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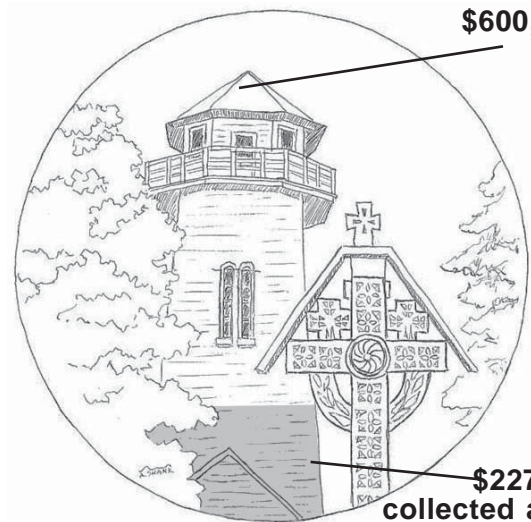
PASTORAL CHANGES

ASSIGNMENTS / SUSPENSIONS / RELEASES

BALANEAN, Rev. Fr. Horatiu, was released from his duties as Assistant Priest and assigned Parish Priest of Sts. Peter & Paul Church, Dearborn Heights MI, effective March 25, 2018.

GHICA, V. Rev. Fr. Daniel, was suspended for six months and released from his duties as Parish Priest of St. Stephen the Great Church, Clearwater FL, effective April 30, 2018. He is attached to Sts. Michael & Gabriel Church, Apopka FL.

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ROSCO, V. Rev. Fr. Romey, was released from his duties as Parish Priest and assigned to be Assistant Priest of Sts. Peter & Paul Church, Dearborn Heights MI, effective March 25, 2018.

DEPOSED

OANCEA, Rev. Fr. David, was deposed from all sacred functions of the Holy Priesthood by the Holy Synod of Bishops, and his name was removed from the ranks of the clergy of the Orthodox Church in America and the Romanian Episcopate, effective June 14, 2018.

STOIAN, Hieromonk Iustin, was deposed from all sacred functions of the Holy Priesthood by the Holy Synod of Bishops, and his name was removed from the ranks of the clergy and monastics of the Orthodox Church in America and the Romanian Episcopate, effective June 14, 2018.

A HISTORY OF THE APOSTLES' FAST

By John Sanidopoulos

"The Apostles almost always fasted."

Saint John Chrysostom (Sermon 57 on the Gospel of Matthew)

Patristic Testimony Concerning the Fast

The fast of the holy Apostles is very ancient, dating back to the first centuries of Christianity. We have the testimony of St. Athanasius the Great, St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Leo the Great and Theodoret of Cyrrhus regarding it.

The oldest testimony regarding the Apostles' Fast is given to us by St. Athanasius the Great (+373). In his letter to Emperor Constance, in speaking of the persecution by the Arians, he writes: "During the week following Pentecost, the people who observed the fast went out to the cemetery to pray."

"The Lord so ordained it," says St. Ambrose (+397), "that as we have participated in his sufferings during the Forty Days, so we should also rejoice in his Resurrection during the season of Pentecost. We do not fast during the season of Pentecost, since our Lord Himself was present amongst us during those days. . . Christ's presence was like nourishing food for the Christians. So too, during Pentecost, we feed on the Lord who is present among us. On the days following his ascension into heaven, however, we again fast" (Sermon 61). St. Ambrose bases this practice on the words of Jesus concerning his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew 9:14, 15: "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

St. Leo the Great (+461) says: "After the long feast of Pentecost, fasting is especially necessary to purify our thoughts and render us worthy to receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. ... Therefore, the salutary custom was established of fasting after the joyful days during which we celebrated the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, and the coming of the Holy Spirit."

The pilgrim Egeria in her Diary (fourth century) records that on the day following the feast of Pentecost, a period of fasting began.

The Apostolic Constitutions, a work no later than the fourth century describing the apostolic traditions, prescribes: "After the feast of Pentecost, celebrate one week, then observe a fast, for justice demands rejoicing after the reception of the gifts of God and lasting after the body has been refreshed."

From the testimonies of the fourth century, we ascertain that in Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch, the fast of the holy Apostles was connected with Pentecost and not with the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul on June 29. In the first centuries, after Pentecost, there was one week of rejoicing, that is Privileged Days, followed by about one week of fasting.

Canon 19 of Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople (806-816), mentions the Apostles' Fast: "During the fast of the Holy Apostles and of St. Philip (or, more expressly, of the forty-days' Lent [of Christmas]), Monks sitting in a Monastery ought to eat once a day, on Wednesday and Friday. But Monks engaged in work or labor may eat twice, after the sixth hour and in the evening."

The Typicon of St. Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of Studios in Constantinople speaks of the Forty Days Fast of the Holy Apostles. "During the Fast of the Holy Apostles, we do not eat fish, cheese, or eggs except on the days we do not sing the hours. Instead, we eat two cooked dishes at the ninth hour -- one vegetable dish with olive oil and one of legumes without oil -- and [have] two servings of wine at the ninth hour and two in the evening. On feast days, however, on which we are permitted cheese and other [such] foods, we eat at the sixth hour and drink three [measures of wine] at the sixth hour and two in the evening."

St. Symeon of Thessaloniki (+1429) explains the purpose of this fast in this manner: "The Fast of the Apostles is justly established in their honor, for through them we have received numerous benefits, and for us, they are exemplars and teachers of the fast. ... For one week after the Descent of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the *Apostolic Constitutions* composed by Clement, we celebrate, and then during the following week, we fast in honor of the Apostles."

Duration of the Fast

The Fast of the Apostles came into practice in the Church through custom rather than law. For this reason, there was no uniformity for a long time, either in its observance or its duration. Some fasted twelve days, others six, still others four, and others only one day. Theodore Balsamon, Patriarch of Antioch (+1204), regarding the Apostles' Fast, said: "All the faithful, that is the laity and the monks, are obliged to fast seven days and more, and whoever refuses to do so, let him be excommunicated from the Christian community."

From the work *On Three Forty Days Fasts*, which is credited to a monk of the monastic community of St. Anastasios the Sinaite (6th or 7th century), we learn that the Fast of the Holy Apostles lasted from the first Sunday after Pentecost to the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God on August 15. Later, however, the Fast of the Dormition was separated from it and the month of July was excluded from the Fast of the Apostles. St. Symeon of Thessaloniki speaks of the Apostles' Fast as of one week's duration.

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A NEW STEP TOWARDS PAN-ORTHODOX UNITY: THE INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

By Alison Kolosova

Jerusalem was an appropriate location for an international group of scholars to meet after the feast of Christ's Nativity to present their vision of how Orthodox [Christian] scholarship could engage more effectively with the issues of our contemporary world. A fifteen-minute walk from our hotel through the chic, modern shopping arcades of downtown Jerusalem brought us to the Old City where before breakfast one morning, we found ourselves standing at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher alongside a Coptic bishop, priests and nuns. They gladly gave us their blessing and holy bread as crowds pressed in to take selfies of the exotically-clad clergy. In the courtyard before the nearby Western Wall, we stood with Jewish women as they swayed and prayed with words of holy texts pressed to their faces. An elevator ride into the tower above our hotel opened up vistas of the sprawl of modern buildings that today fill the steep hills and cliffs of the city. The Wall separating Palestinian and Jewish sectors was clearly visible in the distant haze. During the short bus ride that took us to join the throngs of pilgrims in Bethlehem, we drove past the Walled-Off Hotel, Banksy's evocative graffiti, and his wry words of comfort, 'Nothing lasts forever'.

This is a land and city where every stone speaks of the ancient tangled roots of three Abrahamic faiths, yet every step you take comes with a reminder of the tensions and divisions of modernity. It was this, rather than simply the proximity of the holy places, that made Jerusalem an appropriate location for the first meeting of Chairs of the twenty-five Groups of the recently-formed International Orthodox Theological Association (IOTA). They met in Jerusalem for planning, prayer and pilgrimage at the start of a year which will culminate in IOTA's inaugural conference in Iasi, Romania, from 9-12 January 2019. The Groups, each devoted to a different aspect of Orthodox theology and life, promise to provide a rich time of reflection as theologians, historians, political and natural scientists seek to give informed Orthodox perspectives on today's burning issues. (For the Call for Papers, visit the IOTA website [<http://iota-web.org/callforpapers/>]).

What does it mean to be human? How can the wealth of Orthodox asceticism and spirituality found



in the Philokalia speak today? What can we learn from Arabic-speaking Christians about an approach to Islam that goes beyond polemic? How can a balanced approach to the science-religion interface be found rather than making a false dichotomy between the two? What contribution can analytic philosophers of religion make to the intellectual defense of Christianity? What is the role of women in the Church? What is the theological basis for Christian environmental concern? How can Orthodoxy be authentically enculturated in Africa, Asia and the Americas? How should the

Orthodox churches respond to migration and refugee crises? These are but a few of the issues that IOTA scholars propose to engage with.

Catalin Jeckel, the link between IOTA leadership and His Eminence Teofan, Archbishop of Iasi, who leads the Committee organizing the conference in Iasi, spoke of theology needing to become the 'Art of living' the Revelation. Peter Bouteneff of St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York spoke of the challenge of engaging with theology emanating from vastly different contexts than our own, familiarizing ourselves with the diversity of Orthodox theological approaches, priorities and languages. The meeting as a whole discussed the dual need to be both a think-tank providing resources for the church hierarchy in their deliberations, yet also to make the fruits of its work available in accessible language to local Orthodox parish and diocesan communities. It is to these many challenges that IOTA seeks to constructively respond as it journeys towards the Iasi conference in 2019.

In this journey, the Orthodox churches' greatest wealth is perhaps also their greatest potential obstacle. At best, the deep identification of faith and culture in historically Orthodox countries is the legacy of an incarnational understanding that the Gospel can never be a disembodied, deculturated message. It can and must be enfolded in cultural particularity, with profound implications for the corporate life of any community or society. At worst, the imprisonment of Orthodoxy in any one particular cultural or national form can lead to a nightmare of cultural bias, blindness and misunderstanding, an introverted concern

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THE BYZANTINE ORIGINS OF GUN CONTROL

by George Demacopoulos

It would be difficult to overstate the significance of the Byzantine emperor Justinian for both Christian and political history because, more than any previous Christian ruler, he integrated Christian precepts into imperial legislation. Whether one looks favorably upon the Byzantine model of Church/State “symphonia” or prefers a Jeffersonian separation of Church and State, every modern formulation of Christianity in politics is, in one way or another, a response to Justinian’s legacy. Even the current debate on gun control was anticipated by a Justinianic law preventing citizens from owning weapons.

Justinian’s Novella 85 strictly forbade the sale of weapons to citizens. Only small knives and domestic axes were exempted from the regulation. The ancient Romans had previously forbidden the possession of weapons by citizens within urban areas, but the preface to Novella 85 highlights an explicitly Christian orientation in the formulation of the new and more comprehensive law.

Novella 85 begins: “Calling upon the great God and Jesus Christ, our Savior, and invoking His aid, we strive to keep our subjects, whom God has given to us to govern, from all damage and harm, and prohibit fights, which, undertaken through thoughtlessness, end in slaughter, and bring double penalty—that which the combatants bring upon themselves and that which the law visits upon them for their madness.”

Put simply, Justinian believes that it is his God-appointed responsibility to protect the welfare of citizens. He further believes that he can best ensure the welfare of citizens by criminalizing the sale of weapons to citizens. Novella 85 remained in effect for the final 900 years of the Byzantine empire.

Byzantium was a violent society—civil war, foreign invasion, and riots were routine. So why were the Byzantines so averse to weaponized self-defense?

