

# the *Presbyter*



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## Letter From The President

My brothers, Christ is risen!

I hope that you had a spiritually uplifting Holy Week and a truly joyful celebration of our Lord's Resurrection!

It is hard to believe that my two years serving as president of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council are now drawing to a close. It has been a great experience, but with difficult times as well as I learned about the tribulations experienced by many of our brothers. I had a tremendous council to work with because each diocese elected such talented and dedicated priests to the APC. We had many good and spirited discussions, but always in a harmonious manner. There are so many concerns about which we have expressed our feelings, yet decisions come from the Eparchial Synod – with whom we have requested a meeting – or from the Patriarchate. We in the field know what needs attention, yet movement is slow in addressing these needs. May the Holy Spirit guide our leaders in making the proper decisions!

His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios has been a joy to work with! His door has always been open. One of the highlights of my term of office was accompanying him on his official state visit to Greece. Being with him daily and seeing him in action only confirmed my feeling that he is truly a man of God. We are also blessed to have as chancellor and assistant chancellor of the Archdiocese two men who have our best interests at heart and have been most cooperative in working with us: His Grace, Bishop Savas of Troas and Father Michael Kontogiorgis.

I also want to express my appreciation to the members of the Archdiocese Benefits Committee, who work tirelessly on behalf of all the clergy. The increase in the premiums for our health care benefits may cast a dark shadow, but they have done a tremendous job against overwhelming odds to keep the rates as low as they are. We are in a situation over which we have little control except for each of us to live a healthier lifestyle.

As for the tribulations faced by many clergy, may the Lord strengthen our faith and lead us through our trials. Marriage is a blessed state, but with its challenges. Our prayers go out for those clergy and their wives who are experiencing serious problems in their marriages. Shepherding a small parish can be rewarding, but the clergy family can face difficulties regarding resources. We face the ongoing challenges of working with our parish councils. May God imbue the members of our parish councils with the proper Christian spirit! When changes in assignments are necessary, we need a better process in order to insure continuity for our brethren. Handling conflict and stress in our ministries and leading healthier lifestyles are issues that we need to be addressing as a body. These are the concerns that have weighed heavily on me over the last two years. They do not even take into account all of the many other ecclesiastical and ministerial items that the APC has discussed at our meetings and have been reported in *The Presbyter* and by

your diocesan representatives. As we try to make our communities the one Body of Christ, so too we priests must be one body, mutually supporting and uplifting one another. We have the special grace of the Holy Spirit sustaining and guiding us. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Let us take these words of Scripture to heart!

I look forward to seeing many of you in Los Angeles at the Clergy Laity Congress. Let us make the best of the opportunities for fellowship presented to us this summer. May God bless each of you abundantly!

—Rev. Nicholas Bacalis  
President, Archdiocesan Presbyters Council  
Dean, Ss. Constantine & Helen Cathedral  
Richmond, VA



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# The Misuse of Spiritual Authority: Facing Clergy Misconduct

As a field of study or research, at least in bibliography pertaining to Orthodox theory and practice, the issue of spiritual abuse has not been discussed at length. Details and statistics are minimal and are not always available, possibly because one always runs the risk of appearing irreverent towards sacred institutions such as the parish, the priesthood or monasticism. Up until the 1980's, there exists no study or writing from an Orthodox perspective – at least to my knowledge – on this subject. The silence rather resembles the way in which problems of incest or child abuse have been handled within families and societies until recently: we know that they exist but we do not want their existence to be known. The Church needs to break the code of silence, embarrassment and shame that surrounds this issue. The Church is called to be ahead of and not behind secular institutions that care for those who have been hurt. The moral responsibility of spiritual fathers or elders does not essentially differ from the responsibility of other healing professions in society, irrespective of how inappropriate or insufficient it is to define the priesthood as a “profession.”

All other caring professions – such as teaching, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, social welfare and various forms of counseling and therapy – have specific moral regulations which clearly define the boundaries of the profession. Every group, nation, civilization and family

has its own common points of denial, certain aspects that are concealed, if not avoided. In the same way there are certain social and personal “secrets” in the Church. We must at some point begin to disabuse ourselves of our denial in order to assume the responsibility for our failures within the institution of the Church. It is unfortunate that, while as Christians and as clergy or theologians we have acquired some experience in identifying and confronting the evil that exists within society, we have not yet learned to understand and appreciate the evil that exists within the Church. And if we do not expressly name the evil, then we surely cannot hope to overcome it.

