

# the *Presbyter*



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Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

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## On The Road To Nashville

On the road to Nashville we anticipate the great joy of our National Church gathering together once again to build up the body of Christ and prayerfully look to the future *sharing the truth of the gospel and love of Christ* to all those whom we support and assist.

Since our last national meeting in New York I have had the joy, along with all the members of our Archdiocese Presbyters Council, to serve our brother priests and work together with the National Sisterhood of Presvyteres, the Retired Clergy Association, the Archdiocese Benefits Committee and the Holy Cross Alumni Association, seeking to aid clergy families in all facets of ministry and life.

After the New York Clergy Laity Congress the Archdiocese Presbyters Council met in Boston at Hellenic/Holy Cross. His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios welcomed us to the Metropolis of Boston with a delightful dinner meeting at the Metropolis Center. The next days were spent at Hellenic/College Holy Cross meeting with Fr. Nicholas Triantafillou, the staff and students of our beloved School. Our Spring meeting was hosted by Fr. Nicholas Pathenos in the Metropolis of Detroit where His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas greeted us and hosted us to a wonderful welcoming dinner at the Metropolis Center. Our thoughts even then focused on the road to Nashville planning for the upcoming congress. The true joy of this past term was the National Presbyters Retreat held in Austin, Texas hosted by the Metropolis of Denver and Fr Jordan Brown. Our beloved Archbishop, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, opened our program together with His

Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver. Fr. Stanley Harakas lead us in an uplifting retreat guiding over 100 priests in a meaningful reflection on ministry and service. Our final meeting was held in the Metropolis of San Francisco this May. His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos warmly welcomed us into his Metropolis and we were graciously hosted by Fr. Steven Tsihchlis.

Throughout this term our work has focused on issues concerning education, support of the priest and clergy family, and ministry to the parish, the Metropolis, and the Church at large. There are many challenges we are encountering in this service and our hope is to provide the needed resources to fortify, enrich, and support our priests in this awesome and joyous ministry. As a result of these challenges we are anticipating that the wellness seminars being offered in Nashville for our clergy families will provide insights and approaches to strengthen our lives and enrich the landscape of our service to the Church. Our ongoing education committee seeks to offer additional opportunities for edification and enrichment and the newly formed clergy development committee will make available assistance and methods for dealing with family and personal issues.

Two of Christ's apostles were on the road to Emmaus and met the Risen Christ. At first they didn't recognize him, yet St. Luke says their hearts were joyfully burning. Dear brothers, as we journey on the road to Nashville I pray our hearts will also burn with joy so that in our love and exchange His presence will become throbbing and vibrant in our hearts.

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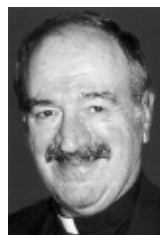
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—Rev. James C Moulketis - President, APC  
Pastor, St. Nicholas Church - Wyckoff, NJ



# The Real Mixed Marriage Problem: A Note to My Parish

It's summertime, the season for American Orthodox Churches to convene conferences, convocations, and conventions. Annually or biannually, well-intentioned and earnest lay-leaders and clergy sacrifice some of their vacation time to address a broad array of weighty subjects affecting the National Church, dioceses, and the local parish. May the Holy Spirit guide their deliberations!

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## *Are we losing our young adults because they are entering into mixed-marriages?*

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This time of meetings means that there will be lots of opportunities to drag out and revisit one of the great canards of American Orthodoxy: "The Mixed-Marriage Problem." For literally as long as I can remember, there has not been a gathering of churchmen and women, wherein someone has not stood up to lament the "fact" that we are losing our young adults because they are entering into mixed-marriages.



For those unacquainted with contemporary Orthodox Christian terminology, a mixed-marriage is not a contract for life between you and your pet. (I'm not making this up — check out the Internet sites that offer this service if you don't believe me!) It is neither a wedding between persons of different races (a relatively common occurrence in the Church) nor between a person who is Orthodox with a non-Christian (a bond forbidden by the Church). In modern Orthodox parlance, a mixed-marriage is the matrimonial union between an Orthodox Christian and a Christian from another tradition.

For too many American Orthodox Christians, the mixed-marriage conventional wisdom follows this line of reasoning: In our pluralistic society, we cannot avoid the fact that most of our youth will choose spouses who have had a different religious upbringing. With these unions comes an inevitable dilution and disintegration of the practices of the Orthodox Faith. The Greek Orthodox version of the typical harangue sounds something like this: "My boy Costa married a xeni (stranger, outsider, foreigner) and now he doesn't come to Church!"

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## *Protestant and Roman Catholic fiancés are not leading our young people away from the Church.*

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I don't buy it.