Part of the answer is that their vision of government was authoritarian. They not only presumed that imperial authorities and the army were in a better position to defend its citizens than the citizens were themselves, but they also took careful steps to minimize the threat of insurrection by the citizenry. Bringing this into the American context, it is worth noting that both the initial advocates of gun rights in the 18th-century and the most vociferous defenders of those rights today believe that a well-armed populace helps to prevent authoritarian government. In other words, the Byzantines thought their society was safer if citizens did not have weapons; modern advocates of



gun rights believe that society is safer if the citizenry does possess weapons.

But authoritarianism offers only a partial explanation. Given the explicit invocation of Christian faith in Novella 85, we should also consider how Justinian’s law might reflect Christian ethical norms at the time. While our surviving theological sources do not directly ask or answer a question about the moral suitability of an armed citizenry, they do have plenty to say about the moral injury that occurs in the taking of another life. Believing that it would lead to spiritual healing, St. Basil famously prescribed that soldiers who had killed in the line of duty should not receive Eucharist for three years. For his part, St. Ambrose rejected out-of-hand the possibility that a Christian citizen might kill another in self-defense: “I do not think that a Christian, a just and a wise man, should save his own life by the death of another; just as when he meets with an armed assailant he cannot return his blows, because in defending his own life he would compromise his love for his neighbor.” (Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 3).

Justinian, of course, framed Novella 85 as a means to prevent violence among citizens rather than an effort to establish the legal parameters of killing in self-defense. But the moral trust of a theologian like St. Ambrose suggests that self-defense offers no justification for the ownership of weapons.

To be sure, Novella 85 has no direct legal bearing on the right to possess weapons in 21st-century America. But American Catholics and Protestants would do well to recall that Byzantium is part of their own cultural, political, and religious heritage. Not only is the Justinianic Code the foundation of modern law, but Orthodox Christianity and, especially, its political theology are more directly relevant to the modern West than is generally recognized.

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SAINTS PETER AND PAUL: WITH WHAT CROWNS OF PRAISE?

Sermon by His Grace, Bishop Joseph of Arianzos

With what crowns of praise shall we crown Peter and Paul? The former as the leader of the Apostles; the latter as the one who toiled more than the others.

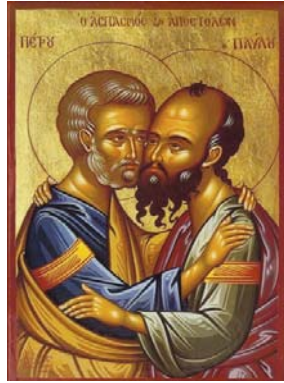
June is always marked by the festive commemoration of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul which is observed by our Church on the 29th day, and indeed after fasting in honor of the chief Apostles.

The 29th of June, certainly is not the day they suffered martyrdom. Rather it is the day that in 258 AD, Pope Sixtus II transferred their very sacred relics to the catacomb of St. Sebastian in Rome. Since then, this day, as a day of common honor for both Apostles, overshadowed the day of their individual martyrdom; and so from ancient times, the Church honors Peter and Paul together, not only with a common feast day, but also with a common fasting period for both. (Indeed, the fasting period during which eating fish is also permitted on Saturday and Sunday [according to a stricter tradition] or on all the days of the week except Wednesday and Friday [according to a more lenient tradition], starts on Monday after the Sunday of All Saints and ends on the 28th of June. But if Easter falls on the 3rd of May or later, then there is no fast for the feast of the Apostles).

Our Church also honors them with Icons which depict the two together, either embracing in a brotherly love in Christ or holding in their hands the Church in the form of a small Byzantine church, so emphasizing the unity of the faith and the unity of the Church, mainly consisting of two different elements: The old Israel (the Jews) to whom, in the main, the missionary work of Peter was directed; and the Gentiles (the Pagans) who correspondingly were the objects of Paul's missionary work. Also, they are honored with common churches named after both of them, and with common hymns like the one from the Vespers service of their feast which we have placed at the beginning of these humble lines.

With what crowns of praise shall we crown Peter and Paul? What worthy words can one find to laud the chiefs of the Apostles? What forms and ornaments of speech can one employ? What kind of poetic blossom would we gather to dedicate to them?

What can be worthy for Peter, who, when he declared



that our Lord is “Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:16), revealed the unshakeable stone onto which is founded and based the true faith of those who are saved; and thus, he himself at the same time became the first stone of the spiritual edifice of the Church?

What can stand worthy to praise “the imprisonment in various cities and the afflictions” of Paul, “the hard work and toil, the sleeplessness, the sufferings of hunger and thirst, the cold and nakedness, the basket, the beatings with a stick, the stoning, the journeying, the death of the sea, the shipwreck” that he endured, “so that he would win people for Christ Jesus his Lord” as the muse of St. Andrew, Archbishop of Crete is wondering?

How can you praise the “Mouth of the Apostles” who “lifted up his voice and said to them” (Acts 2:14) in front of the crowd on the day of Pentecost and as many as heard this first holy divine-voiced sermon of his “were pricked in their hearts” (Acts 2:41) and were baptized, “and the same day there were added three thousand souls” to the Church? (Acts 2:41).

How can you praise the God-called “Teacher of the churches” who became all things to all men that he might by all means save some? (1 Corinthians 9:22).

What can you first bring to memory about Peter and laud him? The enthusiasm? The humility? The saving and redeeming tears of repentance after that third “I do not know this man” (Matthew 26:75)? After this denial, his complete dedication to the God-man and his triple confession of love to Him for which he heard from His mouth, “feed my lambs” and “feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17)? His God-wise teaching which is contained in his two General Epistles or his all-holy martyrdom for Christ in the “Eternal City” where he irrigated with his scarlet blood the newly-grown tree of the Church of Rome?

What can you first call to mind about Paul and praise him? His godly zeal with which he repeatedly travelled round the Mediterranean with infinite dangers, hardships and problems in order to evangelize to its people the salvation in Christ? His patience with the “thorn in the flesh” which God granted to him to buffet him for life (2 Corinthians 12: 7-10)? His courage in front of the rulers of this world? His politeness which made him respect even the high priest of the Judeans who transgressed the law (Acts 23:5)? The bottomless depth of his humility, by reason of which, when he remembers the time that he was an enemy of

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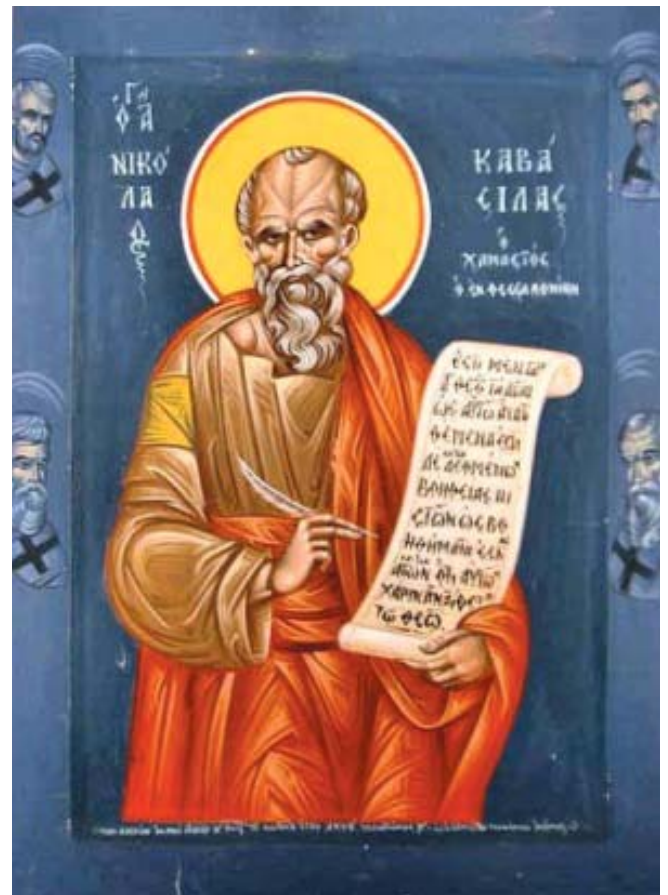
THE KAVASILAS OPTION

by Fr. Micah Hirschy

Much has been written in the last couple of years concerning the “Benedict Option.” People have found inspiration in it as well as a great deal to criticize about both the movement and Rod Dreher’s book. The historicity and theology of the book are questionable. The dire picture painted is difficult not to dismiss when every Orthodox Church echoes with “Christ is Risen from the dead, by death trampling down death”. However, what is perhaps needed is not another criticism or debate about the “Benedict Option.” Instead, the time has come to explore another “Option.” This Option is rooted in the Gospel and found in the 2nd-century letter to Diognetus as well as the novels of Dostoyevsky. In contemporary times, it has been incarnated by a diversity of people that include Mother Maria Skobtsova and St. Porphyrios. This is the Kavasilas Option.

St. Nicholas Kavasilas lived during the 14th century in the twilight of what has become known as the Byzantine Empire. The empire was besieged on the outside by the Muslims to the East and the Latins to the West. Within the empire were turmoil, civil wars, and uprisings. Religious controversies touched nearly every aspect of society. Nicholas was in the middle of it all. He was a scientist and theologian. He was a close friend to St. Gregory Palamas and was an advisor to emperors. He counted among his friends both Hesychasts and humanists. St. Nicholas wrote about the Liturgy and the Mysteries while contemporary scholarship is all but certain he remained a layman his entire life. Far from removing himself from society, there does not seem to be any area of society and culture with which he was not fully engaged.

The Kavasilas Option begins with the Liturgy. St. Nicholas was quite clear in saying that everything needed is given in the Liturgy; a person can add nothing to what Christ has given in the sacred Mysteries. At the same time, it is necessary and depends on the person to preserve what has been given. St. Nicholas believed that this was done by reflecting on Christ and meditating upon the Law of the Spirit which is love. Olivier Clement puts it quite succinctly when he writes that Kavasilas “recommends brief meditations to those living in his day, reminders in a way to remember, within the time it takes to put one foot in front of the other, that God exists and that He loves us” (Three Prayers, 32). Here there is no self-exile or removal from society. St. Nicholas teaches that these meditations can be done by all and in every place: “The general may remain in command, the farmer may till the soil... one need not betake oneself to a



remote spot, nor eat unaccustomed food, nor even dress differently... It is possible for one who stays at home and loses none of his possessions to constantly be engaged in the Law of the Spirit [Love]” (Life in Christ, 173-174).

At first glance, this might seem a bit simple if not naïve. Go to Liturgy and throughout the week reflect on Christ’s love? St. Nicholas, distilling a thousand years of ascetic praxis, explained that every action comes from desire and that desire begins with reflection. Christ’s love is reflected on and this turns into desire to be with Christ which leads to actions pleasing to Him. People will act not out of fear of punishment or desire for reward but out of love for Christ.

It is important to remember that these reflections and meditations on Christ throughout the days and weeks can never be independent from the Eucharistic gathering. It is the Ecclesial experience of Christ in the shared meal that is remembered in the midst of the world and daily life and in a very real sense is brought into the world through this remembrance. The Eucharist is never independent of the world because it is carried into the world, relationships, politics, and encounters with culture. In fact, St. Nicholas writes that the bread and wine offered in the Liturgy are themselves the fruit of human labor, culture, and are products of daily life.

The Kavasilas option is the “Eucharisteite in all

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IS MINISTRY PREPARING KIDS FOR LIFE IN THE CHURCH?

By Steven Christoforou
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Dept. of Youth and Young Adults

Dorothy Day was a Catholic social activist, and a Cardinal once described her as trying “to live in such a way that one’s life would not make sense if God did not exist.” This is the sort of description that should apply to every Christian’s life. Shouldn’t it?