Orthodox piety rightly holds the ordained servant-leaders of Christ's Church in high esteem and in frequent prayerful commemoration. The task of pastoral service in the name of Jesus Christ is of such importance and the responsibility so great that gratitude and respect is surely due all those who commit themselves to this sacred work. The gift of honor on the part of the faithful toward their leaders becomes all the more fitting when a deacon, presbyter or bishop reciprocates the commitment, proving himself to be a genuine instrument of God's peace and love in the lives of the faithful.

Sometimes, however, the formalities of appreciation can distance bishops and their presbyters and deacons from the people whom they

are called to love and serve. Unfortunately, our traditional teaching and piety places clergymen so high up on a pedestal, that either they are rendered inaccessible and irrelevant for most people, or else they exercise tremendous authority over them. The result is that the clergyman is often respected by the pious faithful as being something superhuman, “equal to the angels” to quote St. John Chrysostom. Yet it is extremely dangerous for a clergyman to regard himself as anything else or more than merely human. Every priest must at all times be fully conscious of his limitations – personal and interpersonal, physical and spiritual. The same Chrysostom explicitly rejects any kind of “angelism” in the priestly ministry

## *Pastoral idealization and transference*

The Church must avoid “idealizing” and “idolizing” its leaders. It is a mistake to turn our leaders into gods and worship them. When idealization takes place, ministers are expected to be “perfect.” Since none of us is perfect, some may feel the need to hide their weaknesses and pretend “for the people's sake” to be more virtuous than they actually are. In this way, hypocrisy sets in while inner wounds fester. It is important that we see our priests and bishops as whole persons, with strengths and weaknesses, as sinners and saints, just like us. In her illuminating book on clergy sexual misconduct,

Candace R. Benyei discusses the phenomenon of pastor idealization using the psychological concepts of transference and counter-transference: "When a congregant comes to the clergyman for help, he or she already perceives the pastor, by nature of the clerical position, to be kind, sympathetic, caring, affirming, long-suffering and godlike. This benevolent picture is called transference and may or may not be characteristic of the counselor in question. The clergyman, as recipient of this rosy projection, feels competent, affirmed and valued whether or not he is capable of performing usefully as a counselor in an objective sense. This is called counter-transference. Because caring and valuing are two of the most sexually arousing activities that can happen between people, this sort of transference and counter-transference quickly develops into what is called transference love – the warm, gooey, filled-up, no-longer-lonely, safe, embraced, exhilarating, sexually powerful feeling that

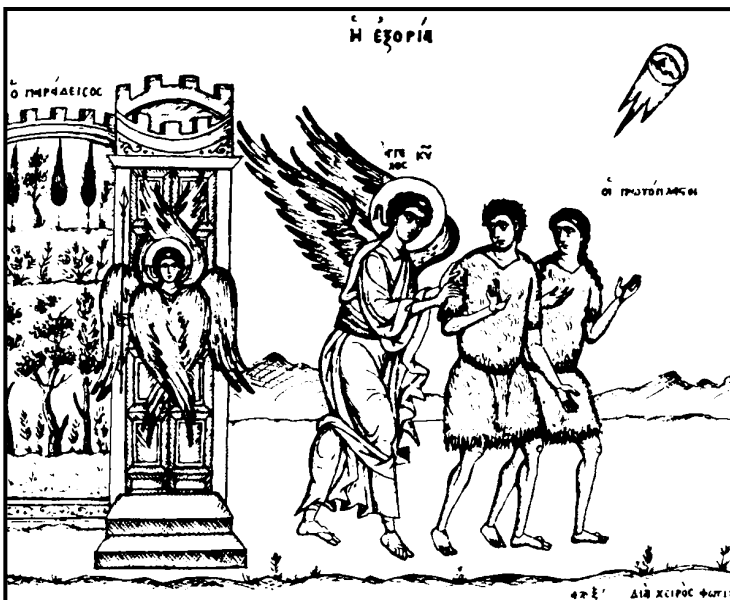
our culture has co-opted us into believing is true love. The sheer force of sexual attraction that arises from transference love cannot be emphasized enough. Transference/counter-transference love is the stuff of all infatuations and all experiences of "falling in love" which are more accurately the wishful desire to possess the fanciful "good object." Real love can only occur in a real relationship that has been, most often painfully, stripped of illusion. It is very easy for emotionally starved, overworked clergy to fall into the trap of believing that these powerful feelings of transference/counter-transference love are signals, finally, of the love they have never had – true love to which they now abandon themselves with little thought of the consequences" (Understanding Clergy Sexual Misconduct in Religious Systems: Scapegoating, Family Secrets and the Abuse of Power, 1998). Pastor idealization (transference) should be recognized for what it is. The kindness, compliance, vulnerability and adoration of

congregants and spiritual children must never be taken advantage of or manipulated by a spiritual leader to gratify one's own needs for power, love or adoration.

