husbands did. Mr. Grimm just hit me.”

---

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Anthony was actually born in 1941.

“He beat me the day he and my mother returned from their honeymoon in Niagara Falls. He said he wanted me to know who was in charge. When I was 11, he tried to hang me from a light fixture. He would hold a loaded revolver to my head and play Russian roulette.”

“The worst and last time any of this happened with Mr. Grimm I was 15. He would tie me to a steel support in the basement and beat me. Well, this one time he beat me until he was out of breath. I had welts on my body from the bottom of my feet up.”

“The next day I came home from school and he told me to undress. He told me to take a bath. I did it. I closed the bathroom door. I got into the tub. Then the door came crashing in. Mr. Grimm was on top of me. He was trying to drown me. I kicked him in (the groin) and went out the bathroom window.” Young Anthony never returned. He went to the home of Mr.

*She would say things will get better if it's God's will, or not... if it's God's will.*

Good, who had remarried after being divorced from Anthony's mother. “Mr. Good was bitter about my mother, but he took me in and made a home for me,” says the monk.

“The thing with him was he wouldn't let me go to Mass or Catholic school. He was divorced, you know, and mad at the Church for the way it treated him.”

“He sent me to classes to be confirmed in the Lutheran Church. I fought it. Finally a Roman Catholic priest told me that if I accepted confirmation, I'd go to hell. The priest gave me \$10 to go out on my own. I did.”

Father Anthony lived at a friend's house, paying \$25 a week rent, which he got by blackmailing Grimm, an elected official, with charges of child abuse.

He stayed at the friend's house for about six months. Almost age 17, he left there and joined the Capuchin-Franciscans in Cumberland, Md., where he completed his high school education.

In 1961, he developed tuberculosis of the kidneys and was in a sanitarium in Pittsburgh for two years. After recovering he was sent to Broken Arrow and Prague, Oklahoma by the Capuchins and worked as a tailor, cook and teacher.

## THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

“I was learning over and over something a nun, Sister Pauline, had taught me in school in Pittsburgh,” he says. “She told me to remember that God would always take care of me, but maybe not in the way I wanted. She would say things will get better if it’s God’s will, or not, if it’s God’s will.

“That has helped me over the years. I was learning that life is discipline and discipline is teaching. I could accept more and forgive more.”

“I forgave my mother. I knew she was doing her best, and was just trying to survive. And I have come to a point where I can even pray for Mr. Grimm.”

Grimm committed suicide with a shotgun in 1962.

Father Anthony sees his life up to this point, with all its hardships and lessons, as preparation. As it turned out, he would need all the help he could get.

In 1965 in Cleveland, where he was recovering from kidney surgery, the monk, on behalf of an order of Catholic nuns, began visiting homes of poor, inner city people to teach them how to cook, sew and otherwise take care of themselves, skills he had learned as a Capuchin. One of the families had a surprise for him.

On a November day in 1967, the first of his 47 children came to him.

“Barbara was her name. She was only 32 hours old. And she was dropped off at the door of my apartment,” he says. “It turned out her mother was having drug problems and couldn’t care for the baby. So I did, for 9 or 10 months, until Barbara’s grandmother came for her.”

Word spread in Cleveland’s inner city, and in the social-services system that there was a young monk willing to take in children.

“I wasn’t looking to do this,” he says. “The situation seemed to choose me. But I couldn’t refuse, after all, I was anti-abortion. How could I not take children in?”

One after another came. They were from 5 years old to 14, and from different races, 39 of them black, 6 white and 2 Puerto Rican. Many of the children were related, as siblings and cousins. Usually they stayed with Father Anthony until they were 18.

Most of them came unofficially, with the knowledge of the Ohio Youth Commission but without financial aid. It wasn’t legal for a single male to

be a foster parent, the monk says, but his help was needed. So local authorities let him continue, but without support.

“A couple of kids were placed with me by the county, and there was financial help,” he says.

Father Anthony worked as a cook to pay bills. He also taught I taught remedial reading. As many as 14 children lived with him at one time. He refers to each of the 47 as his child. At different times, other monks in the Orthodox Church would help out by babysitting.

*You never expect your children to die before you*

“I was learning as I went. I made mistakes. What did I know?” he admits. “I was smart enough to know that my own past was a factor, that coming from a childhood of alcoholics and abusers, I was a loaded gun.”

“In fact, that background helped me. I was more careful about how I raised my children. Not a day goes by that I don’t thank God for the family I had because it helped me raise my children. It was a blessing.”

The outcomes of the children were mixed, mostly good but with some tragedies. One son, Raymond, is now a podiatrist. Another son, Alex, is an artist and carpenter. Dee Dee is in college. Jackie is a secretary.

“Donald has made a career in the US Marines. Barry, who was also an Orthodox monk for a while, is now a US Postal Service worker.

One son, Gary, who came to Father Anthony as a 12-year-old, became an Orthodox monk. Gary died in 1983 at the age of 24, from complications of diabetes. “That was the most traumatic event in my life,” says Father Anthony. “You never expect your children to die before you.”

Father Anthony has lost touch with 12 of the children.

“Most of the ones I lost track of were those placed with me by the Ohio Youth Commission. Most of them were white, and I think if you’re white, being a foster kid is considered more of a stigma. Other cultures, black and Hispanic, don’t have the same hang-up.”

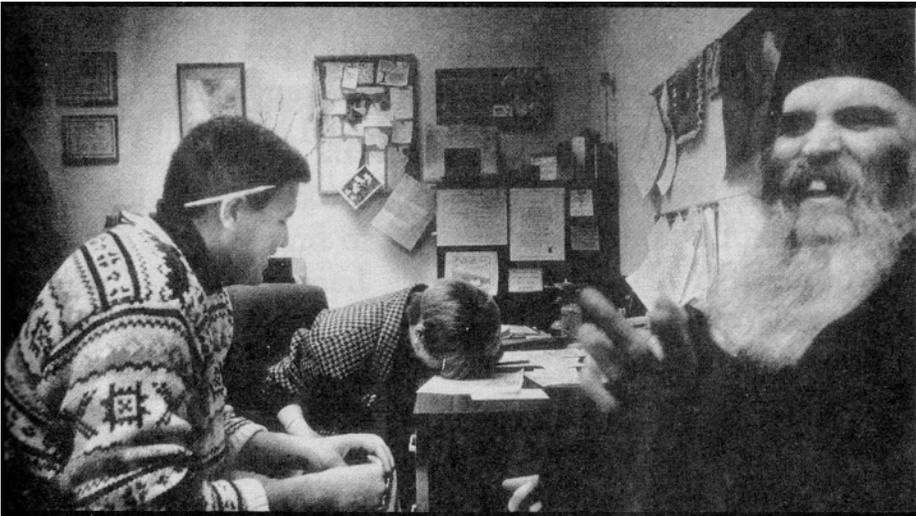
The life of one son, Robert, has been miserable – both for the boy and for the monk. Twice he attacked Father Anthony, once beating him so badly that he hospitalized the monk for three weeks. That attack came in 1975, the day after Father Anthony was released from a three-month hospital stay for surgery of a bacterial brain abscess.

## THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

In 1988 Robert murdered his pregnant sister-in-law. He is serving a life term in an Ohio prison.

In the midst of all this, however, a great, bright moment occurred in Father Anthony's life. One of the children he raised, Donald, had a son, Stephen, born October 1, 1974. But neither Donald nor the mother wanted to raise the boy. So in 1981, Stephen became the only child of the 47 that Father Anthony adopted.

"All the hard work with all the children, all that I learned from it, led to this beautiful event," Father Anthony says of Stephen's adoption.



*Humor has helped Father Anthony and adopted son, Stephen, 17 (left) get through hard times. During a meeting at Stephen's school, Wauwatosa East High School, a joke sends guidance counselor Rachel Boecher to the desk top.*

Today, Stephen is a confident, easy-speaking, handsome junior at Wauwatosa East High School. He sings in the choir, plays on the school's football team, wrestles and writes poetry. He and his father are active at their Orthodox church.

Stephen considers his biological father, Donald, who's now in the Marines, more as his brother. Stephen calls Father Anthony Pop or Dad and speaks of him with pride and openness.

PROLOGUE - THE POSITIVE ROLE OF THE FATHER

“We have to be the funniest family in the world,” he says, laughing. “He’s my Dad. He’s been there for me since I was born. I know our family is different. It’s unique. It’s neat, really. I mean, my friends think my father is cool, dressed all in black, and with his long beard.

“All those kids who say my father looks like a freak, well, Dad told me to ignore them, let it go in one ear and out the other. All I know is he loves me, and I know life would have been a lot worse, certainly a lot more boring, without him.”

Stephen hopes to attend college in Wisconsin after graduation.

Father Anthony hopes then to rest.

“All I want to do is be a hermit. Really”, he says. “The past 20 years I’ve tried to be super monk. Now I want to live out my life as just a monk, a regular monk. I’m tired. I just want to rest and pray.”

***He’s entitled!***

## A MONK'S DREAM COMES TRUE

**The following article, written by Richard L. Kenyon, appeared in *Wisconsin*, the Sunday Milwaukee Journal Magazine, and is reprinted with the permission of the Milwaukee Journal.**

“I worried that when I retired to a hermit’s life after raising 47 kids I’d go through withdrawal,” says Father Anthony Good. “Surprisingly that hasn’t happened. I like the quiet.”

Father Anthony is a 52 year old monk of the Orthodox Church. On April 30, 1993, the nearly always cheerful monk moved from Milwaukee, where he had worked in a halfway house for alcohol and drug dependent men and raised his 47th child, an adopted son, Stephen. He settled into a donated farmhouse in little Richwood, northwest of Watertown, Wisconsin. “It was the right time and things worked out,” said Father Anthony. “Stephen graduated from Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. East High School and won a four-year scholarship to Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin. That allowed me to do what I’ve been dreaming to do for years, be a hermit.”

Father Anthony, who was featured in *Wisconsin* Magazine on May 3, 1992, had to wait a while for his dream to materialize. Beginning in 1965 in Cleveland, Ohio, he began caring for children tossed aside by their parents or the system. The first of his children was a girl named Barbara who was dropped off on Father Anthony’s doorstep when she was 32 hours old. Forty-six other kids followed, some staying only months or a few years, but most staying until they were 18.

*It's a pleasure to get  
up at midnight and  
be alone with God  
for a few hours*

Life was understandably tough for Father Anthony. Most of the kids he cared for came with the baggage of troubled homes. He dealt with it. His own upbringing was tough, with a mother who was married many times and often married to men who abused Father Anthony. He sees his own past as a preparation for the children he raised and helped.

## A MONK'S DREAM COMES TRUE

These days Father Anthony is tending to a garden and plans to raise chickens and open a small gift shop at his house to sell icons “to pay for the phone and feed myself,” he says. “Some friends have helped set me up here, too,” he says. “I’ve got enough canned goods to last until the Second Coming.”

Most of his time now, though is spent in prayer. “My prayer life takes six or seven hours a day,” he says. “I follow the Orthodox cycle (of prayers over a 24-hour period). It’s a pleasure to get up at midnight and be alone with God for a few hours.”



## THOUGHT FILLED RETIREMENT

**The following article, written by Christina Pike, appeared in the Watertown, Wisconsin *Daily Times* and is reprinted with the permission of the *Daily Times*.**

RICHWOOD, WIS. It is a time of reflection for Father Anthony Good. He has been to many places and has met thousands of people. He has experienced things few others will ever know. Now, it is time to rest.

Father Anthony, 52, a monk of the Orthodox Church for almost 20 years, has begun his life as a hermit in the unincorporated town of Richwood. Walking through town dressed in a floor-length, heavy black Orthodox robe, called a *Riassa*, he is far from invisible. The ruralness of his new abode, however, provides the serenity he needs to offer praise to God without interruption or demands from society.

Smiling so fully that his teeth can be seen from under the thickness of his full mustache which flows into his footlong beard, Father Anthony announced that his life as a monk has been more wonderful than his imagination had ever allowed. "It's like a married couple that worked very hard and raised a very big family and the last one is getting ready to leave for college," he reflected, his beard sweeping against his chest as he stirred in his chair.

"I really... I still love God, even more than I did when I was 16," he said, eyes shining. "I've been through riots, beatings... and I'm still here."

Father Anthony stresses that God's word is inerrant and important above all else, crediting that belief with leading him through his eventful and often turbulent life. If all Christians would focus on that belief, he said, many sacred and secular problems would be alleviated. Father Anthony came to Richwood in May, 1993 after the home was made available to him by Archbishop Walter Brown of the St. Nicholas Orthodox Old Catholic Church in America, based in Richwood.

"I'm sure people know I'm in town," he said, making a sweeping motion from his almost foot-tall *klobak*, or headdress of Orthodox clergy, to his sandal-clad feet.

## THOUGHT FILLED RETIREMENT

He lives in a portion of an old, tin-roofed farmhouse on County Highway Q, an unusual site for a hermitage. But then again, throughout his life, Father Anthony was an unusual person whom God put in unusual situations.

Father Anthony's mother was a Catholic school teacher, who married many times. As a boy, he suffered abuse in the hands of several of his mother's husbands. The abuse continued throughout his childhood and early adolescence, until finally he ran away.

At age 16, he joined the Capuchin-Franciscans in Cumberland, Maryland and completed his high school education. He developed tuberculosis of the kidneys in 1961 and was sent in 1965 to Cleveland, Ohio, to recover from kidney surgery. It was there that one of his greatest challenges and blessings found him. In 1965, when he was living in

*Being a hermit is not  
the end goal in life,  
Loving God is*

Cleveland, recovering from kidney surgery, a woman who was having drug problems left her 32-hour old baby with him. Father Anthony cared for the infant for almost a year, until her grandmother came for her.

As time went by, word spread through the inner city that Father Anthony would care for unwanted children. Ages 5 to 14, children of all races were left in his care, with the knowledge of government agencies, though not with their financial support. Most of them stayed until they were 18.

He refers to them as his children. The last of his children, Stephen, was born October 1, 1974. Stephen's father, Donald, was raised by Father Anthony. Neither Stephen's mother nor father wanted to raise the baby, so in 1981, Stephen became the only child of the 47 which Father Anthony legally adopted.

Stephen, who calls father Anthony 'dad', also lives in Richwood. A graduate of Wauwatosa, Wis. East High School, he will attend Carroll College in Waukesha, Wis. this fall with the help of grants and scholarship. Father Anthony walked swiftly from the enclosed front porch decorated with a two-foot tall wooden cross and paintings depicting Jesus Christ at Mount Calvary, announcing plainly that he is ready to settle in

and focus on God. “Being a hermit is not the end goal in life,” he explained. “Loving God is!”

Father Anthony crossed through a neat but mismatched kitchen into the chapel area, which in another time may have been a living room. Now, however, it is adorned with gold carpeting, a gold and white stained glass window and more than 50 icons placed strategically on the walls. His reverence for the icons was evident as he motioned to each one, describing why it was placed in a particular place and what it means. The icons, which are crafted by monks in Boscobel, Wisconsin, will be sold by Father Anthony beginning July 1 in order to raise money for the few worldly items he needs. He welcomes people into his home warmly, he said, noting that a monk must always be hospitable.

*Every time we turn  
our back on God we  
are left to our own  
devices*

Although beginning his life as a hermit, Father Anthony is far from stagnant. He has a regular prayer schedule, worshiping six times a day, even at midnight. Whatever task he undertakes, he centers around God, whether it be building a chicken coop, the new back deck, or busying himself with household chores, including sewing his own clothing. Although he has distanced himself physically from the despair he has seen in the country’s inner cities, including a two and one half year stay in Milwaukee where he worked at the Holy Family Retreat Home for alcohol and drug dependent men, his mind often returns to the problems of the church and society.

“To me, (the problems) are symptomatic,” Father Anthony said, leaning on a square kitchen table located in the exact center of the kitchen. “Every time we turn our back on God we are left to our own devices.”

Basically, he explained, “people have stopped taking responsibility for their actions.” He said, “even followers of God have turned their backs on Him, expecting the Lord to take care of them rather than worship Him. We are going to church to give something to God,” Father Anthony said, emphasizing that in church, God should be the center of attention. “We should go to church to give Him back something.”

He said that believers have “cut God short”, putting Him in the category of the Tooth Fairy, greed and self. “I don’t need the Tooth Fairy,” he said with emphasis. “I gave that up when I was young.”

**After a pause, he said, “Thank God that He is more patient.”**

Father Anthony spoke rapidly, easing from one subject into the next from the Roman Catholic Church to television evangelists to abortion. He spoke with an open mind and an occasional chuckle.

Father Anthony meandered through the back yard, inspecting a chicken coop he and Stephen built for chickens and pigeons. “I’m always afraid to thank God, to say, ‘I love this place,’ because then I seem to have to move. I would like to die here.”

In the two months Father Anthony has lived in Richwood, he said, his health problems have minimized. As he ambled through the back yard, he talked of building a chapel outside.

“I like the atmosphere in a small town,” he said, peering out into an empty field. “I don’t like the big city. It was like living in a war zone. I’m sick of the cities.”

Father Anthony continued to focus his piercing blue eyes on the field. Finally, he said, he will step back to honor and praise God as a hermit. “I’m tired,” he whispered. “Be still and let God be God,” he then said, quoting from a Psalm in the Bible, and noting that’s what he intends to do.

**“That’s the problem... We don’t let God fix things.”**



## FAREWELL

**Excerpts of a talk given by Janet Christopulos at Father Anthony's farewell party held on April 25, 1993 at Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Wauwatosa, Wis.**

First of all, we gather together at occasions, and this goes way, way back to olden, olden days, whenever there is a birthday or an anniversary. The reason why you celebrate is because you gather people that love the person. And in circling that person with love, you automatically isolate evil. It can't even get in the cracks. And I think that is the purpose today because we do love Father Anthony and Father Anthony has loved all of us in one way or the other.

I want to tell the truth about Father Anthony and this is where it gets a little dangerous because most of the time we wait till funerals. And you know, we look in the casket and we say, "Oh how wonderful this person was and everything." And we don't say it to them when they're alive. I'm going to be a little bit dangerous and say a few wonderful things about Father Anthony and not wait till that casket moment.

The other thing I want to put in perspective is that each one of us is given a name at birth. And when we become Christians at baptism, we are given a name. The Book of Revelation says that our names will be written in the Book of Life.

Our journey on this earth is to take that name with its naked letters and fill it in. And so that's what I want to do with Father Anthony. I want to take his name, Father Anthony Good, and with his own life experiences fill it in a little bit. And in filling in his letters, ironically we're filling in all of our letters.

So I'd like to start with 'F'. Definitely if you look at Father Anthony, the black habit, his sandals, he reminds all of us, especially those of us who are in color, that there is one Father. And that is ultimately where we're going. And I think Father Anthony in his poverty, and his simplicity

constantly helps us reflect that this earth is not our final home. When a crisis, sorrows, sufferings and even joy happen, we have to remember what we're really about. That's what we forget so often and we get sidetracked, depressed and discouraged. But if we just look and remember, we have one *Father*, and one home to journey towards. And that's what the 'F' stands for very strongly, as strong as the color black. Bless Father Anthony because he is one that has maintained that image for us all.

The 'R' definitely means *reverence* for life. I'm going to start with plant life. Father Anthony is going out to Watertown, which is a wonderful farm community. He loves to plant. I think all of us in this room love flowers and plants.

The other thing is animal life. He even loves animals. He named his dog 'Angel'. That's a profound name because I really believe each one of us has an angel and that angel has watched over us in our life. If we really

*When someone throws  
you a lemon, what are  
you going to do?  
But make lemonade*

reflect, there have been many situations that our angel has saved us, not quite all the way. We've experienced a little pain, because that's good for us too. But the angel has saved us from much hurt. So Father Anthony not only has reverence for plant and animal life, but human life as well.

Anyone who has raised 47 children certainly speaks deeply to the reverence and the importance of life. So as far as 'F' and 'R', he's really filled those two letters out. Now let's go on to 'Anthony', and the letter 'A'. Those of us who know Father Anthony, know he comes from a very abused background as a child. But I think the most beautiful part of him is that he was able to take that experience of abuse, add a few letters, and make it '*able to use*'. Very few people can do that. Many people when they've been abused, stay abused and pass that abuse on. Father Anthony is a person who has showed us that there is real glory in using whatever experiences we've had, whether they've been good, bad or hard. It's like when someone throws you a lemon, what are you going to do? But make lemonade. That's what Father Anthony has done.

I want to fill out the letter 'A' a little bit more. Father Anthony realizes that each of us has an assignment in life, we're never out of school. And that assignment is to find out what is exceptional or what talents we have,

and take hold of every single moment and live it with joy, with giftedness, with determination, with commitment and just make the best of our lives here on earth.

Then we go on to 'N'. My mother is really good at this too. She can take *nothing and make something*. I saw this reflected in Father Anthony also. He can take a scrap of material, sew some gold on it and make it beautiful. And I really consider this a rare treasure. In many ways I think we all share this quality.

Then we go on to the letter 'T'. Father Anthony is definitely someone who has his 'Ts' in order. He knows how to *toil*. He knows how to *take time*. He knows how to *trust* and I think that's a big one for all of us. I could get a lawsuit on this one. He even knows how to *touch*. I know that's a tricky one. But touch is so important because as I started out, the most important quality that we all have is the ability to love. And when we stop touching with our eyes, with our smile, with our hands, with our whole being, I think we've separated ourselves from life. And that's why I said he's got his 'Ts' in order. Even to touch. Even a monk.

And that brings us to the last 'T', which is *tears*. Father Anthony also knows how to cry because sometimes it does hurt. And I think, God never asked us to hide things, but to be honest.

And then the letter 'H' definitely, as my husband Mike (Christopulos) pointed out, stands for Father Anthony's sense of *humor*. He just has a delightful way.

Things can be so down, and Father Anthony can still come up with a joke or one-liner. I've never seen someone at rock bottom who can actually still come out laughing. Father Anthony can. He knows what true *heroism* is. It's not winning a Brewers' game or earning a million dollars. It's really taking what we have and living with it and being grateful for every moment.

The papers are loaded  
with the gold, but we  
don't see God too often

And then the letter 'O' stands for *oddball* because the poor guy, I mean Father Anthony's got half of his brain removed; he's had cartilage removed from his wrist; he has a steel plate in his head; and he has carpal tunnel. I don't mean to embarrass Father Anthony but I think we can rightly call him an oddball. Despite his oddness, he's really a good person. And he's learned a lot through all of these losses.

## FAREWELL

‘N’ stands for *newness*. He’s willing to bear his cross and he’s willing to wait for the change, for the newness of when that cross will be changed to a crown. His patience is a very beautiful quality.

‘Y’ the end of his name stands for years. This year Father Anthony celebrates his 35th year as a monk. That’s a neat thing in this day and age when we have dropouts all over the place. To be able to say I’ve been at something for 35 years is a real treasure.

And then I’m just kind of going to squeeze ‘GOOD’ together. Because if you squeeze the two ‘Os’, you simply have *God*. That’s what I’ve been trying to say throughout this talk. Father Anthony is not one who is going for the gold. He is truly one who is going for God.

In this day and age, it’s just a wonderful thing for all of us because the papers are loaded with the gold, but we don’t see God too often.

And then I ran a little test because I give this test to my students. I ran it on Father Anthony and he passed it with flying colors.

Father Anthony has a tendency to think and act spontaneously, rather than fears based on past experiences. Two, he has an unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment. Three, he has a loss of interest in judging himself. Four, he has a loss of interest in judging others. Five, he has a loss of interest in conflict. Six, he has a loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others. Seven, he has a loss of ability to worry. Eight, he has a frequent overwhelming episode of appreciation. Nine, he has contented feelings of connectedness with others, with nature and God. Ten, he frequently smiles through the eyes of his heart. Eleven, he has a profound ability to love and extend love out to others. And twelve, he has an increasing tendency to let things happen, rather than to force them or try to make them happen.

So, Father Anthony you scored very high on this test. I think what this test says to me is that when we let go of our own self, judgments, controls and expectations, we, with God’s help, can really experience inner peace.

This is the Easter season for all of us. It’s Pascha. That’s what the peace of God is all about.

Christ brought us a newness in this Pascha season. So I thank Father Anthony for being in our lives. I thank him for the role model, the mentor that he has been in our family and in the parishes that he has belonged to. I wish him well. And I’m envious of Father Anthony because he can pray more, and have some silence. So we just wish you well and we thank you

THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

for the example of taking your name, using the experiences you have had and doing something very, very beautiful and God-like with them.



FAREWELL



## BE STILL, SO GOD CAN COME INTO YOUR LIFE

*Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.* – Psalm 46:10

When we come into this world, we basically start out as a sperm cell and unfertilized egg. The chance of these two meeting is remote. Yet in God's providence there is a thought, an act of God's will. There is always the love of God and hopefully the love between two people in God. This is an act of the will of God that takes place. It's the beginning of human existence. Human existence really started in the stillness of the earth and the will of God. Matter of fact, the existence of everything started in stillness. The understanding of the truth is the beginning of true happiness. It is learning to be still and let God be God.

Finding the secret to beginning prayer life, finding solutions to one's problems, finding a way of resolving a tragedy, making sense out of a sickness, a death of a loved one in one's life or even the joys one experiences, all start in stillness without images or fantasies.

There are countless examples in the Gospel where God commands us to be still. When Jesus Christ was out on the rough sea with His disciples, He ordered the sea to be still; also the story of Mary and Martha, etc.

Before praying, we have to calm down inside spiritually and set aside all earthly cares. The same thing holds true when a person undergoes therapy.

When a person sees a psychiatrist, he or she is urged by their psychiatrist to be still, calm down and get everything else out of their mind except whatever problem they're facing. One must be still to focus on a possible solution to his or her problem, whether it be real or imaginary. One must make sure one is on target when addressing a problem.