After all, as St. Paul wrote, the Gospel is something that doesn’t quite make sense in light of the wisdom of our time: “*We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles*” (1 Cor. 1:23). Phrased even more simply: “*the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God*” (1 Cor. 1:18).

If individual Christian lives shouldn’t make sense without God, then the same should apply to Christian activities and ministries. So, do our ministries make sense without God?

The Shape of Our Ministries

I grew up in the Church. I was an active participant in parish youth groups, athletic events, cultural activities, Sunday School, etc. These are the same programs that make up most youth ministry today. And these are the same programs that most of our young adults have participated in. Yet we all know that the Church has a problem: young people are increasingly disaffected and disengaged from the life of the Church. Young people are increasingly of the opinion that their lives “make sense” without God. Is it because the ministry that shaped them made sense without God?

Catherine’s Story

I’ve given talks to thousands of young adults across the country, and have been blessed to speak face-to-face with hundreds of them. When young adults share their stories, I’ve noticed a common thread. It was incredibly obvious when I met Catherine. Catherine is in college. I met her during a young adult event. We were going around the room, sharing our stories and struggles. As Catherine spoke, everyone in the room began nodding in silent agreement.

Catherine described growing up in the Church. She was active in everything: from Sunday school to the parish dance group. She played on the community’s basketball team and never missed a youth event.

Yet, as soon as she graduated high school, her relationship with the Church dissolved. She joined several different clubs and groups. As soon as she heard that there was an Orthodox young adult event in the area, she made sure to attend. As she described her

journey, one thing was clear: Catherine was desperate to belong to something. And she never felt like she belonged to the Church.

“Institutionalized” by Ministry

But why? How can someone who was active in literally every program the Church offered feel so disconnected from the Church?

There’s a scene in the movie *The Shawshank Redemption* that may help clarify the question. The movie takes place in Shawshank State Prison. And Brooks Hatlen is an elderly prisoner, someone who was locked up as a young man. Unexpectedly, Brooks learns that he’s been paroled at age 73, after over 40 years in prison. Yet he isn’t pleased with the news. Instead, he holds a knife to another inmate’s throat and threatens to kill him. One of Brooks’ friends is confused by this reaction: why isn’t Brooks happy to finally be a free man? Another inmate soberly responds: Brooks has been institutionalized. He’s spent so long in prison that he no longer knows how to live as a free man. There is nothing connecting him with the wider world.

After all, what’s a prisoner without prison walls? And what’s a GOYAn without GOYA?

Ministry as a Garden

When I was young, my grandmother kept a beautiful garden. It was full of all kinds of fruits and vegetables, including tomatoes. I noticed that when the tomato plants were young, she would tie the plants to sticks she placed in the soil. The stick, she explained, was meant to help keep the plant from falling over while the stem was weak. When the plant was strong enough to stand on its own, she would remove the stick.

It seems to me that, if our ministries are the “sticks” being used to support our young people, they’re not helping our children learn to stand on their own. People like Catherine can spend over a decade in a variety of youth programs. They spend years participating in activities, attending events, etc. And, at the end of it all, they seem completely ill-equipped to be healthy members of the Church. They seem just as institutionalized as Brooks Hadley, completely unable to survive outside of the walls of their youth programs. Thus when GOYA goes away, so do the GOYAns.

Do We Need More Programs?

I know what you’re thinking: “maybe this means we need more young adult programs.”

Yet, a simple desire for more will not address the real problem. Young people climb the ladder from HOPE to JOY to GOYA, moving from one program

to another. They spend years learning how to be good participants in these programs, and yet never develop the ability to function as Christians in the Church.

Absent a program to prop them up, our young people find the Church to be uninteresting at best, or completely foreign at worst. Without the threat of being benched during the Basketball Tournament if they don't show up for Liturgy, they have very little buy-in. And, because kids may jump through this hoop and show up for Liturgy while they're in the program, we may feel that we've facilitated good ministry. But have we?

Based on our perceived successes with youth programs, our knee-jerk reaction is to make more programs. Programs for college students! Programs for young professionals! Programs for old adults, and then elderly adults! Programs from the cradle to the grave!

Investing time and effort in young adult groups may, on a surface level, appear successful in the short term. But what happens after a person ages out of this program? All we've done is kick the can down the road. All we've done is form a generation of program participants who will never be at home in the Church itself.

We don't simply need more programs any more than tomato plants need more sticks to prop them up. We need better programs. We need to recognize that programs are meant to be the stick that holds up seedlings, not the vine themselves. We need Christ-centered and Kingdom-oriented programs that shape people who, eventually, don't need programs. We need a vision of ministry that forms Christians with a deep and abiding relationship with Christ in His Church, not mere participants who depend on more and more programs.

Reimagining Ministry

For decades, we have crafted ministry programs that make perfect sense without God. Children participate in fun activities and go on exciting trips. They play sports and learn ethnic dances.

(Never mind that the local YMCA has better sports teams, and there are thousands of summer camps with better ropes courses and arts and crafts.) And maybe, in order to justify calling our programs "ministry," we sprinkle a bit of "religion" on top for good measure. (You can hear the implicit lesson when leaders say, "Let's pray real quick, and then we'll get back to the fun stuff.")

But we have to be honest. The reality is that the fruit of these programs isn't a new generation of faithful Christians who are at home in the Church. Our programs are not forming people with robust and resilient prayer lives who are cultivating meaningful relationships with both God and neighbor. Because our programs aren't guiding young people into the practices of active Christian life, of ascetically struggling to know Christ in His Church. Instead, our programs are creating a generation of people who can't survive without out those programs. Of people who

EPISCOPATE CONGRESS 2018

Thursday, Sept. 6 – Saturday, Sept. 8, 2018
Vatra Romaneasca, Grass Lake, Michigan

SCHEDULE

Thursday

Clergy Conference / Episcopate Council Meeting

Friday

Episcopate Congress Sessions / Arrival of
Hawaiian Iveron Icon of the Mother of God

Saturday

Hierarchal Divine Liturgy / Closing Banquet

HOTEL INFORMATION

(mention "ROEA Congress" for rate)
All hotels in Michigan are now non-smoking

Holiday Inn - Jackson (517) 789-9600
2696 Bob McClain Dr., Jackson
(behind Meijer, North side of I-94
@ Airport Rd)

Deadline: August 15, 2018

(2 Queen beds) - \$139/night + 11% taxes

(Single King) - \$139/night + 11% taxes

Fitness center, business center, indoor pool,
free Wi-Fi

Holiday Inn Express - Jackson
(517) 788-6400

3506 Oneil Dr., Jackson
(South side of I-94 @ Airport Rd exit)

Deadline: August 5, 2018

(2 Queen beds or Single King bed)

\$120/night + 11% taxes

Free breakfast, indoor pool, free Wi-Fi

HOME2SUITES (by Hilton) – Jackson
(517) 998-7000

2704 Bob McClain Dr., Jackson (behind Meijer,
North side of I-94 @ Airport Rd.)

Deadline: August 5, 2018

All rooms are suites with a fold out sofa bed

Suite (1 Queen) - \$122/night + 11% taxes

Suite (2 Queen beds) - \$139/night + 11% taxes

Free breakfast, indoor pool, free Wi-Fi

are completely unable (or even unwilling) to live as Christians in the Church.

Perhaps the ministry we lead isn't as Christ-centered or Kingdom-oriented as we pretend it is.

Maybe we've been doing ministry incorrectly.

Published in the Orthodox Observer, May-June 2018, page 31.

ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY: THE CENTRALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE NECESSITY OF PHILANTHROPIA WHY ORTHODOXY? PART 9

By Ryan Hunter



“To Know God:” The Holy Spirit within us, Christ alive in the Church today, and living the sign of the Cross.

If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you see me: because I live, you shall live also. In that day you shall know, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you (John 14:15-20).

These beautiful words contain Jesus’ promise to His disciples that He would send them the Holy Spirit from the Father, “another Comforter” to abide with them—and with all the faithful—forever! The first verses are familiar to many as Elizabethan composer Thomas Tallis’ magnificent “If You Love Me” choral composition. I urge you to wonder at their meaning: Christ did not say that the Spirit would dwell “near” us or “by” us, but that *he dwells with you, and shall be in you*. It is by the grace of the Holy Spirit that in Christ we *shall live also*. Revealing the Trinity, Jesus tells us that by the Holy Spirit, *you shall know that I am in my Father ... and I in you*. What an extraordinary promise, that God in the third Person of the Holy Trinity will dwell with us and abide in us till the end of time!

Stirring testimonies left to us by so many of the saints bear witness to their profound awareness of Christ’s active presence in His Church on earth and the

Spirit’s abiding presence in the hearts of the faithful. From St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, and many others among the early fathers, to St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. John of Kronstadt, and St. Silouan of the Holy Mountain, all the saints reaffirm that the Holy Spirit and Christ Himself are truly at work among us. One of the most beautiful passages about the Spirit left by St. Seraphim comes to mind when he describes the Holy Spirit as a fire,

... warming and igniting the heart and inward parts. So, if we feel coldness in our hearts, which is from the devil (for the devil is cold), then let us call the Lord: He, in coming, will warm our heart with perfect love, not only towards Himself, but to our neighbors as well. And the coldness of the despiser of good will run from the face of His warmth.

From these words rings forth the centrality of the third Person of the Holy Trinity in Orthodox spirituality. Just as the Spirit is an active presence upon which the faithful are urged to call, Christ Himself is always present in the Church, which St. John of Kronstadt equates as “one and the same with the Lord—His Body, of His flesh and His bones. The Church is the living vine, nourished by Him and growing in Him.”

When St. John wrote these words, he was reminding us that Christ is not only supporting the Church from heaven as His “living vine” on earth, but that Christ is truly alive in the Church, as much as His flesh and bones are of Him! By the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Church continues to grow in Him here on earth.

St. John continues by urging us to think of the Church not as a man-made institution or earthly thing, for in truth it is neither, but to think of it together with “the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father and Holy Spirit.”

While the Church on earth is partially in the care of wise yet fallible men, it is above all in the loving care of Christ, its Creator and eternal Head. The late Bishop Basil (Rodzianko) of blessed memory spent the closing years of his life at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Washington. Fr. Valery Shemchuk once told me that His Grace often said that God made creation itself so that there might someday be a Church. In saying this, Bishop Basil was underlining not only the timeless

and divinely preordained mission of the Church, but that the very purpose of man's existence is to draw closer to God in the life of the Church.

Similarly, Bishop Kallistos observes that "Orthodox theology never treats the earthly aspect of the Church in isolation, but thinks always of the Church in Christ and the Holy Spirit. All Orthodox thinking about the Church starts with the special relationship which exists between the Church and God." By this "special relationship," through participation in the inner life of the Church by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may come not only to believe in God, but even to know Him. As St. Silouan observes, "Enlightened by baptism, people believe in God. But there are some who even know Him. To believe in God is good, but it is more blessed to know God."

How does the venerable elder describe those who "have come to know God by the Holy Spirit?" They "stretch upward day and night, insatiable, to the living God, for the love of God is very sweet." May we all aspire to this intimate knowledge of the love of God in our souls, "stretching upward" to touch the very heavens.

One of the most profoundly simple ways to invite God into our hearts is to make the sign of the Cross over ourselves. You will notice when you enter an Orthodox church, that people make the sign of the Cross quite frequently, often accompanied by a bow. Worshipers cross themselves during the Liturgy whenever the doxology is invoked, which is quite often in comparison to Western Christian services. They cross themselves when praying before icons, and they cross themselves in their own private devotions, in morning and evening worship. There is a particular symbolic beauty to the Orthodox method, in terms of how it is done physically, which you should find out for yourself. I have seen many old men and women at church perform the most beautiful crossings upon themselves, with faith shining in their eyes....