## *The Offending Pastor*

Entrusted with the confidence and confession of others, pastors must be vigilant to avoid hurting or violating others in any way. Any intentional crossing of personal boundaries, any form of mistreatment, exploitation or manipulative abuse is intolerable. Ministers must be held to the highest standard in this regard. Sexual contact is not part of the pastoral role. Sexual contact by pastors with parishioners violates the trust necessary in that relationship. The potential harm this causes is enormous and the consequences are devastating.

Sexual misconduct may be a matter of a single incident or a series of incidents of ongoing intimate relationship. With the repetition of a sin, a person's conscience becomes dulled. The unrepentant sinner allows his heart to become hardened. Such a person may well continue exploiting and abusing others until he is stopped. The underlying psychological deficits that lie at the root of such conduct may be many and various: a history of victimization, a psychological illness, a deep sense of childhood neglect, a deep-seated feeling of inferiority, an inability or unwillingness to acknowledge and address one's inner conflicts and so forth. Often, such people do not see the pain they cause in others because their narcissism literally blinds them to it. Extremely narcissistic individuals see others as prey upon which to feed themselves. Such "spiritual guides" are truly blind (cf. Matthew 23: 16-26). They like to dominate and control others. They want authority without responsibility. When a clergyman abuses his authority and privileged position and harms and exploits another, he ceases to be a "father" in the image of the true Source of love and life.



## *The Victims of Clergy Misconduct*

It is common for victims of pastoral sexual abuse to be scapegoated by some in the Church who find it unbelievable that their pastor could commit such acts. This may occur whether the perpetrator is a respected layperson, monk, nun, priest or bishop. One of the most painful aspects of sexual abuse is the way in which it is so often silently and passively overlooked and tolerated. "Keep it secret" and "don't ask questions" seem to be the unwritten rules governing people's behavior with regard to this issue. Long habits of silence and avoidance of the topic have led to a widespread but unfortunately false perception that "these things do not happen in the Church." To confess this evil requires courage, faith, as well as consciously and righteously channeled anger. The Church must give the survivors of clergy sexual abuse the opportunity to tell their stories and have those stories acknowledged. The Church must be willing to walk with survivors in their suffering, even as Christ does. Victim-survivors are often prematurely and platitudinously advised to "forgive and forget." Forgiveness, however, more appropriately comes after restitution has been made. Confession and penitence on the part of the offender, therefore, must precede forgiveness and reconciliation.

## *The Church's task: Intervention and Prevention*

Most professions – including medicine, education, law, social work and psychology – have articulated precise codes of ethics that clearly define the duties and boundaries of appropriate behavior. It is advisable for the Church to articulate in precise and specific terms the obligations and limitations of its representative ministers and employees. It should be clearly stated that sexual contact between Church leaders and congregants is unethical and unacceptable. Certainly, a thorough investigation must be undertaken to verify or disprove every serious claim of clergy sexual misconduct, some of which may prove invalid. If so, the Church must take action to restore the pastor's credibility. If, however, serious misconduct is proven, permanent removal from pastoral leadership is the only proper response. The Church must intervene swiftly on behalf of victims, offering protection, restitution, aid and support. Therapy should be offered, as well, to the offending minister who has possibly destroyed his own family.

In order to help prevent clergy misconduct and the abuse of spiritual authority, the following principles are offered for consideration by pastors and spiritual leaders:

- to be at all times involved in a committed relationship of accountability to a spiritual mentor;
- to be more sensitive and attentive to the psycho-spiritual and power dynamics that characterize pastor-parishioner and spiritual director-directee relationships;

- to understand one's own sexual identity and vocation;
- to respect and affirm the special dignity and sacred worth of every person;
- to take care of oneself physically and emotionally and take measures to prevent one's level of stress from exceeding a tolerable level;
- to nurture and maintain a close, intimate sexual relationship with one's wife (in the case of married clergy) or a close, healthy relationship with one's spiritual father (in the case of celibate clergy);
- to understand the spiritual, psychological, ecclesial, familial, financial and legal consequences of sexual misconduct.