Is the problem real? To make sure that it is real and that one is not being deluded, one must first sit down and be still. Stillness enables one to figure out the real meaning of life, the purpose of problems one has encountered such as a death in the family, or wondering whether one's recent marriage will last.

For one who seeks a real relationship with God, one has to enter into the presence of God with total stillness. You have to quiet down, and let the truth reveal itself. Every truth originates in and from God.

The beginner Christian and all of us fall into that category unless we have a very disciplined prayer life must be still, face God empty-handed and have no preconceived ideas. Only then can God direct us to solutions to our problems. When a person first becomes still, one discovers there is nothing really inside one's self except one's own problems, sinfulness and emptiness and a person tends to become bored, frustrated or even fall into depression or despair.

This is because in truth as Solomon did say, "all is vanity".

I recommend that one set aside about 10 or 15 minutes the first few times you try to be still and listen to God's voice in prayer. You should do this alone in a quiet, private room where there are no outside interferences. Of course, this also can be done in a church, on a park bench or whatever suitable place you can find. I also recommend that one faces the east, the direction from which Christ came into the world and from which He will return. Having both our body and mind in this position helps preserve us from falling prey into fantasies or delusions. Chances are, you'll find out that the first thing you want to do is start moving around because most of us don't like what we see when we go inside ourselves.

Every Truth  
originates in and  
from God

What we find is 'nothing' and that becomes very scary because we are usually faced with the fact that everything in our lives that we value is subject to decay and has no real lasting value. Probably for the first time in our lives we come face to face with ourselves and our values, which are almost always devoid of reality.

It takes time for us to quiet down after the discovery, and to become still enough to find out that there really is something deep, deep inside of us. And it isn't something. It is someone. And that someone is God our Creator calling us to Him. You only discover this by shutting everything else out.

You won't find God as long as you have all the commotions of all our earthly things, things which the early Church Fathers called our idols.

You only find God if you truly become still inside. And that means, you have no preconceived ideas, no imaginary thoughts or ideas of Him.

You are not trying to search for God, you are just trying to let God speak and hear Him. Once you listen for Him, you start hearing Him.

Most heresies start when we presume or feel or think that we can either find God on our own time as an act of our will or that we can speak for God or teach God's wisdom based on our own intellect and studies. None of this even qualifies us to be Christians. It just makes us academically more 'correct' or 'educated' than other people who are unlettered, but that does not bring us closer to God.

It is good for a husband and wife to pray together to God. But when you for the first time meet God in prayer, if your wife, husband or some other member of your family is along, what you often end up doing is turning this into a group therapy session. It might make everybody feel good afterward and it might even be very beneficial to your prayer life at some time. But it isn't a real beginning to a real prayer life. First of all, you have to come to terms with whom and where you are going to spend eternity.

It's either with God or without God. You make the choice.

If you want to spend eternity with your 'idols', be they your wife, your children, your possessions, power, or it can be anything else, you have that option. Or you can choose to spend eternity with God. You have to start somewhere.

Be still and try to hear the voice of God. Do this for several days. Don't try to speak or even try to force things while trying to hear God's voice. The only formal prayer I would venture to offer is a shortened version of the *Jesus Prayer*. Say, "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy", and leave it at that. Do not add your 'give me list' or even your personalized 'thank you list'. "Have mercy", is good enough because you are asking God to have mercy on yourself, on creation and everything around you according to His will. Eventually something inside you will make you begin to realize that there is someone else living more important than yourself. There is someone more important than you and all you hold dear and that someone is God.

For instance, look at a leaf. It took a great deal of wisdom to create that leaf so that it fits it with the tree and the tree fits in with the soil and the landscape. The point of all this is that once you let the natural process

It's either with  
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God. You make  
the choice.

occur, you become awed at your own insignificance. At first, you feel lonely because you feel so alone, so insignificant in this vast universe.

Eventually, you will hear the word of God calling within yourself. There's no way to tell a human being exactly how this will happen, but when it does, you will know it and I'm not talking about delusion.

You must be cautious about being deluded. Once you start thinking that you've heard the voice of God and/or have been appointed His prophet, His only spokesman or feel that you are going to go out and save and teach the whole world instead of you being saved and taught first, then

*You must be  
cautious about  
being deluded*

you'll know you're running into problems and are being deluded. The evil one, the devil, or his angels, or even mental illness could be the cause for delusion. Once you experience any of these or have even 'feelings of a spiritual high', you should start saying a shortened version of the Jesus

Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me", for all spirits should be tested. Later, you should start reading the Holy Scriptures. Reading and understanding the Scriptures are so necessary for a Christian as is the reading of the Holy Fathers and saints of Christ's Holy Church which He founded 2000 years ago.

When we really earnestly pray, we should do it alone and away from worldly distractions. Christ even ordered that when we pray, we should go into our "closets" and pray. He meant we should pray inside one's self. We learn this example also from the life of Moses, the prophets and our Lord's example in the desert before His public ministry, as well as His praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

I don't know about other people, but I tend to be somewhat shy and distrusting of large groups of people mainly because of my background. I've overcome a good part of my shyness through public speaking, at least on the surface.

When I'm in a crowded room, I tend to go off in a corner somewhere and have a cup of coffee. Even there, I can be quiet and alone with God.

It all depends on where God calls you, the quietness of a closet, a private room, or even on a walk through the woods. The place isn't important if you enter into your prayer with no expectations, outside of wanting to listen to God and wait for His time to call you instead of your time. If you persist in humility, God will open the door.

You should pray daily and your prayer life will have to continue even into eternity. I know that sounds a bit strange. But if you continue praying even after you die, this means you are in eternity with God and you'll be praying with Him always.

The main point of stillness is this: You no longer put yourself in charge. You no longer become the center of the universe. You allow God to claim the universe and for Him to be not only the center of the universe but the whole purpose of it, the whole purpose of everything that's ever been created.

Stillness and to pray always, in my limited understanding, is to live in the presence of God 24 hours a day. It's more than 'just communication' with God or even just 'listening' to Him.

To pray always and stillness is a state of being, a way of living life to its fullest potential in, with and for Him who is "*the way, the truth and the life*".

This in no way means we are devoid of action or free from external obligations and pursuits such as work, problems, concern for others, etc. For one can be active and remain still and prayerful if one truly reaches this state of being by God's undeserved mercy and grace. As St. Basil says, "prayer should not be an excuse to avoid work", (our responsibilities to our obedience in our given vocation and lot in life), for this would be delusion. Delusion of this kind always lead to sin, because like the anti-Christ, it is clothed in self-will, fantasy, and false assumptions under the guise of holiness and goodness.

This we learn from a true understanding of Holy Tradition (the Scriptures, the Fathers and Saints, the liturgical life of the church, the canons and the church's unbroken living experience and witness.)

For although God is changeless in time and eternity, He is not devoid of activity. For we know Him and His will from His actions (His attributes.)

All of creation was born and originated in stillness and silence as an act of God according to His Will and Word and Spirit and is not subject to our sciences and limited understanding.

Those who learn true stillness learn to stand in awe before God as an empty vessel, empty of all self will and delusion and presumption, ready to be filled to capacity by its Creator of all that is true and good.

Like the vessel man creates, it is filled with what it is created for.

*We must be still  
and let God be  
God*

In this understanding of stillness, man must first empty his self of all that is not of God. As a vessel it must be empty and cleared of all that would contaminate it in order for it to be filled with the substance for which it was made.

We must “be still and let God be God”. This is the beginning of true humility. This is the wisdom taught in Holy Scripture and it is the gift of true faith. As man creates a vessel from the clay of the earth, he imitates God who created and fashioned man from the clay of the earth.

We have a purpose. In order to fulfill this purpose we must be still and let God be God.



## HOW CHILDREN GROW SPIRITUALLY AND PHYSICALLY

*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it. – Proverbs 22:6*

After a child is born, one of the first things that occurs, at least since the fall of man, is that the child cries and experiences pain. After crying, the child learns through events that it encounters. This is the physical progression of any child, whether the child is born without a brain, handicapped, deformed, afflicted by a mental illness and lacking all the necessary elements that make a child healthy. During an infant's first hour, the child doesn't try to digest food, walk, run a computer or speak a foreign language. It's ridiculous to even perceive such a thing happening. Things just don't work out that way in the real world. We accept the limitations of a child and accept how much it depends on its mother, and yes even its father for guidance, protection, food, and for all its necessities.

The same thing holds true with a child's spiritual development. Spiritually, a child basically starts out with nothing, but hopefully it has a very good spiritual father or mother to teach it some spiritual truths.

If parents do everything for their children merely to boost their own egos, this is a mistake.

An example would be a proud mother who parades her child around for everybody to see without allowing the child to get any rest. Eventually, the mother will kill her child by wearing it out.

Children need rest, care, sleep, nurturing and protection. A good spiritual father or mother likewise does the same thing. The first instinct of a parent is to cover one's child, basically to protect it. The second instinct is to make sure one's child is breathing and is healthy. If a baby cries, a parent responds to its needs. A parent holds the baby when it needs to be held and feeds it when the child is hungry. At this early stage of life, one

doesn't punish a baby because the infant is responding only to that which is around him.

A good spiritual guide takes you as you are, just as a mother accepts her child with all its physical imperfections and shortcomings. If a baby has colic, a good mother or father responds to that need, putting one's own needs aside. A good mother and father love their children regardless of whether they are physically beautiful, intellectually beautiful and gifted or anything else. Once a baby has that much love, it is at least assured of being in a healthy environment. This comes from the first step, which is stillness. Secondly, one basically has to find the right place to grow. In order to properly take care of a child, you need food, clothing and shelter. In order to take care of your soul spiritually, first of all you need parents. Somebody has to take responsibility for the child or it cannot exist.

**The Scriptures are a  
significant part of our  
Holy Tradition**

If a child doesn't secure a good spiritual guide, it must eventually pray alone and pray and pray and pray and pray in stillness. It's important, however, that the young Christian starts out with a sense of direction.

Once a child learns to read, the first spiritual food it will receive will come from its reading of the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures are a significant part of our Holy Tradition in the Orthodox Church. Without Scriptures, all other writings, all other liturgical services and everything else becomes like a tree without roots and is destined to die.

One may ask, how does a parent get a child to start reading Scriptures? You start by having the child read at an early age. If a child is reluctant to read, then I suggest you do this: buy cassette tapes containing sections of the Bible, stick that tape in your car's tape deck and let your child hear the tape while you are transporting your child to church, school or whatever. Some Biblical messages they hear will eventually sink in. Of course, your child may tell you it doesn't want to listen to the tape. Does that mean you don't ever play the tape? No. You can't give in to a child's wishes. It's the same thing that occurs when a child doesn't want you to change its dirty diaper or doesn't want to eat vegetables or solid food when you first offer it to him. If you listened to a child and never changed its diaper, it would

eventually die from disease. And if you never fed your child the solid food it needed, it too would suffer dire consequences.

A child grows spiritually by watching its parents. It's important that in the early stages of a child's spiritual growth, it doesn't become confused or burdened by too heavy a program. A saying in the Roman Catholic Church years ago went like this, *a family that prays together, stays together.*

That saying still holds true.

First of all, you have to start praying. The only reason my 18 year-old son Stephen comes downstairs almost every night and asks me, "Let's say our prayers before I go to bed?" is because we've always done this. It's not something I ordered him to do. It was something he learned by example. He may skip saying his nightly prayers once or twice, but Stephen soon realizes that something is missing. You teach by example. Children are prone to rebel. A baby doesn't know it needs a three-course meal. It doesn't know it needs to take its vitamins. You just tell a child what to do and eventually it does some good.

Spiritual food is the same as physical food. You don't always leave the spiritual choices up to those who can't make intelligent choices. Sometimes, it's like in a hospital. If a hospital patient is dying of starvation, you force feed the patient, not caring whether the patient is fed intravenously or otherwise. You don't try to convince a starving patient to eat. Sometimes, a child has to be almost force-fed spiritually. We have responsibilities as parents and even as a spiritual parent to ourself.

After stillness, we have to at least start feeding our children spiritually.

A parent has to provide its child with spiritual food and shelter. Spiritual shelter means taking your child to church, reading to them the lives of the Saints and the early Fathers of the church.

This shelter protects children or at least gives them an Orthodox understanding of the Scriptures, your values, your private prayer life and shows the love a parent has for its child. It provides a shelter for our entire Holy Scripture and expounds on the Scripture.

Parents and yes, even Orthodox clergy, often abdicate their roles in spiritually nourishing young children. Let's start out with the clergy. Because Orthodox services are so long, clergy often make their sermons short, sweet and to the point. Bible classes led by clergy tend to be

somewhat boring, if not secondary, and aren't a very important part of the parish ministry

Many just give reading  
the Bible lip service

How many Orthodox priests when they go to bless a parishioner's house, say: "You should have a Bible. Do you read it everyday?" Not many. What they ask is "Where is the candle? Where is the bread? Where is the salt and where is the Holy Water?" These are all great things. But we should worry about them after we heard about the word of God, not before. We've got it backward. I think everybody from the patriarchs and bishops on down are abdicating their role in pushing people to read God's Holy Scripture. Many just give reading the Bible lip service and only infrequently urge Orthodox people to read our own Traditions, especially the Scriptures.

How many times in church does one hear words quoted from the Holy Fathers as compared to how many times one hears quotes from the Scriptures?

How many times does a whole congregation pick up a Bible and read it all together on Sundays during a sermon, at least the main Bible reading for the day? We should have identical Bibles in the pews so parishioners can look up the same page number just like they do at any Baptist church. We Orthodox have given our whole Tradition away. One of the highest gifts God ever gave us was His written word. And this is part of our Tradition. It's not that our faith rests upon Scripture. The Scripture rests upon our faith. When we talk about faith, we talk about all of our Holy

Tradition that God gave us. But somehow we provide the Bible with no real place in our liturgical services.

Sure we walk around the church with our Bibles, emblazoned with jewels. We sprinkle the Bible with Holy Water. We hold it high above our heads, we kiss it, and walk behind it carrying candles. We do everything except *read the bible*. I mean all the other things we do with the Bible are nice, but we aren't using it like we should, we aren't feeding ourselves with its words.

Children need spiritual food, shelter and clothing. Part of the food that children need when they are very young are the sacraments. And parents should provide them with these sacraments and the first and most

important sacrament is Baptism. The biggest day in a Christian's life should be the day on which one was baptized.

Even with all the 47 children I've raised, I fault myself in this regard. And like many other parents, I've forgotten my children's baptismal days. We remember our children's physical birthdays.

But those birthdays mean nothing because we all know that we are going to die. Our baptismal day should be our most important day because we receive our first spiritual food through the sacrament of baptism.

Protestants and even the Roman Catholic Church fall far short in celebrating baptismal days. And with the New Age movement and everything else associated with it, the emphasis is no longer that God feeds us spiritually as a child. Even if we don't know it intellectually, we are still being fed spiritually by God. When one starts feeding a child sacramentally, the emphasis is on God and not on man.

Some Protestants miss the boat because they wait until a child can spiritually and intellectually understand what is happening before they baptize a child. The point is that salvation doesn't come by our faith or intellectual awareness. It comes as a gift from God. Salvation doesn't come through our spiritually or intellectually accepting God as our saviour. Rather it comes from our Saviour accepting us sinners unto Himself freely, without any preconditions.

This is the big difference between Orthodoxy and all other forms of Christianity and all other forms of religion. We did not call God to come down. He called us and came down.

The emphasis has to be back on God. We are the children and God is actually our parent. He provides us with our spiritual food, shelter and clothing.

The way I've always viewed this is that our spiritual shelter is that part of our Holy Tradition that we call the Holy Scriptures. Our spiritual food is that part of the Holy Tradition that we call Sacraments or Holy Mysteries. Our spiritual clothing is that part of the Holy Tradition that comprise the collective writings of the Saints and Holy Fathers.

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Our Holy Tradition points to the very focus of Him, who calls us from inside all the stillness and all the loneliness that exists in creation since the fall. He who is calling us is Christ because Christ is the center of the universe and the purpose of the entire creation. Where we came from isn't as important in the mind of God as where we are and where we are going.

Our Holy Orthodox faith was given to us by God, a loving parent Who provides us with our spiritual food, shelter and clothing.



## WHAT'S WRONG IN OUR SOCIETY

**The following is a condensed version of a speech given by Father Anthony in Brown Deer, Wisconsin to the North Suburban Kiwanis Club May 4, 1993**

The main thing I'm going to talk about tonight is basically what's wrong in our society. I entered monastic life when I was about 16. So the greater part of my life has been as a monk. My existence is not normal even in our church. It's not normal for monks to raise as many children as I have. Our church's position is that we are antiabortion. My problem with being anti-abortion is that if you're not willing to raise the children, you don't have very much right to speak out against it, especially for a male, because it's usually the women who end up with the real care and nurturing of the children. Going through it 47 times – three of them were girls by the way – I can appreciate what women go through. I know what it's like to have infants in the house and not being able to even make it to the corner store to pick something up without risking danger to the children that are sick at home when you are alone.

The symptoms of what's wrong in not just our society, but basically the world today, is summed up in about 10 or 15 problems:

Civil disobedience and the breakdown of the family; alcoholism and drug abuse; child and spouse abuse involving both men and women; rape; greed; poverty; armed robbery; murder; war; teenage pregnancies; lack of respect, especially for the rights of others; use of profanity, especially among our young people and our young and middle-aged adults, even on television to where we have no sense of discipline left in our society; racial discord; corruption in government and in churches, especially among the clergy; satanism; perversion, sexual and otherwise; problems with our environment falling apart; so-called mercy killing of the elderly; and for some people, depending upon their religious beliefs, you can throw in abortions or the other end of that just, abandoning children or neglecting them.

Actually, when we look at all these, we usually call these symptoms, the problem, but they're not. They're the symptoms of a greater problem.

Most people think alcoholism and drugs cause a lot of the problems we have in our society. For the last 2½ years I've heard fifth-steps in a drug and alcohol treatment center (in Milwaukee.) I don't know if any of you are familiar with AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) but the fifth-step of AA in the Catholic church is called confession, a general confession of their life. The longest one (fifth-step) I've heard was about 17 hours. Believe me I was about ready to pass out. He was only 23.

*The wrong and the  
right answers are really  
deep inside of us*

With some of the women's fifth-steps that I've heard, there has been everything (confessed) from sexually abusing their own children; beating their own children and trying to kill them; husbands and wives prostituting each other. The list goes on.

When you are dealing with about 80 to 90 people at one time in the retreat home like I was and when some of them are there for even up to a year or beyond, you get to know them very well. And when you hear a confession that lasts 17 hours the shortest fifth-step I ever heard was about 5 hours – I try and give them some feedback.

What I used to think was the problem like drugs and alcohol is not really the problem either. It's another symptom of what's wrong with our society, and with our whole world today.

When I think back over all the violence in my life until I left home when I was 15, one thing becomes very clear. There had to be some reason for doing the right thing, and there had to be some reason for the wrong that was going on. The wrong and the right answers are really deep inside of us.

I credit a nun, Sister Pauline, a fourth-grade teacher, who taught me this valuable lesson. She was my friend up until she died, and she was up in her seventies when she taught me in fourth grade. She intervened and gave me some of the tools to put my priorities together. Our family was ahead of its time as far as the immorality and many of the problems the rest of society has today. Part of the problem was that even though my mother still went to church and everything, she had lost a connection with God.

And I'm not saying this just because I'm a clergyman or clergy-person. For one thing, I'm a hermit now. The thing I learned when I was 15 was this: there is something inside that isn't there. There is some connection of life that isn't quite making it. The problem we have in our society today is that we forgot how to talk to God No. 1. We forgot how to listen to God No. 2 and we treat God in America basically like a tooth fairy, no matter what perspective, denomination or even what religion we come from.

The people at the retreat home hit the very bottom as far as drugs, alcohol and everything else is concerned. The one thing they never received at home was a clear sense of God. They call upon God because they've hit the bottom and want Him to dig them out. When they do this, they make themselves the center of the universe, rather than God being the center.

You know, it's strange. There isn't one alcoholic, one drug addict that I know of that has ever recovered and lasted for more than even a week if they don't get that one truth back in order again. And I'm not talking about religion, I'm talking about spirituality here. So many of them get into religion and they don't even last two days after they get out. That is not knocking anybody's religion. They commit themselves to some type of program, thinking that God is going to get them out of it all without any work on their part.

They can be Baptists, Catholic, Muslims or Jewish although we get very few Jewish people (in the retreat home.) It seems Jews have a very low rate of alcoholism.

Still when they come through, they don't make it either unless they keep their priorities straight. The first priority has to be God, something outside ourselves. One has to realize something is greater than ourselves. One also has to realize they got themselves into this mess (free will) and there is no way out of it because they've lost the control and the freedom (sin). One has to resubmit what is called in AA, a higher power, which is basically God. One has to reconnect and start restructuring and re-disciplining one's life, putting one's life back together again (with God's help, according to His will by His power in grace.)

So often we have no concept of God, no concept of absolutes in our society today. Our whole society is falling apart.

Changes need to be made. I would say back in the fifties and sixties we needed to get rid of the hypocrisies.

As an Orthodox Christian, my one problem with the women's movement wasn't that woman didn't have parity with men in regards to jobs and salaries. If the women as they were climbing up the ladder would have reached parity with men economically, educationally, in job opportunities, rights and everything else, that would have been fine. But the woman sank down to the men's morals. It used to be that men were the ones usually found guilty of adultery, fornication, stealing, lying, robbery, bad politics and all that. If the women's movement at least would have carried the men to the moral plateau they were on, and the men could have carried the women to the economic plateau that they sought, I don't think anybody would have had a problem with that.

*The problem we have in our society today is that we forgot how to talk to God*

that would have been fine. But the woman sank down to the men's morals. It used to be that men were the ones usually found guilty of adultery, fornication, stealing, lying, robbery, bad politics and all that. If the women's movement at least would have carried the men to the moral plateau

We'd have a better nation if everybody would have stayed on track with God, made God the center of the universe, and stayed spiritually in contact with God 24 hours a day. How we interact with God affects how one does business, treats his neighbor, children, wife, husband or whatever.

Getting back to the women's issue. It's a shame women didn't lift men up to the point where men no longer talked in the locker rooms the way they do. Now we have women and men both outdoing each other in uttering profanities. When you get people, especially under 40 years of age, in a group, it's almost impossible to have them get through three sentences without God's name being used in vain, or without people using explicit sexual terms or whatever, at least three or four times in every paragraph.

So instead of women pulling everybody up to the highest level, women and men sink to the lowest level that's humanly possible.

Eighteen years ago when I was the chaplain at April House, a home for alcoholic women in Milwaukee, I never heard fifth-steps in which women admitted molesting their own children. You'd be surprised how much of that abuse goes on now. What's more, now you hear of cases at the retreat home where women who are alcoholics and drug addicts beat up their

husbands. I've seen husbands come into the retreat home with black eyes and cut lips. It's like the whole thing has turned equal, I guess. And maybe that's a good thing, too, if we all realize that we are so low on the totem pole that we don't have too much further to go down.

Our society is in more trouble today than any of us care to admit. Take this last war over in Kuwait. I remember listening on the news one night and hearing that the United States had one hundred and seventy some people killed in the war. The announcer made it a point to say the US suffered practically no deaths in the war. I remember saying to my son Stephen, "you now, the shame with that whole statement is that there was almost a quarter of a million people killed. Maybe they were from Kuwait and Iraq, but most of these were innocent men, women and children who had nothing to do with this whole war except for being in the wrong place at the wrong time."

And you know, it's not whether the war was 'justified or not justified'. I'm not even trying to get into the politics. What bothers me greatly is the lack of feeling that we have for human life. It's even like a lot of the problems in our streets.

Our monastery in Cleveland where I was stationed for many years was in a far worse and poorer neighborhood than anything you have in Milwaukee. But the same thing applies to the inner cities in Milwaukee and Cleveland.

Most of the drug money, most of the prostitution money, and most people driving by to pick up the prostitutes and to make the big deals on the drugs are usually Anglo-Americans. They come into neighborhoods that are already corrupted enough as it is and feed on its misery.

I'm not making excuses for the inner cities. I'm just putting things into perspective.

I learned from my own background that if one matures as a human being, one has a choice of taking one of two roads, the good road and the bad one. If you have everything given to you, I think it's bad. I didn't have that advantage growing up. I had nothing, and I still even usually refer to myself as my mother's bastard child. For me, there was no place else to go but up.

Truthfully, I think that if we really want to, we all at least have a choice of taking hold of God's hand, counting our blessings and taking each step up the ladder. It's hard and it takes a lot of discipline.

And it's not us who are really doing it. It's really God. And the other thing, it too has to do with having a sense of values, a sense of limits, a sense of discipline.

*We have to start  
reclaiming our God and  
our discipline again*

Being a clergyman myself, there's nothing more scandalous than the secularism that has finally started to penetrate our churches. Our whole society is deteriorating and that's where our priests and monks come from. We're falling apart too, inch by inch, but maybe not as fast as some of the other churches.

Somewhere along the line we have to start reclaiming our God and our discipline again. We have to start with simple things. Like the men at the retreat home, they have to clean up their tongues, start talking civilly to each other, accept a disciplined way of life, and realize they can't have everything they want.

A big problem in our society is that everything has to be instant. I mean we've even turned God into that.

One turns on television to view a religious program on a Sunday morning because we're too lazy to even go to a nearby church. We accept Jesus as our personal saviour, which is fine and I'm not knocking that. But once you do that, one dumps it all on Him.

After that, should one just sit back and do nothing? No. You have a life to live and that takes work. And that's what we tried to get the men and women at the retreat home to do. They must realize that God comes first, and day by day, minute by minute, they have to meditate on this and commit it to prayer. It takes a lot of work just to remain sober and drug free. All of us are addicted to things in our society too.

