

the *Presbyter*

The Publication of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America



July, 2005 • vol. VII • issue 1

Set Aside Our Worldly Cares

In the Divine Liturgy the Cherubic Hymn calls us to set aside our worldly cares and receive the King of All. Far too often worldly cares consume our lives and we, who serve as priests of the most High, need not only to set aside our worldly cares to receive the King of All in our liturgical life but in our daily living as well.

To this end the Archdiocese Presbyters Council will again sponsor the biennial National Clergy Retreat in Austin Texas on October 4-6 2005. The call is to bring together all members of our Archdiocesan clergy family to set aside our worldly cares and allow our Heavenly King to come and dwell among us.

This year's program brings to conclusion the educational initiative blessed by our Holy Eparchial Synod. Through this initiative a copy of Fr. Stanley Harakas' book "Life and Salvation" was mailed to all archdiocesan clergy throughout the United States. Each Metropolitan Clergy Syndesmos met to discuss this book's message and now Fr. Stanley is planning to wrap up our work at the Texas Retreat.

You will find information about the retreat contained in this publication. Lakeway Inn Conference Resort will provide a platform for our most special time together. Spiritual reflection from Fr. Stanley, conversation with our Archbishop and beloved Hierarchs, time alone with God, interaction with our brothers in Christ, an absolutely marvelous setting in the foothills of Texas are all waiting for you this October. Fr. Jordan Brown and his leadership team have worked hard to insure every opportunity is available for us to become refreshed, renewed, and revitalized during the retreat. Safeguard these special days in your demanding schedules and let us come together setting aside our worldly cares, receiving and sharing Christ in our midst.

Please complete the enclosed registration form and return as soon as possible to Fr. Jordan Brown in Austin Texas. It is good when brothers dwell together in harmony and love.

—Rev. Jim Moulketis - President, APC
Pastor, St. Nicholas Church - Wyckoff, NJ



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The Greek Orthodox Priest as a Leader in America

The task set before me gives us the opportunity to examine our collective priesthood in America objectively: the good and the bad, the joys and the sorrows and the rights and wrongs. The measuring instrument that I shall use to illuminate our understanding of the Greek Orthodox priest as a leader will be that given to us by the Spirit of Truth, the Fulfiller of all things, the Holy Spirit. Perhaps no greater expression exists of the Holy Spirit's call to serve Christ, and the human response to that call to serve, than these words of St. Peter Chrysologos, written in the 6th century: "Be the priest and sacrifice of God. Do not lose that which has been given to you by the authority of God. Clothe yourself with holiness; let Christ be the covering for your head; let the Cross of Christ be the protection for your face; and let your heart be, as it were, an altar on which you may safely offer your very body as a sacrifice to God."

The doctors and fathers of the Church from Justin and Polycarp to Ignatios and Chrysostom refer to the depth, quality and extent that the priest, as a leader, must play in the fields of faith, doctrine, tradition, ethics and that in every instance he should excel through a personally committed and exemplary life. All the teachers and fathers of early Christianity, with no exception, underline the Christocentric make-up of the life and ministry of the priest who, at all times, should strive to be Christ's likeness.

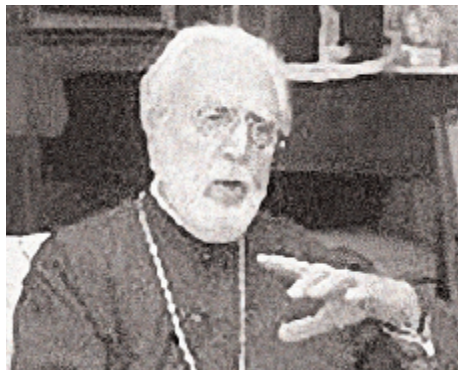
I trust that you can appreciate my reluctance to talk on this very challenging subject. I cannot see the priest as a leader. I prefer to see him as a servant. My subject, however, remains unchanged: it is "the Orthodox priest as leader in America" and I shall endeavor to do justice to this subject, responding to your expectations to the best of my ability by dividing my presentation into three parts.

