



Climbing the Spiritual Ladder

Recently, I had the opportunity to view an exhibit of icons and other liturgical items from St. Katherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Some of the oldest icons in the world are on display there, including a beautiful 5th century icon of the Apostle Peter done in encaustic, a wax medium. Ancient icons that I had only seen photographs of in art history books were now right before my eyes.

Although there is much to see in this exhibit, the icon that riveted my attention was one we're all familiar with: the icon of the spiritual ladder. This 12th century icon depicts our struggle as human beings to "work out our salvation in fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12), climbing the mystical ladder through the stages of renunciation, humility, obedience and love, always ascending towards Christ, who awaits us with outstretched arms at the summit of the ladder, welcoming us into His Kingdom.

But the ascent of this ladder, our movement towards Christ, is depicted as being fraught with peril, as half a dozen demons ensnare would be climbers and pull them completely off the ladder, one even falling into the gaping mouth of a dragon and being swallowed whole. As priests and pastors, our struggles are many – both with our inner demons as well as those outside us. Not a few of us, like the climbers depicted in this icon, are being pulled off the ladder and swallowed whole.



In speaking with priests around the country I have often felt that many of us, working so hard "in the trenches," are facing exhaustion and discouragement. A number of priests have said to me that they are "tired." Now, there are two kinds of tired. There is the "good tired" that we experience after a job well done. This is temporary and after an appropriate period of rest we're back in the swing of things doing what we need to do to serve the Lord Jesus and our parishes. But there is also a "dangerous tired." The difference between "good tired" and "dangerous tired" is like the difference between a cool spring rain, refreshing and life-giving, and the volatile atmospheric conditions leading to the deadly whirlwinds of a tornado like the ones I used to hide from in the basement of my parents house in the Mid-west.

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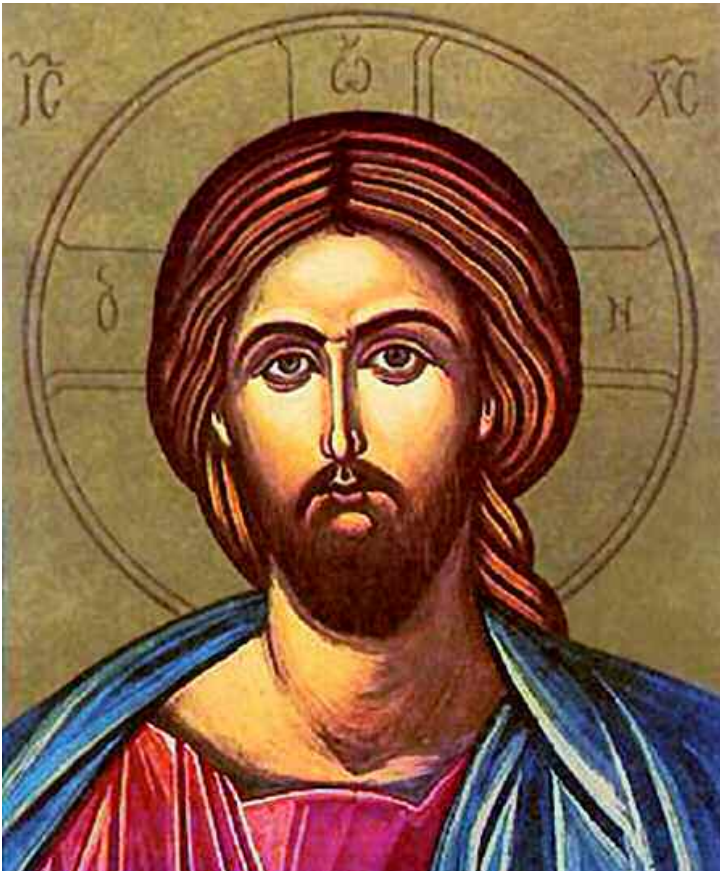
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To be “dangerously tired” is an atmospheric condition of the soul that portends the risk of self-destruction and with it, the destruction of those around us.

Being “dangerously tired” is a fatigue of soul that is often masked by ever more frenetic activity and compulsive overworking. Often, a man who is dangerously tired cannot truly rest and instead indulges in escapist behaviors like the mindlessness of sitting before a television, control in hand, switching from channel to channel, too emotionally drained and spiritually exhausted to relate to one’s wife and children or choose an activity truly life-giving. This is what the ancient desert fathers like St. John of the Ladder called *acedia*.