Other cultures don't have the violence that we do. They don't have our problems because they still have a sense of God. That's why I think Muslim countries in the Middle East tried purging themselves of many things they adopted from the western culture. When the Russian people threw out Communism, that was a relief obviously to the Russian Orthodox churches. But this event has been a mixed blessing.

## THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

Communism disappeared but Capitalism came in with all its greed. The people are no better off. They're worse off.

Believe me, after you go through several of these fifth-steps at the retreat home, they can get pretty gory. They deal with everything from murder to rape to God knows what. It wakes you up inside and makes you appreciate where you're at.

In closing, what I'd basically like to say is this. It isn't so much the situation we're born into.

A lot of very bright people come out of very poor environments and a lot of evil people come out of very gifted environments. What really counts is our faith in God, our family values, what we pick up from our families and the discipline that we learn from our families.

You know our children are given to us by God only for a short time. And we only have those years with them to give them the very best that we have. I probably did the worst with the ones I was able to do the most for financially. And I probably did the best with the ones I struggled the most financially to raise, like my youngest son Stephen.

For the last year and a half, I lived in a basement of a shed or monastery in Milwaukee. The basement was cold and drafty and when it rained, I got wet. This experience was good for my son, Stephen. At first it really bothered him a lot. And I think it still did bother him until I moved. But actually it's been a good experience for him. He realized that when we were living in Loraine (Ohio) in a very decent, but not extravagant home, we were content. God provided for us. And when I lived in that cold, drafty and wet basement in Milwaukee, we still survived and stayed together. And I was still there for him.

At least for him, I think this has been an experience where it wasn't the money, it wasn't anything else that made life worthwhile. It was rather God first and what He gave to our family. I think that's something that people who God has blessed with better jobs, more money, etc., lose sight of.

They lose sight that what really counts in life is God.



(Editor's note: In response to questions, Father Anthony made the following observations)

⊕ Our country is unraveling at the seams. There isn't anything really left holding this country together.

Maybe we didn't share the same religion years ago, but we definitely had a common dedication to God. When I was a child, the religious order that Mike Christopulos' wife, Janet, belonged to, (School Sisters of St. Francis) had over 5,000 nuns. There's barely 500 of them left. And they're not dead.

**Capitalism without God  
is no different than  
Communism**

I feel bad about the corruption and greed that has seeped even into our churches. When the scandals first hit the surface about Jimmy Swaggart, I remember a Catholic priest telling me, "well, see what they're really like". And I said, "Don't say that too loud, we'll be all just looking in the mirror 10 years down the road."

And then I remember an Orthodox priest saying to me recently after some sex scandals surfaced about the Catholic church in the northern part of the state, "well, see how they're all alike." And I said "hold the mirror up to yourselves, too, because it's coming our turn too." And sure enough a few months later there was a scandal about an Orthodox priest in the paper. We're all in this together. One person doesn't fall by himself.

⊕ Pure Communism was practiced by Christ and the Apostles. They shared everything in common. Read the Acts of the Apostles.

The Apostles were basically Communists, but they weren't anti-Theistic. Capitalism without God is no different than Communism.

If your kid gets up three times in school and wants to say the Rosary, or go read the Bible or something like that, it's forbidden. That doesn't mean I think we should reintroduce Bible reading or other such things into classes. There are people, Hindus, Muslims, Jews or people of other religions who would be offended by this, depending on which part of the Bible you're talking about. But I do think that if a student wants to read

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the Bible on his own, he should be permitted to do so. Students can do that in former Communist countries, but they can't do that in our society.

If a student feels like saying a prayer or reading a Bible while he is eating lunch in school, a student should be able to do so. It's his own time. When I was growing up, we didn't have to stay in school, we could go home for lunch. So you are talking free time as opposed to school time.

I don't believe in teaching or reading the Bible before classes or after classes because that's imposing. I would resent anybody reading the Bible or interpreting it to my son Stephen. I would consider it inappropriate. That is my choice as a parent. But if my son wanted to say his prayers right before he ate, I think he has every right to do so. But there you are talking free time. There's a difference.

When Sodom and Gomorrah and the Roman Empire fell, people blamed the symptom for their collapse.

But it wasn't the symptom that caused their downfall. Sodom and Gomorrah and the Roman Empire fell because their people lost their sense of being with God.

‡ As far as separation of church and state goes, our government, every politician and even the preachers, priests and ministers, use the church, religion and a so-called belief in God at their own will, at every public function, and at every public part of society when they can make money off it or advance their own interests.

# WHAT'S WRONG IN OUR SOCIETY



## HOW TO BE A GOOD PARENT

*Teach a child to choose the right path and when he is older he will remain upon it – Proverbs 22:6*

Ideally, a child born in an Orthodox Christian family should have one parent at home full time. This is most important for the bonding and nurturing all of us need in our formative years. We see in our society the results of babysitters or day care workers raising our children. We have a generation of young people who are 'goal orientated' to things which pass away and decay. This is the positive side. On the negative side, we have young people who have no goals, no discipline, no sense of self-value or direction because they can't or don't want to compete. Really, both groups have no roots, no tradition, and no sense of God. God and family are things that people apply like makeup, a kind of insurance policy that makes one feel good! The message most young people get from us today is 'take care of No. 1, me, myself and I'. And that thinking becomes our god. For even God's value is judged only in the view of Him serving me.

*If the parents don't read the Bible themselves and with their children, what parents say has little value or impact on their children's lives*

I feel that no matter how difficult it is, one parent should be at home until a child starts school full-time, if at all possible.

The only exception to this should be in cases where there is no other choice. A child learns from their environment in their early years. If a single parent or a very poor family has to have both parents working, a child learns early that 'things' come before Family.

As for teaching your child about God, your faith and your convictions, these things cannot be taught by what one says. They are taught by what a parent does. Words have little value or impact unless the child daily sees and witnesses a living faith. Parents can buy their children Bibles and send them to church schools, but if the parents don't read the Bible themselves and with their children, what parents say has little value or impact on their children's lives. We see examples of this in many, if not most, Orthodox

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Christian homes in our society. The Gospel book sits on our altars, encased in gold, carried during processions. Yet the Bible is seldom read at home!

In order for a child to learn the value of our faith, the child must see it in our faces, our daily living and in how we dress, talk, and deal with each other. Our children also must see how we deal with our personal sins and also the sins of others who offend us or do us wrong.

The priorities and values of parents are what have the most impact on their children. It may be true that the outside world has a real impact on our children that is contrary to Orthodox values and the Orthodox view of life. But this has always been the case and it always will be.

We can only control our witness and that also has always been the case.

Ancient Roman and Greek culture was changed, person-by-person, and family-by-family until all of the Roman Empire was transformed.

The empire also fell away from the faith in God by the same manner when people and officials turned their eyes away from God and towards 'their' accomplishments.

Christ and His human family was poor and very ordinary in the evil world of that time. Their impact stands out as a complete contradiction as to what that society or ours values as 'how to make it in life'. Yet, no family has ever impacted man as much for what is truly good, human and of spiritual value as Christ's. To repeat it again, this is not Disneyland or a fairy-tale. This is the real world and our young people will learn their priorities by what they see us do, not by what we say others should do.

We, as parents, not only have to take up our crosses in these dark days, but we must be willing to help others carry theirs. This does not mean I advocate a 'new world order or new Gospel', such as we have witnessed with the watered-down version of Christ, the faith, monasticism, etc. It means we must in our Tradition, given to us by Christ, the Apostles, Fathers and Saints, be willing to live out our words in our actions in an Orthodox manner. The hermits who left seclusion to defend the faith against Arianism were not unfaithful to their vocations.

Monks, nuns and bishops would be no less faithful to their vocations if they used their resources to combat evil and provide alternatives for children in need of assistance. Without this willingness on their part to

take a stand against worldly values, the unmarried clergy and monastics in our faith might as well remain silent on the whole issue of abortion.

For our young people will see our words devoid of witness and divorced from reality. These words may seem harsh, but they ring with truth. To repeat, teenagers learn by what we do and not by what we say. In my opinion, this is what Christ tried to tell the Pharisees, scribes and religious leaders of His day. He never condemned their words or the Law. He condemned their priorities and their living witness of their traditions. He also condemned their misuse of the Law.

For example, when Christ was confronted with the sin of the woman caught in adultery, He didn't change the law, nor did He say she didn't deserve to be stoned to death. He simply told those who wanted to stone her, that if they were without sin to go ahead and do so. As we know, no one present stoned the woman because they realized they were not sinless. Christ told the woman to go and sin no more. Judgment was left in God's hands.

It's impossible to stress enough the importance that the witness of parents and clergy play in the lives of young people. The gossiping, slandering and condemning occurring within our church among adults is destroying the faith of our children. Children see our priorities as silly.

They are put off by our childish fighting over rubrics, dates, jurisdictions, liturgical attire, music, etc., as shameful and devoid of responsible adult behavior in any setting, let alone in a Church which professes to be the guardian and depository of Truth.

We need to follow St. Paul's words and allow those who refrain from certain foods and hold certain days holy to continue to worship in this manner. We should let those who eat all things and observe all days equally as holy, go on praising God in this manner and get our priorities back in order. Also, we should not worry about what bishop we follow or are in communion with. Like St. Paul, we are baptized into Christ, not Bishop John or Monk, etc. Christ is the head of our Church and if we follow Him and His Holy Tradition handed down to us unchanged by the Fathers, this is enough. This doesn't mean that we give our children a 'branch theory of the Church' or a watered-down version of the Orthodox faith. It means that the date of Christ's birth, which none of us knows for certain, and other issues of such importance, don't divide us or give us cause for slandering or denouncing each other.

While the whole world seems to be going to hell, we Orthodox alone seem lost in endless debates dividing and condemning each other, when we should be giving witness of Christ and His salvation, not only to our children but to the world.

If we want to be good parents in a truly Orthodox fashion, we must make it our priority to live our faith daily with prayer and humility.

And we must ensure that our children see in us Christ and His love, mercy and His other virtues. Our children must see us read and live the Scriptures and the lives and writings of our Saints. We must be willing to accept our children as they are despite their faults, their failings and their imperfections.

And if they sin while we condemn their sin, we must lead them back to repentance with the compassion and mercy we hope to receive from Christ ourselves.

*We must ensure that our children see in us Christ and His love, mercy and His other virtues*

To err may be human, to sin may be demonic, to forgive may be divine, but to be a good Orthodox Christian parent in this world is surely a gift of God and is a treasure which no one acquires without selfless dedication.

The teenage years are the most difficult ones on the parent and child equally. Although a parent may do and say the correct things, the child may reject part or all he sees in his family.

Although we must never give up on our children, we must often let them suffer the consequences of their own choices. Sad to say, but some of us, if not all of us, have to learn the truth, bitter though it may be, through experience.

In the book of Proverbs, God tells us not to provoke our children to anger. I believe this means to refrain from being overly critical and negative towards them. It means to respect our children's opinions and to listen to them, even until it hurts. This isn't always easy because often what we hear is not true in this world and our children's views are often harmful to them.

But we must still listen with respect and then speak, hopefully with wisdom, compassion, understanding and love. Then we must pray and deal with what happens next, even if our advice is rejected and ignored. Our children have to deal with the results of their choices. This life we live is not a fairy-tale and not every ending is a happy one.

If parents are having marital problems or going through a divorce, this causes even more anguish for the teenager, leaving him or her with little, if any, real sense of stability or security. If the teenager sees how seriously his parent is committed to God and his marriage vows, the teenager will ultimately connect with the absolutes in life. Otherwise, the teenager learns that the only one that counts is himself, his needs, his feelings, etc.

Divorce is one of the most destructive forces in teaching our young people morals and values because it tears at the very fabric of relationships. If one knows his father on earth, then one can know His Father in heaven. That doesn't mean that an abused partner doesn't have a right, or even an

Parents who leave a marriage 'to find fulfillment' or 'to find themselves', often do so at the expense of their children's spiritual lives

obligation, to leave an abusive marital situation. Only when one is faced with such a life-threatening situation is one justified in leaving. A child knows the difference between abandoning a marriage for the right reason and leaving a mate for selfish reasons or because one's mate has fallen short of the 'ideal' or 'perfect mate'. Parents who leave a marriage 'to find fulfillment' or 'to find themselves', often do so at the expense of their children's spiritual lives.

Parenting holds a high place because Christ in becoming man elevated man's relationship with God and his fellow human being. Through his love for us, Christ gave us the example of loving each other as He loved us. God, who is love, through an act of His human love, (hopefully and ideally) brings a new being into creation with the possibility of spending eternity glorifying God.

Each child is created in God's image, no matter what the situation or physical condition of the child. For this reason, no truly Orthodox Christian can ever justify abortion. Birth and the right to life after

conception is one of those absolutes because only God can will the conception of any soul.

This doesn't mean we should not have compassion on a woman who is faced or who made the choice to terminate (kill) her unborn child. We are obligated to do all in our power to ensure that she has alternatives,

**No truly Orthodox  
Christian can ever  
justify abortion**

support, even compassion and mercy in making choices. We also must help those who made the wrong choice by understanding, mercy and help bring them back in repentance before God. We should leave judgment in His hands while making sure we in no way give passive approval of their taking a human life.

I covered the issue of abortion and divorce under the topic of parenting because it is imperative that our children learn by our example how to deal with these issues that are so widespread and commonly accepted in our society.

Changing the law or forcing unwanted children on parents who don't want them won't change things for the better. To really deal with this issue, by our example, we must live out our faith.

That provides the only alternative in which children can discover right from wrong.

And again I say if our children are to ever learn responsibility and morals, we have to get our priorities and lives back within our daily witness so that children see in us the values of an Orthodox marriage and the Orthodox Christian way of life.

Even our Orthodox bishops, monks, nuns, etc., must give witness to the above, not only by their words, but by their deeds, if we are to be taken seriously on issues such as abortion. As the desert Fathers came out to fight the Arian heresy, we must be willing to take in the unwanted children, if need be. Without this witness on our part, our words are empty. For we, who have the faith, lay burdens on others that are often without the gift of faith.

## MONASTIC LIFE

*For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it. – Matthew 19:12*

To express my thoughts on monastic life is like asking a couple that has been married for 30 years to express their thoughts on their marriage. As it is with people who decide to get married, there are many different reasons why a person decides to become a monastic and why one stays or leaves.

For me, the only reason for entering this way of life is a love for God and a desire to do His will, be it ever so immature and imperfect. This is also the only valid reason for staying in this way of life.

Although the life of a monk or nun is one of penance, fasting, discipline, obedience, poverty, etc., it should never be a sad, unhappy life, devoid of joy, peace and love. Personally, I firmly believe God has a great sense of humor. After all, He did make the choice of calling us into existence to love and serve him. Although we should always take God and life seriously, it is not healthy to take ourselves too seriously all the time.

Far too often, we monastics think our vocations depend on our rules, fasting, ritual, habits and other such things.

Although we give a witness by these practices, they are not an end unto themselves. They are part of the means to the ultimate end, which is a love of God. How we deal with many of the 'externals' of our vocations is often a reflection of the state of a monk or nun's inner spiritual life.

There are couples who communicate well with each other, who remember anniversaries, special days and keep mementos of special events and times. The same thing holds true with monastics.

Although the externals may not be an end themselves, they nevertheless play an important part in giving and preserving meaning in

one's vocation. Keeping all this in proper perspective and in balance is necessary if the monastic is to avoid becoming like the pharisees or the 'New Age religious monastics'.

A good monastic life is made relevant by the grace of the Holy Spirit working in the souls of relevant people. Monastic customs such as the holy habit, the rules, etc., cannot make the life an irrelevant person meaningful. At the same time, monastics who disregard customs and

Growth doesn't  
mean change for the  
sake of change

traditions cannot become meaningful by changing the externals or trying to simply dress up a dead vocation in new clothes.

Proof of all this can be seen by what happened in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II.

Then well-intentioned nuns, brothers and priests 'opened the windows to let the fresh air in', only to discover there was nothing inside that they wanted to salvage of the 'old' or even the 'new'.

Monastic life, like a good marriage that is worth living, requires love, sacrifice, discipline, open communication, maturity, faithfulness, tolerance, understanding, as well as the other virtues, and above all the grace and blessing from God. It is a growing process. Yet this growing process requires stability, repetition, consistency, and symbols of remembrance, such as vows, wedding rings, anniversaries and traditions.

Growth doesn't mean "change for the sake of change". It means a *change* in intensity, dedication and above all, a growing in love, faith and hope as well as other virtues. So often in our self-indulgent and ego-building culture, we confuse love with sentimentality and self-fulfillment.

At times, these may be normal 'steps' in growth but they must be viewed with discernment and seen for what they are: Emotional fillings that are often adolescent, immature and self-centered and at best, a means that can be used to an end. And the end being the adoration of God and love of God.

I believe monastic life is the turning away from *self* towards God (penance). It is a life of adoration (angelic); a life of discipline (taught by God); a life of fasting (using what we need, not what we want.)

In summary, a true monastic loves God. His will and his glorification alone is the end purpose of this life. This does require a true selfless love

of others as well as all of creation. Monastic life is not a life of ‘social services’ or ‘environmentalism’.

A monastic’s love of others is based on his or her love for God, who created man (male and female) in His own image. A monastic’s love of animal life and the rest of creation is based on the fact that God created these things for mankind’s benefit, and as a reflection of His beauty and goodness.

These truths are expressed in our Orthodox worship, liturgy, *akathist* hymns, our hours of prayer, and our chants, both western and eastern. These chants are one and the same Tradition, that the power of the Holy Spirit produced our Holy Scriptures and the rest of our written Tradition, such as the writings of the Holy Fathers and our Canons.

In the Orthodox Catholic Christian Tradition there is only one real Tradition and that Tradition is Christ-God. He alone “is the way, the truth and the life.” He is the Sacrament. He is the Word of God (written and eternally living.)

He is God where the fullness of the God Head dwells and manifests itself to mankind in His Holy Body, the Church.

The monastic life is a living witness to these truths. It is living life unselfishly to its fullness in the truths by the grace of God.

If one departs from this belief, monastic life becomes but one of the ‘traditions’ of man, missing the point of its existence. For if anyone tries to depart from God, it would truly be better if one had not been born at all.

In closing, let me reiterate, monastic life is a love story. It is a life of love in Him who is Love itself. To fully understand this, all one needs to do is read the Gospels, the other Scriptures, the writings of the ancient Fathers and Saints, and join in the worship service of our Holy Faith.

There is only one  
real Tradition and  
that Tradition is  
Christ-God



## ARE WE SAVED?

**Verify, verify, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God – John 3:5**

In today's society, we often are asked, "Are you saved? Are you born again? When were you saved and born again?" Some Orthodox Christians answer these questions by saying on the day of their baptism, which brings criticism because most Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics as well as mainline Protestants were baptized as infants. In many cases, such questions make people feel guilty because they can't pinpoint the exact date and time when they personally accepted Christ as their personal saviour and were born again.

In regard to our physical birth, we had no choice. This was an act of God. After we're born and become older, we have a choice of how we wish to live. But we can't change the years allotted to each one of us on earth by God.

As for our spiritual life, we are saved and born again by an act of God's will and the power of the Holy Spirit working through Jesus Christ the Son of God.

In my opinion, the correct Orthodox Christian answer to such a question is this:

*We were saved almost two thousand years ago near the city of Jerusalem on a hill called Calvary between the hours of noon and 3 PM. and by the incarnation, birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone.*

Proof of this can be found in the physical and historical resurrection of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man as testified to by the New Testament writers, who for the most part, paid with their lives as martyrs to give witness of this fact.

As far as 'being born again', we Orthodox Christians need only recall Christ's simple words, we "must be born again by the water and spirit" and we "must eat and drink", His body and blood. The time and place when this occurs is not our choice. God calls us, we don't first call Him.

## ARE WE SAVED?

That's what we're told in Scripture and by the Orthodox Christian Saints. It's presumptuous to say that through our own will and merit we accept Christ and are born again on such and such a date and time. That turns our 'personal salvation and being born again' into an act of man and not an act of God.

**Only God  
knows these  
answers**

As for the exact date of our personal salvation and Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection, Scripture is silent. Only God knows these answers.

There are similarities between our physical and spiritual lives. We can reject our physical life and kill ourselves as an act of our own will as Judas did.

And we can reject God's gift of salvation and die spiritually. That's the teaching of Scripture.

To sin was and is within the power of our free will. To be born again and to be saved was and is an act of God's will alone. Anything else is just a sin of pride.

Both Satan and the first man and woman thought they could know and make the choice of good and evil on their own. As we're told in Scripture, Adam and Eve erred and couldn't even ask for God's mercy without His divine intervention and grace.

If you diligently search Scripture, you won't find one personal date or time given for any person being born again or being saved, other than the time that Christ freely died for our salvation and being born again! This alone is our only hope. How easy mankind is deceived with false humility. We dare to even claim salvation as our own deed and call this 'true religion'.

If somebody wants to be certain of one's salvation, one needs to place his or her trust in Christ as did the thief on the cross and simply ask "to be remembered" in Christ's kingdom. We should not think it is within our power to accomplish God's mercy. It is for this reason we constantly need to repeat the Jesus prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner."

In Scripture, God has given us what we need to know, not what we want to know. It seems strange to me that fundamentalists have missed the fundamental truth. It seems even stranger to me that many Orthodox Christians are embarrassed by the questions I've addressed here when God Himself has provided us with the answers in Holy Writ, the writings of our Saints and our liturgical worship and practices.

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner and remember me in your kingdom.” Amen! You alone have the words of eternal life.

We are baptized as a reminder of God’s mercy. Circumcision was a foreshadowing of baptism in the Old Testament and was administered to the male child. God ordains both our first birth and being ‘born again’ by His undeserved mercy. This doesn’t mean that salvation is an accident of birth because even the conception of a child in the womb is an act of God’s will and grace.

Those who argue that the old law has no effect on the new dispensation, clearly misunderstand Scripture. Christ clearly taught us that he fulfilled the old law, which was a foreshadowing of the New Testament, His Good News. This is the witness of His Church through the ages without change.

One may think this means that those children not born to Christian parents are not called to salvation or that human beings play no part in salvation, This isn’t true. Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments, gives us examples of persons and angels who rejected God’s call and gifts. Salvation is not merited, damnation is. Grace and being born again is not merited. Sins are acts of our own will and bring on eternal death because we reject God’s gifts.

There are certain times in our life when we personally feel God’s presence or His grace. However, this doesn’t mean that He wasn’t there with us before and all along. Salvation is an accomplished fact brought about by Christ’s death on the cross and His resurrection.

By the grace (the power of the Holy Spirit) we accept this or by our own free will, we will reject this act of God.

If things happen as the modern day ‘born again’ Christians claim, then we reduce God and His salvation to an act (or) deed of our own wills. Further, we reduce God and His gift of salvation to being dependent upon our own action, thus putting man’s actions first and God’s last.

Of course, this is idolatry and no doubt is the reason why the ‘born again’ crowd often judges others so harshly and frequently claims that God tells them personally so many things. In reality, these ‘born againers’ are suffering from a delusion and from an overworked imagination that fills their minds with grandiose ideas of their own importance. Also, that’s

the reason these people are so intolerant of persons who fail to meet 'their standards' of being 'born again' or 'saved'.

If one truly is guaranteed by Christ of his or her salvation, one would no doubt be speechless as was the thief on the cross. Or like the Virgin Mary, they would ponder this mystery in their hearts.

This truth is also pointed out in Apostle Paul's conversion, as well as other conversions we're told about in the New Testament. Paul was not saved by being knocked off his horse. God got his attention by this act. As Paul testified, he "gloried in nothing but the cross of Christ."

If it seems I repeat myself very often, it is only because Scripture often repeats the same answer in many different examples to show the unity of the words and witness of Holy Writ.

All Scripture supports the glory and worship of God's will and actions, not man's. The apostle Paul had to be knocked off his horse, blinded and silenced to get this point through his overzealous self-will. The salvation Paul received was a gift from God. The process took a long time. It was not an act of Paul's will that occurred in a split second in his life. His glory and boasting was what Christ did on the cross alone.

**We are not  
the center of  
the universe.  
God is!**

Are we 'born again' and 'saved'? Hopefully, the answer is yes. But we must not delude ourselves. We must grow to maturity spiritually as St. Paul tells us. We must stop thinking and acting like children and put aside childish things and grow up! We are not the center of the universe. God is! This is not my personal view alone. It is the testimony found in Scripture and all its books and works, individually and collectively.

Like Adam in the garden of paradise, we always want to claim the knowledge of good and evil, blame each other for our sins and then hide from the truth when God calls us, or worse yet, claim we accepted God's grace as an act of our own will.

Let us humbly thank God for the gift of being saved and born again. Let us not make the same mistake that Adam and Eve did. Let us ask ourselves for God's mercy and humbly accept His free gift and grow spiritually in wisdom and the other virtues.

THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

And finally, let us not forget God's non-merited goodness and kindness to us, unworthy as we are. Lest by the sin of presumption and pride, we be eternally banished from His Kingdom.



ARE WE SAVED?



## WHY I BECAME ORTHODOX

*If, however, a thief or robber tries to enter, not by the proper door, but by climbing up some other way, pay no attention to him. For the thief enters only so that he can deceive by heresy, and kill the Scriptures by turning them into allegory, since he is unable to interpret them spiritually. Then through presumption and his pseudo knowledge, he destroys both himself and the divine thoughts contained in Scripture. – St. Peter of Damaskos*

It is best to start by explaining why I left the Roman Catholic Church. While I was in almost despair, God in His infinite goodness, forced me to evaluate my spiritual needs and search for his Truth.