The Orthodox Priest in the 20th Century

The Orthodox priest in the 20th century, and especially the Orthodox priests that I have met during my more than three decades in America, have impressed me more as builders than leaders: builders of the physical community, rather than as priest-leaders of a spiritual community. He impressed me more as a man of this century than as a prophet-man of a world with no end. Materialism and the soul consuming robopathy of a modern consumer society were not seen by the Orthodox priest of the second half of the 20th century as a menace to his own or his parishioners' spirituality or spiritual concerns. They were viewed rather as necessary evils, by products of the previous century's industrial revolution and accepted, perhaps resentfully, as the mode of modern life.

never before has the need to have priests capable of leading been felt so clearly

The Orthodox priest in the 20th century in some cases accepted the challenge by yielding to it. The Orthodox priest of the 20th century saw the need for temporal knowledge but not necessarily for holy wisdom. He saw the need to lead a life comparable to the life of those in similar lifestyle, but not necessarily comparable to a saint. The Orthodox priest of the 20th century did indeed strive for material independence, but not always for spiritual and moral freedom. For a priest to truly free himself seems to be the most difficult of all his tasks. I say this because I know many fellow priests who are struggling, and at moments most desperately, for such a detachment which in essence is a detachment from the ephemeral and an attachment to the eternal.



The Priest as a Leader

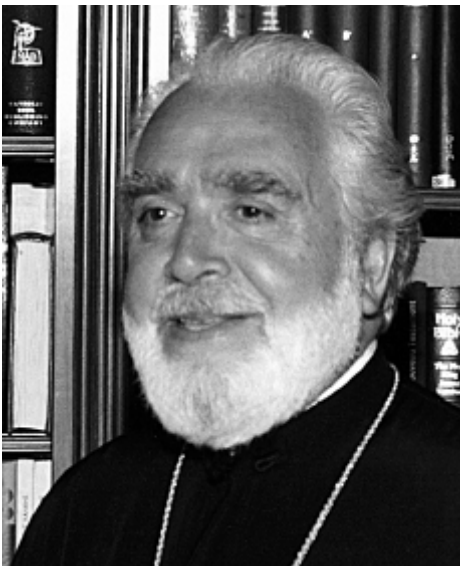
It is true that never before has the need to have priests capable of leading been felt so clearly. For at no other time has there been such a loss of direction, such an absence of a sense of direction. There is an unprecedented competition for the monopolization of ownership of human attention. The news industry competes with computers; the technological with sensualism; and commercialism and consumption with secularism. And each one of them wants for itself the whole of human attention. Leadership today, we must admit, is exercised by the mechanical and audio-visual rather than by living beings and realities. A political leader or a demagogue, even in the good sense of the word, is less effective than a paid announcement or an appearance on a television screen. Following Jesus, all His disciples, especially after the day of Pentecost, made it their task and mission to show God to people and bring them closer to Him first through teaching; second, through baptism; third, by imparting to them God's commandments; and lastly by bearing personal witness and testimony to all they had seen and heard in Jesus. We call ourselves inheritors and recipients of the apostolic succession. Are we also the inheritors of their sense of leadership? As parish priests, have we been able to lead? And if we think we have displayed and continue to demonstrate an undisputed leadership, has it always been a leadership in the

direction of God? A true Christian leadership? Have we put on the whole armor of God? In what field are we leading? In pastoral care, in preaching, in inter-church relations? In relating truth and reality to the faithful? Have any of us ever been approached by a man or woman who owes his conversion to God, his discovery of Christ, his salvation, to us? I hope that you have had such an experience and I pray that you may be blessed with many more such experiences. God must be not only the epicenter but also the uncircumscribed periphery of all pastoral and spiritual concerns.

The Orthodox Priest in America

America, my friends, is the greatest challenge and at the same time, the greatest opportunity that God, in His mercy and loving kindness, could present us. America is a free land; the freest in the whole world. America is a rich country; the richest on earth. America is a powerful and resourceful nation, the most powerful and most resourceful, more than anyone could imagine or dream of.





course of Orthodoxy and the course of the moral conduct of the Christians under his care. The Orthodox priest in America should look for unity, but first with God. An Orthodox unity or unity among Orthodox jurisdictions would be one of the easiest tasks, if unity with God was given first priority. Orthodoxy, participating in the economy of the Holy Spirit, is the religion of the future, but it must be lived and practiced here and now by its priests and laity to the fullest possible extent.

Allow me, in closing, to share with you my vision of the unique role of the Orthodox priest in America. The Orthodox priest in America is to live in the midst of the world (America) without desiring its

pleasures; to be a member of each family, but belonging to none; to penetrate all secrets; to heal all wounds; to go from men to God and offer Him their prayers; to return from God to men and bring pardon and hope; to have a heart on fire with love and a heart of bronze as a shield of purity; to teach and to pardon, to console and to bless always.

What a glorious life! And it is yours, O priest of Jesus Christ!