The sources of this inner depletion are many and vary from person to person. Some of these sources are as simple and straightforward as the over-scheduling that comes from poor time-management skills – something none of us learned in seminary. Sometimes we are carrying heavy burdens from our past that we have not adequately dealt with, a childhood trauma or a deep betrayal of some kind that has left us wounded and driven. But other sources come from deeper within: the needs of our egos, the need for approval, to prove ourselves to

others, to be “successful” as pastors – whatever that means – rather than merely “faithful to the end” as Christ demands in Matthew’s Gospel.

Over the last year three men, all of whom I thought were good priests, have blown up their lives and ministries by acting out in sexually inappropriate ways. Two were younger than I am – I’ve been at this for 25 years now – and one was older. I didn’t expect this from any of them – although looking back, the fierce and burning rage I sensed in one of them was a dead giveaway that I should have recognized.

Great Lent, as we tell our congregations year after year, is a time for repentance, prayer, fasting, charity, confession, *katharsis* and spiritual renewal. Is that also true for us? Do we really practice what we preach in this? Let’s face it: another source of spiritual exhaustion among clergy is that over time, there is a severe slippage in our spiritual discipline, those spiritual practices that help us keep our attention focused on God so that He can comfort us in our pain, confront us in our sin, nourish our souls with the presence of His Spirit and forgive us. Many of us also lack the necessary accountability for this. At a retreat for clergy in the Metropolis of San Francisco last year, Metropolitan Gerasimos asked the assembled priests how many had spiritual fathers to whom they went for confession. Only about half of us raised our hands.

At that same retreat, Father Vasilios Thermos, a psychiatrist and priest from Greece who served as our retreat master, told us that “priestly wellness, wholeness and maturity always involves self-awareness, something not always welcome because it is something painful and involves change.” Great Lent is a time of year specifically set aside for repentance, for *metanoia*, a time for change. The first step in self-awareness is a willingness to change. The great Roman Catholic patristic scholar of the 19th century, John Henry Newman, echoing the teaching of St. Gregory of Nyssa, once wrote that “here below to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often.”

May this Lenten season be for all of us the beginning of a willingness to change – often.

—Rev. Steven P. Tsiichlis - President, APC
Pastor, St. Paul’s Church - Irvine, CA



A Marriage Made in Heaven: Longevity in the Pastorate



How long should a pastor remain in a particular parish? Twenty years ago, the conventional wisdom was seven years: Years one through three, the pastor accrues leadership capital; the fourth and fifth year are his most productive; by year six he has worn out his welcome and it is time to shepherd a flock in greener pastures.

Today's church growth gurus argue for longevity. They observe that all successful churches have at least one thing in common: a long-term pastorate.

Almost twelve years into my present pastorate, I'm going with the gurus. Good things happen in the life of a parish when the priest puts down roots. The people in the pews get to see their pastor grow as a Christian and his example seeps into the hearts of all who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

An enduring relationship between a flock and their shepherd has a lot in common with a lasting marriage. Husbands and wives who see marriage as a marathon and not the 100 yard dash learn what it means to forgive seventy times seven, bear one another's burdens, wash one another's feet, and even be crucified for one another.

In good marriages, spouses pray for each other and they fight fair. They don't bail out when the going gets tough, and they don't go looking for something better when their marriage hits a temporary slump. I have learned far more theology from my wife than I will ever learn from a thick trade paperback filled with footnotes.

After two-and-half decades into the great adventure that began in the church choir in Jacksonville, Florida, my wife and I both know that God was, is, and always will be the Holy Celebrant of our union. Has it all been peaches and cream? If you're married, you already know the answer to that question. But through it all, our time together has made good on the promise given to us at our wedding: we have gone from being two persons who believed in God to living as a couple in communion with Him.

Priests and parishes who gut it out through the tough times and honeymoon in the good times receive similar blessings. They live out the virtues of forgiveness, mutual sacrifice, and unconditional love. They are no longer hearers but doers of the word. "Christ is in our midst" moves from cliché to reality.

Longevity: The Priest's Role

What can the parish priest do to avoid the "seven year itch?"