—Excerpted from the book  
*Soul Mending:  
The Art of Spiritual Direction*  
(Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001)  
by Deacon John Chryssavgis  
Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School  
of Theology



## *'The Presbyter'*

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# The Proposed Charter of the Archdiocese

*A Response by the Clergy Brotherhood of the Pittsburgh Diocese*

April 18, 2002

To: His Eminence,  
Archbishop Demetrios; and  
Mr. Michael Jaharis,  
Vice President of the  
Archdiocesan Council

Your Eminence and Mr. Jaharis,  
Thank you and the members of  
the Archdiocesan Council for all  
your labors over the past three  
years, as you worked under  
the guidance of the Holy Spirit,  
to prepare the Proposed Draft  
Charter of the Archdiocese.

We appreciate your invitation  
for us to review the Proposed  
Draft Charter.

The Clergy Syndesmos of the  
Diocese of Pittsburgh, with 33  
priests present, met on April  
11, 2002 in the presence of  
His Eminence, Metropolitan  
Maximos, and offered the  
following unanimous response  
to the Proposed Draft Charter  
for the Greek Orthodox  
Archdiocese of America.

We believe that the Proposed  
Draft Charter is of such  
paramount importance to  
deserve the input of the 36th  
Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress  
in Los Angeles. Please use  
your good offices to assure  
that this happens. Surely there  
may be other articles of the  
Charter that may need further  
study. However, we submit  
in particular our views on the  
following areas.

1.) Article 1, line 16 should add "and  
whose breath is the Holy Spirit".

2.) Election of the Archbishop  
(Article 13): The last section of  
article 13-b which states "or to

*have proven, direct, substantive  
and broad knowledge of the life and  
status of the Church in America,"  
should be slightly altered by  
replacing "or" with "and". We  
believe that future Archbishops  
should be elected from and by the  
Eparchy of the Greek Orthodox  
Church of America, with some  
form of participation from the  
laity. They should have extensive  
knowledge of American culture and  
the role of the Archdiocese within  
the fabric of America.*

3.) We submit that the present  
Metropolitans should be elevated  
to full Metropolitans, elected by  
the Greek Orthodox Church of  
America. Each Metropolis should  
be named after the city where  
the diocese is located, not by a  
titular title of a foreign city. This  
is the apostolic tradition and is  
linked to our liturgical theology  
that understands hierarchical  
leadership as emanating from the  
Eucharistic celebration, the place  
where the entire people of God  
are gathered together in prayer  
and thanksgiving to God. We are  
concerned that when a vacancy in  
one of the Metropolises occurs, that  
a new Metropolitan be elected by  
the Eparchial Synod to replace him  
as soon as possible.

4.) Article 3-b "Organization  
of the Archdiocese" should be  
written with this alteration: The  
Archdiocese of America has its  
headquarters in New York City  
and is incorporated in the State  
of New York. It consists of "the  
Archdiocese of New York and eight  
(8) Metropolises, namely, Atlanta,  
Baltimore, Boston, Chicago,  
Denver, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and  
San Francisco."

5.) The Metropolitans should serve  
under the Archbishop of America,  
as part of the Eparchy of America,  
so as to keep the unity of the  
Archdiocese intact.

7. Article 14-c (lines 22-24) should  
be deleted altogether.

8. We submit that that the  
Auxiliary Bishops should be  
elected in the same manner as the  
Metropolitans as per the above  
revisions.

—Respectfully submitted on behalf  
of the St. John Chrysostom  
Clergy Syndesmos of the Diocese  
of Pittsburgh, His Eminence,  
Metropolitan Maximos of Ainou,  
presiding hierarch, by

The Rev. Costa Keares  
President of the Clergy Syndesmos  
of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and  
Dean, Holy Trinity Cathedral  
Camp Hill, PA



# Ministry Spotlight: An Interview with Father Tom Avramis

CEO, Trinity Children and Family Services - Yucaipa, California

There might not be a person better positioned to interview Father Tom Avramis than someone who has grown up with him and called him friend for over 34 years. As such, I can honestly say that he is a person of humor, faith, loyalty, optimism, energy, vision, knowledge, charm, and creative force. Add to this a touch of attorney-like logic, a sense of drama, quick thinking and natural leadership skills, and you begin to understand a person who is, in everything he does, productive.