*Written as an address
to the clergy in 1976 by*

*His Eminence, Archbishop Iakovos
of North and South America*

1911-2005

May his memory be eternal!

Education is free; religion is free; the conscience of man is free. America is a growing nation, beset with all kinds of growing pains. America is a prosperous and powerful nation but without the ability to fully control either her prosperity or her power. As a result we have permitted ourselves both transgression and corruption, deviation from both the ways of history and the ways of God, and the foolishness to walk with no direction or clearly visible goals.

The Orthodox priest, however, must never lose sight of reality. He must always be in contact and in touch with reality. The Orthodox priest in America can no longer think in the parochial or provincial way he is accustomed to. He must think in the spirit of the Bible's words: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." A leader can see before him only God's world; only God's people; only God's church; only God's plan of salvation; only God's glory; and only God's kingdom. Nothing else!

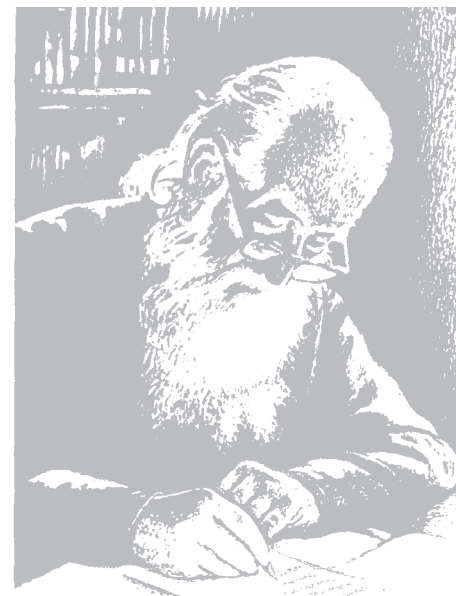
The Orthodox priest in America is at all times a steward of the mysteries of God, a teacher and preacher of His word, a counselor and helper of His flock and here in America, a defender of both the faith and the souls of the Christians entrusted to his care. The Orthodox priest must be a leader, a man who will chart the



WHAT THEY DIDN'T TEACH ME IN SEMINARY

The phone rang right at suppertime. An hysterical voice on the other end started berating me for not listening to her, for abandoning her in her most dire need, for not really hearing her confession, for being self-centered and abusive towards her and everyone else in the parish. No, rather it was the parish community itself, those egotistical, ungrateful people, who had abandoned her, offended her, tried to "set limits" they knew she couldn't accept.

This was the third call from her in the past twenty-four hours. Supper was getting cold, and my wife was becoming less and less patient. For several months she had put up with invasive calls from this same person and was getting tired of it. Finally I broke it off and told the person not to call my home again. If she wanted to talk, if she wanted to hear my recommendations -- which included her getting therapy -- then she should make an appointment, and I would be glad to do whatever I could.



There was a loud click, and I never heard from her again. She shortly thereafter went back to the Catholic Church, which she had stormed out of several years earlier, largely, it seems, because the local priest had responded to her demands much as I did myself.

For a long while afterwards I felt awful. She had succeeded in laying a heavy guilt trip on me: true to form, I had "abandoned," "rejected," and "insulted" her, "like all priests do to their spiritual children," she insisted. She was actually becoming a wedge between priest and his wife, and I was allowing it to happen. Should I have yelled at her to "go get help"? Or continued to sympathize with her only to reinforce her co-dependency? Or given up, and opened a grocery store somewhere downtown?

Why didn't they teach me about things like this in seminary?

Last month the starosta and choir director got into a squabble that threatened to turn into a fight. It ended peacefully enough, but the finale was hardly amicable. Then a couple of days later one of our people heard of a great offer for a used van. She had often urged the parish council to provide transportation for youth outings, so she took the bait, signed papers with a local used car salesman in the name of the parish, and (generously) made a first payment out of her

own pocket. In addition to a leaking roof, mortgage payments on the education building and a horrendous problem with termite control, we now have payments to make on a ten year old van that gets twelve miles to the gallon.

Why didn't somebody warn me about these kinds of things when I was in seminary?

One of our young priests phoned the other day. He's exceptionally dedicated and conscientious as well as being very bright. He sounded both distressed and depressed. One of his aged, ailing parishioners was on life-support in the local hospital. The medical team, the hospital ethics committee and several family members felt the old man was struggling to die and that consequently he should be taken off the ventilator. The priest agreed. Two of the man's daughters, however, were determined to draw every breath from him they could. "You people," including the priest, they argued, "are simply trying to get rid of him!" Take him off life-support, they yelled, and we'll sue every one of you for wrongful death -- beginning with the priest, since he was supposed to be the moral arbiter.