Stop being a careerist

Seminary conditions us to believe that every priest should aspire to be the dean of a cathedral. God willing, all clergymen will live long enough to realize that the acceptable icon for the height of ministry in our era is not found in the pulpit of a mega-church but in service like Mother Teresa performed. (Besides, do you really want to spend the rest of your life doing things like serving as the toastmaster of the "Pan-Slobovian National Dinner-Dance?")

Love your parish where they are

After courting my wife I knew that she was a person who enjoyed intellectual pursuits more than household chores. (Today she is in law school and a cleaning lady visits our home every other week.) Jesus didn't expect Peter to be anything other than an impetuous, sometimes clueless fisherman, and He knew what He was getting when He called Levi the tax-collector to be an apostle.

Every daytime talk show reminds us that the only person that you can change is yourself. So, change! Learn to pray. Find a niche (missions, youth ministry, writing, pastoral counseling, whatever) and run with it. Spend the energy that you would waste wishing your parish were different into making yourself different, spiritually and professionally. Your parish will appreciate the fact that you've stopped nagging them, and the people who authentically want Christ will be inspired by your example.

At the very least, be moral

Even some clergy hold the misguided notion that adultery can be mitigated if a priest claims that his marriage is unfulfilling. Spare me. Adulterous priests deserve the boot. Unfortunately, when they get what they deserve, their parish, in fact the entire Church, suffers the consequences.

Longevity: The Parish's Role Find a suitable spouse

When I got married, I was a Navy pilot. But I didn't marry one of the ladies hanging around the Officers' Club at happy hour.

Parishes need to know what they want in a priest, the same way that most of us know what we want in a spouse. While the Church in America is blessed with many vibrant communities, there are plenty of parishes that are content with being private ethnic clubs that are open for business a couple hours on Sunday morning (unless there was a evening wedding the night before, in which case hardly anyone shows up for Church). If you're one of the slack communities, please don't say that you want a young, energetic, and American born priest that will grow ministries. After three months, he'll be miserable and so will you.

Stop running off priests

Parishes that have had more priests than America had Presidents need to wake up and smell the coffee. No young man who left a good job and schlepped his family to seminary (where he presently endures three to four years of forced re-entry into adolescence) dreams of coming to your church. Trust me. He already knows your reputation. Instead, value the priest you have today and start working together. Be affectionate.

My wife appreciates it when I give her a random hug and kiss, do the dishes, or bring home flowers. Priests need affection too. Clergy serve the Church out of love. They respond to positive strokes with even harder work. As in marriage, abuse makes a person emotionally withdrawn and eventually drives him away.

Get help with your authority issues

In a society that has deconstructed most authority figures (police, teachers, and politicians are now "donut eaters," "chumps" and "crooks"), priests stand as one of the last remaining lightening rods for people who resent their fathers. At one time or another, every priest will suffer at the hands of people who need to pick up the phone and make nice with their dads.

I've had enough of priests who self-justify being made into scapegoats with the words "Jesus suffered, so must we." I'm sorry, but Christianity teaches that Jesus was crucified once and for all as the perfect and complete expiation for all of humanity's sin.

Experience has taught me that suffering finds every priest, and the time spent on my knees, weeping like a child has made me a better Christian. At the same time I'm not Christ. Rather than turning priests into whipping boys, some of the faithful would do well to invest in 10 or 20 hours worth of therapy.

The Fruit of Longevity

Last Sunday, Columbia's Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church broke ground on a new sanctuary. We have outgrown our present worship space. The faithful drop by my office daily for pastoral conversation, counsel, or confession. A new batch of folks is preparing to join the Church. We have strong givers and even stronger leaders. Sure, I know there are probably some folks that wish I were dead, but I'm fairly certain that there are times during my years of marriage when my wife or kids might have hoped for the same.

Serving the same parish for a dozen years has given me the same gift that my wife gives me every day of our married life. Ups and downs have obliged me to live out the Gospel and forgive, forbear and sacrifice. Challenges have forced me to learn how to pray. Struggles have compelled me to place my life in the hands of the Master.

I've still got plenty of rough edges but I pray that the faithful have seen that I've grown both as a Christian and priest as we have labored together. They wouldn't have this witness if I had cut and run during the tough times or if I had succumbed to the temptation of trading up to a more prestigious zip code or job title.

Like my relationship with my wife, serving my parish has taught me more theology than any book could. When a priest and his flock learn to go the distance, it's a marriage made in heaven.