Father Tom was born in Tucson, Arizona, and he is proud of it. He graduated from the University of Arizona in 1977, from Holy Cross in 1981, and married a Tucson girl, Lisa Ott, whose family had pioneered the Arizona Territory. Father Tom served one parish as proistamenos for 8 years, the Church of the Resurrection in Castro Valley, CA. He transformed this quiet community into one of the most active in the San Francisco Diocese. Once, when the Bay Area wheels of justice tried to silence the traditional Christmas bell ringers of the Salvation Army, Father Tom mobilized an army of local clergy that so stirred up the media that the effort was dropped. What better person to take the helm of Guadalupe Homes, founded in Yucaipa, California by Father Leon Pachis in 1966. Now called Trinity Children and Family Services, this organization has impacted the lives of over 40,000 children, and under Father Tom has now expanded to seven states.

Trinity is probably one of the most overlooked organizations by the Orthodox faithful – but only by the Orthodox. When President George W. Bush announced his *Faith Based Initiative* to grant federal funds to worthy private charities, the White House consulted with Father Tom, as Trinity is considered a model program for the nation. Surprised that an Orthodox program would be so highly regarded? Don't be, as most likely you will be hearing more in the future as this highly charged presbyter propels Trinity and Orthodoxy forward in the U.S. by sheer faith, hard work and a real can-do attitude. So it goes with Trinity, which makes an interesting Ministry Spotlight interview for *The Presbyter*. Who better to explain about Trinity than Father Tom?

## ***Would you give a brief history of the foundation of Trinity, and its purpose?***

*Trinity was founded in 1966 to provide a place where abused kids out of the court system could receive the quality services they needed to be able return to their families or to function in society. Trinity is non-sectarian, yet it is a Greek Orthodox ministry to the world, and so we take any kids that are sent to us. Privacy laws don't allow us to track them after they leave, but we know we're very successful because the people who place kids with us tell us that our kids go on and do well and they don't see them in trouble again. If agencies like ours don't do a good job, the courts won't place kids with them any more and they won't last long. Trinity, although*



*not the oldest, is definitely the largest such agency in California, the next closest entity being half our size. Trinity is one of the top programs in the nation. Dr. Hans Steiner of Stanford University, did a six month study of our programs, and it was highly positive. The report covers our treatment model, which is called "Group Centered Leadership," a model that we've originated and evolved since 1968. Stanford evaluated that model and reported that it is based on the most solid of current thinking in the field today, of how kids change and make their lives better.*

## ***Describe how your life and ministry led you to be CEO of Trinity?***

*I worked with the Juvenile Court center of Pima County Arizona for three years. My Degree at the University of Arizona was in criminology. I was going into the field of Juvenile Probation, as being a priest was not foremost in my mind at that time. Of course I ended up leaving that behind, going to seminary and becoming a priest. When I got to California I was asked to go on the Board of Directors for Guadalupe Homes where I served for seven years. When Father Leon wanted to retire, I was asked to take over as I was both a priest and had the criminology background, and by then knew the agency really well. It also helped that I had by then obtained an MS in psychology.*



## ***How has your training and experience as a priest affected your leadership at Trinity?***

*I wanted to bring the Church element into treatment, the idea that the Church's mission was to the world at large and not just a parochial mission. All people, especially kids, are our responsibility as Orthodox Christians—not just the people who are in our parishes. I took it upon myself to learn all that I could during my seven years on the Board of Directors. I wanted to learn and understand how the agency worked from all aspects. As a priest, my experience was working with a 100 percent volunteer force, where at an agency like Trinity with paid personnel, I had to adjust to things being more streamlined. In parish life, the ebb and flow of people's interests made things harder. Priests are required to be good at their people skills to be able to keep people motivated.*

## ***What is your vision of the mission of Trinity, for now and the future?***

*The mission of Trinity right now is to serve as many of these kids as we possibly can who are abused, and give them a reason to live for the future. A lot of them have no hope because they come from horrifying backgrounds, and we try to give them therapeutic treatment first to stabilize them. Kids that come to us can't go home because much of the time, at least one of the parents may have been arrested and have been abusive. We help them get a handle on who they are, where they fit in this world and what skills they're going to need to succeed. In the future, I'd like to see Trinity*

*continue to expand these kinds of services. Since 1995 we've spread from California to seven states, adding a state a year, largely by invitation. We are not aggressively pursuing growth, instead, states hear about our program and ask if we would consider going there. We do research to see if we can operate there the way we are accustomed—to be as good there as we are everywhere else. Some states are better than others in their legislation, favoring non-profits and what they do. We've already implemented at many of our campuses the ability to learn trades like construction, computer sciences and culinary arts. The older kids are learning these trades and going out and getting jobs and being self sufficient.*