Certainly, the sign of the Cross is very important, for it is the physical symbol of the Christian faith. Yet it occurred to me recently that the perfect sign of the Cross is not actually a precisely-done hand gesture or movement at all. As Christians, the sign is something much more meaningful than a physical motion with our right hand. We are called to make the sign of the Cross each day within our hearts, as a quiet commitment in all that we do, asking that the Holy Spirit illumine every aspect of our lives. Truly, by living in imitation of Christ's loving example, we live the sign, we live the Cross. This is by no means easy—indeed it is a great challenge—but it is the most beautiful, the most fulfilling one ever offered to mankind.

Just as we are challenged to live the sign as much as we find comfort in performing it over ourselves, implicit in the very word "Orthodox" is not only an obligation to observe the many traditions of the Church that constitute "right belief," but to live in a spirit of

"right glory" toward one's fellow man made in the image of God. Thus, Orthodoxy in its truest form is a resounding call to work toward holistic social justice which embraces and strives to heal and foster the whole of the human person—body, mind, soul and spirit. It is a call to live in *philanthropia*, that is, a profound love for mankind.

As Bishop Kallistos reminds us from the words of 1 John 4:20,

Love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable. A person can love his neighbor as himself only if he loves God above all; and a person cannot love God if he does not love his fellow humans ... only if he loves his fellow neighbor can a person be deified.

Thus, outside of *philanthropia*, there is no possible way we can become like unto God through divinization. Because humans are "made in the image of the divine Trinity," we can only realize "the divine likeness" if we "live a common life such as the Blessed Trinity lives: as the three persons of the Godhead 'dwell' in one another, so we must 'dwell' in our fellow humans, living not for ourselves alone, but in and for others ... Such is the true nature of theosis."

As St. Silouan observes, "Blessed is the soul that loves her brother, for our brother is our life. The Spirit of the Lord lives manifest within her, giving peace and gladness."

It is this inner peace which comes from exercising the Church's calling to the highest form of love: agape, or love of the image of God in every person.

Originally published on orthochristian.com on 2/4/16.

A History ... *Cont. from page 3*

In the Orthodox Church the Fast of the Holy Apostles lasts from the day after the Sunday of All Saints to the 29th of June, the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul. This fast may be of longer or shorter duration depending upon which day Pascha is celebrated. According to the Julian Calendar, it could last from as little as 8 days to as many as 42 days depending on the date of Pascha, but this is shortened by the Revised Julian Calendar which sometimes obliterates the Fast altogether, though rarely. If the feast of Pascha occurs sooner, then the Apostles' Fast is longer; if Pascha comes later, then the Apostles' Fast is shorter.

Prescription for the Fast

The Fast of the Apostles is somewhat more lenient than the Great Fast before Holy Week and Pascha. The Kievan Metropolitan George (1069-1072) approved the Rule for the Kiev Caves Monastery which does not allow meat or dairy products to be eaten during the Apostles' Fast. On Wednesday and Friday, they prescribed dry food, that is, bread and water or dry

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ARCHPRIEST LEONTE S. COPACIA

MEMORY ETERNAL!



**Archpriest Leonte S.
Copacia**

[SHELBY TOWNSHIP, MI] Archpriest Leonte Simion Copacia, Jr. fell asleep in the Lord on August 16, 2017. Known to many as Father Leo, he was 85 years old at the time of his repose.

Born on April 4, 1932 in Salem, OH to Leonte Copacia, Sr. and Elena [Buta] Copacia, immigrants from Beclean, Romania and Rosario de Sante Fe, Argentina, respectively, he was a 1950 graduate of

the New York Military Academy. Afterwards, he attended Ohio State University before enlisting in the US Marine Corps at the end of the Korean War. Professionally, he held various management and executive positions at Chrysler Automotive, where he worked for 34 years before retiring in 1991.

Having completed the Late Lay Vocation Study Program for the Diaconate under the auspices of the Orthodox Church in America, he was ordained to the diaconate on September 30, 1979, by His Eminence, the late Archbishop Valerian D. Trifa, and served at Saints Peter and Paul Romanian Orthodox Church, Dearborn, MI, and Saint George Romanian Orthodox Cathedral, Southfield, MI. On June 5, 1988, he was ordained to the priesthood by His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel at Saint Mary Romanian Orthodox Cathedral, Cleveland, OH, after which he was assigned Associate Priest at Southfield's Saint George Cathedral. He also served "on loan" as an Associate Priest at Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, Saint Clair Shores, MI, from December 1993 through April 2001. He was installed as the first priest of the newly-formed Saint Raphael of Brooklyn Mission in northwest Detroit on May 6, 2001. He was elevated to the dignity of Archpriest by the Holy Synod of Bishops on March 20, 2007.

In addition to his pastoral duties, Father Leo served as a national President of the American Romanian Orthodox Youth in 1960 and Business Manager of the SOLIA newspaper in 1963. He spent 16 years as cantor and choir director at Dearborn's Saints Peter and Paul Church; directed, produced and broadcast the English segment of the Orthodox Radio Hour, which aired on WNZK AM across the Detroit region from 1989 until 1994; organized and directed the first Council of Orthodox Christian Churches' Christmas Concert in 1987; founded the Archbishop's Charity Endowment (ACE) Fund to help the needy; and served as Financial Adviser and Treasurer of the Romanian

Orthodox Episcopate of America for three terms. He also served as Spiritual Advisor of the Association of the Romanian Orthodox Ladies Auxiliary of North America (ARFORA) prior to his retirement from the active priesthood on December 31, 2009, due to health reasons.

Father Leo is survived by his beloved wife of 62 years, Preoteasa Mary [Bogdan]; four sons, Terry [Suzanne] Copacia, Timothy [Linda] Copacia, Tod Copacia, and Trevor [Kimberly] Copacia; 11 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; three nephews; and one brother, Franklin [Molly] Copacia.

Visitation was at Saint George Cathedral, 18405 West Nine Mile Road, Southfield, MI on Monday, August 21, with the celebration of the Saracusta in the evening. The Divine Liturgy, followed by the Funeral for a Priest, began at the cathedral at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, August 22. His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel presided, assisted by many area clergy. A mercy meal (pomana) followed the services. Interment was at Saint Mary Cemetery, Grass Lake, MI.

May Father Leo's memory be eternal!

A History ... *Cont. from page 11*

fruits. On Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, they permitted fish, wine and oil. In addition to this, they directed that one hundred prostrations (profound bows to the ground) be made daily, excepting Saturdays, Sundays and holy days (the Feast of the Birth of John the Baptist falls on June 23rd; and fish, oil and wine is permitted no matter the day). This rule was transferred to Russia via the Kiev Caves Monastery who based their rule on that of the Monastery of Studios in Constantinople. We can thus assume this was the monastic rule for the Fast practiced by both the Roman Empire and the Russian Empire, with some variations. This is the rule still practiced today with minor variations among jurisdictions.

A New Step ... *Cont. from page 4*

for one nation's faith and internal affairs. The vision of a Church which exists not for itself but, following Christ's example, for the life of the world, is easily forgotten.

This picture becomes even more complicated in the myriad new contexts in which the Orthodox Church finds itself in the contemporary world, whether in Africa, Asia or the Americas, where Orthodox Christians usually find themselves in the position of a counter-culture.

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2017 WILLIAM R. STANITZ / AROY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



Elena Bucciarelli

Elena Marie Bucciarelli is the 2017 recipient of the William R. Stanitz / AROY Scholarship. She was born on May 22, 1999, in Detroit, Michigan, and was baptized on July 15, 1999, at St. George Cathedral in Southfield, MI. She is the daughter of Joseph and Donna (Muresan) Bucciarelli of Livonia, Michigan; granddaughter of the late Andrei and Sylvia Muresan of Redford, Michigan; niece of Ronald Muresan and Carmen Ionescu of Eugene, Oregon; and goddaughter of Valer and Ileana Pufescu of Naples, Florida.

Elena has been a lifelong member of St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI, where she attended Sunday school and is a member of the Valerian D. Trifa Choir, Treicolor Romanian dance group and Junior AROY. Elena has attended both Vatra Camp for Juniors and Seniors. She has also volunteered for numerous summers as a dining room hostess, and for the past 2 summers as Choir Director for the Junior Camp. She has been an active participant at the ROEA Family Life Conferences for the past 5 years. She was presented as a debutante at the 2015 Family Life Conference held at Presentation of Our Lord Church in Akron, Ohio.

Elena attended Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Livonia, MI and graduated Summa Cum Laude with a GPA of 4.13. She has been an active member of the Marching Band, Jazz Band, and Wind Ensemble, playing alto saxophone and bassoon. Elena participated in the Michigan State Band and Orchestra Association (MS-BOA) District and State Solo and Ensemble Festivals all four years of high school. She was awarded nine "I" judge's ratings and three "II" ratings at the District level, and with the nine "I" ratings that were advanced to the State competition, she was awarded nine "I" awards for her saxophone and bassoon performances. She was also a member of the Symphonic Choir in her senior year. Elena has been active in the Drama Department with acting, dancing, and singing roles. In her Junior and Senior years, she was the choreographer for the spring musical and was also cast in a lead role in her

I LIVE AGAIN, BY MOTHER ALEXANDRA, REPRINTED



The sisters of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City, an Orthodox spiritual oasis established by Mother Alexandra (Princess Ileana), tirelessly pray and labor. Recently, through their efforts, the memoir of Ileana, Princess of Romania and Archduchess of Austria, entitled "*I Live Again*," was reprinted, after almost 70 years. The first hard cover edition was published in London by Victor Gollancz

LTD, in 1952, and it was a great joy and encouragement to the Romanian exiles. Today, I hope, the news of this new edition will bring a similar and even greater joy to all Romanians, now free of communism, and to all those who admired the Princess-Nun and were inspired by her life, faith and character. The book appeals to the Orthodox and non-Orthodox as well and to all who love to read. It takes the reader into a bygone world, and it does it with royal class. It is lively and inviting; it is inspirational and dramatic; it is strengthening, uplifting, and it builds character. I strongly recommend it.

The new edition was published in 2018 by Ancient Faith Publishing, Chesterton, Indiana; and it may be obtained from store.ancientfaith.com/i-live-again-a-memoir-of-ileana/ for \$24.95. It contains an epilogue by Archbishop Nathaniel and an introduction by Very Rev. Mother Christophora, Abbess, as well as a prologue by the undersigned, a foreword by Ileana Hapsburg-Snyder, and a postscript by Fr. Laurence Lazar. Don't delay to act. Order your copy now. It also makes a perfect gift for someone you love. It is a great support for the Monastery, but the real benefit will be yours. Above all, the prayers of Mother Alexandra, who left the glory of the world for the true glory of God, will bless you with her smile from above.

Fr. R. Grama



Senior year. She earned membership in the Thespian Society and the National Honor Society.

Since July 2017, Elena has been attending Kettering University, a private Engineering College in Flint, Michigan, where she is pursuing a degree in Computer Science. Congratulations, Elena!

HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

HIS EMINENCE, ARCHBISHOP NATHANIEL

January 10 – June 6, 2018

January 10-13. Miami, FL. Christ the Savior Cathedral (OCA). Thursday: Funeral Service for Bishop Mark (Forsberg) concelebrated with Archbishop Nikon. **Friday:** Funeral Liturgy concelebrated with Metropolitan Tikhon and Archbishop Nikon.

January 14. Hollywood, FL. Holy Cross. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. **Evening:** Visit to Holy Trinity, Miramar, FL.