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## *Marry a "xenos"?*

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My mother became Orthodox because of marriage. So did my father-in-law. So did my mother-in-law's mother—the first or one of the first converts in Jacksonville, Florida. Yia-Yia could not have been more white-bread. She grew up a Methodist in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Her grandfather was a sergeant in the Confederate Army who fought under General Lee at Appomattox. All three embraced Orthodoxy at a time when the Liturgy was performed completely in Greek and there was no strategy for Church growth like small groups or Wednesday evening Bible studies.

My family's witness confirms what I have seen in parish ministry. Whenever the Orthodox partner in a marriage is strong in his or her beliefs, the non-Orthodox spouse develops an almost immediate admiration for the Orthodox Church. Very often



this esteem leads to conversion and when it doesn't there is usually at least a sense of respect for the Orthodox way.

Mixed-marriages in America expose a problem, and it's not that Vassiliki is engaged to a blonde named Bubba. Protestant and Roman Catholic fiancés are not leading our young people away from the Church. We are the source of the problem. We raise young people who are lukewarm in their faith.

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***Believe me, even if your kids are grown, they're still watching you.***

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There's good news and bad news from the "we're-losing-our-youth" front. First, the bad news: There is no silver bullet youth ministry or Sunday school program that will turn a young person into a pious, believing, and committed Orthodox Christian. Now, the good news: there is no silver bullet youth ministry or Sunday school program that will turn a young person into a pious, believing, and committed Orthodox Christian.

Are you worried that one day you may have red-headed grandchildren who think that icons violate the Second Commandment? Here is what you need to do. Take your child to as many services of the Church as possible from the time the child is forty days old. I don't care how many dirty looks Mrs. X gives you. Her grown kid is probably at home sleeping off his hangover. Keep the fasts. Pray together often: at the very least before every meal. Participate together as a family in all of the sacraments — including confession.

Moreover, watch what you say. Every time you trash talk a priest or bishop as you sit around the Sunday dinner table, your children become very confused. Psychologically, they see the clergy in their vestments as Jesus and you as God the Father. More often than not, the confusion you create is too difficult for young people to process and they will just simply drop out.

If reading this article makes you wince, I apologize. But there is even more good news.

It's never too late to change. If you are a young married Orthodox Christian not going to Church, get there next Sunday. Bring your spouse. See your priest. Get with the program. Your marriage can grow richer and stronger.

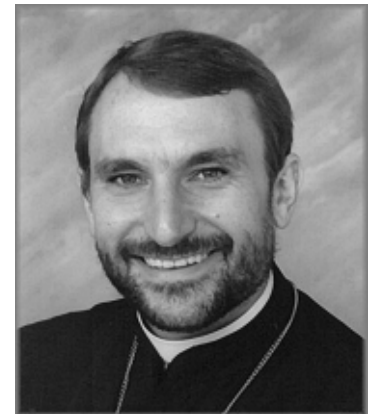
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***It's never too late to change.***

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If you're a parent that regrets not forcing the issue of living the life of the Church earlier in your own children's lives, then repent yourself. The change in your heart will affect everyone around you. Believe me, even if your kids are grown, they're still watching you.

When all is said and done, marrying someone who is not Orthodox threatens only the faith of the faithless. Lived Orthodoxy is the pearl of great price that many seek but too few find. Could we please stop wringing our hands over the "mixed-marriage problem?" My wife's Yia-Yia would have said, "That dog don't hunt." She also would have said during this time between Pascha and Ascension, "Christos Anesti!" (Christ is Risen!).



—Rev. Aris P. Metrakos  
Pastor, Holy Trinity Church  
Columbia, SC.

written for  
[www.Orthodoxytoday.org](http://www.Orthodoxytoday.org)

# Report on the Clergy Institute of the Metropolis of San Francisco

November 29 – December 1, 2005

Last year, at the end of November, 57 priests of the Metropolis of San Francisco gathered for a retreat at the St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center, set in the beautiful Sierra Nevada Mountains outside Fresno, CA. His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, opened the retreat with a keynote address about the priesthood and parish and family relationships, emphasizing the importance of his clergy finding a balanced lifestyle and encouraging them to take proper care of themselves.

The theme of the retreat was "Clergy Wellness: Finding the Balance" and the retreat master was Father Vasilios Thermos, a psychiatrist for children and adolescents in private practice from Athens, Greece who also holds a Ph.D. in theology from the Theological School of the University of Athens on the psychology of priestly vocation. Speaking in two sessions, Father Thermos discussed priestly life and identity and shared ways for the clergy to enhance their parish ministry without neglecting their roles as husbands and fathers within their families.