## ***Why is Trinity important to the ministries of our Archdiocese?***

*Trinity is able to walk that fine line between being a private non-profit entity with a religious base while at the same time utilizing public money and donations. Here we are, Greek Orthodox Christians and one of the largest agencies in the country and the Church gets the credit, without Archdiocese funding.*

*We're doing this with funds that come from donations and tax dollars, yet the Church gets the credit.*

Father Tom Avramis



## ***Describe how Trinity has become a model program for the nation?***

*Upon announcing President Bush's Faith Based Initiative the White House contacted us and expressed interest in having the President visit one of our campuses to showcase what he had in mind. He didn't come because of 9-11, but I was invited to the White House last summer where I spoke with his top official in the faith-based effort. He had a lot of info on us already, but still took a lot of notes. Whatever they're going to do in the future, we had quite a bit of input. We were singled out for this because of how large and efficient we are, remaining effective in our programs with kids while having a religious base. We can do a lot more than the government for a lot less money.*

## ***What can the presbyters of the Archdiocese do to help you in your efforts?***

*The priests can help support us. They can make their youth groups aware of what we do. They can make their Philoptochos aware of us—a lot of them already are. They can send us their mailing list in order for us to send our newsletter to every Orthodox Christian so they may see what their support is doing. If there is a need for our services in their community, they might want to start a group in their Church to see if it's feasible for us come to their community and open a new program. A foster care program, for example, is probably the easiest thing to do and the best shot of getting something done in the greater community.*

*What is the most important thought you would like to impart to our fellow clergy?*

*All children are our responsibility, no matter what their background, no matter what their color.*

## Final Thoughts

Father Tom was somewhat stark in his response to the last question, revealing his absolute clarity. It is exactly this focus which makes Trinity so important and so efficient, in fact, it is one of the most efficiently run non-profits in the country. If we are to be honest with ourselves, we must admit that it is rare to see an Orthodox endeavor considered 'efficient'. Certainly, Trinity's very inception, which left behind the 'Orthodox Only' mentality has at the least illuminated for the rest of us a clear path for real growth and mission (should we be brave enough to venture such). But the real gift here is witnessing the best of our faith and work ethic, showing that it can be done at the highest caliber, with true professionalism. So much so that Trinity has clearly earned the public trust to bring real change in the lives of victimized children, a sacred responsibility in American terms. In a time when Christianity in general is disregarded, and Orthodoxy all but invisible, it is a joy to see this bright light not being hidden under a bushel. Shine on.

—Rev. Chris A. Margaritis  
St. John the Baptist Church  
Omaha, NE

# Contemporary & Classic Excerpts

First of all, a priest ought to have purified his soul entirely of ambition for the office. Some men, in contending for this office, have filled the churches with murder and split cities into factions.

Priests are the salt of the earth.

Parents bring us into this life; priests into the life to come.

Kingship is not so highly esteemed by God as the priesthood.

A priest must not only be blameless, as befits a man chosen for so high a ministry, but also discreet and widely experienced. He ought to be as much aware of mundane matters as any who live in the midst of them and yet be more detached from them than the monks who have taken to the mountains.

The soul of a priest ought to blaze like a light illuminating the world.

Consider what qualities a man needs: he must be dignified yet modest, impressive yet kindly, masterful and yet approachable, humble but not servile, vehement yet gentle, impartial and courteous.

The priest's shortcomings simply cannot be concealed. On the contrary, even the most trivial soon get known.

More billows toss the priest's soul than the gales that trouble the sea: anger, dejection, envy, strife, slanders, accusations, lying, hypocrisy, intrigue,

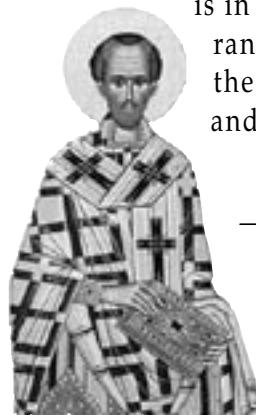
delight at disgraceful behavior in fellow priests and sorrow at their successes, love for praise, greed for preferment, teaching meant to please, contempt for the poor, fawning on the rich, restraint of plain speaking, much pretended and no real humility.

When God wanted to show that sins received a much heavier penalty when committed by the priests than when they were committed by ordinary people, he commanded as great a sacrifice to be offered for the priests as for all the people (Leviticus 4:3,14). This explicitly proves that the priest's wounds require greater help, indeed as much as all the people together.