January 21. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Divine Liturgy.

January 27-28. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Saturday: Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Divine Liturgy. Memorial Service for George Oancea.

February 1-17. Phoenix, AZ. February 4. Phoenix, AZ. Holy Cross. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Luncheon. **February 5-9. Scottsdale, AZ. Franciscan Retreat Center.** Clergy Confertreat. **February 11. Glendale, AZ. St. John.** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Luncheon.

February 18. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

February 24-25. Alliance, OH. St. Nicholas. Saturday: Great Vespers. Supper. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Lunch. **Evening:** Orthodoxy Sunday Vespers. Supper.

February 26. Fairlawn, OH. Presentation of Our Lord. Meeting.

March 9-10. Aurora, ON. Forty Holy Martyrs. Friday: Holy Unction Service. **Saturday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Ordination of Deacon George Bogdan Diaconescu into the Holy Priesthood.

March 11. Toronto, ON. St. John. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

March 17. Grass Lake, MI. ROEA Chancery. Episcopate Council Meeting.

March 18. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

March 24. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Divine Liturgy. **Evening:** Great Vespers for feast of Annunciation.

March 25. Walker, MI. Annunciation. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for parish's patronal feast day.

March 31. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Great Vespers.

April 1. Warren, MI. Descent of the Holy Spirit. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Palm Sunday Banquet.

April 4. Ellwood City, PA. St. Elias the Prophet. Holy Wednesday. Holy Unction Service. Supper. Hospitality at Transfiguration Monastery.

April 5. Canton, OH. St. George. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Holy Thursday. **Evening: Fairlawn, OH.** Pastoral visits. Matins of Holy Friday (Twelve Gospels).

April 6. Youngstown, OH. Holy Trinity. Holy Fri-

day Hours and Vespers. Lunch. **Afternoon: Alliance, OH. St. Nicholas.** Vespers. **Evening: Hermitage, PA. Holy Cross.** Lamentations Service.

April 7. Warren, OH. Holy Resurrection. Hierarchal Vespersal Divine Liturgy for Holy Saturday. Lunch.

April 8. Cleveland, OH. St. Mary Cathedral. Pascha. Matins and Hierarchal Liturgy of the Resurrection. Reception. Agape Vespers. Reception.

April 9. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Bright Monday. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

April 14-15. Elmhurst, NY. St. Mary. Saturday: Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet.

April 16-19. Syosset, NY. OCA Chancery. Holy Synod Meeting.

April 20-22. Toronto, ON. St. George. Saturday: Great Vespers. Dinner. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet for parish's patronal feast day.

April 24 – May 4. Calgary, AB. St. Mary. Thursday: Marriage of Andrei Ilieviciu and Maria Lupu. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet honoring Fr. Michael Lupu in retirement.

May 6. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

May 11-14. Kannapolis, NC. St. John. Friday: Vespers. Preparation for consecration of the church. **Saturday:** Consecration of new altar and church. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

May 18-20. Lilburn, GA. Sts. Constantine & Helen. Saturday: Pastoral Session. Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Luncheon.

May 24-25. Seattle, WA. Three Hierarchs. Pastoral Visit.

May 26. Vancouver, BC. Holy Trinity. Blessing of Prodromita icon. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet.

May 27. Oregon City, OR. Holy Trinity. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet.

May 28. Portland, OR. St. Mary. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Memorial to soldiers.

June 1-2. Hermitage, PA. Holy Cross. Annual ARFORA Conference.

June 3. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

June 4-6. Aurora, IL. Funeral of relative.

A New Step ... *Cont. from page 12*

Émigré communities seeking to continue the traditions of distant homelands or convert communities seeking alternatives to other religious traditions are united at least in a common desire to avoid living according to the expectations of the surrounding cultural status quo. Yet to reflect critically on Orthodoxy's role in new contexts and realities is to challenge deeply-held convictions about cherishing and perpetuating the national faith, culture and language both of those

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FINANCIAL REPORT

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M/M Leonard Jones, Philadelphia, PA.....\$150.00
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The Byzantine Origins ...

Cont. from page 5

For the Orthodox in America, the significance of Justinian's Novellae is both more substantial and more complex. Many Orthodox across the globe look nostalgically to an authoritarian Byzantium or Tsarist Russia precisely because they offered a political space where Christian teaching could be enshrined in legislation. Perhaps there is no greater example than Justinian's Novella 6, which decreed that the decisions of Church councils possessed the weight of imperial law. What often goes unnoticed is that this relationship was reciprocal, meaning that all imperial law had canonical bearing for Orthodox Christians living within the empire. The most famous interpreters of Canon law in later centuries of Byzantium made little distinction between laws that originated from Church councils and laws that originated from the government. In other words, Justinian's Novella 85 would have been interpreted by Church officials in Byzantium as a canonical regulation for all Christians.

Given all of this, we might expect that those American Orthodox who are the most enthusiastic about the legacy of Christian Byzantium and those who are the most likely to affirm the traditional nature of their Orthodoxy would be the ones who are most enthusiastic to follow Justinian's lead and push for the restriction of gun rights today. But this is rarely the case. Instead, it would appear that American Orthodox who advocate for gun rights are as informed by a particular kind of Americanism as they are by their Orthodoxy. The irony, of course, is that the argument for gun rights is not traditional in any kind of long historical sense. It is, rather, distinctively modern and highly secular.

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The Kavasilas Option ...

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circumstances" of St. Paul's 1st letter to the Thessalonians (5:18). From this remembering and reflecting, born of these meditations on Christ's manic love and the experience of the liturgy, a eucharisticizing of the world takes place. This is spoken of beautifully by Olivier Clement: "There is a particular way of washing, a way of dressing, of being nourished—whether through food or beauty—a way of welcoming one's neighbor that is Eucharistic. It seems to me that there is also a Eucharistic way of fulfilling our dull, tiresome and repetitive daily tasks" (Three Prayers, 29).

What is the Kavasilas Option in the end? It is to be truly human. "It was for the new man [Christ] that hu-

man nature was created at the beginning. ...Our reason we have received in order that we may know Christ, our desire in order that we might hasten to Him. We have memory in order that we may carry Him in us" (Life in Christ, 190). The great wonder of Kavasilas' teaching is that when people live as they were created to live, they become "as a people of gods surrounding God" (Life in Christ, 166). Because Christ:

Gives them birth, growth, and nourishment; he is life and breath. By means of Himself He forms an eye for them and, in addition, gives them light and enables them to see Himself. He is the one who feeds and is Himself the food... Indeed, He is the One who enables us to walk, He Himself is the way, and in addition He is the lodging on the way and its destination... (Life in Christ, 47).

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A New Step ... *Cont. from page 14*

from Orthodoxy's historical homelands, and those for whom the new contexts are home. Is there a way to get beyond these obstacles to the unity and conciliarity of the Orthodox Church?

Disturbed by the legacy of two world wars and what he perceived as the idolatry of churches on both sides making an almost total identification of the cause of Christ with the cause of their own nation, the leading 20th-century Christian thinker, Lesslie Newbigin, offered the following remedy: 'It is only by being faithful participants in a supranational, multicultural family of churches that we can find the resources to be at the same time faithful sustainers and cherishers of our respective cultures, and also faithful critics of them.' He emphasized the need to listen to those with minds and hearts shaped by other cultures in a spirit of mutual responsibility toward one another, and with a willingness to receive mutual correction. Newbigin was not Orthodox and did not find ready-made around him that family of churches that he felt Christ's Body should be. He devoted much of his life to building such a family. Orthodox Christians can be grateful that they have an advantage, in theory, and in many ways in practice, over Newbigin's situation. It is this ready-made foundation, this supranational, multicultural family of local churches that IOTA's scholars hope to build on. In their deliberations together, it is the unity and conciliarity of this family that they seek to serve.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIANS IN THE FIRST / SECOND CENTURY

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity.

The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking manner of life.

They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers.

They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring.... They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives.

They love all men, though they are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, yet they are restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonored, and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.

Epistle to Diognetus, by an anonymous 1st or 2nd century writer.

Saints Peter and Paul ...

Cont. from page 6

the Church, he calls himself “as one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8) and “least of the Apostles”; and he comes to say “I am not great to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God” (1

SAYINGS

If you cannot find Christ in the beggar at the Church door, you will not find Him in the chalice.

No matter how just your words may be, you ruin everything when you speak with anger.

There is nothing colder than a Christian who does not seek to save others.

If you wish to leave much wealth to your children, leave them in God's care. Do not leave them riches, but virtue and skill.

St. John Chrysostom

Corinthians 15:9)?

His care and the unquenchable interest and fatherly anxiety for the spiritual development of the faithful and the support of the churches at different places, as is so characteristically evident from the statements: “by the space of these years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31), and from the most affectionate “my little children of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19); and the so responsible, “that which comes upon me daily, the care of all churches” (2 Corinthians 21:28)? His perfect love which compelled him to say that unrepeatable “who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?” (2 Corinthians 21:29). His laboriousness and the refinement of his soul which made him, despite the burden of the Apostolic duties, also pursue the humble craft of the tent maker in order to procure for himself food and clothing, so that he could preach without expense the Gospel “and not to be a burden to anybody”? His not loving money which made him say with modesty: “I have coveted no man's silver, or gold or apparel” (Acts 20:33)?

Which of his virtues and which of his graces would you first bring to your memory? Only you stop at his last sacrifice, the culmination of all his unending, unceasing throughout his life, sacrifices for Christ, the sacrifice of his blood under the sword of Nero; and you stop going any further by respecting the greatness of the all-holy man.

With such facts on the one hand, and the writer of this not having the necessary prerequisites to attempt to say words worthy of the “holy luminaries of the world” on the other, it naturally follows that they say should be given to the holy hymnographer of the Church, who expresses the voice and the conscience of her holy Body, to conclude these poor and unworthy lines with the hymn from the Matins service for the feast of the Apostles:

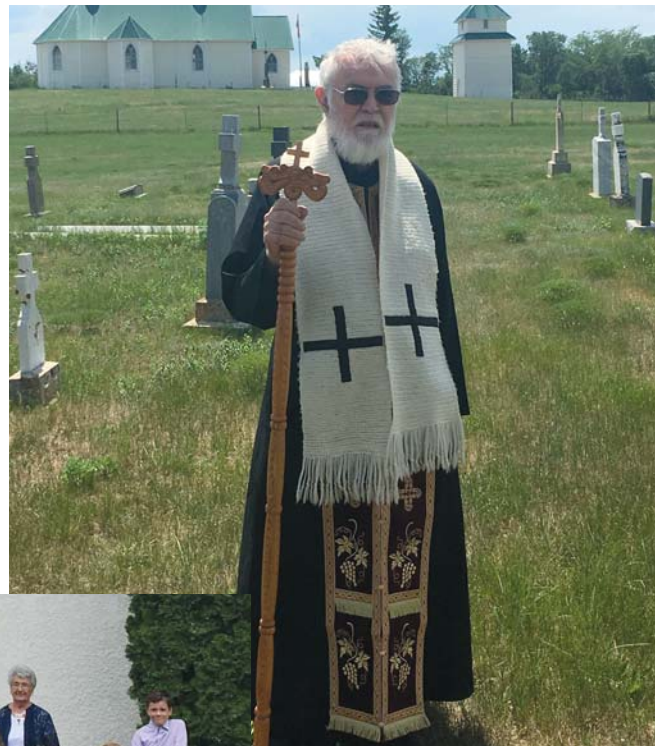
“Peter, the leader of the glorious Apostles the rock of the faith and Paul divine of the holy Church the orator and luminary who stand beside the divine throne, intercede for us”.