To begin with, I was one of those Catholics who firmly believed in the inerrant Scripture that God gave to his Holy Church through the Prophets and Apostles as part of the living written Tradition. This is and always was the position of the Roman Church, her Saints, her Fathers and her infallible popes through all of her history until after Vatican II.

To deny this truth made doctrines of sacraments, popes, the mass, salvation, etc., all human opinion, subject to our comprehension and what we considered relevant.

It also made monastic life, prayer, fasting, evangelization and our moral code, etc., to being mere useless attempts on the part of misguided and overzealous persons seeking to find the meaning of life and salvation.

After Vatican II, not only was everything questioned, but many tenets of the Catholic faith were denied and past practices and dogmas were openly ridiculed by the so-called learned theologians in high church circles.

In my opinion, if one denies the first chapter of the written Tradition (Genesis) and subjects it to human science, understanding and comprehension, it is no use to go any further in one's search for the truth. If the first book of written tradition was based on commonly held (mythological) stories containing 'hidden truths', then all Holy Writ, the lives of the Fathers and Saints and their beliefs all stem from myths,

allegories, and speculation based on ‘good intentions’ and possibly lofty noble intentions of human origin.

To deny the Old Testament introduction as being historical and scientific truth, is to deny the validity of the New Testament as well. For the New Testament is but a fulfillment of all Scripture based on the law of Moses according to Christ and writers of the New Testament and all the Fathers and Saints of both the Eastern and Western traditions of Christianity, who called themselves ‘Catholic’ or ‘Orthodox’.

If so much of the Old Testament was just a story with hidden meanings, I felt it would be just as beneficial for one’s spiritual growth to read *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Snow White would sure make for easier reading and it would also be less time consuming and more understandable to persons lacking theological degrees and not well versed in Hebrew, Latin and Greek.

It would serve all of us well to remember that we are not baptized into Paul, an apostle or bishop, but we are baptized into Christ

I felt that logically it was only a matter of time before the New Testament fell by the wayside, followed in short order by the mass, sacraments and everything else connected with the Catholic Church. My words proved prophetic. Everything fell by the wayside except the mass. I believe the mass survived because without it, the financial support would evaporate and

all the faithful would leave. The clergy and theologians would then all have to get honest jobs and really work for a living.

It was in this mind set that I walked away from the Roman Church in tears and felt as if I was experiencing what Christ felt when He sat and wept over Jerusalem.

I first came into contact with Orthodoxy at a time when I found refuge attending an Episcopal church. Changes in Rome were fast making headway in High Church Episcopalians. At this point, God in His goodness sent into my spiritually troubled life, Father Charles Campbell and Father Vasile Hatigan, two Orthodox priests. They gave me literature to read and Orthodox prayer books to study. Although these books differed

with my historical view of the Old Testament, they confirmed the truth of all Scripture.

It was in this setting that God found me and called me to the true faith, once delivered to His Church and held throughout all ages.

After many years of being Orthodox, I still hold to this true faith given to us by Christ and handed down to us by the Apostles and Saints. Yet I realize the church is made up of people and will always have shortcomings in its leadership and clergy on this earth.

Through the years, I've had to depend on the faithful for enlightenment and encouragement because some of our bishops fight for power and some clergymen waste an inordinate amount of time preaching 'canonicity' while all creation is on the road to self annihilation, temporally and spiritually, as were the Pharisees during Christ's time. People, like some old Catholics and others stand at our Orthodox doors, but we look the other way, or worse yet, we close the doors and lock them out.

Our faithful ask for spiritual food and far too often they are given debates about canonicity, calendar dates and questions about 'who is the bishop', etc.

It would serve all of us well to remember that we are not baptized into Paul, an apostle or bishop, but we are baptized into Christ. Canonicity depends on our faith, creed and our faithfulness to all of our Holy Tradition (Scripture, Creed, writings of the Fathers, the Holy Canons, liturgical practices, etc.)

Canonicity is impossible in such cities as Milwaukee, Wisconsin where several Orthodox churches exist under six 'canonical' bishops, a direct violation of the canons themselves.

Such scandals as these are not why I remain Orthodox. But like Peter, I say, "Lord to whom else can I go?"

I believe the prophecies in Scripture seem to be coming upon us because of what's happening everywhere. Human society is in moral decay, and our religious leaders, clergy, institutions and seminaries are neglecting their vocations as shepherds and pastors. We are all forgetting the lesson Christ taught his apostles at the mystical Last Supper when in humility He washed his disciples' feet.

## WHY I BECAME ORTHODOX

Since I've been Orthodox I've never seen such holy men and women as those who taught me in Roman Catholic schools and monasteries. But they and their religion are things of the past. In the Orthodox church, many, if not most of the leaders and clergy and seminaries, seem to be entering the same road of deception. Gossip and slander and disunity seem to be the norm in our parishes, which lack humility, charity and evangelization from some of our would-be leaders.

It is true the Orthodox church is anti-abortion, but where are our alternatives? It is true we have the true faith, but where is our evangelization? Do we seek out our 'lost sheep' or do we drive them away? It is true we have apostolic bishops, but where is their authentic loyalty to the canons or to the true canonical order of the church.

**It's impossible to serve  
God and mammon.**

**It is impossible to mix  
truth with a lie.**

Too many of our clergy want obedience and stress that the Church is not a democracy. This is true, but where is their loyalty and obedience to Christ's mandates and the canons of His, not their Church? Where is their submission and defense of all Holy Scripture? Is it only the fundamental Protestants who will stand up

and be counted for their absolute faith in the truthfulness of our written Traditions found in every word of Holy Writ?

After reading these words, many may ask why I still claim Orthodoxy for my faith. It is for the reason that Christ still acknowledged the people of Israel's faith while condemning their false practices. We have the faith once delivered, but we condemn ourselves by our practices of it.

It is for this reason that I went into exile in my own country as have many of our laity and those monks, nuns and clergy who have voiced their objections to the issues I've raised. It's impossible to serve God and mammon. It is impossible to mix truth with a lie.

Christ is my bishop. He is my truth. He is my sacrament and my tradition and my canonicity. He is my salvation and my hope in time and eternity.

Although I am my mother's bastard child, the God of all creation came into this world for this lost sheep (a sinner above all else) and He lived, died and rose from death to claim His own eternity.

This is the Orthodox faith that God gave to me, rejected by family and even the ‘official’ church ‘unofficially’ with silence. I say this without anger, hostility or despair.

For this was Christ’s station in life, and a servant can only rejoice in having the same lot as His Master. This is why I joyfully proclaim the faith delivered by Christ to us sinners. This is why I am Orthodox. It is a gift freely to me, without any merit on my part.

“Oh Lord to whom else can any of us go, for You alone have the words of eternal life.” In the end, it only matters if God considers us Orthodox, i.e., true believers in Him). Regardless of how unfaithful the witness of the leaders of the Orthodox Christians are, we must try to obey what they tell us. At the same time, we should separate ourselves from their actions and examples when they are disobedient to the Head of the Church, who is Christ alone.

If being in exile is our lot, we must endure and remain faithful because Christ will ultimately free us if we but ask for His mercy.

I’m Orthodox because Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. I’m Orthodox because I no longer fear Him. I love him.

We should remember the example and witness of those faithful Orthodox Christians in Russia who preserved their faith despite their godless state and some of their religious leaders who compromised their faith to gain favor with the Communist party. We can learn from their witness.

Those of us who think we in America live in a better society had better think again. The evils of capitalism are just the other side of the same coin known as communism.

Capitalism in many ways is more deceptive than communism, but it is no less deadly. For where communism denies the existence of God, capitalism claims man and his sinful greed as No. 1 in place of God.

The fathers taught us the value of discernment and humility in the acquisition of a virtuous life. True wisdom dictates that we test all spirits and prophets of our ‘new world order’ lest deception leads us into damnation.

*Oh Lord to whom else  
can any of us go, for  
You alone have the  
words of eternal life.*

Our only guide is that which the God of all ages gave us in Holy Tradition (Scripture, the writings and lives of the Fathers and Saints, our worship, liturgical practice, etc. Anyone, even if that someone is a bishop, who departs from the truth should be dealt with, lest the faithful be deceived. Our Master warned us that ‘in the last days’ evil men, would come to us ‘dressed in sheep’s clothing’. Our only prayer and hope is best expressed in the Jesus prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner.”

All a discerning person needs to do is look at the situation the Roman Church finds itself in during our time. We should thank God daily we have a different infallible head.

The Protestant alternative is filled with its own deception because it is based on man being the center of God’s creation rather than God’s will

If each one of us searches the Scripture, reads the Fathers and lives the Tradition of our faith, then one will realize there is no alternative to this true worship of God. Even in exile, the truth comes through.

Our faith is based on Christ God, given to us through His Church alone, regardless of our own sins, and the shortcomings, sins and failures of our leaders.

*One cannot separate theology from Scripture, worship, daily life, witness, discipline for all these things are one in Christ.*

We belong not to an organization founded by man, but one founded upon the rock of faith, which is in Christ, our only God and salvation. He alone with the Father and Holy Spirit is God, the God and creator of all that is, was or will be. He is the center and

only cause or purpose for being.

Christ gave us the example of a good bishop and priest when he washed the feet of His disciples at the Last Supper. Our leaders may be right when they state that the Church started by the Apostles is not a democracy. However, by Christ’s example, we know it should not be governed by dictators nor egocentric Pharisees of our day. Anything less than following Christ’s example is an example of an abuse of the office of bishop, priest and deacon and makes a mockery of our faith itself and all we call Holy Tradition.

## THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

Leaders of our church are poor examples of their holy vocations in far too many instances.

It was not the church leaders who preserved the faith in Communist Russia, it was the old women and men and their home icon corners and constant prayers that even the cruel dictatorship was not able to extinguish.

Arguments revolving around canonicity, ecumenism, the calendar have given rise to many would-be prelates who have personally gained power, position and financial gain at the expense of the faithful.

*May God, by His grace,  
save us from ourselves  
and our deeds.*

God help them on the day when they must give a final account of their stewardship.

Despite all this, our Saviour has promised 'that the gates of hell may not prevail' against His Church. We must remain faithful at all costs and not leave. If we are driven out, we must accept our exile and stand firm at the doors until our Lord returns and calls us back into His Kingdom and drives out the hirelings.

No servant is greater than His Master and we must take up our cross daily, and follow Christ, even to the cross outside the Holy City Jerusalem (the Church) if necessary. For with Him, we too will see the veil torn open and will then enter into His resurrection and our only plea and hope will be:

*Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.*

For we indeed have found the true faith, we have seen the true light, worshipping the undivided Trinity. Amen!

The truth of all Holy Tradition, Scripture included, was proven by our Lord's resurrection and by the witness of the lives of the countless prophets, saints and martyrs of the Church. Anything less reduces God to our limited level of understanding and is but a counterfeit faith, which is not the faith once delivered but one couched in rationalism and delusion.

Look around you. Look at our attempts to provide a 'new world order'. Look at our destruction of human life, in and out of the womb.

Look at the destruction by man and his technology of even the environment, animal, and plant life. All this was foretold by the prophets, Christ God, His Apostles and His saints centuries ago. He who has eyes to see, ears to listen and a mind to discern has the solutions to all these and other symptoms of the sin, lack of faith, our idolatry (the worship of man and his intellect), and our greed.

*I had only one choice  
open to me,  
It was Christ and the  
Orthodox faith.*

The hour is not too late yet to repent and escape the fruits of our actions. May God by His grace, save us from ourselves and our deeds.

I firmly believe the Bridegroom will come and we must keep our midnight lamps burning, lest we Orthodox Christian also be locked out.

This is the reason why I hold to the only faith given to us by God Himself.

Why am I an Orthodox Christian? The answer lies in the Psalms and the Lord's Prayer. They contain the hope and truth held and witnessed to by the 'Old Israel'. In the Psalms and the beautiful 'Our Father' prayer that Jesus handed down to us, is fulfilled all that is contained in the New Testament, the writings of the Fathers and the liturgical life of the Orthodox faith.

For in true Orthodoxy, one cannot separate theology from Scripture, worship, daily life, witness, discipline (canons, rubrics, icons, fasting, etc.) For all these things are one in Christ.

Strangely enough, I learned all these things while I was a novice in the Capuchin order; from the writings of St. Francis of Assisi and Theresa of Lisieux; and from a Roman Catholic Franciscan nun named Sister Pauline who took me under her wing when I was a child.

Following all the changes in the Roman Catholic Church brought about by Vatican II and the departure by the Catholic Church from Biblical historical truths, I had only one choice open to me. It was Christ and the Orthodox faith.

## FASTING AND CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in thanks giving, meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word to speak the mystery of Christ. – Colossians 4:23*

In Christian Tradition there is clearly a discipline of prayer and fasting to be observed in our daily lives, and which is found in Scripture.

Since the time of King David the prophet, God's people used the psalms in their private and public worship, a practice carried on even to this day by most Christian denominations and people of the Jewish faith. Even our Lord and His apostles practiced this form of worship.

The Psalms represent the faith, hope and heart of 'Old Israel' and the 'New Israel', the Orthodox Christian Church, as well.

Today it is popular in many non-Orthodox Christian denominations to replace the Psalms with hymns and modern secular music. It is also common for these groups to completely drop use of Psalms considered too harsh or unchristian such as verse 9 of Psalm 37 because it refers to cursing our enemies and killing them and even their infants. Even in Roman Catholic monastic worship such Psalms have fallen into disuse.

To begin with, we must realize that the Psalms are part of the divinely inspired word of God, which we call the Bible. Secondly, Psalms like 137 must not only be understood in their historical context, but also in their timeless spiritual context.

Historically speaking, Psalm 137 speaks of the Israel that was destroyed and its people taken captive and forced into exile in Babylon. The Israeli people prayed for delivery from their enemy. Furthermore, they also prayed for the destruction and annihilation of their enemies and even all the Babylonian children, lest after their delivery the Babylonian children would grow up and inflict even worse pain upon them.

In their writings, the Fathers and Saints of the 'new Israel' told us that we must pray for deliverance from our sins, which have spiritually blocked our entrance to the Kingdom of Christ. Also, we were told that we must even pray that God would annihilate all traces of our faults and temptations, spawned by our arch enemy, Satan and his kingdom.

As Israel was given the wisdom to know and fully understand its enemy, Christians likewise through the ages have been warned not to underestimate their enemy.

This latter point has been made very clear by the placement and uses of the Psalms, Scriptural canticles (both Old and New Testament), the Lord's Prayer, etc.

It would be unheard of for anyone in the Orthodox Tradition to presume to pass judgment and brand any word or iota of the Scriptures as being unchristian in content, form or message.

Such presumption would in effect make God and His divinely inspired Word subject to our feelings and limited understanding.

The relevancy of God's Word doesn't now, nor has it ever depended upon human judgment, acceptance or popularity.

God and His Church is not running for a public office or trying to win a popularity contest. The relevance of God, His Church, His Divine Scriptures are relevant because this is truth.

Although we may consider the path to God straight and narrow, this is the only path to salvation given to us by God. Our personal judgments and opinions are really irrelevant if they differ from God's.

Keeping all this in mind, we can now accept the divinely-inspired discipline (teaching) of Scripture, the Church and ultimately God gave us in all His Humility. We can now make every effort to pray daily at the appointed times as taught by God in His Psalms, the books of the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. We do

*The relevancy of God's Word  
doesn't now, nor has it ever  
depended upon human  
judgment, acceptance or  
popularity.*

this not as slaves to man-made tradition, but as free men and women in obedience and humility, worshiping and praising God as He so graciously taught us. Try as we might, we can never improve upon the Tradition given us unworthy sinners by the only God.

When our prayer life is fed daily through the discipline of Christ, we soon realize that God's ways are not our ways and we need not look elsewhere if we really want to live a truly relevant life.

## THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

How an Orthodox Christian should fast, dress, talk, give alms, handle his business affairs, take care of one's family, and care for the poor, etc., is taught to us by God's Divine Scripture, particularly the Psalms.

With the Orthodox way, our liturgical life (the discipline and rule of daily prayer and services), our theology, our understanding and use of Scripture, the Saints, our Church structure, our use of icons, the rules of fasting and our sacraments, etc., are not individual things. They are part of a whole and unified in Christ as one.

What we pray, sing, teach, read, live, etc., are all part of the same truth, which is Christ, if we are truly believing Orthodox Christians. As St. Paul tells us, "what do we have that we have not received from God?" Or as Christ tells us, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

Human reasoning doesn't bring us to this conclusion. It is the gift of faith, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, who teaches us.

This is what separates Orthodoxy from man-made religions.

As we are told in II Thessalonians 3:13-17:

*"We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."*

*"Whereunto He called you by our Gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

*"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the Traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle."*

*"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace."*

*"Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."*

And as II Peter 1:16-21, tells us:

*“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His Majesty.”*

*“For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”*

*“And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the Holy mountain.”*

*“We have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”*

*“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.”*

*“For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”*

St. Peter in chapter two of the same Epistle goes on to teach us of destructive doctrines, false teachers, etc.

He warns us so that we may guard against deception and falling from the truth we’ve received from God. Today, many religions, including those who profess to be Christians or even Orthodox and clergy, are falling away from the Holy Tradition. Sadly, many sincere people are led astray by the deceptive teachings of church leaders.

Never in the history of the Church has there been a greater need for us to pray for the gift of discernment. The groundwork for the coming of the anti-Christ seems underway everywhere.

There has never been a time of greater need for us to adhere faithfully and with all humility to the strict rule of prayer, worship and Tradition of the Church embodied in the body of Christ, True God and True Man.

As Orthodox Christians, we must remain loyal to the only Head of our Church, Christ. If we separate ourselves from Christ, we'll experience physical and spiritual death.

Although we live in dangerous times, fraught with deceptions and falsehoods, we have no need to despair. Rather with joy and great expectation, we should take heed and read the signs of our times. We should stand tall with a sure hope that God is faithful in His word and if we remain faithful, we will be united in glory with Christ-God in the ages to come in His Kingdom.

*Sadly, many sincere people are led astray by the deceptive teachings of church leaders.*

This does not mean blind obedience to princes or the sons of men, or even the clergy. It means we must live in the Divine Light with our eyes wide open and our hearts and wills obedient to the faith once delivered.

Our discipline must be ever faithful to the grace of God, His Way of Salvation, not ours. Although we are in this world, we must not be of this world. This path of discipline is narrow, but it is the only path to His Kingdom.

Without this sure faith and hope, we are truly lost and we are the most pitiful of mankind's children.

The purpose of our existence is to worship God and do His Holy Will. He is the center and cornerstone which holds all things, seen and unseen, together. We are not No. 1. Good health, wealth, long life, etc. is not happiness. Living in time and eternity in God's presence, according to His will and purpose, in the end, is all that matters or that brings true happiness and true freedom.

I do not believe anyone has ever departed this life in peace, who has not firmly held to this truth, no matter how blessed they were in this life. Truth becomes more clear to anyone who has dealt with the terminally ill and people who are dying.

Even those who seemingly have led 'holy lives', done 'good deeds', and remained faithful to their prayers, often despair or depart this life in great fear. The discipline of prayer and the life of a Christian must be centered in Christ-God's work and His mercy to assure one's salvation and eternal happiness for God's honor and glory, not ours.

Our physical bodies are useless without a head. So spiritually, we serve no purpose apart from Christ, our spiritual Head. I do not think it is possible to overstate the truth of the importance of God being the center and purpose of all creation, not man.

All the evils of this world and this age are but symptoms of the sins rooted in our departure from this truth.

This I have learned mostly from the daily praying of the Psalms at hours sanctified in the Tradition of the Orthodox faith given to us by God through His prophets and saints.

As a child I was taught this truth by a Roman Catholic nun, Sister Pauline, in the fourth grade. Whenever I've departed from this 'way', God in His mercy and kindness, disciplined me even severely at times, to wake me up and return me to His narrow path, leading to Him.

When I was a teenager, it was the daily use of the Psalms and hours of prayer that eventually healed the physical and verbal abuse that I suffered from the hands of my stepfathers. God, in His mercy, opened the words of Scripture to me, a sinner.

It was in this setting that God, undeserving though I was, taught me how to love not only Him, but all of His creation, even those who abused me the most.

I learned that what judgment I willed for them was my own judgment before God.

I could never claim this as my own great accomplishment. I did not will Sister Pauline to come into my life.

I did not will for the Capuchins to reinforce these truths in my life. I did not will for Vatican II to force me to seek out the Orthodox faith.

All these events, the good, the bad, and the ugly, which led me to Christ were truly an act of His divine mercy. The only thing I can take credit for are my sins. These were an act of my will.

I know of no human being who has been blessed more than me in life. Nor do I know of no one less deserving than me.

I have received so much and have accomplished so little as far as true virtues are concerned.

All this being said, it is easy to understand why I feel so strongly about submitting to the discipline God has set forth in His Church for fasting, prayer and daily living.

All that matters is God. To separate ourselves from this would make our lives meaningless, empty and of no worthwhile purpose. It would be a hopeless existence and the beginning of Hell, even in this life. To freely separate ourselves from God or His word and truth is the ultimate in pride and arrogance.

Of no less importance in Western and Eastern Orthodox Catholic Christian practices are making the sign of the cross, chanting the Psalms, liturgical gestures (bows), facing east at times of prayer, etc.

These practices, when and if done with reverence, conviction and real devotion, insure that even our bodies are one with our mind and spirit in true worship of God.

These gestures and practices are deeply rooted in the Scripture, and insure that our worship is offered by ourselves, and by all that God created as ourselves.

This includes our mind, soul and body. God wants us to give nothing less than our whole being to Him. This truth is witnessed to by the firm belief in the resurrection of not only our soul, but also of our body as well.

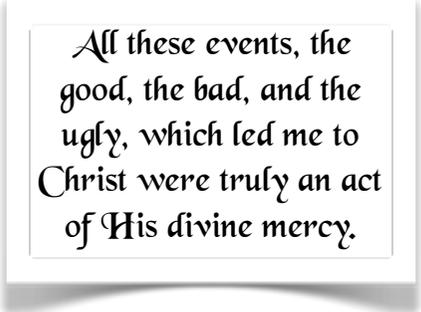
As the Scriptures are the word of God in print, as icons are the word of God in painting, so too, the liturgical gestures are the word of God in symbols, leading to the total worship of God in all truth, by all of man as God created us to be.

All of us will ultimately share in God's glory or His punishment.

The use of incense, vestments, etc. all support and give witness to these same truths and are rooted in Scripture, so that we may worship God in spirit and in truth.

None of these practices are an end to themselves. Nor do they lead to idolatry, if they are utilized in the proper perspective.

God's truth is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow as is the true worship of God.



*All these events, the good, the bad, and the ugly, which led me to Christ were truly an act of His divine mercy.*

As we're told in Psalm 103:1:

*Bless the Lord, O my soul! From the depth of my being,  
bless his Holy Name.*

Reading the Scriptures daily, reading the writings of the Fathers and Saints, and attending Church services as a priority and receiving the sacraments cannot be over-stressed.

*By ourselves we can  
accomplish nothing of lasting  
value. In all truth,  
everything we have we've  
received from God, except  
for our many sins.*

Without these, the correct understanding and worship of God is very limited and subjective, and often leads to delusion or the sin of pride the Pharisees practiced at the time of Christ.

Without the correct balance of all of the above, Christian deeds or even charity and the other virtues become devoid of any value or real lasting purpose.

Often in our childish arrogance and pride, we easily get puffed up with our own false self-importance and claim the mercy and works of God as our own accomplishments. Then, we become judgmental, intolerant and self-righteous, undoing any good that God has done or will accomplish in us by His grace and mercy.

Christian discipline must always be firmly rooted and established on none other than Christ and God's will and purposes alone.

By ourselves we can accomplish nothing of lasting value. In all truth, everything we have we've received from God, except for our many sins.

This knowledge leads us not to despair, but rather to the assurance of God's undeserved mercy and confidence in the sure hope of His Divine Providence.

In all truth, what god is as great as our God? Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has not entered the mind of man greater things than what God has prepared or given us.

“ASK AND YE SHALL RECEIVE”

*Be careful what you ask God for,  
He may give it to you.* – Father Anthony Good

When I was a young child trying to maintain my sanity in between my mother's many marriages, I recall my mother asking me to pray that things 'work out' for her and a certain man she was dating. Furthermore, my mother asked me to pray that this man would marry her.

I was 11 years old at the time. Although this man treated me and my mother very well, for some strange reason I instinctively feared him.

My mother was very ill during this time, stricken with polio. This man financially supported my mother and myself. Although I feared the man, I did as my mother said and prayed that my mother and he would get married and this man would be the father I always dreamed of having.

Shortly after my mother's health took a turn for the better, she married this man. Thus began one of the worst nightmares in my life. The night my mother and her new husband returned from their honeymoon, the endless beatings, verbal and physical abuses started. The man literally began using me as a punching bag. Upon inflicting the first beating on me, my new stepfather told me that "this beating was to let me know what was in store for me if I disobeyed him".

In the troubling years that followed, my acts of 'disobedience' for which I was tortured and severely beaten by my stepfather, ranged from my not wanting to eat bread with my meal; wanting a slice of bread or some butter; not using salt; getting sick; looking at my stepfather; going into my mother's bedroom and giving her water when she was sick after she asked me to do so, etc., etc.

It would be truthfully impossible to even begin to list all the times I was punished by my stepfather for all my so-called acts of disobedience. Suffice to say, the beatings went on and on during my adolescent years until I ran away from home when I was 15.

The point I’m trying to make is this. It is always better to ask God’s will be done, rather than rely on our own judgments.

To also bring the point home to me, God also gave me what I prayed for when I entered monastic life. I prayed that He make my religious life one that in some degree be like that of Francis of Assisi and Theresa of Lisieux. Since the end of my first year in monastic life, I faced one illness after another, and one rejection after another.