The priestly office might well accuse us of not handling it rightly.

Everyone wants to judge the priest, not as one clothed in the flesh, not as a human being, but as an angel exempt from the frailty of others.

Tell me, where do you think all the disorders in the churches originate? I think their only origin is in the careless and random way in which the bishops are chosen and appointed.



—St. John Chrysostom  
(350-407 AD)  
*Six Books on the  
Priesthood*



# MARCH APC MEETING, IRVINE, CA

The Archdiocesan Presbyters Council met on Monday through Wednesday, March 4-6, 2002 at St. Paul's Church in Irvine, CA. In attendance were Fathers:

Nicholas Bacalis (New Jersey)  
Timothy Bakakos (Chicago)  
Louis Christopoulos (Denver)  
Mark Emroll (Detroit)  
Christopher Foustoukos (Boston)  
Anastasios Gounaris (Detroit)  
Emmanuel Gratsias (New York)  
Jerry Hall (Pittsburgh)  
John Kalomas (Chicago)  
Paul Kaplanis (Atlanta)  
Costas Keares (Pittsburgh)  
Chris Kerhulas (past president)  
Stephen Kyriacou (San Francisco)  
Christopher Metropulos, alternate (Atlanta)  
James Moulketis (New Jersey)  
Dean Panagos, alternate (Boston)  
Steven Tsihchlis (San Francisco)

## *President's Report*

After praying the Ninth Hour as our meditation, Father Nicholas Bacalis opened the meeting at 3PM and gave the president's report, highlighting his recent journey to Greece in order to accompany Archbishop Demetrios on his first official/state visit. As the APC representative, Father Bacalis was honored to represent the clergy of the United States on this occasion.

Father Bacalis gave a report on the fall national clergy retreat, poorly attended because of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. The comments and concerns of the retreat evaluation forms will all be taken into consideration in planning the next national clergy retreat.

Father Bacalis discussed, at length, a special meeting he attended in New York concerning the Archdiocesan clergy sexual misconduct policy that will soon

be issued. Unfortunately, because of human sinfulness, sexual misconduct cannot be eliminated, but the Archdiocese, Diocese and parishes can help prevent lawsuits like those currently wracking the Roman Catholic Church by addressing such situations quickly and effectively. A compassionate and just response must be our primary concern. We must also address the window of vulnerability that is opened by not having standards for volunteers in the parish setting.

Finally, Father Bacalis also updated us on a variety of other concerns: the proposed APC meeting with the Synod of Bishops; the development of clear procedures around the termination and transfer of clergy; as well as the need to further develop a clergy care program.

## *Clergy-Laity Congress Update*

We continued our meeting the next morning following the celebration of the Eucharist. Our initial discussions focused on the Clergy-Laity Congress in Los Angeles this coming July. Father

Stephen Kyriacou discussed in great detail the clergy program at the Clergy-Laity Congress. He distributed a CLC room request form for each diocese syndesmos to reserve a room for a breakfast meeting on Wednesday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8:30-10AM in order to elect their officers and representatives for the coming two years. Following the diocesan meetings, the APC will hold its first meeting to elect our officers for 2002-2004.

Plans are currently underway to have an office/room set aside at the CLC for the Archdiocesan Benefits Committee (ABC) for clergy and their families to go to in order to address individual health care insurance and other benefits needs.

Presvytera Elaine Stephanides, representing the National Sisterhood of Presvyteras joined us to discuss the NSP program. The NSP will be organizing a program for the 5-11 year old children of clergy couples and requested that each diocesan clergy brotherhood support this program with a donation of \$500. The clergy of the Diocese of San Francisco have already agreed to do so.



*His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios with the 2000-2002 Archdiocesan Presbyters Council. (l to r) Fathers Stephen Kyriacou, Paul Kaplanis, Steven Tsihchlis, Sebastian Skordallos, Mark Emroll, Nicholas Bacalis, Emmanuel Gratsias, Chris Kerhulas, Basil Kissal, Timothy Bakakos, Louis Christopoulos, Nicholas Katinas and Costas Keares. Not pictured are Fathers Theodore Barbas, Christopher Foustoukas, Anastasios Gounaris, Jerry Hall, John Kalomas and James Moulketis.*

## ***Charter Update***

Father Bacalis reported on his discussions with Archbishop Demetrios concerning the proposed charter for the Archdiocese. Spirited discussion ensued and a number of questions were raised: Is the power of the laity being diminished? Is the Clergy-Laity Congress being marginalized? Is the unity of the Archdiocese in question? Are the qualifications for the election of future Archbishops to serve our Church in America adequate? Questions were also raised concerning the role of the presbyters in the proposed charter and the lack of provision for input concerning the leadership of the Church. Father Bacalis reminded us of Archbishop Demetrios' caution that the charter must be seen primarily in spiritual terms and not in terms of worldly power. Nonetheless, it was felt by all present that the text of the charter be published and input solicited from all the clergy and lay leadership in the parishes of the Archdiocese. Father Bacalis was unanimously authorized to communicate this request to Archbishop Demetrios.