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DIN VIAȚA PAROHILOR



Holy Trinity Parish, McNutt, SK - 115th Anniversary - June 23, 2018



Sts. Peter and Paul Church / Cemetery in Flintoft, SK - June 20, 2018



St Elias the Prophet Parish - June 24, 2018



Sts Peter and Paul Parish, Canora, SK - 115th Anniversary - June 22, 2018

MAICA DOMNULUI PRODROMITA INTAMPINATATA CU ARHIEREASCĂ BINECUVANTARE LA VANCOUVER

26 mai 2018 - o zi frumoasa de primavara plina de Duhul Sfânt. Este ziua pe care o asteptam de ceva vreme cu emotie, cu dragoste, cu nerabdare, cu bucurie, o zi in care ar fi trebuit sa fim fericiti si relaxati. Dar nu a fost asa, pentru ca emotiile incep sa-mi napadeasca inima care bate ca un clopot cu cat ma apropiu mai mult de Biserica Sfanta Treime. Aici urmeaza sa se desfasoare o sarbatoare fara egal, un eveniment ce va fi scris in istoria bisericii noastre si va ramane inscrisa in sufletele noastre pana vom pleca in eternitate.

Biserica este prima chemata sa pastreze identitatea romanilor din diaspora. Doar in biserici isi mai pot gasi oamenii momentele de pace si echilibru, de impacare prin sine cu Dumnezeu, de regasirea adevaratei identitati, de departarea de tumultul vietii prinsa in vartejul treburilor si intrarea in Imparatia altei lumi – Imparatia lui Dumnezeu.

Doamne cat am asteptat sa ajung aici- in Imparatia Domnului! In aer e un miros de pace si liniste. Miroase a manastire, a taina. Miroase a bucurie adanca, pentru toti crestinii, pentru ca aici, azi 26 mai 2018, urmeaza sa participam la slujba arhiereasca oficiata de IPS Nathaniel, Arhiepiscopul Episcopiei Ortodoxe Romane Americii si Canadei cu ocazia instalarii icoanei Nascatoare de Dumnezeu si pururea Fecioarei Maria, replica icoanei Prodromita.

Timpul pare ca sta pe loc, pana s-a facut ora 10 AM, atunci cand Preotul Bisericii Sfanta Treime, Parintele Nicolae Lapuste, si un sobor de preoti au iesit in intimpinarea IPS Nathaniel, insotit de Pr. Vicar Dan Hoarste. Intamplator sau nou o raza de soare ce-l insoteste face ca vesmintele sale si mitra sa fie inundate de valuri de lumina iar eu in maini simt un tremur, in suflet simt un val imens de bucurie, iar ochii mei il vad pe IPS ca pe un sfant. Am vrut sa scot cateva vorbe, dar n-am reusit sa le spun decat in gand: Dumnezeu sa va ajute in lucrarea minunata pe care o faceti!

Un moment deosebit de interesant, foarte frumos si clar prezentat de catre Pr. Vicar Dan Hoarste a fost cel legat de elementele speciale de vestimentatie pe care le-a imbracat Inalt Prea-Sfintia Sa, Arhiepiscopul Nathaniel, pentru slujba din aceasta zi. In selectarea vesmintelor sunt respectate cateva principii, cum ar fi decenta si sobrietate, cat si culorile straielor liturgice care au semnificatii diferite. Dar vestimentatia bisericeasca inseamna mult mai mult de atat, are o intreaga istorie, cu radacinile, de regula, in vremurile Imperiului Bizantin. Ritualul imbracatului cu vesmente, implicarea preotilor la slujba, metaniile, ritualul schimbului de locuri si al inchinarii, odoarele si simbolurile bisericesti pe care le purtau, toate pareau desprinse din decorul somptuos al



procesionilor din Bizanț. Ceva deosebit de emotionant! sunt traiiri atat de profunde si unice, incat cuvintele sunt sarace in a le descrie intocmai.

Asadar, azi am lasat grijele si temerile in curtea bisericii, sau chiar mai departe. Azi, aici, exista doar slujba, cartea de rugaciuni si un simțământ de plenitudine ce plutea si ne umplea de atata pace, de atata senin. Pornesc cantarile, incep rugaciunile ce le spunem intr-un glas, toti impreuna, si ne agatam atata de ele, ca de propria noastra existenta. Cantam impetuos, cu convingere, ca si cum, daca inca n-a ajuns Hristos in mijlocul nostru, acum trebuia sa apara.

Deja ne cuprinsese pe toti o emotie si o vibratie sufleteasca greu de reprodus in cuvinte. Nici nu voi incerca s-o descriu, fiecare simte in felul lui, dar e cu neputinta sa fii acolo si sa nu traiesti momentul la maxima intensitate.

Mintea mea era inundata de un mesaj de fericire, beatitudine si de un iz mirific din lumile subtile spirituale, pe care nu as putea sa-l definesc. Astfel, intr-un mod mult mai direct, dincolo de cuvinte, slujba mi-a usurat, in mod spontan, accesul la realitatile divine pe care ea le invoca. A fost o slujba ortodoxa intr-o frumoasa limba romaneasca la care toata suflarea canta de aprindea aerul. Ma uit si la ceilalti credinciosi, si-mi vine sa-i strang in brate pe toti. Ma uit la ei si ma bucur ca exista, ca in

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ÎNVĂȚĂTURA DESPRE PATIMILE LUI HRISTOS, ÎN CEA DE-A XIII-A CATEHEZĂ BAPTISMALĂ A SFÂNTULUI CHIRIL AL IERUSALIMULUI - PARTEA A 2-A

Pr Prof Dr Cezar Pelin - Parohia Sf. Varlaam, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada

Celei de-a XIII-a *Cateheze* îi sunt rezervate Crucea și Patimile lui Hristos. Chiril însuși menționează: „Cateheză la cuvintele «S-a răstignit și s-a îngropat». Citire din Isaia : «Doamne, cine a crezut în cele spuse de noi ? Și brațul Domnului cui s-a descoperit?», și celelalte. «Ca o oaie spre junghiere S-a adus», și celelalte” (*Cateheza XIII*).

Cateheza este alcătuită din 41 de paragrafe, toate așezate într-o ordine progresivă, lucru din care reiese calitatea Sfântului Chiril de bun psiholog și bun pedagog.

Argumentările lui Chiril abundă în texte biblice. Aproape nicio frază nu este fără susținere biblică. Sf. Chiril a recurs la această bogată argumentare scripturistică, din două motive : pentru a demonstra catehumenilor, că Hristos, în numele Căruia urmează să primească botezul, nu este un om obișnuit, ci este prezis, încă de la întemeierea lumii, că este prezent în întreaga Scriptură a Vechiului Testament, pregătindu-și calea către Legământul cel Nou, iar, pe de altă parte, pentru a demonstra iudeilor că au fost incapabili de a-l recunoaște pe Mesia, Cel așteptat, în persoana lui Iisus Hristos.

Ascultă deci mărturia profetului Ieremia și încredințează-te ! (*Cateheza XIII.19*) [...] Să ne întoarcem deci la dovezile aduse de profeți. Domnul a fost răstignit ; ai primit mărturie ! (*Cateheza XIII.23*) [...] Au fost scrise de profeți și aceste fapte ? Să căutăm ! (*Cateheza XIII.24*) [...] Vezi deci că profeții au scris mai dinainte lămurit despre patimile Domnului ! Dar, după cum am spus mai sus, vom lăsa la o parte multe dintre mărturiile Scripturilor din pricina scurtimii timpului. Căci, dacă ar cerceta cineva cu de-amănuntul Scripturile, ar vedea că nu rămâne niciuna dintre faptele lui Hristos fără mărturie (*Cateheza XIII.13*).

Spune-le, proorocule, iudeilor neascultători precis ceasul când se va întuneca soarele ! [...] Totuși, iudeii se împotrivesc învățaturii noastre, ei, care sunt gata totdeauna să obiecteze și sunt zăbavnici în credință (*Cateheza XIII.7*). [...] Iudeii obiectează și spun : - Oare Domnul suferă ? Au învins oare mâinile omenești puterea Sa ? (*Cateheza XIII.7*) [...] Pentru că obiecțiunea adusă de iudei este mare, haide, prin rugăciunile voastre, să aducem cu harul Domnului, atât cât ne îngăduie scurtimea timpului, puține mărturii despre Patima Domnului. Tot ce-a făcut Hristos este consemnat în scris. Nu

este nimic îndoielnic. Nu este nimic fără mărturie. Toate sunt scrise în cărțile profetice. Nu sunt scrise pe plăci de piatră, ci sunt scrise lămurit de Duhul Sfânt (*Cateheza XIII.8*).

Cateheza Sfântului Chiril se adresează, așadar, pretenzenților la Botez (*Către cei care au să se lumineze*), dar, în același timp, se adresează evreilor, care, având „atâta nor de mărturii”, în Scriptura Vechiului Testament, L-au răstignit pe Hristos.

Crucea are să se arate iarăși împreună cu Iisus din cer (Matei XXIV.30). Semnul de biruință va merge înaintea Împăratului, pentru ca iudeii, când vor vedea pe Cel pe Care L-au împuns (Ioan XIX.37; Zaharia XII.10; Apoc. I.7) și când vor cunoaște din cruce pe Cel pe Care L-au necinstit, să se căiască și să plângă - iudeii vor plânge seminție după seminție (Zaharia XII.12), căci atunci se vor pocăi, dar timp de pocăință nu va mai fi; noi însă ne lăudăm, mândrindu-ne cu crucea, închinându-ne Domnului, Care a fost trimis la noi (*Cateheza XIII.41*).

În *Cateheza XIII*, este reiterată întreaga istorie a omenirii, de la căderea în păcat, până la însăși ținuirea acestui păcat pe Crucea Răstignirii Mântuitorului Hristos, Care „S-a dat preț de răscumpărare (I Tim. II.6)” (*Cateheza XIII.2*).

Sf. Chiril aduce în discuție, încă din începutul acestei *Cateheze*, o serie de minuni, pe care le-a săvârșit Hristos, întrebându-se, retoric, ce relevanță au ele pentru întreaga omenire. Sunt importante pentru oamenii cărora le-au fost săvârșite minunile respective, dar pentru restul omenirii ?

Trebuia o „Minune”, care să le încununeze pe cele săvârșite anterior. Trebuia o minune, care să le cuprindă pe toate celelalte, iar această minune a fost Crucea. „Orice faptă a lui Hristos este laudă pentru întreaga Biserică. Dar lauda cea mare este crucea. [...] Cununa crucii a luminat pe cei orbi din pricina neștiinței, a dezlegat pe cei ținuți de păcate și a izbăvit toată omenirea” (*Cateheza XIII.1*).

Pentru Sf. Chiril, Crucea reprezintă temelia nezdruncinată, pe care sunt clădite celelalte adevăruri de credință. Toate pregătirile, toate descoperirile lui Dumnezeu duc la Jertfa de pe Cruce a lui Hristos, iar din Cruce izvorăsc razele altor descoperiri, izvorăsc razele altor învățături.

Din această Cateheză, centrată pe Cruce, pe Jertfa Mântuitorului, putem desprinde, așadar, mai multe învățături.

Hristos nu este un simplu om, ci Fiul Unul Născut al lui Dumnezeu.

Așadar, Mântuitorul Hristos este Dumnezeu întrupat (*Cateheza XIII.3*); este și Dumnezeu și om (*Cateheza XIII.1*), căci, dacă printr-un om a venit moartea în lume, tot printr-un Om (scris, de data aceasta, cu majusculă), a venit și Viața, El Însuși fiind izvorul vieții celei veșnice (*Cateheza XIII.28*). Mântuitorul Hristos a avut trup, asemenea nouă, trup real, dar lipsit de păcat. Hristos a pățimit fără să fi avut păcat.