Besides my obvious sins of presumption and lack of humility, God in His goodness, taught me the necessity to pray for the grace to persevere and deal with what I ask for, if it is granted. Often what seems to be a holy and unselfish prayer is but false pride, presumption and not really anything we can or want to deal with. We become like a moth attracted to the heat of a flame on a cold night.

**We cannot rush  
God, nor do we  
know better than  
He does**

Our prayers for ourselves and others should always be that God’s will be done and that He grant us wisdom and true discernment. We are not the center of the universe and we really don’t know what is really in our best interests and the best interests of others without the gifts of wisdom, discernment and above all, an unselfish love for God and His will.

God drove this point home to us when his Son Jesus taught us the beautiful Lord’s prayer, “Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven...”

Over the years, I wish I could say this lesson has finally become second nature to me. But sadly, that hasn’t always been the case. Far more often than I like to admit, I failed to pray in this manner. Like the moth, I kept flying into the flame and got burnt, often badly. Yet God in his undeserved mercy still rescues me, so that I am not consumed by the fires of my own folly.

Like Solomon writes in chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes, “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven...”

We cannot rush God, nor do we know better than He does. We need to be still and let God be God and wait on Him to act according to His will and purpose. God’s ways are not our ways and we need to learn this or like

Adam and Eve, we will only add to our sins and cause the next generation to have to cope with our sins.

The evils in this world wars, sickness, alcoholism, drugs, child abuse, murder, starvation, death, etc., are all the result of the sins, individually and collectively of mankind and mankind's will(s). Each of us has added our own sins to this legacy that we pass on to the next generation. There seems to be no end to our greed and selfishness and perversions.

In man's case, the 'trickle down' theory is a reality in this regard. It is not, nor has it ever been, God's will, for situations to be as evil or as violent as they are in the world today. Since the time of Adam and Eve, we have all contributed freely by our wills to man's unhappy plight. Like Adam and Eve, we hide from God and make excuses for our actions, saying, 'he or she made me do it', or 'the devil made me do it', etc.

Unless we repent and ask for God's mercy, our well deserved punishment will surely come in our times as foretold by Daniel the prophet, the other prophets, Christ and St. John in the Book of Revelation. For when Christ comes at the end of the age, there will be no place to hide, nor will our endless excuses remove guilt or our personal responsibility for our contribution to the evil in this world.

Our only hope is that we repent and pray,

*"Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner."*

This is the will of Christ-God, for He came that all might be saved and that not anyone should perish. The only thing standing in the way of God's will is that He gave us our own free will and He loves us enough not to force his will on us.

The choice is ours. Evening is drawing near and the Bridegroom is surely drawing nearer. We must be watchful and discern the times in which we live. For if we do not keep watch and keep our lamp burning with oil (representing the faith and fruits of a living faith the virtues), we will surely not enter the Bridal Chamber (the Kingdom) of God.

In the final analysis, doing God's will and praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit to accomplish it, is the only worthwhile way to pray. We surely need to be careful of what we ask God for. He may give it to us and we may deserve it and even more.

“ASK ADD YE SHALL RECEIVE”

For as we're told in Psalm 102, verses 1 through 3:

*“Lord hear my prayer; let my cry for help reach You. Do not hide your face from me in my time of need. Turn your ear to me when I call. Be quick to answer me, for my days are vanishing like smoke, my bones are like charred wood.”*



## POWER, MONEY AND CORRUPTION

God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for thou renderest to every man according to his work. – Psalm 63:12

In these evil times, one doesn't need to look hard to find examples of misuses of money, power and corruption, almost in every facet of social, family, business and political life. Even in religion are all these evils found.

Many people who honestly are searching for a faith, honestly and simply fall prey and become victims of those whose only intent is to satisfy their own greed for lust for power and control.

Cults seem to be everywhere, even in organized, established mainline Christian denominations as well as the 'new religions' of our times. Once trusted religious orders, institutions and ministries are now looked upon as corrupt and in need of reform or in need of being abolished altogether. One only needs to read the newspapers or watch the nightly news on television to verify these facts.

Much has been written about the constant battles of the 'canonical' and so-called 'un-canonical' Orthodox jurisdictions here in the west. The scandal of all this speaks for itself. At the root of it all seems to be a lust for power and control by those in authority.

The affect of all this on the laity, the average parish priest or simple monastic is seen in the constant gossiping, slandering and battle for power and control that seems to have become the hallmark of an Orthodox Christian parish. Non-Orthodox people can in all honesty look at us and say, "see how these Orthodox Christians hate one another."

Other Christian denominations welcome their visitors. We Orthodox seem to go out of our way to scandalize them and drive them out.

We Orthodox often excuse our actions and those of our leaders by saying, "this is an imperfect world." This excuse would be valid if we didn't claim that we alone are indeed the Church founded by Christ and that we alone are the sole guardians of the Faith once delivered to the

Apostles and Saints. The problem isn't our faith. It is a lack of us living it according to Christ's example.

The laity and simple monastics are powerless to change things because the Orthodox structure is not a true democracy, according to most bishops and clergy. Although it is true that Orthodox doctrine and worship is not a matter of a popular vote, it does not follow that it is a dictatorship. The head of the Orthodox Church is Christ and He gave us the example to be followed by those in charge at the Holy Last Supper, when he washed the feet of the Apostles. He also illustrated this role of shepherd (bishop or priest) in the story of the Good Shepherd. As for those who want to sit next to Christ in His Kingdom, Christ also gave us the answer to this question in the Gospels.

**Bishops need to  
set an example  
of humility**

The role and example of a person who has authority or power in the Church and the proper use of such power is also found in the Gospels and in Christ's examples. Christ healed the sick, fed the hungry, comforted those who mourned, forgave those who sinned and who did Him harm. Christ came to serve and He sent His Apostles out to teach and serve in like manner.

Our problem today is that we fail to follow the canons left for us in the Gospels as well as those left by the Fathers. Even our leaders seem to interpret out of context those parts of the Gospels or canons that give them power and authority.

The solution to this problem is simple. Our bishops need to set an example of humility. They need to seek out the lost sheep. They need to lead them back to Christ and His mercy by their example. They need to set aside their own pride, etc., and follow the Apostle's example and that of the canons of the early Church: one Orthodox bishop in one city. This they can accomplish by drawing straws as the Apostles did when they replaced Judas. The only requirement by these bishops should be their confession of the Orthodox faith. The arguments of canonical or un-canonical churches are useless since everyone is in violation of the canons in the west for this simple reason: different Orthodox bishops claim jurisdiction in the same cities and in the same country.

Personally, I believe the Grace of the Holy Spirit would be available to solve this problem of having more than one Orthodox bishop having jurisdiction over the same city.

The crux of the problem lies in the fact that no bishop seems to have enough faith in God to start the process. Our sins of pride and greed stand in the way.

It seems as if the whole world is on the road to self-destruction and those who have the solution have no interest in resolving the problem because they cling to a 'power', that in the end will bring about their own condemnation.

*Power and  
authority need not  
corrupt if they are  
used as a trust given  
by God*

Divine Scripture foretold of the coming of this age when many people would be driven out of the Church by those in power who thought they were serving God. The choice is not ours, but those who have been given power and authority over us. The faithful must accept the judgment of the Apostolic successors in this life, but those entrusted with authority and power will face their own judgment in the age to come. By what manner they judge, they will be judged.

Power and authority need not corrupt if they are used as a trust given by God in which everyone empowered will have to give an account of their stewardship. Christ made this most clear in the Gospels and in the rest of the Divine Scriptures.

It is true that the faithful, monastic and laity, owe obedience to those entrusted with the authority of a bishop or priest.

Yet, it is also equally true that those who hold the office and authority of a bishop or priest should do so with compassion, fairness, fidelity to the Scriptures and Canons of the Church, and be held accountable, not only for their own actions and judgments, but also for those with whom they share their rank, past and present. For as we are told in Scripture, the sins of a father are visited upon their children.

In my opinion, it is not possible for a bishop or priest to claim his power or authority without being held responsible for their individual and collective decisions. With power and authority always comes responsibility and the use of this God-given authority and power always must be judged by the Scriptures, the Canons, the Fathers, etc. in

Tradition. One cannot claim absolute Divine Right to govern without equally being held accountable. God has given order within His Church to various people prophets, Apostles, bishops, priests, monastics and laymen and these people in turn God used to contribute to our God-given Tradition. This Tradition is found in the Scriptures, canons, and liturgical life. It is balanced and it is a Tradition, which is living and complete. Each part of this Tradition supports and confirms the whole. It is free of the bias of any one man's opinion in which God alone is the judge and source of authority in Christ Jesus, the only Head and only absolute power and authority by which we all are judged and held accountable.

That is why no doubt why the Tradition of Scripture, the saints and canons hold most accountable, those who hold positions as shepherds and teachers, i.e., bishops, priests and deacons.

Ideally, if all bishops, priests and deacons, acted as shepherds in the truest sense of the word, then the Orthodox Church would and could serve as a remedy to all of today's social and spiritual problems. But unfortunately, this ideal is not a reality in our times. Worse yet, it seems not to even be given any serious attention. We seem to live in a time when our leaders within Orthodoxy spend their years perpetuating and promoting the faith as if it was meant only for a 'few good men'. Christ and many of our Church Saints lived their lives believing that All would be saved, who accepted Christ and His salvation.

The abuses and misuse of power provide ample witness as to how far we are in need of self-examination of our personal priorities and witness.

*One cannot claim  
absolute Divine Right to  
govern without equally  
being held accountable*

Our disunity is also just another example of how far we Orthodox Christians have strayed from the Faith once delivered. Our canonicity or lack thereof cannot be judged by the bishop or patriarch we are under. It can only be judged by our faithfulness to Christ-God and His living Tradition within the

Church He alone founded and heads. We are not baptized in the name of any patriarch or bishop and they are not our salvation. We are baptized in Christ in the name of the Holy Trinity.

This does not mean that we are free of obedience to who God in His Church has given authority.

Rather, it means obedience is owed to him who also is held accountable in obedience to the Tradition given us by God within the Church. Orthodox obedience and Tradition were never intended to be blind, abusive and one-sided.

Nor is any bishop, priest, monastic or laymen free to pick and choose and disregard their obedience at will. We are all accountable for our own faithfulness or lack thereof to God's Tradition.

Christ-God gave His Church the only example of the proper use of power within His Church. It is one of service to God in which salvation is a gift offered to all sinners, who by repentance, accept God's will that none be lost. Everyone, whether they be a bishop, priest, monastic, or lay person, will be held accountable for their use of the power of the Holy Spirit given them in proportion to their individual gifts. To them who much is given, much will be required, as Christ taught us.

God help us all if we continue 'business as usual'. All of us who have eyes to see, need to read the signs of the times we live in with wisdom and discernment. For we must be on guard in case we are found unprepared when the Bridegroom comes and our lamps are burned out and we are locked out of the bridal chamber.

"Lord remember us in Your Kingdom." We may not know the exact day or hour the Lord is coming, but Christ gave us signs to watch for and we do indeed need to take heed lest we be caught unaware and ill-prepared.

Surely those who have the true faith, know and profess, "He is coming!" for us, individually or collectively. There is the reality of the mortality of everyone the rich and the poor, kings and subjects, and virtuous persons and sinners. All of us are subject to parting this mortal life.

Tomorrow is promised to no one except those who place all their faith and hope in Christ-God.

Nonetheless, we need not fall into despair or fear the possibility of the coming of Christ. It should be a comfort to us that Christ promised salvation to all those who accept His mercy and forgiveness, with the promise of His grace to only endure that which we have the ability to personally handle. His grace is truly freely given, according to the need of each one of us. Evil and abuse and misuse of power may be all around us.

But as a bride prepares for her bridegroom with joy and anticipation, so we ought to prepare for Christ's return, ever being faithful to Him, in who alone rests our only sure hope.

It is also necessary that each one of us be aware, that even if we are rejected or become a victim of any abuse by those in power, we must not defend ourselves by being abusive in return. We must forgive and we must not return evil for evil. Yet at the same time, we need not refrain from speaking out against evil as a testimony of the truth. Also, it is our God-given right to flee from abuse, if possible. God doesn't demand the impossible from us, nor does it follow that we sacrifice ourselves as willing victims of injustice or uncontrolled, irresponsible abuse of authority.

As the prophet Solomon instructs us, "There is a time and a season for everything under the heavens."

**We must  
forgive and we  
must not return  
evil for evil**

As a victim of physical, emotional and spiritual abuse in my life, I've been guilty of venting my justifiable anger at the wrong time and against the wrong person.

Prayer and discernment are needed to avoid this misuse and misdirection of even justifiable anger. Without the gift of wisdom, we let ourselves fall

into sinning equally, if not to a greater degree, by sinning against charity.

Vengeance is never an acceptable answer or alternative. It only perpetuates the evil and serves no good purpose. We must be willing to forgive and pray for God's mercy, even to those who abuse us and abuse their authority and power. For with what mercy we give, God in return will give us mercy. Vengeance and justice rightly belong only to God for we all have sinned and need His forgiveness.

It is for this reason that we should never judge another man. However, we must judge his words and actions so that we in no way give tacit approval to evil. When doing this, we must pray that we are free of malice and that we rely solely on God's judgments.

Being truly Orthodox and following Christ's ways, has and always will be a narrow path. The gift of discernment is needed above all the other virtues in these perilous times. For with this virtue, we either follow blindly or we misdirect our judgments.

There is no substitute for prayer, reading of the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers and Saints in attaining the virtue of discernment. There are so few truly spiritual Fathers in our time, that we have only these ancient sources to rely on with confidence.

In addition to these 'tools' that I've mentioned in attaining the virtue of discernment, one can add fasting, and being slow to speak, slow to judge and long suffering. If we act accordingly, God will not leave us orphans, nor will He leave us without the appropriate answers and judgment.

With God's will and mercy, I'm committed to remaining faithful to his Church and His will. I trust that His grace will suffice. My life is and never has been a fairy-tale. God has not given me the privilege to choose my preference in penance. Nor has God gifted me with the wisdom of Solomon. All I can do is accept reality and deal with things to the best of my ability, with God's grace. The life that God has called me to is not easy nor does it come cheaply. I am not above Christ and if I'm truly His disciple, I must also accept the cross He has given me as an example.

I share these personal thoughts with the hope that they will give comfort to those who have endured even abuse and rejection by those whose office should be one of reconciliation and service to God's people. Christ didn't warn us of the possibility of ourselves being victims of the 'powers that be', even in His Church, in vain and with no reason. He told us of the coming of this age, so that we might discern His will for us.

Christ didn't warn us of  
the possibility of  
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and with no reason



## EVANGELIZATION

*And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. – Mark 16: 15-16*

After reading Christ's last words and instructions to His Apostles before his ascension into heaven, it is impossible for anyone who is a bishop, priest or deacon in the Orthodox Christian Church not to be evangelical. This also applies to all the laity, as well.

The ordained clergy are primarily to teach, preach and administer the Sacraments (Mysteries) of Christ-God. They also are called upon to lead the people of God in their Liturgical worship, where people pray. And the laity are called upon to assist, support, witness and pray along with the ordained clergy (bishops, priests, deacons) in the evangelization of those outside the Church.

Of course, such a mission is impossible without leadership, order, unity, dedication, total commitment, and the full cooperation and support of members within the local parish and the Church, nationally and internationally. For evangelization to work, it is absolutely necessary that there be unity in faith, doctrine, moral conduct and honesty among all those who evangelize.

The early Church had these requisites.

The early Church also had the assurance of the grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit despite the small number of proclaimed Christians and the opposition and persecution they faced from the hostile world they lived in. Despite these handicaps, the Christian Faith grew rapidly. The more the hostile world tried to destroy the Christian Faith by condemning Christians to death, the more the Church grew.

As far as the Orthodox Christians in today's world are concerned, the evangelization process has become merely a notation in our history. We can barely evangelize our own children born in the Orthodox faith, let alone evangelize the world.

I've often heard it said that the reason this is so is because traditional Orthodox countries have been held captive and victimized by Islamic, Communist and now even Christians of other sects, who are stealing and proselytizing Orthodox people. This of course is true, especially with regards to traditional Orthodox nations in the east.

I've been told and have read many articles published by different jurisdictions in this country that the reason the evangelization process has not taken hold in the free world, i.e. western Europe and the United States, is because "the Orthodox Church is an immigrant church".

Also, many people have warned that Orthodox must not accept converts too hastily because the converts lack the benefit of being born in the bosom of the Faith.

*Christ didn't say  
that all conditions  
had to be in your  
favor before one  
went out and  
preached the Gospel*

Also, we hear that these converts may "come to us and not remain true" to the Orthodox faith, and thus be condemned because of our overzealousness.

Recently, the Antiochian Orthodox Church bucked Orthodox tradition by evangelizing and taking in Western Rite parishes and a small Protestant sect from the Campus Crusade for Christ group, leaders and all, despite strong criticism, reproach and even condemnation from other Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States and other countries.

Even before this happened, in 1970, a group of churches with Russian ties in the United States and Canada, gained its autocephaly from the Russian Orthodox Church, proclaimed itself as the Orthodox Church in America, became a self-governing body, and decreed that its liturgy be performed in the English vernacular. Other Orthodox jurisdictions in the country viewed this move, either with disdain or silence, and certainly not with wholehearted approval.

In all honesty, one must conclude that real evangelization by Orthodox in the United States and other countries seems to be an impossible task or it is avoided because of lack of will, leadership or possibly unity. Not being God, I can't really say or judge all these past actions fairly.

In St. Mark's Gospel, Christ didn't say that all conditions had to be in your favor before one went out and preached the Gospel.

The Apostles and the generations of those who followed the Apostles also faced a hostile world and forces that persecuted them and did everything in their power to wipe out Christianity.

Even after the Arian heresy and those other groups that led many of the faithful away from the Orthodox faith, the Fathers and Saints persevered and evangelized and persisted in bringing the true faith to all who would accept Christianity despite hostility and persecution from the new sects and hostile and evil governments.

Because the Orthodox church was of a Divine origin and guided by the Holy Spirit in its unity of faith, trust and purpose, the Orthodox Church did as Christ commanded it to do, evangelize. It trusted God and was obedient and accepted no excuse or reason to do otherwise.

This is the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church and guides the Church as to who, when and why evangelism is to take place or not to take place.

Of course, before this Tradition can be followed, we must have true unity in Christ and His Tradition as found in the Scriptures, the Saints and the canons, etc. Scripture tells us that a “house divided against itself can not stand.” What can I possibly add to that?

What we need to have is  
a unity in Christ and this  
unity has to be expressed  
in Orthodox Tradition

I totally reject the notion and anti-scriptural view that one should not reach out to those outside the faith.

And yet I really don't know where to send them to a church, where they won't become disillusioned, scandalized or even become part of the total and inexcusable lack of unity and canonical order and discipline in all the Orthodox jurisdictions in this country and now even in the traditional Orthodox lands.

In my ignorance, I used to think that the so-called ethnic parish was what held us Orthodox Christians back in our evangelizing efforts. But now I see that many of the American parishes are no less ethnic and exclusive and arrogant than even the so-called ethnic Orthodox parishes.

What I failed to understand was that it wasn't a unified language in the liturgy or freedom from abroad that was needed. What we need to have is a unity in Christ and this unity has to be expressed in Orthodox Tradition,

## EVADGELIZATION

which clearly states that there should be only one bishop in each city and all bishops should be in full unity with each other in Christ.

Personally I see nothing wrong with having ethnic Orthodox Greek, Russian, Albanian, African, and English speaking (Western rite) parishes co-existing next to each other. This would not violate any canon, nor would it be an obstacle towards evangelization.

Such an arrangement could be of great benefit to various Orthodox people and truly meet their spiritual needs and edify non-Orthodox people as well.

This arrangement hinges on the premise that all these Orthodox parishes would be unified under the same Faith, Tradition and bishop. If this happened, those outside the Orthodox Faith might witness what the early pagan community witnessed in the early Christian era and say, “see how the Orthodox Christians love one another”.

It will probably be a long time before this is likely to occur. That leaves us with little alternative but to do the best we can individually, and then by God’s grace we meet one or two fellow travelers with whom we can share Christ’s Gospel.

We must use our resources and energies and do the evangelization ourselves by bringing Christ to those outside the Church. Further, we must refuse to be restricted by the jurisdictional status quo that exists, for that status quo lacks any canonicity and is not part of the Orthodox Tradition. Those who keep this system alive and well, do so in opposition to Christ and the Holy Tradition.

This doesn’t mean that I support anarchy in any fashion. I accept all the canonical and un-canonical bishops and their clergy equal in status. Personally, at this point in my life I can not accept all the bishops of the city that I dwell in and owe canonical obedience to. That would be hypocritical because it would support and dignify the anarchy these bishops have established, which is contrary to the Orthodox Tradition.

The so-called jurisdictionalism that exists today in Orthodoxy is nothing but a new heresy like the old denominationalism heresy. In my opinion, we’d be better off if we were different Orthodox denominations. That would free us from all the internal and irreconcilable claims of power. Then maybe we could go about our responsibilities and obedience to Christ, without having to justify the evil of the anarchy that has been forced upon us.

No doubt some may quarrel with my opinion on this subject and cite Scripture, which says we should obey the words of our leaders and not their deeds. Others may argue that we must obey God and not man. Personally, I feel we should obey God, and obey our leaders as much as possible. And when the two come into conflict, we should emulate the deeds and disobedience of our bishops, by ignoring them and following Christ.

Our lack of unity is probably the greatest obstacle in our Church that blocks our evangelizing efforts.

One justifiable fear of a unified Orthodox Church in America is that the same leaders who are part of the present system would be the same ones in a new system. I'm fearful that the Doctrines and Traditions of our Faith would be abandoned under such a new system. This latter event might well happen, when one stops to consider how our Orthodox leaders have dealt with the calendar issue, the jurisdictional problems, ecumenism, etc. The answer to this perplexing problem might be found in Scripture.

**Despite all these  
obstacles, we are still  
obliged to bring  
Christ to all nations  
and all people**

As Scripture tells us, the faithful may be driven out of the Churches by those errant leaders who mistakenly think they are doing a service to God. Then all we can do is flee and pray that the Lord comes quickly.

Despite all these obstacles, we are still obliged to bring Christ to all nations and all people. Does the Holy Spirit still work in our Churches despite the anarchy and disobedience? Most assuredly, He does. Christ has promised us that He will be with His Church until the end.

Does this mean then that we never address the issues raised here? Each of us must pray and trust that God will lead us, realizing that if one speaks out, he or she may pay the price of being forced out of the Church.

If the latter happens, should one then go to another denomination and hope that the Holy Spirit operates in that church? The Holy Spirit always dwells in the Church which Christ founded and which Christ promised to remain part of until the last day. Does the Holy Spirit work in other churches? I have no way of knowing that. I leave God to answer that question.

Over the past 22 years, I've seen many sincere people come into Orthodoxy. Some became so scandalized by the politics, the disunity, etc.,

that they fled. Others in time became so involved in the politics, etc., that I fear they became ‘super Orthodox’ in the realm of rituals, the singing and so on, while possibly losing sight of Christ.

**Christ has promised  
us that He will be  
with His Church  
until the end**

Some others became monastics and endlessly went from bishop to bishop and from one jurisdiction to another in an endless search for the ‘true canonical church’ and sadly, I feel, overlook Christ. Some others became bitter and hateful and turned their back on God forever. And yet I’ve seen some individuals who have drawn near to God and somehow

remained untouched by the politics. These latter cases I submit are rare.

In all honesty, what I’ve seen and experienced in my journey through Orthodoxy has been discouraging. To some degree I’ve experienced many things I’ve mentioned earlier. Every day and every night, I try to evangelize myself. When I read the Scriptures, the Fathers and Saints, I know that the Orthodox Church is truly His Body. Yet, when I look upon the disunity and anarchy prevalent in the Church and see even my own part in it all, I despair.

There are times when I nearly agree with those who say us converts should really not come into the faith. But this is so unorthodox and anti-scriptural.



## THE LAYMAN'S ROLE IN ORTHODOXY

*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into the marvelous light. – I Peter 2:9*

I cannot overstate the importance of the role of a layman (or woman) in Orthodoxy in today's hectic world. For proof, one needs only to look at the role of the laity and the contributions they've made to preserve the faith of the Fathers in the former Communist countries and in the Islamic lands. In the face of great cost and hostile governments, lay persons have persevered and endured all while remaining faithful to their Orthodox faith.

God chose a lay woman, Mary, to give birth to His son. God also chose a layman Joseph to entrust him with the care of His only begotten Son. The priests in Christ's time weren't entrusted with this honor. God in His wisdom gave it to the humble lay persons, according to His will and wisdom.

The role and importance of the laity can never be overestimated. It has usually been the witness and living of the faith by the laity that led most converts into the Orthodox Church.

I recently read an article that said the Orthodox faith should not be offered to everyone because most non-Orthodox may take on such a heavy burden that it overwhelms them.

Further, the article said these non-Orthodox people will only be judged in accordance with their ignorance. Such a view was advanced by a conservative Old Calendar Orthodox bishop. Similar views are also held by other Orthodox clergy who claim the Faith of the Apostles and Orthodox saints.

The heresy and arrogance of such teaching is obviously anti-Scriptural, anti-patristic and anti-Orthodox. With leaders such as these within the Church, she needs no enemies from without to accomplish the triumph of evil.

## THE LAYMAN'S ROLE IN ORTHODOXY

Such statements reject God's will that all might be saved by His incarnation, life, death on the cross and His resurrection. People holding these views limit salvation to those 'elect' or of a particular cult-like experience and eastern mind set or of the priestly sect.

This view also denies the Scriptural and patristic teaching of the Body of Christ. We are all members of Christ's body and although we have different functions and roles ordained by God, we are all nonetheless united to our one and only Head, which is Christ-God.