After he told me all of this, he added plaintively: "Why didn't they teach me how to handle this kind of situation when I was in seminary?"

These may be exaggerated (albeit real) situations, but they call up a familiar theme. Why don't seminary courses provide us with ways and means to deal with such common crises as these? A cynical answer would be that seminary faculty members avoid dealing with matters like this out of fear that if they do, none of the students will go into the priesthood.... But that's unfair. And it's also wrong.

each of us needs another member of the Body of Christ to offer us a renewed vision of authentic priesthood

The point is, there are a great many aspects of priestly ministry that can be learned only by direct experience in a parish context. Our seminary intern programs provide invaluable experience in this regard, and they need to be expanded. Massively expanded, so that every one of our future clergy; and anyone -- ordained or not -- who will be working, praying and otherwise dealing with people on a close, personal basis, can profit from this vital aspect of seminary education. Similar programs need to be developed and funded for clergy already in the field, to give experience with a broad variety of situations in which fragile, sinful human behavior threatens the well-being of our parishioners and parish communities.

Seminaries are not equipped to offer training in dealing with such daily realities as co-dependency, obsessive-compulsive disorders, or the panic and grief that so often accompany the impending death of a loved one. Courses in pastoral counseling and bioethics, for example, can offer valuable information and insight. But seminaries are simply not made to deal with many of the critical issues that occupy, preoccupy and often distress our clergy and others in the Church who hold some form of pastoral responsibility. Perhaps in addition to a father confessor, each of our priests needs an experienced elder -- a practiced and spiritually sensitive priest or lay person -- who can serve as a more or less official mentor. Even if the person doesn't have all the answers (and nobody does), the possibility to talk on a regular basis with someone we trust, for whom we feel a certain affection and respect, goes a long way toward easing stress and providing pastorally appropriate answers to "crises in ministry."

each of us needs an older brother or sister in Christ, who knows us, and cares for us

What we should be taught in seminary, in addition to normal course content, is that each of us needs another member of the Body of Christ to offer us a renewed vision of authentic priesthood. This means someone with whom we can share -- in total confidence and

confidentiality -- the problems we face, both personal and pastoral, knowing that this person continues to pray for us and remains available to listen and to hear what we are saying. In brief, each of us needs an older brother or sister in Christ, who knows us, cares for us, and offers us in daily prayer to the guidance and the mercy of God.

No seminary curriculum can provide this kind of support. It is a matter of personal relationship, of friendship and love. It is a precious gift that only God can offer us, one for which we can and should pray, if need be, with tears.

The Very Rev. John Breck

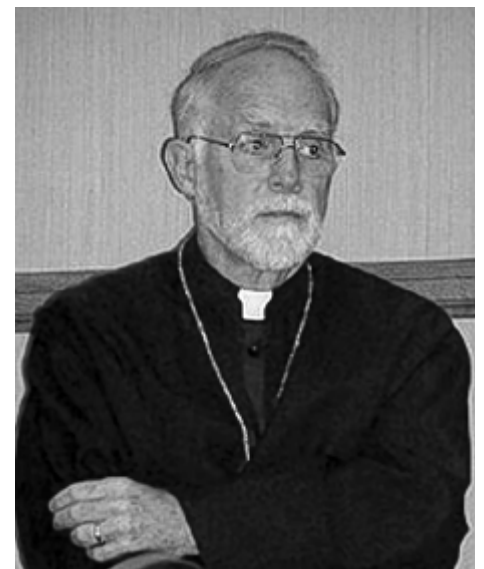
Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Ethics

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Director,

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Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina





The Priesthood

Contemporary and Classic Excerpts

What is most lacking among men of the church is the Spirit of Christ: humility, selflessness, an open welcome, the capacity of seeing the best in others. We are afraid, we want to hang on to what is over and done with because we're used to it. Under a language of conventional humility we hide the spirit of pride and power. We carry on apart from life. We have made the church into an organization, just like all the other ones. We have put all our energy into setting it up and now we put all of our energy into keeping it going. And it works, more or less; rather less than more, but it works. Only it works like a machine and not like life.

Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople, 1886-1972



'The Presbyter'

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National Clergy Retreat

October 4th, 5th & 6th, 2005

Lakeway Inn Conference Resort, Austin, Texas

Featured Speaker: Reverend Father Stanley Harakas

Theme: Reflections on Living the Christian Life

Hotel Reservations: (Deadline: September 13, 2005)

Make your reservations directly with the Lakeway Inn Conference Resort:

1-800-LAKEWAY or (512) 261-6600 or www.lakewayinn.com

Indicate that you are with the: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese National Clergy Retreat

The Room Rate is \$89.00 per night for Single/Double Occupancy

Airline Reservations:

Make your flight arrangements to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, arriving no later than 12:00 noon on Tuesday, October 4th and departing no earlier than 11:00 am on Thursday, October 6th.

Transportation Options from Airport on Tuesday, October 4th:

Free Charter Buses will pick up from the Airport at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm

Lakeway Inn provides a Shuttle Bus for \$40.00 per person per trip which can be pre-arranged directly with the Resort by calling (512) 261-7393 or visit: <http://www.lakewayinn.com> and select Area & Maps

There are several rental car companies at the Airport where you may rent a car

Transportation Options to Airport on Thursday, October 6th:

Free Charter Buses will take to the Airport at 9:00 am

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Cost: \$150.00 for meals and transportation

Make Checks Payable to: Archdiocese Presbyter's Council

National Clergy Retreat

October 4th, 5th & 6th, 2005
Lakeway Inn Conference Resort
Austin, Texas

Cost: \$150.00 for meals and transportation
Make Checks Payable to: Archdiocese Presbyters Council

Registration Form

Mail this Form and Check to:
Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church
414 St. Stephen's School Road South
Austin, TX 78746

NAME: _____

PARISH: _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____

E-MAIL: _____

MOBILE PHONE: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT/PHONE: _____

ROOMATE (Double Occupancy): _____

ARRIVAL TIME ON OCT. 4: _____

DEPARTURE TIME ON OCT. 6: _____

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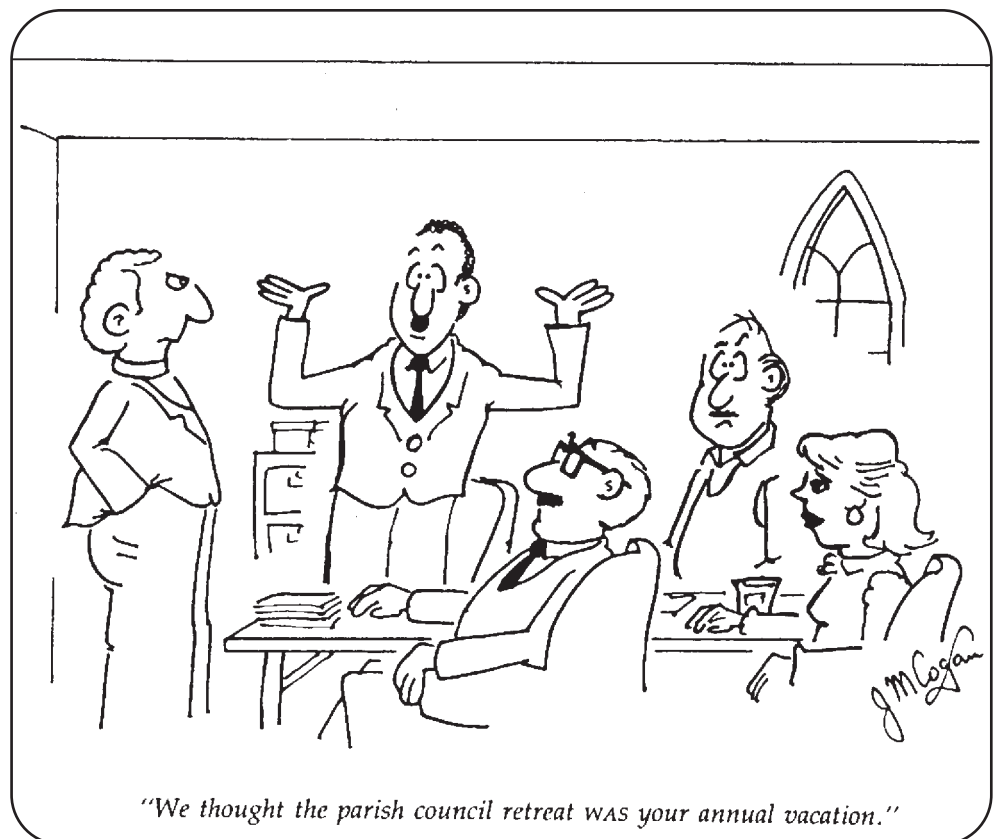
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"We thought the parish council retreat was your annual vacation."