Hristos a fost răstignit având trup asemenea nouă. Aceasta nu înseamnă că a fost răstignit, pentru că a avut păcate le fel ca noi. N-a fost dus la moarte, pentru iubirea de bani, [...] din pricina poftelor rușinoase, [...] pentru că a disprețuit Legea, [...] pentru că a oprit plata lucrătorilor (*Cateheza XIII.5*).

Hristos a pățimit de bună voie.

Sf. Chiril recunoaște în persoana Mântuitorului Hristos, pe Mielul lui Dumnezeu, Cel ce ridică păcatele lumii. Hristos a suferit de bună voie (*Cateheza XIII.6*), dând dovadă de cea mai mare smerenie. Sfântul Chiril se întreabă, de asemenea, dacă El, Care a dezlegat atâtea legături (lanțurile lui Petru, legăturile morții lui Lazăr ș.a.), oare nu putea să se dezlege pe Sine Însuși sau nu puteau să-L dezlege Îngerii, care erau prezenți ? „Da, îngerii erau alături de El, gata să-I spună : *Să rupem lanțurile lor* (Ps. II.2), totuși au păstrat tăcerea, pentru că Stăpânul voia să sufere patimile” (*Cateheza XIII.12*).

Cum spune Apostolul Pavel că Învierea Hristos este începătură a învierii celor adormiți, Sf. Chiril, afirmă că se cădea ca Hristos - Capul Bisericii, trupul Său, *capul oricărui bărbat* (I Cor. XI.3) - să fie răstignit pe Golgota - Locul Căpățânii (*Cateheza XIII.23*). De asemenea, dacă Hristos este începătură a învierii Apostolilor și a noastră a tuturor, tot Hristos este și începătură, prototip al mărturisirii adevărului, El Însuși fiind Adevărul, Calea și Viața.

Aproape că a spus (Hristos n.n.) : «Am știut mai dinainte că au să mă lovească; de aceea nu mi-am întors fața. Cum aveam să întăresc oare pe ucenicii Mei, ca să moară pentru adevăr, dacă Eu M-aș fi temut de moarte ? Eu am spus : *Cel care-și iubește sufletul lui, îl va pierde* (Ioan XII.25). Dacă Mi-aș fi iubit viața și n-aș fi făcut cele ce învățam, ce fel de învățător aș fi fost ?» (*Cateheza XIII.13*).

Învierea lui Hristos nu a fost una aparentă.

Crucea este reală, nu este una aparentă (*Cateheza XIII.4, 37*) și, deci, Învierea este reală. Sfântul Chiril arată legătura indisolubilă dintre Cruce și Înviere. Întreaga operă de răscumpărare, înfăptuită de Hristos, nu este o aparență, o himeră, o nălucire, ci una, cât se poate de reală, deplină și care merită laudă din partea noastră. Toate faptele lui Hristos converg spre Cruce, spre Jertfă și, implicit, spre Înviere. În mod indirect, Sf. Chiril face trimitere la textul paulin, în care se menționează că dacă Hristos nu a înviat, atunci zadarnică este și propovăduirea, zadarnică și credința celor cărora li se

propovăduiește.

Totodată, din textul acestei *Cateheze*, aflăm mărturie și despre cultul Sfintei Cruci, care, la vremea respectivă, era foarte generalizat.

A fost răstignit (Hristos n.n.) și nu tăgăduim. Mai mult încă, mă laud când o spun. Chiar dacă voi tăgădui acum, îmi stă împotriva această Golgotă, lângă care stăm cu toții acum ; îmi stă împotriva lemnul crucii, din care mici bucățele s-au împrăștiat de aici în toată lumea. Mărturisesc crucea, pentru că știu învierea. De-ar fi rămas răstignit, poate că nu L-aș mărturisi, tăinuind și faptul, și pe Dascălul meu. Dar când crucii i-a urmat învierea, nu mă rușinez să vorbesc despre cruce (*Cateheza XIII.4*).

Moartea lui Hristos este preț de răscumpărare pentru om.

Prin Cruce și sângele vărsat pe ea, Hristos a unit pe cele de sus, cu cele de jos. Pentru această unire, trebuia ca păcătosul să moară, știut fiind că plata păcatului este moartea. Așadar, Dumnezeu avea la îndemână două variante: fie trebuiau să moară toți păcătoșii, adică toți oamenii, fie - din iubire - trebuia să-și anuleze hotărârea pedepsei cu moartea. Însă Dumnezeu le-a îmbinat pe amândouă - din iubire, l-a trimis la moarte pe Unicul Său Fiu, ca să ia asupra-Și toate păcatele omenirii și să moară pentru noi, să omoare păcatul în trupul Său și, prin aceasta, să-i elibereze pe oameni (*Cateheza XIII.33*).

Opera de mântuire a lui Hristos are putere pentru faptul că El, Fiul lui Dumnezeu, fiind fără de păcat, a murit pentru păcatele altora.

Mulți oameni, din întreaga lume, au fost răstigniți, dar de niciunul nu se înfricoșează demonii. Dar de când Hristos s-a răstignit pentru noi, demonii sunt cuprinși de frică, chiar numai la vederea semnului crucii. Pentru care pricină ? Pentru că aceia au murit pentru păcatele lor proprii, pe când Hristos a murit pentru păcatele altora (*Cateheza XIII.3*).

În mai multe paragrafe, Sf. Chiril amintește de unele prefigurări ale Crucii, în Scriptura Vechiului Testament, sau face o serie de comparații între unele momente din istoria căderii în păcat a lui Adam și altele, luate din Patimile Mântuitorului Hristos. De fapt, Sf. Chiril îi așează pe Adam și pe Hristos la poli opuși. Dacă, din pricina păcatului lui Adam, pământul a rodit spini și pălămidă, Hristos a oferit viața cea veșnică, purtând pe cap tocmai o cunună din spini (*Cateheza XIII.18*).

Dacă Adam și Eva și-au acoperit goliciunea cu frunze de smochin, Hristos blestemă smochinul cel neroditor, dezlegând, astfel, blestemul cel de demult (*Cateheza XIII.18*).

Pe de altă parte, dacă Adam a căzut în grădina Raiului, datorită mâncării din pomul cunoștinței binelui și răului, și s-a ascuns de Dumnezeu, în ceasul amiezii, Hristos, pentru a ridica osânda cea veche, a pățimit în Grădina Ghetsminani, pe lemnul Crucii, tot în ceasul amiezii (*Cateheza XIII.19, 31*).

Dacă prin femeie și, implicit, prin Adam a intrat păcatul în lume, femeie ce a fost zidită din coasta lui Adam,

se cădea, spune Sf. Chiril, ca Hristos să fie împuns în coastă, pentru a omorî păcatul din rădăcină și, astfel, să fie iertați, atât bărbatul, cât și femeia (*Cateheza XIII.21*).

În timpul lui Moise, începutul minunilor s-a făcut prin sânge și apă. Dar sângele și apa reprezintă și sfârșitul minunilor lui Hristos. Sângele și apa, izvorâte din coasta lui Hristos, Chiril le motivează în mai multe direcții. Pe de o parte, apa a ieșit ca mărturie pentru apa cu care s-a spălat Pilat pe mâini, când a zis : „Nevinovat sunt de sângele acestui drept...”, iar sângele din coasta lui Hristos, sângele pe care iudeii l-au cerut asupra lor și asupra urmașilor lor. Pe de altă parte, sângele este hărăzită iudeilor, iar apa, creștinilor, căci mântuirea vine prin apă, spune Sf. Chiril. În al treilea rând, apa și sângele, cele izvorâte din trupul lui Hristos, ar reprezenta cele două căi de intrare în Împărăția lui Dumnezeu, mai exact, cele două feluri de botezuri principale : botezul apei și botezul sângelui, prin care au trecut atâția martiri (*Cateheza XIII.21*).

Rămânând tot în această sferă a prefigurărilor vechitamentare, Sf. Chiril face unele paralele între șarpele ridicat de Moise în pustie și Crucea Domnului, între lemnul corabiei lui Moise și lemnul Crucii lui Hristos, între lemnul toiagului, care a îndulcit apele, pentru a potoli setea poporului iudeu, în pustie, și faptul că din coasta lui Hristos a curs apă pe lemnul Crucii (*Cateheza XIII.20*). Dacă momentele din Scriptura Vechiului Testament, spune Sf. Chiril, au fost de folos, doar pentru un segment al societății respective, cu cât mai mult, este de folos Răstignirea Domnului, și nu numai pentru un grup restrâns, ci pentru toată lumea, și nu numai pentru toată lumea, ci pentru întreaga creație văzută.

Răscumpărarea este universală.

Hristos a fost răstignit pentru noi și pentru a noastră mântuire, dar nu în mod exclusivist. Opera de mântuire realizată de Hristos este una cosmică, la aceasta fiind invitată întreaga făptură, în frunte cu omul. Hristos „și-a întins mâinile pe cruce, ca să cuprindă marginile lumii. Acest loc al Golgotei este mijlocul lumii. Nu sunt ale mele cuvintele acestea, ci profetul le spune : *Ai făcut mântuire în mijlocul pământului* (Ps. LXXIII.13)” (*Cateheza XIII.28*).

La mântuirea realizată de Hristos, sunt invitate neamurile. Dacă poporul iudeu a refuzat invitația celui care i-a purtat de grijă, atunci sunt invitați cei care nu se împotrivesc Creatorului lor.

Pentru aceasta, spune profetul care a fost citit acum : *Doamne, cine va crede celor spuse de noi ?* (Isaia. LIII.1). Perșii cred, și iudeii nu cred. *Vor vedea cei cărora n-a fost vestit, și vor înțelege cei care n-au auzit* (Isaia LII.15, Rom. XV.21) [...] Prin aceste cuvinte Ieremia lasă să se înțeleagă că harul vieții nu va mai locui în Israel, ci între neamuri (*Cateheza XIII.7*).

În centrul activității mântuitoare a lui Hristos, se află, așadar, Crucea. Crucea se ridică asemenea unui monument, asemenea unui trofeu, care îl însoțește pe Hristos, atât în lumea aceasta, cât și în cea de dincolo.

Nedespărțindu-se de Cruce, Hristos este veșnicul izvor al nemuririi (*Cateheza XIII.40, 41*).

Eliberarea noastră de sub puterea păcatului, prin cruce, este prezentă în aproape toate paragrafele. Conceptele folosite în aceste texte sunt noțiuni familiare pauline, în sensul că păcatul a adus moartea, că Hristos a purtat în propriul trup păcatele tuturor și pedeapsa cu moartea a fost desființată de Patima Sa și de moartea pe Cruce, desigur, Crucea legată de Înviere.

De aceea, Crucea este cunună, izbândire și izbăvire, iar noi suntem datori a propovădui Crucea și în timp de pace și în timp de prigoană, cu timp și fără timp, după cum ar spune Apostolul Pavel. Crucea trebuie să fie mereu propovăduită. În tot ceea ce întreprindem, Crucea trebuie să fie permanent prezentă (*Cateheza XIII.36*).

2. Concluzii

La un studiu amănunțit al *Catehezelor* Sfântului Chiril, putem observa, cu ușurință, principiul hristocentric¹ al acestora. Utilizând un limbaj simplu, fără ornamente și construcții complexe, Chiril îl înfățișează pe Mântuitorul Hristos, în toată splendoarea Majestății Sale. Chiar și cu trestie în mână, în loc de sceptru, Hristos a avut haină roșie și a avut cunună.