Although we are not a democracy *per se*, it does not follow that we are to be slaves to the will of any man. We are all called to serve God and His will as Christ and His life gave witness to. Each member of the Body of Christ, which is His Church, is called to serve Christ in each and every member of His Body after Christ-God's example.

Anything less than this is like the leaven of the Pharisees and a denial of God's purpose for all men and women of all ages and their salvation.

In my opinion, it is not necessary for every Orthodox lay group to be dominated or controlled by the clergy.

This smacks of cultism and often leads to needless mind control of the elect over their subordinates. It is unhealthy and doesn't contribute to the maturity of individuals as responsible adult Christians.

If all our Orthodox bishops and clergy were gifted with the wisdom of an elder, maybe this would justify total obedience and submission on the part of the laity. But as we all well know, there aren't many bishops and clergy who fit this category. A layman or woman is not the enemy and should not be viewed as such. Neither should the laity be controlled as if they were little children.

Such control of lay people within Orthodoxy or any institution only limits creativity and personal growth in human as well as spiritual terms.

If it were not for the Grace of God and the recent actions of lay people in Russia, Orthodoxy would have become a thing of the past in that country and just a notation in history. As it was, the babas (old women) and their icon corners in their homes, kept the light and witness of the Orthodox Faith alive under the Godless Communist government. They did this at a great personal cost and risk to themselves.

By contrast, many Russian clergymen submitted themselves and the Orthodox Church to the Communist leaders and became agents and mere extensions of the God-destroying Communist government. The lay people

never turned away from God or true Orthodoxy. The Holy Spirit and these faithful people are the true heroes in Russia, from which we in the free world can learn a great deal.

This doesn't mean that I support or advocate anarchy within the Church. Nor do I mean to imply that the involvement and blessings of the clergy are not wanted or needed in all cases.

I simply feel that all groups within the Orthodox Church should work in harmony as members of the same body for the greater honor and glory of God. And it also means we all contribute to the end, according to the gifts of God and our status in the Church.

The danger of clericalism and cultism, stemming from clergy domination of all activities undertaken by laymen, cannot be over-stressed. Such type of control is in most cases unwarranted and counterproductive. It leads to a 'we vs. them' mentality. A healthy Church is one in which each member is free to contribute to the common good of the whole body according to one's gifts and abilities.

After all, it is the lay persons within our churches who support and maintain our buildings and our Apostolic ministries. Since lay people freely take their responsibilities seriously and handle it with maturity, they are equally able to act in mature fashions while forming lay groups that will serve the common good.

In fact, it is individual lay persons who keep pushing for a unified and truly canonical Orthodox Church in the United States, despite widespread opposition by the clergy.

At the Council of Florence in the time of St. Mark of Ephesus in the 1400s, it was the laity and St. Mark and another bishop who resisted the false union of the Orthodox Faith with the Roman Church and the papistry.

The laity refused to submit to the will of Rome, a stand not taken by the vast majority of the clergy.

Again, let me emphasize that the laity should not be viewed by the clergy as the enemy and neither should the clergy demand total blind obedience and submission by the laity. The latter isn't desirable. This statement in no way undermines the role and place of the bishops and clergy in the Orthodox Church. Rather, it can lead all within the Church to take a greater role in doing God's will and evangelizing peoples in the western world.

As for those who fear the laity will go astray without clergy involvement in any lay groups, we need only to look at the disunity of Orthodoxy in the United States to see that the laity have better cause to fear the clergy rather than vice versa. The laity aren't the cause of the disunity, rather it is the clergy who disregard their responsibility and refusal to adhere to the canons and Tradition of our Faith. It was the clergy who introduced and imposed the new calendar on the faithful. And it was they who introduced into Orthodoxy jurisdictions cut along ethnic lines and concerns.

God chose a lay woman, *Mary*, to give birth to His son

And it is the clergy who subject Holy Scripture and the rest of our Holy Tradition to historical criticism and the limitations of human theory, philosophy and science of man.

Given the times we live in, it would be better if all clergy groups would be required to have lay persons as members rather than vice versa.

Each Orthodox Christian lay group should be judged on its own individual merits. And the support or lack of support given to such groups should be based on true Orthodoxy, and not on the involvement or control by the clergy.

Far too often, clergy treat lay persons like second-class citizens and impose unnecessary limitations and controls on them, often based on personality issues which are childish and in some cases unchristian and unjustifiable. Lay groups that become purely secular and unorthodox can and should be publicly identified. Above all, each lay person should be encouraged in his or her prayers and Orthodox manner of life that serves Christ and the common good of the entire Church. Each member of Christ's body is responsible for his or her life and preserving one's faith and witness, be they clergy or lay person. Orthodoxy has no cast system that features second or third-class citizens. The Church is like our human body. If it is healthy, all parts work for the common good and serve the purpose of the Head (the mind) which is Christ.

When we look into the history of Christ's Church, we often become aware of the work and revelation of the Holy Spirit in the laity. Monastic life and its contributions to the Orthodox faith and Liturgical life are but

one example. Monastic life was a lay movement within the Church started by such saints as St. Anthony, St. Paul the Hermit and others.

They and other lay people served as fathers and mothers of monastic life. In time, in the Orthodox Tradition, priests followed these laymen into the way of life from which the Church chose their bishops.

In time, as the number of priests in monasteries increased, the office of abbot and those who could invest a novice or monk in this tradition were limited to priest-monk. This is the norm in monastic tradition in Orthodoxy. I often feel it is a departure from the original intention of monastic tradition. If abbots and those who invest the novice and monks are limited to priests, the monastic tradition places the monastics in a system based on cast and clericalism, which is contrary to its origins.

While it is true in principle that an abbot need not be a priest, it is also true that a non-priest is seldom, if ever, permitted to serve in such a position. It has long been the custom that only a monk-priest can invest a man or woman into the monastic tradition. I feel this changed monastic life from a lay movement, inspired by the Holy Spirit, into a different way or life in which all of its members are not equal in value and contribution.

However, this doesn't alter the fact that originally monastic life was a true lay person movement within the Church that contributed so much in the lives of its Saints and was the means by which God chose to give us our rich Liturgical worship form.

The lay person's role in Orthodoxy should never be underestimated or devalued.

Proof of this can be found in the role of the Virgin Mary, the *Theotokos*. Not even an angel can outshine her Divine role in God's plan of salvation for mankind and the Church. Even St. Joseph's role in salvation history is not equaled by those who are called to serve as bishop, priest or deacon in the Church.

His role is often underestimated and not given its just due, in our witness of Christ and our veneration of the Saints of Christ-God, the Church. Nonetheless, these two examples and many others, stand as a witness of the lay person's role in Orthodox Tradition. Even at the foot of cross, it was mostly laity who were faithful to Christ. Such is the testimony of the Scriptures.

The first great Christian heresy was introduced by Arias, a priest. Also, the Great Schism of 1054 was also brought about by bishops and clergy of

the west. Lay movements did not lead many souls away from true Orthodoxy. It was mainly the clergy who betrayed the true Orthodox faith and it was also priests who refused to accept Christ in his own time and condemned him to death.

*The laity should not be viewed by the clergy as the enemy and neither should the clergy demand total blind obedience and submission*

These events do not justify anti-clericalism or disobedience for those who hold their Divinely given place in Christ's Church. It merely reinforces a witness to the truth and supports the role of laity, who are often overlooked and not given a proper place within the Church.

Viewed in its historical place in Orthodoxy, the role of laity holds great value, even in our modern age.

This role is of far greater importance than most people believe. Properly applied, the role of laity may be what is needed most to resolve many problems facing Orthodoxy in the world today.

After reading all this, one may assume I'm anti-cleric. Such is not my position, nor my intent.

If silence and a denial of facts is what Christ wanted of us, He would not have left us His witness, His defense of true faith and its practice in Scripture. The role of clergy in the life of the Church is necessary and important, but that role should not be to the exclusion of the lawful role of the laity. Both are necessary parts of the body of Christ, each in its God-given, ordained place.

We are living in evil times and each one of us has a responsibility for our own roles in which God has placed us. The salvation of our souls and those of mankind is entrusted to all members of the Church, with the promise of God's grace until the end of time.

Each one of us is responsible for our role in God's Church and for obedience where obedience is owed. Such obedience is always found in the examples given to us by Christ and His Saints, which is our Holy Tradition. Anything less is unworthy to be called the Orthodox Christian faith or practice.

No matter what any of us may think, the days when the laity were expected to merely sit by and 'pay, pray and obey' are things of the past. Gone also are the days when priests, ministers, monks and nuns are held in

high esteem, simply because of their titles or status in churches. This is partly due to the moral decay and decline in our society, and partly due to the scandals involving the clergy of all walks of religious life worldwide.

In light of these facts, the laity have every right to insist that their hard-earned offerings to churches are properly spent and that their spiritual leaders are held accountable for their actions. Churches that don't have a system of checks and balances are the ones that produce cults that often become evil and even violent, such as the group in 'Jonestown'.

Considering the evil world that we live in, this requires every Church member, clergy and laity alike, to meet the needs of their parishes and national church bodies to ensure that God's will and purposes are carried out, according to the Holy Tradition of our Faith.

It would be a good thing if clergy and laity alike conducted their roles in the Church in an Orthodox Christian manner showing mutual charity and respect. And that they both make Christ and the well being of all church members, the goal and purpose of every decision. Both clergy and laity also should equally refrain and not insist on having their own way or always claim that they are right and the other side is wrong.

The only exception to this rule is when the majority opinion is contrary to Orthodox Tradition and in that case the bishop or priest always has the final word, unless of course a priest or bishop himself is in violation of the canons of the Orthodox Tradition.

If a lay person, priest or even a bishop should violate the Orthodox Tradition, it is of course the responsibility of everyone else to defend the Faith of the Church and lead the erring party to repentance. If the latter is not possible, then it is the responsibility of everyone else to separate themselves and their support from sin and disobedience towards God and the Faith. My opinions are not new. One only needs to read any of the Gospels or the history of the Orthodox Church to discover that the roles of both clergy and laity are vitally important in the preservation and evangelization of our Holy Faith.

Orthodox Christianity is not a democracy nor a dictatorship. It is the Kingdom of God, with one Divine Head, Jesus Christ. He has not left us as orphans or without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Each of us has equally important, though obviously different, roles, depending upon

God's will and purpose for us individually, according to our station and vocation in life.

In Orthodoxy, we have the example of individual, self-governing, independent churches that are united in Christ by a common creed, faith and Tradition. These churches are not dominated or controlled by any one church in particular.

It stands to reason that it is not contrary to Orthodox Tradition that lay persons and the clergy can each contribute to the common good of the

*Even at the foot of  
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faithful to Christ*

Church and that their individual roles should be judged only by their faith and individual merits and contributions to the Church.

It is true that where the bishop is, there is the Church, provided of course that the bishop adheres to Orthodox Tradition, Faith and discipline. It is equally true that

no bishop is ordained or exists in Orthodoxy without being called worthy (*Axios*) by the laity, and without serving the spiritual needs of the laity. In Christ, both the roles of the clergy and the laity exist in the Church, with separate functions forming one body, one Church before God, the Father and are preserved by the power of the Holy Spirit as St. Paul tells us in his Epistle.

In conclusion, let me say the lay person is not merely a spectator in the Orthodox Church, liturgically or otherwise. The role and participation of a lay person is vital and necessary. This is the history of God's Orthodox Catholic Christian Church, the living Body of Christ.



## THE ETHNIC PARISH

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth. – Genesis 11:9

According to the dictionary, the word ethnic means “belonging to or distinctive of a particular racial, culture or language division of mankind.”

For our purposes, if it is intended to mean a particular church body or parish that serves a certain race, culture, language division, etc., it cannot be Orthodox or Christian in any true sense of the word if it is exclusive.

In the Orthodox Creed we confess that “we believe in One, Holy Catholic, and Apostolic Church”. Catholic means *universal*, and we preach the truth that Christ-God lived, died on the Cross and rose from the dead so that all mankind may be saved.

Any limitations man places on the Catholicity of the faith, emphatically denies the belief that salvation is meant for people of all races, cultures and languages.

That doesn't mean that it is unorthodox for the Church to minister and bring the Truth of Orthodoxy to people in a particular land, culture, or language. Nor does it mean that the Church can not minister to a particular group living in exile.

What it means is that we Orthodox Christians may not be exclusive and deliberately keep people out of the Church strictly on the basis of race, language, culture, etc.

The first Orthodox Church in North America sprang up in Alaska 200 years ago. This Church took its responsibility very seriously in ministering to the ethnic Russian members of the Faith and to evangelize and minister to people already living in Alaska, mainly the Aleut Indians and the Eskimos.

In due time, many other groups came to North and South America because of wars, oppression in their native lands and because they sought a better or freer land in which to bring up their children. These people and the Orthodox clergy and missionaries who came with them, taught and

preserved the Orthodox faith. For the most part, these people were truly living in exile in an often hostile environment.

Almost all of these people eventually became United States citizens, and they and their children knew they were here to stay, thus making them no longer exiles in a foreign land.

*Catholic means universal, and  
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so that all mankind may be  
saved.*

It was along about this juncture that the so-called ethnic Orthodox parishes and even more so the ethnic Orthodox jurisdictions began to introduce something unorthodox and un-canonical into the life of the Orthodox Faith and practice.

The creed of the Orthodox Church says, “we believe in one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church,” and the canons state quite clearly that there “is to be one bishop in a city, having jurisdiction as an overseer.”

One doesn’t have to be a rocket scientist to see that the present situation as it exists in the United States totally disregards both of these injunctions of the Orthodox Christian Faith. Furthermore, the present situation exists in opposition to even the Gospels and teachings of the Apostles.

Although the Orthodox Church has a responsibility to the immigrants still entering the United States, this continent and Western Europe, the vast majority of people in these lands have long ago become citizens in their adopted lands. They are no longer exiles in any sense of the word. The need for them to be under authority of church leaders in their respective home lands is also not justified by any canon. It should be noted that the Orthodox Church in the east has been under hostile anti-Christian forces for decades and the Church itself hasn’t been free in exercising its faith without hostile interference and limitations placed on it.

The problem caused by this un-canonical situation can be felt by all Orthodox Christians in the west and even the east. In western countries such as the U.S., children born of Orthodox parents continue to leave the Church in growing numbers when they become of age.

The constant ‘wars’ and ‘denunciations’ of rival Orthodox bishops and jurisdictions continue to scandalize the faithful as well as those Christians

of other faiths. Added to all this is the fact that converts who come into Orthodoxy often leave or become disillusioned or misdirected in the practice of their Faith.

The solution to these and other problems is so simple and obvious. First, we need to go back to the traditional calendar of the faith to settle that issue and to avoid having the 'new calendar issue' be used as an reason or excuse for disunity.

Second, we need to pull out of the World Council of Churches and other such groups, except as observers, for the same reason.

Third, we need to have identical English liturgical books available for all our Orthodox Churches in the U.S.

Fourth, and most importantly, we need to be canonical by having only one Orthodox bishop preside in one city or area and have all the bishops united under one primate.

Fifth, we need to provide liturgical services for the immigrants in each community where there is a need and such services should be provided only for as long as such a need truly exists.

Sixth, we need for everybody to truly commit one's self to the evangelization of the people God has brought to us, setting aside our wills so that we can accomplish God's will.

Seventh, we need to have an Orthodox translation for the Scriptures, and return to a truly patristic teaching of the Word of God. This of course, means turning away from such tools as the historical critical method, etc., and returning to the Fathers and Saints and their witness of God's Holy Word. The problems caused by the imposition of these Protestant methods of interpreting God's Word has been and is the chief cause of the moral decline of the world we live in.

For proof of this, one needs only to look at the problems gripping the Roman Catholic Church and the mainline Protestant churches.

And finally, the Orthodox need to reach out to those Old Catholic Christians who call themselves Orthodox and bring them into full communion with Orthodox Christianity. We need to be understanding and respectful of their traditions and customs that are in agreement with the Holy Faith.

We also could practice charity in dealing with their liturgical practices and traditions that comply with the Orthodox Faith and dealing with the

bishops and clergy in their ranks. By doing this we could ensure that we hinder no man or group from coming to Christ.

Some Orthodox jurisdictions receive and welcome Roman Catholic converts even those clergy were ordained in a church that uses the filioque clause.

It would be more in keeping with Orthodoxy to accept Old Catholics who decades ago removed the filioque clause and other heresies from their faith and practices.

*With God all things are possible, if we have the mind of Christ and follow the path laid out for us by the Holy Spirit through the Prophets, Apostles and Saints*

If it seems a bit presumptuous for a simple monk to state all these views, I quickly point out these ideas aren't my own wisdom. They are the canons and Tradition of the Orthodox Catholic Christian Church founded by Jesus Christ, true God and true Man. The canons, the writings of the Scriptures,

the Saints and our Liturgical worship are all equally Holy Tradition and the work of the Holy Spirit.

The reason we have such disunity and problems in Orthodoxy today is because we have turned away from the wisdom and canonical order that the Holy Spirit gave us in the Faith. We have replaced the will of God with the reasoning and wisdom of man. We suffer from delusion by the Evil One (Satan). We have disregarded Holy Tradition in trying to solve our problems, making excuses for the present situation that exists in our churches.

We have the opportunity as Orthodox Christians to go forth and evangelize. But first we must be willing to follow the Holy Spirit and His Ways as found in Holy Tradition, with sound Orthodox teaching and order.

We must truly submit to Christ as the only True Head of His Church. As the Apostles told us, we are not baptized in Paul, Peter, etc., but we are baptized in Christ and Faith in Him alone.

It seems so long ago when we Orthodox Christians had bishops and pastors who would leave all in search of the one lost sheep in the Church fold. Sad to say, that doesn't happen very often today. What we now often see is clergy and laity being guilty of driving away and scattering the

sheep over personality conflicts and vain ambitions for control, power and greed. We run the risk of becoming a cult of man, rather than what we should and could be.

God never imposes His Divine will on us. We are free to do it God's way or we can do it our own way, hence condemning ourselves and those entrusted to our care.

There is a day of reckoning for us all as I pointed out earlier. Christ is going to return at the time the Father has set.

We will be judged not only by our words, but by our faith and the witness of this faith. We are all His stewards and we are all accountable.

Many sincere people within the Church are justifiably fearful that if all the bishops and clergy joined hands to form one jurisdiction, they would not do so with a real change of heart and priorities. Under such a scenario, a united Orthodox Church in the United States would be led by the same people who created the present chaotic situation in the first place. That in turn would only lead to an even further departure from Christ and Orthodoxy.

For proof, one only needs to look at the present situation confronting Orthodoxy in the East after the fall of many of their civil governments. Here, you have the Church leaders who were part of the old system are also the reformers and leaders of the free Church.

Such fears could be laid to rest if indeed the bishops and clergy had a change of heart and a change of priorities and began dealing with people in a spirit of true charity and humility.

Under such a situation, and with God's grace, I believe true canonical order is possible in Orthodoxy in the Americas. With God all things are possible, if we have the mind of Christ and follow the path laid out for us by the Holy Spirit through the Prophets, Apostles and Saints.

To say all this is idealism or wishful thinking is to reject the Tradition God gave us in His Church and limits or reduces the Church to merely another institution of human possibilities.

Following the canons doesn't necessarily mean that all ethnic parishes and concerns would disappear. Nor should they. This would simply mean an end to all ethnic jurisdictions and ensure giving people a chance to truly begin doing Christ's will and open the possibility of real evangelization of the people in the western countries.

## THE ETHNIC PARISH

In my opinion, ethnic parishes and the so-called ethnic problem are symptoms of the real problem, which is the abandonment of Holy Tradition one step at a time.

Our departure from the faith and way of life that we Orthodox Christians find ourselves in today represents victory for evil. In far too many cases, individually and collectively, we act like the pharisees in Christ's time and adopt a form of religion and law apart from the mind and purpose of God.

Thank God that God is merciful and that He has still given us time to repent. We still have all the tools and answers in our Orthodox Tradition. We only need God's grace and the resolve and humility to follow and put into practice what God has given us.

No god is as great as our God. He who brought all things into existence, parted the Red Sea for the Israelites, was born of the Virgin Mary, is on our side and invites all mankind into His Kingdom for eternity. The only thing holding us back is our stubborn will.

God has no limitations and not even the laws of nature, nor man, can limit a man or people who trust in Him.

This truth is given witness to in Our Scriptures and lives of the Saints countless times. These views are not my own wisdom nor that of any man's system. It is Orthodox Tradition.

The real enemies blocking the unity of the Church today is not just the obvious evils in the world. The enemies are within the Church and the leadership that has led us astray from the narrow path in the Holy Tradition and canons of our Orthodox Faith, which is God's way.



## PIGEONS

*I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.* – Song of Solomon 5:2

Pigeons (or dove, member of the same species) are mentioned frequently in the Scriptures. They are mentioned in Genesis in the story of Noah. The pigeon (dove) is mentioned in Leviticus 12:2 as being used as an offering to God and it is mentioned again in Psalms 55:6 and 74:19 and in numerous other parts of the Old Testament. Pigeons (doves) are mentioned in all four Gospels of the New Testament as an offering to God and as a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Pigeons became a very important part of my life while I was growing up, as a young boy of 11 or 12. It was about this time that the violence and physical abused heaped upon me by my step-fathers took a turn for the worse.

My image of a parent in general, and a father in particular, was one of neglect and violence. It was a very negative image, and one that was not mentally or spiritually healthy. During these very difficult times in my life, an older man, who owned a real estate business and raised pigeons, befriended me.

I had often seen his flock of pigeons flying and I was fascinated by them.

He lived not far from us and his pigeon coop was in his back yard.

One day I mustered up enough courage to stop by and observe his pigeons while he was outside tending to them. He invited me to come closer and observe his birds more closely. I was shy and very timid, but I eagerly accepted his invitation. He showed me his coop and started to explain these creatures of God to me. After he finished, he invited me to come back again.

In time, we became friends, even though he was much older than I was. Almost every chance I got, I went to his house and helped him care for and fly his pigeons. He and his wife were very kind to me and often even invited me to eat with them.

## PIGEONS

After a few months, he offered to give me two of his pigeons. My mother agreed to let me have them and a neighbor let me use his old chicken coop that they didn't use anymore, to house my pets in.

Thus I began a love affair with pigeons that endures to this day. God in His mercy and providence taught me so very much from these birds. While I observed these birds, God allowed me to learn what it meant to be a real parent and so many other valuable things in life.

*Thus I began a love affair with pigeons that endures to this day. God in His mercy and providence taught me so very much from these birds.*

Pigeons are not a bird of prey. They are vegetarians and live in a community called a flock. They mate for life, they are faithful to their mate and both male and female, equally, share the responsibility for caring for their young.

Both male and female are involved in the parenting process, from building of the nests, to setting and hatching their eggs and to the feeding, nurturing, and caring for their young. The parents even care for their young after they are able to leave the nest and begin to feed themselves.

The parents, particularly the male, continue to feed their young during this period of their development, slowly doing less and then gradually withdrawing from caring for them. Finally, the parents withdraw completely and let their young take responsibility for themselves.

Another interesting part of how pigeons live is the fact that they have the ability to find their way home from distances of even over one thousand miles away. They also have the ability to fly in a flock, often in great numbers, as if they had a single mind and will directing them.

Although most experts say pigeons have a leader, they live as equals. It is impossible for even the most experienced pigeon fancier to determine the leader while the birds are in flight or even in the coop.

From observing these birds, it is easy to understand why a child from my abused background, could learn so much from them. They taught me about sex and the responsibilities that come with it. I learned the birth process, starting from when a couple mates, and the laying and hatching of their eggs.

In watching the male and female feed and tenderly and lovingly care for their young, I learned that a mother and father are equally important

and equally responsible in all aspects of raising a healthy child, from mating until maturity.

As a matter of fact, if one parent in this family of birds dies or neglects its duty in the raising of their young during the hatching process and up until the young are old enough to feed themselves, the young die.

This, of course, is how I learned the necessity for both the father and mother to be involved in the parenting process in life.

I also learned from flying, racing and releasing my pigeons, a long distance from my house, the importance of a home in one's life.

I belonged to a local pigeon club that transported the pigeons to distances 100, 200, and up to 1,000 miles away.

During this time, I had two jobs. I delivered newspapers and worked in a shoe repair shop. In that way, I was able to support my hobby. My hobby was actually my only link with sanity, along with God's church.

My mother, God bless her, also gave me money in order to help me make up for our lack of any real home life. All this taught me the value, rewards and necessity of work in a person's life.

Despite my family background, even as a young boy I clearly understood and appreciated the importance and symbolism in the Scriptures and theology relating to birds.

The dove (or pigeon) is a symbol of peace, hope, love, much like the Holy Spirit. These gifts are part of our spiritual life and held very great meaning to me personally.

These symbols of the dove in Scripture came alive for me and were part of my own experience and understanding. The symbols weren't mere abstractions or pious platitudes.

As a child and as an adult, I fully appreciated the wisdom and importance of mentioning God's creations in the context of Scripture.

Personally, I feel all children should be taught about parenting, sex, marriage, fidelity, community living and responsibilities, things I learned from the birds. I also feel adults who are guilty of abusing their children or those who are victims could be helped greatly by observing these pigeons as part of their treatment.

There is so much we can learn from God's laws in nature, if we but open our eyes and look with discernment and humility. God does speak to us through all His creation and He provides so many answers and solutions to the human race in dealing with our sins and problems.

One other thing I learned from pigeons was this. Unlike humans, they live, mate, care for their young, etc., with no regard to color, and type of breed. This is truly how God intended it.

It seems only man has developed a problem in this matter. And we call ourselves a higher form of life, gifted with intelligence, etc.!