What follows are some notes taken during Father Thermos' presentations:

*The priest has sometimes been described as an acrobat between heaven and earth; others have defined the priest as someone who preaches what he doesn't practice.*

## **Self-awareness**

*Priestly wellness, wholeness and maturity means to bear one's cross; and bearing one's cross always involves self-awareness, something not always welcome because it is something painful and involves change. Self-awareness is the revelation of God in our souls, a pre-requisite for the spiritual life. To avoid any genuine self-awareness, there are a number of defenses: for example, a workaholic is so busy he has no time to look inside too deeply. Listening to the still, small voice of God may then not be possible because of the "noise" of our work.*

## **Role vs. values**

*Although the role of the priest is external, it is the path to the values of the priesthood, values such as humility, love and responsibility as opposed to the externals of respect, power and wealth. Unfortunately, it is possible to cling to the role of the priesthood while abandoning the values of the priesthood, to be so focused on oneself and the role of the priesthood in terms of status and power that one has a priest-centric ministry (a self-serving ministry) rather than a flock-centered ministry (service to others). Jesus gave us power and authority only over the Devil – not over people. In our ministry we should avoid attempting to control and dominate others.*

*The Church entrusted to our care does not belong to us; rather, we belong to the Church.*

*It is an unfortunate fact that parishioners with unrealistic expectations of clergy sometimes end up worshipping us instead of God.*

## **Mature and immature clergy**

*A mature priest faces reality, does not repress problems, does not project his own defects on to others, loves without expectations, and is flexible and open to others. A mature priest is one in whom theological and psychological truth coincide. An immature priest tries to escape problems and is defensive and aggressive. He has a distorted view of reality. His sense of inferiority leads to competitiveness; he takes suggestions as threats; he adulates his superiors and dominates his inferiors; he has an all-or-nothing mentality that leads to depression.*

*Unrealistic expectations in a priest lead to frustration; frustration leads to alienation and projection (blaming others). This leads to poor effectiveness which further heightens frustration and in turn leads to depression and burnout; and finally, this leads to acting out in inappropriate ways.*

*Chronologically and sacramentally, we are first husbands and then priests. We should be good husbands in order to be good priests. The doctrine of the Incarnation means that life is not divided into sacred, priestly things and secular things. As clergy, we cannot divide our lives into sacred (the Church) and secular (our family). Although conscientious priests often find it difficult to relax, it is an absolute necessity. We must spend times with our wives each week and personal time with each child. We should never be on automatic pilot with our families.*

The discussion generated by Father Thermos' talks revolved around real ways and techniques that clergy can use to improve their lives as both as husbands and as pastors.

Fr. Jim Pappas, the pastor of St. George's Church in Fresno, CA summed up the general feeling of all the clergy present: "This retreat was refreshing."



—Rev. Gary Kyriacou  
Pastor, St. Demetrios Church  
Camarillo, CA



# *The Priesthood*

## *Contemporary and Classic Excerpts*

### *The Pastors of America*

I don't know of any other profession in which it is quite as easy to fake it as in ours. By adopting a reverential demeanor, cultivating a stained glass voice, slipping occasional words like "eschatology" into conversation and "heilgeshichte" into our discourse – not often enough to actually confuse people but enough to keep them aware that our habitual train of thought is a cut above pew level – we are trusted, without any questions asked, as stewards of the mysteries.

We can crib our sermons from the masters, learn to lead the liturgy by rote, write the appropriate Scriptures for home and hospital visitation in our cuffs for unobtrusive reference, memorize half a dozen prayers to suit all occasions when we are asked for a little prayer to get things started on the right note and learn how to chair a committee by attending a few meetings of the PTA and making a few notes on what does or doesn't work.

The image aspects of being a pastor, the parts that have to do with meeting people's expectations, can be faked easily. We can impersonate a pastor without being a pastor. The problem, though, is that while we can get by with it in

our communities, often with applause, we can't get by with it within ourselves. At least, not all of us. Why aren't we content with this? Because far more is involved than pleasing customers; something like the integrity of material is involved. With professions, the integrity has to do with invisibles: for physicians, it is health (not merely making people feel good); with lawyers, justice (not helping people get their own way); with professors, learning (not cramming cranial cavities with information on tap for exams). And with pastors, it's God (not merely relieving anxiety, giving comfort or running a religious business establishment).

We all start out knowing this, or at least have a pretty good intimation of it. But when we entered our first parish we were given a job. Most of the people we deal with most of the time are dominated by a sense of self, not a sense of God. Insofar as we also deal with their primary concern, the self – directing, counseling, instructing, encouraging – they give us good marks as pastors. Whether we deal with God or not, they don't care overly much. Flannery O' Connor describes one pastor in such circumstances as one part minister and three parts masseuse.

How do I maintain a sense of pastoral vocation in the middle of a community of people who are hiring me to do religious jobs? How do I keep a sense of professional integrity in the midst of people who are long practiced in the art of comparative shopping and who don't get overly exercised on the fine points of pastoral integrity?