De altfel, Hristos a fost proclamat rege de către ostași, spune Sf. Chiril, întocmai ca un „adevărat rege” din lumea aceasta ; numai că Hristos Însuși spune că împărăția Lui este dintr-o altă lume și, deci - conchide Chiril - cununa Sa este dezlegarea păcatelor și abrogarea sentinței celei vechi de condamnare (*Cateheza XIII.17*).

De asemenea, întreaga Sa activitate este redată în termeni concisi, dar, în același timp, care mustesc de o trăire autentică și de o convingere de neclintit, din partea propovăduitorului.

Hristos este temelia, pe care Sf. Chiril caută să zidească sufletele catehumenilor săi, la fel cum și Crucea reprezintă temelia Învierii. Prin aceasta, credinciosul este dator a lua Crucea lui Hristos, ca temelie, pe care să-și zidească întreaga viață și existență, având obligația de a nu-L tăgădui pe Cel Care s-a răstignit pentru el. În caz contrar, îi vor sta împotrivă toți cei care au fost implicați, mai mult sau mai puțin, în evenimentul Răstignirii Domnului - într-un cuvânt, întreaga Scriptură (*Cateheza XIII.38*).

Pe lângă alte elemente caracteristice *Catehezelor*, am putea aminti, cu ușurință, faptul că Sf. Chiril dorește să facă din catehumenii săi credincioși activi și nu statici.

Nu te lăuda cu Crucea numai în timp de pace, ci aceeași credință să ai și în vreme de prigoană. Să nu fii în timp de pace prieten al lui Iisus, iar în timp de război, dușman. [...] Când va veni războiul, luptă cu bărbăție pentru Împăratul tău ! Iisus, cel fără de păcat, a fost răstignit pentru tine, și tu să nu te răstignești pentru Cel care s-a răstignit pentru tine? (*Cateheza XIII.23*).

Catehumenii lui Chiril nu trebuie să rămână cu mâna întinsă, spre a primi toate învățăturile de credință, spre

1 Ierom. Veniamin MICLE, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

a primi totul de-a gata. Se cere râvnă și muncă pentru aceasta. Ei nu trebuie să rămână într-o permanentă stare de pasivitate.

Voi vedea râvna fiecărui bărbat ! Voi vedea evlavie fiecărei femei ! Să se înflăcăreze mintea pentru evlavie ! Să se făurească sufletul ! Să se bată cu ciocanul învârtosarea necredinței! (*Procateheza* 15).

Datoria mea este de a spune, a ta, de a te apuca de lucru, iar a lui Dumnezeu, de a desăvârși. Să ne întărim mintea, să ne încordăm sufletul, să ne pregătim inima! (*Procateheza* 17).

Sf. Chiril este conștient de faptul că sufletul credinciosului este în stare să lucreze pentru înălțarea lui spirituală. El vrea să deștepte tocmai această activitate nobilă a credinciosului, atât sub aspect duhovnicesc, intern, cât și sub aspect concret, al acțiunii, al faptei palpabile, externe.²

Se poate sesiza cum Sf. Chiril îl aseamănă pe Hristos Mântuitorul cu cei care îi verifică pe soldații care sunt trimiși în luptă. La fel, Hristos verifică starea sufletească a catehumenilor, care doresc să devină ostași ai Lui. El vrea să constate dacă sunt pregătiți pentru adevărata confruntare. Drumul Crucii este drumul de formare și de maturizare spirituală a creștinului.³

Dacă vei discuta vreodată cu cineva și nu vei avea argumente pentru demonstrarea învățăturii tale, să-ți rămână nezdruccinată credința ! Dar este mai bine să înveți bine doctrina creștină, ca să închizi gura iudeilor cu ajutorul profeților, iar pe elini să-i combați cu propria lor mitologie. ... Hristos a pățimit real și reală este și mântuirea (*Cateheza* XIII.37).

Nu trebuie să trecem cu vederea că, în explicarea învățăturilor de credință, pe structura Simbolului de Credință, Sf. Chiril nu recurge la o expunere abstractă, pur logică, ci la una vie, la una trecută prin filtrul minții și al inimii sale. Astfel, Dumnezeu propovăduit de Chiril este Ființa în sine atotcreatoare și atotdreaptă, Care este îndreptată și deschisă spre creatura Sa. Având în vedere mai mult aspectele pedagogic și formativ al catehezei sale, Chiril vorbește despre Dumnezeu, sublinind aspectele cele mai importante: creația și iubirea.⁴

Pentru a argumenta actul Răstignirii Domnului și Crucea asumată de El, Sf. Chiril nu recurge la mărturii „sofisticate”, din sfera înțelepciunii, sau la speculații teologice, ci doar identifică locurile Scripturii Vechiului și Noului Testament, care vorbesc despre acest lucru, în același timp, rugându-se la Dumnezeu, pentru a da, atât „nouă, care vă vorbim, puterea de a grăi, cât și vouă, care ascultați, puterea de a crede” (*Cateheza* XIII.8).

Este necesar, în plus, aplicarea procedurii așa-numit supranatural, pe care îl putem sesiza ușor în metoda catehetică a Sf. Chiril al Ierusalimului. Această metodă se prezintă în forme aproape liturgice sau de ritual.

Un astfel de procedeu a ajuns, sub formă documentară, până în zilele noastre, chiar îndeosebi în rânduiala catehumenului din ritualul botezului, care, așa cum se prezintă acum, nu este altceva, decât un comprimat al metodei de catehizare în spirit supranatural. În acel dialog al exorcismelor, însoțit de anumite gesturi, de binecuvântarea mâinii preotului în semnul crucii, de facerea acestui semn de însuși catehumenul adult sau naș, acea mărturisire a credinței în formule determinate și renunțarea la vechea confesiune, nu sunt altceva decât o cateheză, în care catehumenul are senzația palpabilă a supranaturalului, odată cu semnele și gesturile rituale.

Maica Domnului ...*Cont. de la pag. 19*

ei îl pot gasi pe Dumnezeu, ca în chipul IPS Nathaniel eu vad un sfânt. Ma bucur și mă simt o norocoasă, o protejată a Domnului care mi-a daruit această binecuvântare de a fi aici, azi, de a participa la slujba arhieriască, de a cunoaște pe IPS Nathaniel, care îți umple inima de pace și frumusețe, da sens placut vieții pământești.

Intampinarea icoanei Maicii Domnului Prodromita la Biserica Sfânta Treime a fost savarsita de IPS Sa Arhiepiscopul Nathaniel, Pr. Vicar Dan Hoarste și un sobor de preoți, cu adanca cinstitie și respect, cu plecaciune și evlavie, cu înaltătoare iubire.

Icoana Maicii Domnului Prodromița (adică Înainte-mergatoarea) este o icoană facatoare de minuni „nefăcută de mână omenească”, din tezaurul Schitului românesc Sfântul Ioan Botezătorul – Prodromu de la Sfântul Muntele Athos, supranumit Gradina Maicii Domnului. Este cea mai importantă icoana a comunității românești de la Muntele Athos, pentru că sunt puține icoane nefăcute de mână omenească în toată lumea ortodoxă.

Prezenta copie a Icoanei Maicii Domnului Prodromita, este o reproducere fidelă, în marime naturală, a icoanei facatoare de minuni de la Sfântul Munte Athos, atât în ceea ce privește pictura cât și ferecatura ei, este un semn al purtării de grijă al Maicii Domnului pentru orașul Vancouver, pentru Canada, este o donație din partea unor credincioși ai bisericii noastre, în fața cărora imi plec fruntea, cu mulțumiri.

Chipurile cele preacurate, smerite și pline de sfântă cuviință ale Maicii Domnului și Pruncului Hristos îi privesc, îi primesc, îi miluiesc pe toți românii din acest colt de lume.

Icoana a fost sfântită, a fost asezată pe un soclu imbracat cu flori, acolo unde-i este locul de azi înainte, în Casa Domnului, în Biserica Sfânta Treime, din Vancouver.

“Născătoare de Dumnezeu, pururi Fecioară, sfinte și dumnezeieștii tale icoane cu dragoste și cu credință închinându-ne, o sărutăm, mulțumind. Căci printr-înșă dăruiești celor credincioși cu adevărat tămăduiri sufletelelor și trupurilor. Pentru aceasta, grăim către tine: Slavă fecioriei tale, slavă milostivirii tale, slavă purtării tale de grijă, ceea ce ești una binecuvântată.”

Cont. la pag 24

2 Ierom. Veniamin MICLE, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

3 Arhim. Grigore BĂBUȘ, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

4 Arhim. Grigore BĂBUȘ, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

Maica Domnului ... Cont. de la pag. 23

Tot in ziua de sambata, 26 mai, au fost "Mosii de vara", sarbatoare dedicata pomenirii mortilor. Cu aceasta ocazie, in toate bisericile ortodoxe se oficiaza Sfinte Liturghii urmate de slujbe de pomenire a celor trecuti la cele vesnice. Dupa traditie crestinii impodobesc gospodariile si mormintele cu ramuri de tei si faceau pomeni fastuoase, obiceiuri care s-au pastrat pana astazi in unele sate bucovinene. Si la biserica noastra s-au facut rugaciuni pentru pomenirea celor adormiti intru nadejdea Invierii de Apoi, lungul sir de nume al celor dragi, aducand mângâiere si bucurie sufleteasca celor prezenti.

Dupa terminarea slujbei a urmat o agapa frateasca in Sala Comunitara a bisericii. Acolo Parintele Nicolae Lapuste a tinut sa multumeasca tuturor celor ce au pus umarul la reusita acestui eveniment care s-a desfasurat cu o mare incarcatura emotionala si o prezenta numeroasa. Mobilizarea exemplara a gospodinelor si gospodarilor parohiei a fost posibila prin contributia si implicarea doamnei Delia Apatean, președinta Reuniunii Femeilor Ortodoxe a Parohiei si dl Lucian Axente, președintele Consiliului Parohial.

Multumiri, cinstire si respect soborului de preoti, enumerati mai jos, care au participat alaturi de Pr. Vicar Dan Hoarste

- PC Parinte Corneliu Dragomir de la Biserica "Sf. Nicolae" din Port Kells, Surrey, BC

- PC Parinte Ioan Catana de la Biserica "Sf. Trei Ierarhi" din Seattle, S.U.A

- PC Parinte Stephens Slipco, preot pensionar

- PC Parinte Daniel Nohai, Biserica "Sf. Varvara" din Mitropolia Moldovei si Bucovinei, care a rostit un

frumos cuvânt duhovnicesc

- PC Parinte Diacon Nicolae Bogdan Lapustea de la Parohia Înălțarea Sf. Cruci, San Jose, California.

Fie ca Bunul Dumnezeu sa binecuvanteze pe toti cei care iubesc podoaba casei Sale si cu deosebire pe cei care prin fapte dovedesc aceasta inaltatoare iubire. De asemenea, sa fie binecuvantati toti preotii, dascalii, alte persoane care au ajutat, au trudit, s-au ostenit ca aceasta minune sa se intample, azi, aici, in Imparatia Domnului!

Dorina Cornelia Aldea - Vancouver

Mesajul Parintelui Nicolae Lapuste pentru IPS Nathaniel

"Multumind Lui Dumnezeu ca v-am intalnit pe calea vietii, il rog sa va dea multa sanatate, fericire, pace in suflet si ani multi si binecuvantati. Bunul Dumnezeu sa va dea putere sa raspanditi in continuare cuvantul, lumina si darul Evangheliei, si mai presus de toate, sa ne oferiti binecuvantarea, iertarea si dragostea pentru noi toti si pentru toate. Va multumim din suflet pentru toata sustinerea, incurajarea si dragostea, pentru ca stiti sa aduceti nadejde si lumina in sufletele noastre!"

La multi si binecuvantati ani, Stapane!"