From this discovery, I learned how unnatural and ignorant any form of racism is. I also learned how our free-will invents new sins featuring greed, lust for power and pure stupidity.

*In my abusive  
situation, the  
pigeon brought  
hope*

I originally had not intended to write a chapter about pigeons in my book. Yet, one night it came to me that I should do so because pigeons were something important in my life. And I needed to share that part of my life. God in His wisdom and goodness let me learn so very much from this humble, simple and gentle bird.

For me, as was the case with Noah, this gift of God's creation, brought hope to me and let me know that the storm and anger in my life were coming to an end, and that a new day was on the horizon.

In my abusive situation, the pigeon brought hope and I found peace, knowing that in spite of man's sins, we can begin anew with God's forgiveness and love. I also learned the importance of not repeating the sins of our fathers in a very real sense and the importance of learning from man's past sins and mistakes.

I pray that when anyone who takes the time to read this book, they will remember the lessons God taught me from the pigeons. When you look at them or see them in flight, it is my hope you reflect on the lessons God provides for us and that you offer a prayer of gratitude for all those who have survived abuse as children, as has this sinner. If only this chapter is remembered and applied in the reader's own daily life, personally and spiritually, then my writing and publishing it will serve its intended purpose.

There may be some who think this chapter seems out of place in a book on the Orthodox Faith and the reflection of a simple monk's life. I disagree. I strongly feel that by understanding and observing the pigeon and its symbolism in the Holy Scriptures, we can learn the importance of

being a member of the flock (Church) of Christ. Furthermore, we can also learn the importance of following His laws and truth as He ordained them.

This is why the Holy Fathers placed so much importance on the Divine Scripture, and on its every word, its hidden meaning and its symbolism.

For Orthodox Christians, every word of God has been given to us as truth in order that we may learn God's will and for our salvation. There is not any part of His word that is of no importance or superficial. That is also why humility and discernment are such important virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Orthodox Faith. In the absence of such virtues, we often fall prey to reducing and

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limiting God's gifts and words to our limited understanding. And we thus fail to apply what He is teaching us. That's why man falls prey to deception, arrogance, denominationalism, and other errors and sins.

While observing the pigeons fly, I realized that we must act with one mind and one will, as God ordained it to be.

Like the homing pigeon used to carry a message, God's word finds its way home in the heart of a Christian, no matter where he or she lives. For like man, pigeons live in cities, in the country and in hot and cold climates. I'm eternally grateful to God that pigeons became part of my life. Through the pigeons, God taught me so many things necessary about life. Without them, I surely would have been lost and maybe would never had found my way home to God and His love and mercy.

As I wait on earth for God to hopefully open the doors of His Kingdom to me, I ponder on this important lesson the homing pigeon taught me. When a pigeon returns home from a long hard, far away journey and finds the entrance to his home locked, it doesn't get discouraged. Far from it. The pigeon patiently waits by the entrance, in the rain and cold, waiting for the master to return to open the door, trusting that once it enters its home it will find food, shelter and other members of its flock.

## PIGEONS

If after waiting for a long time and the entrance remains closed and a violent storm is approaching or the pigeon is attacked by a hostile predator, it flies off in search of shelter. In the case of us humans, when we become fearful, hopeless and lose a sense of our feelings, we can find solace in Scripture with the dove (pigeon) in Psalm 55:6-11:

*And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest.*

*Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness, Selah.*

*I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.*

*Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof. Mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.*

*Wickedness is in the midst thereof deceit and guile depart not from her streets.*

People who live in the violence of our society and times can easily relate to these feelings and symbolism expressed by the psalmist. It was these words that led me to leaving and running away from home in my early teens. And it was also these words that led me into a hermit's way of life, after a lifetime of dwelling in cities and trying to live with ugly politics that exist within the churches of our day in all denominations, even in Orthodoxy.

I learned from the psalmist that God does not expect the impossible from us, nor does He expect us to sacrifice our souls and our eternal life in situations in which we have no ability to change.

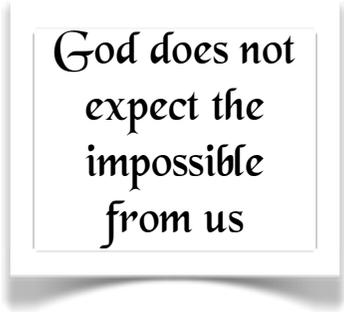
To retreat and remove ourselves from violence and abuse is not a cowardly act. Rather, it is accepting limitations, and leaving what is beyond our control in God's hands to resolve.

## THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

As I grow older and have retreated to my new home and hermitage, I again have started raising pigeons. It's my way of thanking God and the bird for its many benefits and lessons I've received. I know that in time the storm will pass by and the Master will return and in His great mercy He will open the doors of the true home for me. If I wait patiently and live according to His precepts in Faith, he will surely return.

We are told in Revelation 22:20:

*He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.  
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*



God does not  
expect the  
impossible  
from us

# PIGEONS



## CONVERTS TO ORTHODOXY

**Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which  
keepeth the truth may enter in. – Isaiah 26:2**

Over the years, we've witnessed many converts come into the Orthodox Faith. These people have not been members of traditional ethnic Orthodox backgrounds such as Greek, Russian, Serbian, Ukrainian, etc.

In more recent years, some Hispanic and African-Americans have also become Orthodox. Their numbers have been small, but they have come to Orthodoxy, nonetheless.

Most came because they were seeking answers to the reason why we were created. Some who became Orthodox found in the Orthodox Christian Faith, not only the original Church that Christ-God founded, but also developed a truly spiritual life in Christ.

For the most part, converts come into the Orthodox Church not because of any great evangelical effort by Orthodoxy clergy or laity. Rather, they hear about the Orthodox Faith by chance or accident, perhaps by reading the book *The Way of the Pilgrim*, or just wandering into an Orthodox Church. It is true that some become Orthodox because they marry someone who is Orthodox. And yet, a lot of these people don't really attend Church services often, if at all.

Most converts who come to us have to self-prepare and self-educate themselves. Those who don't become nominal Orthodox.

In recent years, there are real signs that converts no longer have to do the bulk of the work themselves, thanks to the efforts of the Orthodox Church in America and the Antiochian Orthodox Church. The Antiochian Archdiocese has even made real efforts to accommodate former Western parishes and pastors by allowing them to use an Orthodox Western liturgy. All this is surely to their credit.

In recent years, the Antiochians even established an Evangelical Orthodox Mission in their diocese, composed of clergy and laity, who for the most part came from the fundamental Campus Crusade for Christ movement. This was no small accomplishment, which was greatly criticized by many Orthodox clergy, bishops, theologians and even a patriarch or two.

To be perfectly honest, the Evangelical Orthodox group was converted to the Faith of the Apostles and Fathers by the Holy Spirit and their own efforts. They were moved by the grace of God and were bound and determined to find the Church of the Gospels and New Testament by reading the Scriptures and the early history of Christ's Church.

Years before this group was officially recognized as being a 'canonical' Orthodox group, they were truly Orthodox in their services and teachings. By God's grace, they came to the Church, instead of the Church taking the Faith to them.

This in no way implies that Metropolitan Philip of the Antiochian Church didn't reach out.

*By God's grace, they  
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It only points out the fact that these converts came knocking on doors years before they were taken seriously or even allowed into the Orthodox fold. Thank the Holy Spirit and Metropolitan Philip for showing that such things are still possible, even in our troubled times.

Many other clergy and laity I've known over the years who have embraced Orthodoxy have entered in this same way. Some came to the 'canonical' Orthodox Church by way of Orthodox Catholics, i.e., Old Catholic groups, which are independent. There is hardly a 'canonical' Orthodox jurisdiction in the west that does not include clergy and laity who came to their Churches through these independent churches and their missionary efforts.

This shouldn't come as a surprise. Christ said He would raise up prophets and even the stones, if necessary, to have his Gospel preached.

We have to admit that those who traditionally have been gifted with Faith have done little to evangelize. In some cases, laity and clergy, including bishops, have been negative and critical of any and all efforts to bring home the lost sheep. Some traditional Orthodox clergy imply or even come right out and say, "The Orthodox Faith is not meant for all people, and they may be better off at the last judgment in ignorance."

Such an attitude is anti-Christian, anti-Gospel, anti-Scriptural, anti-patristic, anti-canonical, anti-human, etc.

It is heresy, selectivism and religious bigotry condemned by Christianity of all ages. No member of the Church founded by Christ has a right to make coming into the Church an obstacle course under the pretense of guarding or protecting the Church from undesirables or those who can not understand Her. As Orthodox Christians, we accept as fact that Christ-God was born, lived, died on the cross and rose from death for the salvation of all mankind of all ages. This does not in anyway mean we compromise any truths of the faith. Nor does it mean we do not take every reasonable effort to ensure the sincerity and right motives of those evangelized or those who come to us on their own. It simply means we don't create an obstacle course for those whom God sends to us. Christ-God came to redeem the sinners and rejects, not the just, according to His words in the Gospels.

When minorities such as Hispanics and African-Americans, by the grace of God, come into contact with the Orthodox Faith, we need to keep some very important things in mind. Spanish and African culture is very spiritual and every part of their emotional being is tied in with their relation with God. Secondly, Africa has given Orthodoxy many saints and Fathers of the Church and finally, African culture is rich and deep. This is also true of the African-American culture and their history of slavery in the United States. No culture could possibly appreciate the Biblical Book of Exodus more than African-Americans and properly apply God's message of deliverance. When it comes to evangelizing African-Americans, it would be helpful if the clergy were African-Americans.

If they aren't, then they must make sure they aren't control types and don't view themselves as a savior. The same is true in the evangelization of Hispanics or any other minority. These minorities have had far too much of the 'great white father' image.

I've lived most of my life in these communities and have learned the real meaning of love, forgiveness, brotherhood, virtues, etc., from the Christian and Islamic witness in the lives of these communities. This was and is my family and home that God blessed me with and it is also my history.

Minority communities usually may be dirt poor and have a high crime rate. But its people are for the most part good God-seeking and loving people. Although they often are victims of poverty, racism, drugs, etc.,

most of them work hard against overwhelming odds, while living a Godly and moral life.

I mention this because most non-minority clergy enter these communities as social do-gooders or social workers and have the attitude that they are making this big sacrifice to save the savages. Both attitudes are not appreciated and arrogant, and produce little reward for God's Kingdom. Coming to serve God and His people with humility is the only acceptable attitude. The priest must have a deep and true respect for the community he serves. He will be respected for being unyielding and uncompromising in matters of faith, but would be looked on with disdain and considered a cult leader and control freak if he always had to control who sat on the church council or decide what color paint should be used in the ladies' restroom.

*Christ, His Apostles and especially St. Paul, applied the word servant to themselves in serving not just God the Father, the Son or Holy Spirit, but in serving people.*

I've often seen priests fall into the latter two categories. Such priests say they are in no way an employee or servant to the parish they serve. Also, they say they are the 'father' and leader of their spiritual family. What's more, these priests are quick to say that the Church is not a democracy.

The problem with all this, even if it is true, is that in some minority communities and in even more communities than we care to admit, some Orthodox priests only serve as long as they are paid a salary, furnished housing and given benefits. They are correct in some cases of saying they aren't servants because they aren't in any sense of the word. They leave one parish and go to another one because they seek a 'higher position' and/or need more money or just need a change. None of this by itself is necessarily right or wrong.

Before addressing the right or wrong of this type of clericalism, I must state I am not anti-clerical. After all I'm a monk and do believe in order. And I must add I do not believe in congregationalism. It is true that the Church is not a democracy and not even the ecumenical patriarch can validly change the Faith, doctrine or the Head (Jesus Christ), or His laws and words.

All this being said, we all have to admit that Christ, His Apostles and especially St. Paul, applied the word servant to themselves in serving not just God the Father, the Son or Holy Spirit, but in serving people. Christ-God and the Apostles serve both the believers and unbelievers.

We even had the example of Christ-God washing the feet of His Apostles and Christ stating, "This is an example" of something they should do in their ministry.

Now let's turn to the difference between an employee and a father. Considering my background, I can say what a good or bad father should be. First off, a father does not collect major revenue from his children for their care. Nor is his hospitalization, housing and other benefits, such as a paid vacation and retirement plan, part of the usual trappings that most experience with the title father. If such were the case, I no doubt would be the best kept person I know and very well off financially for my role as a father.

Of course, children do not live in a democracy and are limited in their freedom for their own good. This is necessary and is not their role for their entire earthly life. Eventually in most families, children come to an age of responsibility and being non-dependent.

Nonetheless, a father's role continues for life if he remains faithful. He is not an employee, but he is also not just free to walk off at will by God's law or man's in society.

For this reason in the Orthodox Tradition, a priest is ordained in the parish and community to which he is appointed to serve in. He is to be the spiritual father of his spiritual family, and is expected to work to feed them and provide for their spirituality, following the example of Christ and His Apostles.

He is expected to sacrifice himself for this cause and bring his people to spiritual maturity as a loving, forgiving and determined father. Using wisdom, charity, discipline, etc. to the best of his ability, a priest with God's grace, can ensure that the Truths of Christ and His salvation is made available to all members of the spiritual family entrusted to his care.

It is in this context that we call our priest 'father' because he brings us to understanding that only God truly is our Father and a priest strives to serve as an example to this truth in and by his limited witness.

Perhaps a person reading all this, may come to the conclusion that a priest should not be paid, etc. This, of course, would be anti-Scriptural

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because St. Paul rightly tells us that a laborer is worthy of his wages. My intention here is definitely not to support or encourage clergy-bashing or any form of anticlericalism. Rather, I say this to express my personal opposition to the growing clericalism in some segments of our Churches. This

clericalism is not only an evil, which will hurt our parishes, but it is also an evil that will destroy efforts of evangelism, especially among minorities. Parishes need Christ as Master, Savior and God! They don't need another human master or ruler who would exploit or 'save' them. Such priests suffer from an emotional and mentally unhealthy need to control other people.

I do not see any justification for any form of slavery or a need to control other people's minds or justifiable freedoms. This includes clergy and laymen equally. Also there is a need to state that the words 'servant' and 'serving' are given dignity and new value by Christ-God and the 2,000-year Tradition of the Orthodox Church. To serve and to minister and to be a priest is a vocation. Those who reject this notion obviously have answered the wrong calling unless they know better than what Christ said and gave us as the example. To serve is not a bad word or an evil to be avoided.

If we want to really be serious about an honest all-out effort to evangelize any group, we Orthodox Christians, especially the patriarchs and bishops, need to learn to serve, and maybe even wash a foot or two. By doing this, they would really teach us all a lot about real humility.

Personally, I feel the only way this can come about on any really meaningful level that is truly blessed and supported by God, is for us all to follow our Tradition in obedience and humility, following Christ's example and in canonical order.

Of course, this would mean that all ethnic jurisdictions out of their borders would be under the ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople.

The Patriarch in turn would, in obedience to Tradition reinstate the old calendar until such a time when the revised calendar now used in some Orthodox Churches is needed and changed by all the Church willingly. Orthodox ecumenical efforts also would change. The Church would abandon the political process by which it compromises our Tradition. Instead, the Church would strive to accomplish internal Orthodox unity and witness internally and to all of the world. If this was our resolve and will, we could again make progress in bringing back into the fold the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the 'un-canonical' and many Old Catholic Orthodox standing at our doors.

I'm a supporter of western rite Orthodox Christians, but until the 'canonical' Orthodox deal with their internal problems, the Western rite Orthodox problem remains difficult.

Of course this doesn't mean that where two or three, no matter who they are, can not be and are not part of the Church and body of Christ. On the other hand, it does not mean that they alone have the right to exclude everyone else from the Church because one made a mistake or even sinned as all of us have done.

Although I believe with all my heart that we must hold true to Orthodox Tradition, I don't in all honesty put the date of the Nativity, rubrics, the wearing or not wearing of the monastic cowl (veil) at all times, as absolutes of the Faith.

I feel strongly that we should return to the Old Calendar for one simple reason. Changing the date of the Nativity and other feast days really has not benefited any converts or ethnic Orthodox in any way.

Speaking for converts and minorities, I can truly say it is spiritually more beneficial and emotionally fulfilling to be free of the Santa Claus and gift mentality on the Holy Day of the Nativity. In that way we can truly keep the feast Holy!

In Cleveland in the early seventies there was an African-American Orthodox parish, Zion, that also featured a school, day care facility and a small monastic community. Although I was in poor health at the time, suffering from periodic brain surgeries, I served as pastor of the parish and also was the abbot of the monastic community.

Lutherans and Methodists in the area supported us but we got next to no support from other Orthodox Christians, partially due to a 'canonical'

vs. 'un-canonical' problem dividing the Orthodox monks. Eventually the parish had to be closed.

God in His goodness did use the Zion parish to assist Father Gregory establish St. Herman's House of hospitality on Cleveland's west side. This home still is in operation today, sheltering and helping the homeless. Father Charles Campbell also lived at Zion until it closed. Later, he established an Orthodox mission in the area that helped men coming out of prison. It also exists today on Cleveland's East side.

Although I had to accept that I failed in my evangelization effort, I refuse to believe that it was God's will that it not continue. I've always felt the effort failed because the entire Orthodox community was like a city divided against itself

Nevertheless throughout these trying times, I was blessed with the friendship of many clerics, such as Father Vasile Hatigan and Bishop Valerian of the Romanian (Orthodox Church in America) diocese; Father Charles Campbell of the Ukrainian Church that tonsured me and received me into Orthodoxy; and Bishop Walter X. Brown of the Orthodox Catholic Church in America (Western rite Orthodox Old Catholics) and others. They all tried to assist in their own way, but it was impossible for us to spiritually survive after being constantly pulled apart by the divisive 'canonical' problems.

For me personally, the fact that most Orthodox 'canonical' and 'non-canonical' didn't serve with each other or recognize each other was impossible to spiritually deal with. It was not bad enough that I had some severe health problems (my brain seizures) to deal with, but it was at this juncture that my adopted son Stephen entered into my life, an event for which I'll forever be eternally grateful. Stephen was entrusted into my care at the time of his birth by his mother and God. Everyone else could make it on their own, but not Stephen. As an infant, he needed my constant attention. All this forced me to set priorities and accept my limitations. In my mind, Stephen's well being became more important to me than my efforts to keep the parish going in the face of some tremendous odds. In time, we closed all operations at Zion and I took this as a sign from God that it was time to get another assignment.

Eventually, Stephen and I moved to Lorain, Ohio, where the schools were better than Cleveland's schools, and afforded Stephen an opportunity to receive a better education.

I'm recounting these events from my life to explain why I believe true canonical order has to be restored in the Orthodox Church in the United States. True canonical order can only be achieved when the following events occur: Only one bishop presides in each city or area; the same calendar is used by all Orthodox Churches; everyone is under one patriarch and all Orthodox remain under one Head, Jesus Christ. These things are absolutely essential and necessary. If these events don't happen, then any real evangelical efforts are doomed to only limited success because they will be thwarted and torn apart by the internal problems facing Orthodoxy.

The cause of Orthodoxy in the United States would have been greatly advanced if all the various ethnic groups had stayed under the Russian Patriarch in Moscow. This was the correct canonical course and should have continued. We can endlessly argue as to whether the Orthodox Churches in the United States should be under the ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople or the Russian Patriarch. But such arguments serve little purpose and are devoid of reality.

The fact remains that for all intents and purposes Orthodox Christians in the United States are fast becoming like denominations and sects. Some are in communion with each other, some aren't, and some are going on their own merry way, contrary to canon law, which we call Divine and part of Holy Tradition.

To ignore this troubling situation is dishonest and prevents one from realizing that many converts leave the Orthodox Church because of all the internal wrangling that is going on among these various Orthodox jurisdictions.

Archimandrite Charles (Campbell), who tonsured me fully into monastic life as an Orthodox monk once told me: "Now you are in the Church that holds all the Truth that God gave His Church. The only thing I suggest is that you need to avoid most of the clergy, whether they be 'canonical' or 'non-canonical', otherwise they'll surely convince you that the Church isn't here."

“My son,’ Father Charles told me, “If you want to be canonical in this country and you let this be your goal, you will probably lose your soul and waste your life looking for what doesn’t exist here.” He told me to keep my eyes and heart fixed on Jesus Christ as my bishop and only Salvation, never doubting any word of Scripture. Furthermore, he told me I ought to read and follow closely the words of the Fathers and love and live in peace and simplicity, honoring the bishops that will allow you to do so and praying for those who won’t.

*Christ fulfilled not only the letter, but also the spirit of the law. Only in cases of actual real charity or need was the law set aside*

At first, I thought his words bordered on being anti-clerical. But over the years, I’ve come to accept as wisdom what he told me. When I failed to remember and heed what Archminandrite Charles (Campbell) warned me to avoid, I found myself sidetracked from God, my vocation and trying to grasp the air in the wind.

Until canonical order comes to Orthodox churches in the United States, evangelization must be done with responsibility and care. This is especially necessary when evangelizing minorities. God will not only hold us accountable and responsible for teaching them the Faith, He will also hold us fully accountable if our disunity and failures in virtue make these souls victims of our scandals and internal disputes over issues that could be resolved quickly if we held fast to our Tradition and canons.

We do need bishops and priests, who are truly spiritual fathers and lead by example, understanding, and compassion. And when necessary, these bishops and priests should hold firm to the Faith, following Christ’s example.

As with a good human father, our bishops and priests must be obedient to laws they expect their spiritual children to follow. If parents follow a set of rules that is contrary to one given to their children, this usually leads the children to become confused and seldom does any good at all.

It isn’t that the canons are an end to themselves. My life isn’t dedicated to this as an end either. But keeping the canons and expecting

the clergy to do so is important, so we sinners may again focus on Christ, His mercy and will alone.

We would then be free from all the political overtones and fights for vain control and power if the clergy followed the example Christ-God gave us in His own day. Christ fulfilled not only the letter, but also the spirit of the law. Only in cases of actual real charity or need was the law set aside by Christ, assuring that its goal and purpose would always be served and not the letter of the law as an idol.

Evangelization is essential and long overdue. When and if we ask others into our Orthodox house, we must pray that we don't cast these souls out into the air over the many personal and personality conflicts I've witnessed many times in Orthodox circles.

We should also be on guard against giving possible converts from minority backgrounds, a watered-down version of the Old Testament. Doing this would not only be unpatristic in our Tradition, but in theirs as well. Many converts know their Bibles inside out, and better in some cases than our priests and bishops, as was the case with the Fathers and Saints. That is because like so many of our Saints, these converts pray, read, meditate and believe every word and every implication in Scripture. They only lack one thing, an exposure to the Fathers and Saints to unlock the full meaning of Scripture.

This exposure to the Fathers and Saints often provides them an opportunity for the first time to learn and see how often men have distorted and led many away from the truth into denominations founded by men, espousing their own private views and interpretations of Scripture.

Our weakness on this point only becomes cloudy because of the issues of our 'canonical' disorder, disunity and some of the recent impact of modern western ecumenism and some ill-timed unnecessary internal changes in the calendar, etc.

My opinions haven't been formed by taking any courses or from government agencies. I've reached these conclusions because I've lived in minority communities, and I am a child of them. To hear me talk and to look at my light skin, one would think I'm not part African-American. Yet, I'm a product of these minority communities and we are children of the same soul and culture.

I pray that God in His mercy will in a short time lead many of our spiritual bishops and clergy to gather the lost sheep into God's fold. Furthermore, I pray that our spiritual fathers serve their respective flocks in a manner, worthy of their calling as successors to the Apostles and disciples of the Good Shepherd, Christ, our only God and Savior.

Orthodox monks and bishops, who are garbed in expensive suits and tool around in big, expensive cars, make a bad impression on minority groups in the United States. If bishops in the Eastern Orthodox Church

*Many converts know their Bibles inside out, and better in some cases than our priests and bishops... They only lack an exposure to the Fathers and Saints to unlock the full meaning of Scripture.*

were not monks obliged to live in obedience, poverty and chastity, their appearance would not present a problem to Hispanic and African-American people. But when a bishop or monk shows up at an Orthodox parish in a big car, decked out in very expensive vestments, and

expects and is given a hefty monetary stipend by the host parish, this only causes scandal and points up the hypocrisy and fraud that only fools would expect. Much of this may be seen as a lack of understanding on the part of minorities in evaluating the role of the bishop in the modern world. However, I feel truth must come here, first of all, or the scandal caused and damage done unnecessarily will be held against the Orthodox Faith and Christ's Church.

Speaking honestly, I've seen some Orthodox priests and bishops act arrogantly in ethnic parishes or toward recent converts from Western European cultures. Such behavior would never be tolerated by African-American Orthodox parishioners. I say this not insultingly or disrespectfully. But the potential problem needs to be addressed.

People of color or other minority groups today simply won't bow and scrape and call any man 'master' or 'father' except God, or those men they truly see living in God's presence, by their every word and deed. African-Americans are very much aware of the evil that slavery brought in their for bearer's lives, knowing full well how Christian masters years ago subjugated their ancestors.

Such cultures strongly frown on allowing an Orthodox nominating committee to select candidates for church council, and then give a priest veto power and authority to make the final selections. What's more, Orthodox minority parishioners simply refuse to follow the 'pay, pray and obey' dictum prevalent in some parishes.

We seem to be going through a period when the clergy feel there is a rise in anticlerical attitudes among people. However, in the last 10 years, for instance, the only people I've heard criticize the older priests and bishops who built the Churches, seminaries, monasteries, etc., were newly ordained and highly educated priests. Such priests, products of Orthodox seminaries, are often truly arrogant and don't give their spiritual fathers due credit, nor do they understand the sacrifices and commitments made by older priests.

Many of these young, arrogant, 'educated' clergy, are the real fathers of the anti-clericalism and are themselves guilty of clericalism. That has no place in any group called Christian.