## ***Benefits Committee Report***

Father James Moulketis reported that our pension fund investments are doing well considering the recent volatility of the market following 9/11. There is a strong cooperative effort between the ABC, the APC and the NSP in helping those clergy families in financial need. The benevolent fund currently has a balance of \$120,000. Our CAP program is also working well and is being utilized by a number of our clergy and their families. He also wished to publicly thank Archbishop Demetrios for being so supportive of the work of the ABC. However, our biggest problem is health insurance. We seem to be in a winless situation regarding health

insurance matters. The ABC hired Mack & Parker, a well-known consulting firm to review our health insurance plan and its costs. Mack & Parker have confirmed that we are where we should be and are getting the most for our dollar. Unfortunately, medical insurance costs work on the basis of experience in use of the program and our track record is not good. This keeps the cost of our health insurance high. Clergy health and wellness is something that must be strongly emphasized in the months and years ahead. Further, there are a number of priests that are not part of the Archdiocesan health insurance program and they may indeed get lower rates for a number of years. But inevitably their rates go up. This past year, a dozen such priests have requested to re-enter the Archdiocese program. There is talk on the part of a number of Dioceses of pulling out of the national program. If this takes place, we will have to live with the consequences of not having a national health insurance program providing the quality of care that we currently have. Father Moulketis stated firmly that we are our brothers' keepers and encouraged everyone to remain in the plan in order to provide the best coverage for everyone.

## ***Liturgical Committee Report***

Father Steven Tschlis presented brief prayer services to be done before parish council meetings and general assemblies in order to provide a more prayerful context for these meetings. He also presented a service of Appointment to the Parish Council to be prayed in Church following the Liturgy on the Sunday that the newly elected parish council takes their oath of office and begins their term. Finally, Father Tschlis distributed a special service for the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack and it was suggested that

this service be celebrated on the 1-year anniversary of the attack throughout the country. Discussion followed and all agreed that the services before parish council meetings and general assemblies should be distributed as ministry tools offered to all the clergy of the Archdiocese. It was also suggested that there may be a variety of services available throughout the Archdiocese for the installation of new parish councils, for catechists, the opening of Sunday School, etc. that could be culled through to have a variety of such uniform prayer services available for use as ministry tools. Much work still needs to be done to make our liturgical life real and vital to our people.

## ***Other Concerns***

A number of other concerns were brought to the floor, ranging from the need for continuing education for the clergy to the need for wider ecumenical involvement on the part of local clergy in order to make the Orthodox voice more clearly heard. Father Christopher Foustoukos reported on the many positive things happening at Hellenic College/Holy Cross under the leadership of Father Nicholas Triantafyllou. Father Christopher Metropoulos made a report on the ministry of the Orthodox Christian Network. The "Come Receive the Light" radio program is a vital outreach ministry to America and all present agreed that it deserves to be supported by all the clergy of the Archdiocese.

As this was his last meeting as the 2000-2002 president of the APC, the assembled brothers thanked and applauded Father Nicholas Bacalis for his dedication, diligence and hard work these past two years.

—Rev. Paul Kaplanis  
Secretary, APC  
Pastor, Holy Trinity Church  
Raleigh, North Carolina



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## 36<sup>th</sup> Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress Schedule of Selected Presbyter Events

### Monday, July 1

Keynote Address by His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios  
9:00 a.m.

Clergy Tax Workshop  
2:00 p.m.

### Tuesday, July 2

Clergy Workshop on the Archdiocesan Clergy  
Sexual Misconduct Policy  
4:00 p.m.

### Wednesday, July 3

Diocese Clergy Meetings with Breakfast  
8:30 a.m.

Archdiocesan Presbyters Council Meeting  
10:00 a.m.

Clergy Family Forum and Benefits Session  
7:00 p.m.

### Friday, July 5

Clergy Breakfast with His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios  
8:00 a.m.

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