What are the means by which I carry out this pastoral vocation, this ordained ministry, this professional commitment to God's word and God's grace in my life and in the lives of the people to whom I preach and give the sacraments, among whom I command a life for others in the name of Jesus Christ? What connects these great realities of God and the great realities of salvation to the geography of this parish and in the chronology of this week?

The answer among the masters whom I consult doesn't change: a trained attentiveness to God in prayer, in Scripture reading, in spiritual direction. This has not been tried and discarded because it didn't work, but tried and found difficult (and more than a bit tedious) and therefore shelved in favor of something or other that could be fit into a busy pastor's life.

—Eugene Peterson  
is a retired Presbyterian pastor  
and seminary professor

The above is taken from his book  
*"Working the Angles: the Shape of  
Pastoral Integrity"* (1987)

# Clergy health and Wellness Program

Tuesday, July 18, 2006

Look for the Health and Wellness sign up sheet in your registration packet.

***Attend 4 sessions to be eligible for fantastic prizes!***

**Need not be present at drawing to win.**

*Visit the Clergy Laity website, [www.clergylaity.org](http://www.clergylaity.org) for more information.*

Look for the Health and Wellness sign up sheet in your registration packet.

*Attend four sessions to be eligible for fantastic prizes!*

**Grand Prize:** \$750 Gift Certificate to any Ritz-Carlton in the U.S. and two airplane tickets (with a maximum value of \$1,000)

**Second Prize:** \$500 American Express Gift Card.

*Raffle will be held Wednesday night at the Clergy dinner. Need not be present at drawing to win.*

Nashville parishioner Dr. David Taber, of the Department of Radiology and Radiological Sciences and Emergency Medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, has coordinated these important health and wellness lectures with some of the country's leading healthcare professionals. All Clergy and Presbyteres are encouraged to attend these outstanding programs.

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS TOPICS AND GUEST SPEAKERS

### **"Stress, Frustration and Worry Management"**

*Colin Armstrong, PhD*  
Dr. Armstrong is a Health Psychologist and Director of the Vanderbilt University Dayani Center's Weight Management Program where he teaches courses on Conflict Resolution, Work/Life Balance, and Stress and Anger Management.

### **"Diet Myths and Misconceptions"**

*Deanna Dillon, RD, CDE*  
is a licensed Dietician and Certified Diabetes Educator. She provides individual nutrition counseling for Diabetics and those interested in weight loss or Heart Disease prevention.

### **"Tips for Becoming an Active Family"**

*Sam Ewing, MS*  
is one of only a hand full of Exercise Physiologists in the country who is certified as a Diabetes Educator. His interests include physical activity programming for kids and the prevention and treatment of obesity among adolescents.

### **"Understanding and Preventing Heart Disease"**

*David Maron, MD*  
is the current Medical Director of the Dayani Center and is an Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of Cardiology at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Dr. Maron is a world-renowned specialist in the field of Preventive Cardiology and the management of hyperlipidemia in persons with known Heart Disease.

### **"Current Approaches in the Treatment of Tobacco Addictions"**

*Barbara Forbes, MSN, GNP*  
is a Nurse Practitioner who specializes in smoking cessation counseling and research and is the Director of the Vanderbilt Institute for Smoking Prevention and Cessation.

**"Understanding Health Care Issues  
During the Retirement Years"**

*Mark Jacokes, MD*

is trained in Internal Medicine from the University of North Carolina. He helps coordinate the Vanderbilt Dayani Center's Executive Physical Program and specializes in lifestyle and preventive medicine.

**"Strategies to Prevent Diabetes  
and it's Complications"**

*Dennis Karounos, MD*

is Director of the Diabetes Program and Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, Division of Endocrinology and Molecular Medicine, University of Kentucky College of Medicine, Lexington, KY.

**"Exercise & Physical Activity for  
Weight Loss; How Much is Enough?"**

*Jay Groves, EdD*

is a Certified Exercise Specialist through the American College of Sports Medicine and supports the Dayani Center's Weight Management Program. His research interests include the use of digital pedometers in physical activity and exercise programming.

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*Clergy addresses provided by the Archdiocese.  
Contact the Archdiocese for updates or changes.*

**You are cordially invited to an evening with**  
***His Eminence***  
***Archbishop Demetrios***

**for Clergy and Clergy Couples**

**Wednesday, July 19, 2006**

**6:00pm - 8:00pm**

**Buffet Dinner followed by Question and Answer Session**

**If you have Childcare needs, arrangements should be made with  
Le Petite Academy. TEL. (615) 885-1821 or visit their website, [www.lapetite.com](http://www.lapetite.com)**

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