I'm often offended by Orthodox priests who deliberately pull their hands away when faithful parishioners try to kiss their hand while receiving the Holy Bread (*Antidero*.) When priests do this, they don't allow the faithful to show God respect with this gesture. After all, it is not the priest's hand that the faithful venerate. It is God and His Word active in His ministers. And also it was the clergy who in humility and simplicity understood their unworthiness and offered this sign of love to God and his image, preserved in the Sacraments and Holy Gestures of the Church in Her mysteries.

A truly humble clergyman knows all this and never does anything to humiliate others in order to show he is 'just one of them'.

These important issues need to be addressed openly by the bishops and priests and by the instructors at our Orthodox seminaries. Talk centering on which jurisdiction is the most 'canonical' or which one has the highest ranking patriarch, or which one came to the United States first, doesn't concern most people who find their way into Orthodox Churches.

Even those who came to Orthodoxy from the Roman or Anglican bodies can get caught up in local politics or national church politics, somehow walking right past Christ unintentionally.

## CODVERTS TO ORTHODOXY

These problems don't always occur because the people in power intend them to. Satan plays apart in all this and only Satan is wise enough to introduce a lot of the things I've mentioned.

In my mind, I don't think bishops had an evil intent to create the disunity, lack of evangelization and disputes over the calendar issue that is prevalent in Orthodox circles.

Patriarch Athenagoras met Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem in 1964, the first time the leaders of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches had conferred since 1439. In 1965, the two leaders agreed to a revocation of the mutual excommunication decrees of 1054. This was not done, nor supported in our churches, by evil people in power who wanted to betray or compromise the Faith intentionally. Yet, nonetheless, few bishops were gifted with insight into the effects of this meeting, except for Metropolitan Phileret of the Russian Church Abroad. Metropolitan Phileret correctly foresaw the evil that would follow this historic meeting, accompanied by declining morals and misguided ecumenism.

Many people believe we are rapidly moving closer to Christ's second coming. Whenever this occurs, we need the only True Historical Church Christ founded, to unite under Christ in His Tradition, as much as possible, and according to the canons.

Also, we need in all charity and human compassion to go out and be about our Father's business, serving Christ and all people He brings us to, by word and deed.

God, for now, has allowed the anti-theists to lose power in Eastern Europe. We should use this time wisely to assist the Eastern Europeans. By doing so, that would ensure that all of them and their clergy, with all the patriarchs, assist in resolving our American and Western European Orthodox unity problems.

Only God knows how long freedom will reign in the former Iron Curtain countries and whether this freedom will be permanent.

We need humility, discernment and faith, hope and charity found only in Christ-God. We need repentance and mercy from God. We must forgive and truly repent and be reconciled with each other in Christ's Body, His Church. This applies to all of us, clergy and laity alike.

## THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST

Now is the time for saving and harvesting of God's Kingdom. There may be time to fix those parts not fully working, but we must begin now unless much is lost.

Perhaps, this can be the time of the greatest and possibly the final all-out effort, we Orthodox Christians launch to evangelize our birth-lands or lands of choice. In any case, our time is only once appointed by God and we are accountable.

Let us start each hour and day in beginning, always anew, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son, for the glory of God the Father and the Holy Spirit! As in the beginning, as in the end, God alone and His will is what is worthy of lasting value and glory.

Left to our own devices, the possibility of failure seems endless and we feel helpless. But we all have been baptized in Christ and we surely are not by ourselves. The only One we need is always there. We are the ones who hold back mercy or love or blessings, not God.

Surely He comes quickly, come Lord Jesus! Come!

Jesus Christ must again be the center of our prayers, sermons and daily lives and not the oft-repeated idea that 'Orthodoxy', the Church and clergy are the true Faith, apart from Christ. Far too often, the sermons we hear, dwell on worshipping in 'Orthodoxy', the Church or touch on the divine right and necessity of the clergy. When that happens, Christ and His importance sadly seems to be missed. Of course, this is what Jesus condemned in the Pharisees and their followers. The Pharisees had the true faith and practiced it almost to perfection. Yet, they somehow turned their faith into deeds, missing God's purpose and even His real presence in their own times and before their very eyes.

Somehow I find it very insulting and a denial of Christ when I hear people walk up to visitors in our Orthodox Churches and after greeting the visitor with a perfunctory 'hello', immediately ask, "Who is your bishop?" It's as if we use a 'Master Card' approach in addressing this over-blown issue and question. If a visitor's bishop isn't on the 'serve' or 'acceptable' list, then the visitor is scorned. Our faith in Christ, our knowledge of Scriptures and our real personal commitment to Christ become of secondary concern, overshadowed by the 'who is your bishop' question.

I can't honestly visualize St. Paul or any of the other Apostles accepting this system of priorities that puts Christ second to anyone in His Church.

There are those who may argue that my comments indicate I lack real understanding for the necessity to ensure that the Sacraments and 'canonical' order be maintained. However, I hasten to point out that not too long ago many Serbian and Ukrainian Orthodox Christians considered factions outside their ranks as having invalid and 'un-canonical' bishops and priests, viewing these clergy as the enemy. Now, in many cases these former rival groups are in full communion with one another. Such things occurred not because one faction was properly ordained or changed its profession of faith. Rather the change was due to political changes abroad and/or ethnic shifts in populations or attendance at churches.

It seems as fast as the concern for evangelization and bringing the Faith to minorities in this land grows, we at the same time, must admit our failure to retain those born into an Orthodox family.

We can't always blame bishops and priests, past and present, for these failures. But it doesn't excuse them for ignoring their responsibility to rectify the mistakes and errors of the past.

Our focus must solely be on Christ as Lord, God, Savior, and Head of the Church. And the so-called ethnic or converts in the Orthodox ranks should be encouraged likewise to center their Faith and loyalty to Him. Clergy and laity of all races must find unity and purpose for being members of Christ's Church.

If we have failed to drive this truth home to people baptized in the Faith, what makes the new graduates of Orthodox seminaries better able to deliver this message.

I have served with and under 'old' and 'new', 'highly educated' clergy. As a general rule, it has been personally more difficult for me to deal with younger priests and those who converted to Orthodoxy. Converts and members of Orthodox ethnic parishes have expressed similar views to me. What has caused this is the growing tendency toward clericalism and the need for priests to gain power and control their parishioners.

This is not surprising when you stop and consider the immoral society and times we live in. After all, the young are only trying to hold onto what they have and undo the abuses and evil world they inherited. Little do they know that my generation went through the same thing in the 1960s. Like

previous generations, we were arrogant enough to think we could really control our futures in our limited comprehension of ourselves, the created world or of God. As the old song goes, “When will they ever learn?”

Yes, our sins and mistakes have gone as flowers and dreams of our youth. Christ is the only one that is not a dream or just words or flowers of a human origin.

God gave some people the gift of Faith and from this one seed followed hope, humility, discernment, contrition, repentance and other virtues, leading up to love in, for and of Christ!

Souls who received this gift are surely the few who find the narrow way to Heaven, which Christ alone teaches us. He is the way, the truth and the life. He is the only Head of the Church or possibility of salvation for mankind, according to our real Tradition, living in and of Him who is!

*Christ is the Way,  
the Truth, and the  
Life of Orthodoxy*

Missionary efforts toward new prospects or even the ‘old faithful ethnic guard’ often fail because we forget to always remember that we are baptized and born anew into Christ.

Clergymen may be a necessity that Christ gave us, but we must remember they are never to take His place or his position of importance at any level and aren’t to act contrary to His example.

If we at least said, “Glory to Jesus Christ and good morning,” before we asked “are you Orthodox and who is your bishop?” I could deal with the real need to question visitors intending to receive Holy Communion. Merely saying so and so is one’s bishop doesn’t guarantee one’s Faith or personal spiritual worthiness or preparing for services on the gift of Christ at the altar.

Whenever someone asks me, “Who is your bishop?” I always respond by saying, “Christ, and who is yours?” If I’m visiting another parish, I don’t receive Holy Communion unless I absolutely introduce myself to the priest or bishop ahead of time, and know his policies and practices. Of even more importance, we shouldn’t ask to receive Holy Communion unless we have adequately prayed and prepared for this Sacrament. I don’t think it’s proper to force a priest to make a quick decision on whether he should give someone he doesn’t know Holy Communion.

## CODVERTS TO ORTHODOXY

Recognizing what's happened in the past and learning from these experiences is absolutely essential, if we, as individuals, or the Church want to convert others into the Faith.

If we are going to lead people to Christ, the Scriptures, prayers and His Church, as She exists today in the United States and with all the irregularities, we should first stop slandering each other and face the fact that we are all un-canonical. This is a difficult situation at best.

In peace and with some dignity and manners, the clergy could meet privately and keep their displeasures in some rational order until they really commit themselves to Christ and the Tradition and the canons and submit obedience to Christ.

If we did this, what a witness that would be in our divided world. If ethnic, so-called American minority and mixed parishes in each area were under the same local bishop, regardless of his race or ethnic origin, that would be a huge step forward. It also would help if each bishop was in Christ, loyal to the Tradition and in union with each other.

Orthodox missionary efforts will be limited and possibly destroy some people's Faith or spiritual well-being, if we first don't make sure Christ alone and His Glory and Will are the real priority. Christ is the way, the truth and the life of Orthodoxy and He alone gives Orthodoxy meaning or purpose.

It is best I feel if we all admit we've contributed to the problems I've outlined. Getting these problems out into the open may actually inspire us to reform and really become one Faith in Christ alone, with each of us united in His local ordained bishop, according to God's Grace and Will, and the canons.

If we do this, it could render a death blow to anti-clericalism and clericalism and eliminate the 'factions' and 'sectarianism' hindering Orthodoxy's growth and well-being today. Satan and evil would be the big losers in the United States if all these things transpired. This would lead towards a real Orthodox following of the Faith in America in Christ.

Under this scenario, bishops and other clergymen would become more accountable to their vocation and the witness of it. This would be a real blessing and in the best interest of Christ's Church, for the clergy and laity alike.

Who knows, maybe all Orthodox bells will again be united and ring to announce our unified faith in Christ's Birth, as well as other Truths we

hold and proclaim. Maybe then all bishops again may seriously embrace their monastic discipline and life and be real witnesses and missionaries in our True Tradition, as given by Christ's example and the teaching and the Saints.

There are those who may be quick to say this isn't possible or even a good thing to occur during this period of time. And some may accuse this monk of living in a dream world and concocting a fairy-tale, which is totally beyond the realm of possibility. To those people, I say we must have faith in Christ and Trust in the Holy Spirit's inspiration of all we hold dear and call Orthodox tradition.

The dreamers are really those who think that maybe they can reinvent Scripture, the monastic life and most of our Tradition or just keep mouthing the words without following what is required. Such dreamers are really treading on dangerous ground. For to do is consider the complete falling away from Scripture and Protestants and liberal Roman Catholics alike. This has been painfully demonstrated before us daily. Only those groups who really hold tightly to Truth and Tradition taught by Christ are showing any signs of any real meaningful spiritual and numerical growth.

God alone  
is  
He who is

Before we Orthodox presume to share with others what they may lack, we should first make certain we've retained the Faith of Christ's Church in Faith and practice ourselves. We can't give others the peace, unity, and love found in Christ, if these are not, at least, our goals and intention in our life.

It is usually best for a person to go inside his soul first, making sure one has what one intends to share with others. In our zeal, we may completely miss the point, which is always Jesus Christ and the Father and the Holy Spirit!

God alone holds the position of No. 1. In the end as in the beginning, He alone really is the purpose. Without Him, nothing has lasting meaning, value or even a possibility. God alone is He who is.

CONVERTS TO ORTHODOXY



## DEATH AND DYING

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where  
is thy victory? – I Corinthians 15:55

The mention of death, heaven, hades (hell), the grave, paradise, reward, punishment, etc. abound in the Scripture and in the writings of the Saints and other Orthodox authors. There's hardly a service or Orthodox prayer that does not directly or indirectly bring the subject of death to our attention. Even in other religions of Christian and non-Christian origin, the topic is dealt with extensively.

In our day and age in the secular world, many people in medicine, social sciences, and philosophy feel compelled to address the reality of death, a fate faced by all living creation.

Even in the world of advertising, funeral services are promoted not only for humans, but even for pets! These advertisements promise to lessen the impact of death and offer to help loved ones left behind.

There are contemporary Orthodox books dealing with death and dying, such as Father Seraphim Rose's book, *The Soul after Death*. In his book, he examines and presents many teachings and experiences of the Fathers of the Church on this subject.

For me to add to or explain this subject would be the ultimate in presumption, pride and ignorance because this subject is too important, and I greatly fear the possibility of leading any person astray.

Instead of trying to approach this subject from a theological or doctrinal viewpoint, I will offer instead my own experiences and impressions, related to death and how I dealt with these realities in my own life.

Obviously death is a reality that each and every human being has to face in this life. We see it everywhere around us. No matter how much we die, take care of our bodies, cosmetically or surgically try to cover up the aging process, death keeps advancing closer to us. And in due time, it is the fate of all of us who ever have lived or will live. The only possible exception to this will be those who remain on earth at Christ's second coming.

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This realization terrifies most people, even those who have faith in God or believe in life after death. This is in my opinion wisdom, for we all have sinned and because there is no way to turn back from the other side once we die.

If we don't like what we encounter in death, a return to this life is impossible unless it's brought about by an act of Divine Will. And these exceptions are extremely rare.

Having said all this, I should point out that as a child I was always fascinated with the absolute beauty and solemnity of the Roman Catholic Requiem (Burial) Mass and services. As a victim of abuse and with all the pain I'd seen and received from those around me, this service offered me hope and comfort. Even in my earliest years and before I could read, the Gregorian Chant and the tone of these services comforted me.

Somehow, the hope of being home with God and all that this implied, came through the Latin and the ancient chants, leaving a lasting impression on me.

*If we don't like what we encounter in death, a return to this life is impossible*

In time, I learned to read and could read the English translation of the Requiem Mass. But as a rule, I set my missal aside and allowed God and the mode of the services to speak for themselves.

In the early 1940s. through 1950, it was common practice for the Requiem Mass to be said on many week days, commemorating the dead. Most of these masses were sung. Even though I frequently attended these masses, I never tired of them.

Since I attended a Catholic school, we were encouraged to attend Mass and receive Communion daily. Even though my mother couldn't receive Communion because she was divorced, she frequently attended masses with me on week days. No doubt she also found comfort and safety in God's presence from the abuses she also dealt with in her life. With the exception of her first and last husbands, my mother was as much of a victim as I was. Even her own family ridiculed her and heaped verbal abuse on her because she was a divorced woman. In those days to be a divorced woman with children and Catholic was the same as being publicly branded as a whore. There was virtually no compassion or mercy shown toward those who dared to remarry. And there were few attempts

made to help a woman left alone to raise her children. Women often or in most cases were paid less for doing the same jobs by men.

Women were in a no-win situation. I think that for these reasons, even my mother found some comfort and solace in attending Masses offered for the dead. We both existed with the same realities of rejection and abuse in our lives.

As the years passed and the violence in my own life increased, death was no longer a real concern or fear in my life. It was an assurance of a deliverance into God's Kingdom by a God who suffered also and died because he loved me personally as well as all humanity.

This truth was constantly pounded into my head by Sister Pauline while I was in grade school. The message sank deep into my being that Christ suffered and died so that I would be delivered. Furthermore, I was told that this Savior actually loved me and would not reject me regardless of my own sins, failings or my family's sins. If I had this faith, offered my pain in suffering and did all I could, with God's grace, to avoid sin, this holy nun assure me of God's mercy and love. What's more, Sister Pauline assured me of God's mercy and love and taught me that even though I might sin or be tempted to despair, I could find forgiveness and mercy from God through repentance, penance and confession of my sins and transgressions. To prove this and make her point, Sister Pauline told me the story of how Christ showed mercy to the thief on the cross and how Christ asked for forgiveness of those who put Him to Death.

After I entered the Capuchin order in Cumberland, Md., these truths took on even meaning because I experienced and witnessed the holiness in the lives of the friars (monastic brothers) of this religious order of the Roman Catholic Church. Never before had I seen men of such virtue, devotion and compassion. All the suffering and pain of my youth was given meaning and purpose by my spiritual fathers and brothers. The meaning of life and the purpose of death and my love of the Requiem Mass took on even a deeper meaning. Direction and purpose started to really enter my life. I became acutely aware that religious monastic life offered no place to hide from or run from the life or world. It became a place where life was dealt with realistically and in truth. In monastic life, one stands alone before God, without the comforts or distractions of this world. You can't hide from God in this way of life because God is ever present in everyone and everything around you.

## DEATH AND DYING

I was at Cumberland for a little over a year and during that time I suffered from frequent bleeding in my left ear, and traces of blood showed up in my urine and also in my vomiting. I hid these facts from my superiors, fearing I would be rejected.

In monastic life,  
one stands alone  
before God

I was transferred from Cumberland to Annapolis, Maryland while I was a novice. My condition got worse and I couldn't hide this from my superior, who ordered me to see a doctor. The doctor hospitalized me immediately. I wasn't told the results of my tests, but was transferred to St. Francis Hospital in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where the Capuchin motherhouse was located and where my mother lived.

Finally, they told me I had tuberculosis of the kidney. After a few weeks, I was transferred to Mercy State Tuberculosis Hospital.

Although the constant tests I had to take were painful, I really had no fear. I found comfort in reading the life of Theresa of Lisieux, who died at the age of 24 from tuberculosis. I also found comfort in daily prayer, the Divine Office, the Hours of prayers. I felt honored that I had been chosen to go to my true home in the same manner as Theresa, if it was God's will.

In the years that followed after Vatican II, I finally left the Roman Catholic Church because of all the changes and became Orthodox. In Orthodoxy, I developed an immediate love for the *panakida* service for the departed. Of all the Eastern Orthodox services, it is not only the most beautiful, it also is the most comforting to me personally. While the services of Holy week and the service of the Resurrection all have great beauty and may liturgically and theologically have more importance, the *panakida* for me personally sums up all my heart longs for and expects from God.

As a fool maybe I rush in where angels fear to tread, but in God's mercy and love I trust. Even though I realize this may be presumptuous on my part, I feel and believe God overlooks even this fault or sin of the child in me. I realize my own sins and the gravity of them.

Yet, death is still to me a gift from God and is a friend because it will free me from the possibility of adding to my sins, failings and rejection by God or others.

As I wrote all these things, I realized that they may not be intellectually or theologically acceptable to those more spiritually and better versed in Orthodox doctrine. But they are my honest answers and thoughts and feelings about death and dying.

My view of death may have been colored because of my abused childhood and the many life-threatening illness I've endured. Nonetheless, I believe that while fear is truly the beginning of true wisdom, God's mercy, compassion and love awaits even the worst of sinners and fools, who completely trust in Him and believe in Him.

I think my belief is consistent with Divine Scripture, the writings of the Saints and the Orthodox liturgical prayers. In my opinion, my beliefs aren't a rejection of the precious gift of life. Nor are they morbid because since the passion, death and resurrection of Christ-God, death has no sting or victory. For to be completely before God's presence with the veil of mortality removed is real life.

Despite our sins and the evil in this life, God the Father only sees us in Christ, as a member of His Body if we have absolute faith and trust in this same Christ, who is True God and True Man. There are no deeds or merits that we must have because only Christ accomplishes these and has already done so.

In my way of thinking, this doesn't mean we have no need or necessity to live and work and to accomplish deeds and exhibit virtues that please God. It only means that our good deeds and virtues are not truly ours, but are rather gifts of the Holy Spirit, accomplished in us despite our limitations. True faith and a truly penitent soul is freed by God's grace to accomplish a Faith that is a living and giving witness there of by its deeds.

If the Lord and God is truly our Shepherd, what do we really need fear, even as we journey through this vale of tears or the one between this life and final judgment. The only words we need to present in our defense before God are these: "*Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner!*"

Those who I've seen die in this manner have always departed this life in peace, without any signs of fear. Their departure truly was but a falling asleep in Christ. This was true, even of the one victim of AIDS that I saw die. I attended him right before his death. After he started repeating the Jesus prayer, he immediately seemed oblivious to his pain and no longer

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seemed to have any fear of leaving this life and going before God's judgment seat.

The only sting or possible victory death has for one who faces death in this manner is centered on the loved ones left behind to mourn. The loss of a loved one is indeed a sting. And for those who don't have Faith and fall into despair, death may claim victory.

I firmly believe that those who faced death solely trusting in the mercy of Jesus Christ alone, aren't ending life, but rather entering the real life God intended us to live.

It is not possible for anyone to comprehend or even imagine what God has prepared for those who enter eternity trusting in God's love and mercy. I would not presume to even offer an opinion on this subject. It is incomprehensible to us. If we knew the answer, we would find life impossible to experience here because any possibility of free will would vanish. It is for this reason that the canon of our Church's Divine Scriptures and this chapter and my book will conclude with these words from Revelation 22: 20-21:

*“He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly! Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”*

Lord Jesus Christ  
have mercy on me a  
sinner

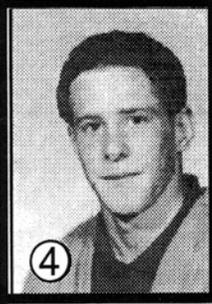
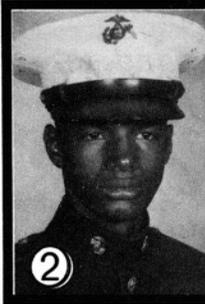
## I REMEMBER THEM ALL

*Oh, my forty-seven children, I remember each one of you. How and when you came to me and the day that each of you departed.*

*Unfortunately, I don't have photos of each of you. Some of you stayed only a short time and the chance to take a photo never presented itself. While others, of which I did have photos, the photos became lost during my many moves and periods of sicknesses. The photos which follows are all that I have in my possession as physical remembrance of you. If by chance any of you, my beloved children of God, who I have lost touch with should read this, I would welcome hearing from you.*

*Father Anthony Good*

I REMEMBER THEM ALL

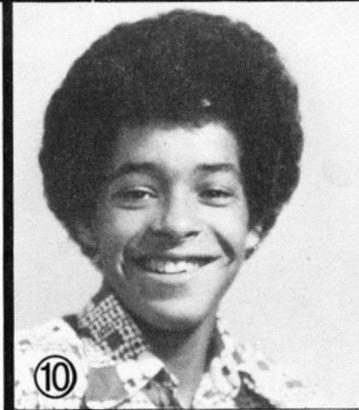


1. Damian and Dominic
2. Barry
3. Barbara
4. Paul
5. Donald



*"Let the  
Little Children  
Come  
Unto Me."*

THIS FATHER KNOWS BEST



*May God Bless and  
Keep All of You  
Til We  
Meet Again  
in the  
Kingdom of God*

**6. Fr. Anthony**

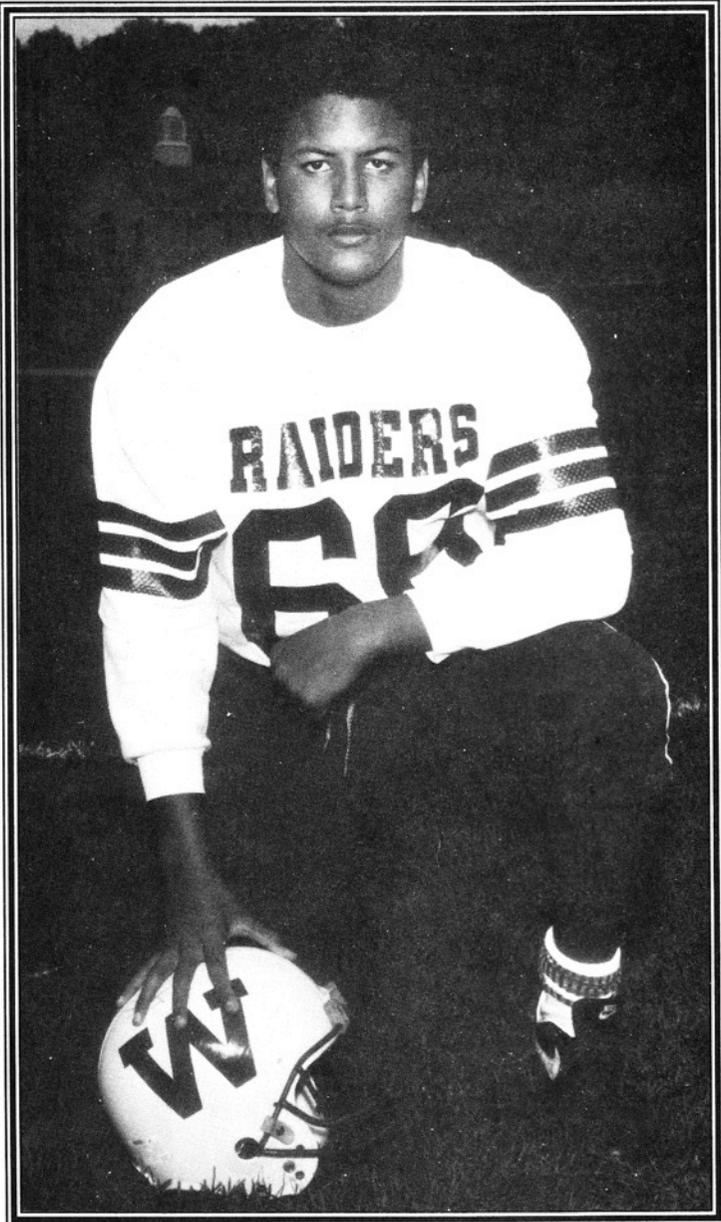
**7. Jackie**

**8. Arletta**

**9. Fr Anthony  
with Stephen**

**10. Luis**

I REMEMBER THEM ALL



This is my only adopted son, Stephen, who has given me much joy and happiness in watching him grow up to be a young man in the way of the Lord.