—Rev. Aris Metrakos
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The Beginnings of the Presbyters Council

The reflections that follow were prompted by our current President, Father Steven Tsichlis, who asked me to share with you some thoughts on the beginnings of the Presbyters Council.

The Council of Presbyters was established by the 1970 Clergy-Laity Congress

As noted in the annual Yearbooks of our Archdiocese, the Council of Presbyters was established by an act of the celebrated 20th Clergy-Laity Congress, which was held in New York City in 1970. The Council was conceived as a vehicle by which the clergy of the Archdiocese would receive counsel from and offer counsel to the Archbishop concerning various priestly issues.

Prior to the creation of the Council of Presbyters the concerns of the clergy of the Archdiocese were voiced only at local clergy brotherhood meetings – the several ‘Archdiocesan District Syndesmoi.’ However, there was little intercourse between the Syndesmoi. They were as isolated from one another then as they are now. As a result, many matters of common concern, interest, and import to the clergy went unnoticed and unheeded. The views of the presbyterate (the body of presbyters) regarding the life and mission of the Church were seldom solicited and their collective voice was hardly ever heard.

It is true that a number of priests served on various Archdiocesan councils,

committees, and commissions and that several of them were responsible for valuable initiatives and notable achievements, but the role of the presbyterate as a whole was limited and, in many respects, ineffectual. Even the Clergy-Laity Congresses offered few opportunities for the clergy to address their special needs or to allow for their collective wisdom, formed by long pastoral experience, to bear on and influence the vital ecclesial issues of the day. At times it appeared, perhaps wrongly, that the essential affairs of the Church were managed by only two bodies, the hierarchy and the laity. It seemed as if the presbyterate did not really matter, even though the new Uniform Parish Regulations adopted in 1964 at the 17th Clergy-Laity Congress in Denver restored to the priests their rightful canonical role as head or leader of the local parish – the essential eucharistic cell, where the saving work of the Church is actively pursued and enacted.

A synodal and hierarchical Church cultivates mutual love, respect, & accountability.

As I recall now, more than forty years after its founding, four things especially helped to shape the idea and the need for a Council of Presbyters. The first was the aforementioned 1964 Uniform Parish Regulations that registered clearly the change in the

primary identity of the Parish as an ecclesial entity, with all that this implied about the roles and the relationships of the four constitutive orders of the Church, bishop, presbyter, deacon, and laity. The second and perhaps the most important contributing factor was the revived interest in Orthodox ecclesiology as a result of the Church’s involvement in ecumenical activities. In fact, the deepening awareness of our ecclesiology led to the revision of the Uniform Parish Regulations.

The Church, as it was now emphasized, is an organic unity of communion and relational in her identity, mission, and structure. Therefore, in every level and aspect of her life she is both hierarchical and conciliar or synodal. The Church is composed of many members. They are knitted together in love to form one body, in order to carry out their common activity, which is the edification of the Body, through their different but interrelated functions, varied duties, and distinct responsibilities.

A synodal and hierarchical Church honors and preserves unity and diversity, recognizes and esteems the ministry of leadership, and values and cultivates mutual love, respect, and accountability. As the sacred mysteries are celebrated by all the orders, so also the administrative functions and the mission of the Church are fulfilled by all the orders together, but each according to its proper role and place. All gifts and

ministries are ordered to one another in a network of relationships and communion (Acts 6: 1–6; 15: 1–33).

The Presbyters Council is based in the presbyterium of the ancient Church.

Also contributing to the creation of the Presbyters Council were the developments in the Roman Catholic Church in the early 1960s. Through its directives, the Second Vatican Council had encouraged bishops to establish consultative and advisory bodies with the clergy, laity, and religious orders. Thus, Priests' Senates began to emerge in many of the dioceses in America and elsewhere. If such changes were occurring within the rigid structures of the Roman Church, how much more so our own ecclesiology not only allowed but called for the establishment of a Presbyters Council based on the fact that in the ancient church the bishop and the presbyters of the local Church together constituted the presbyterium (*πρεσβυτεριον*), a fact that has long been overlooked and even forgotten. The presbyterium constituted the essential organic conciliar unity out of which all other synodical expressions emerged. Of course, while the bishop and the presbyters share much in common, they are neither equals nor interchangeable. The role of the bishop is unique inasmuch as he constitutes the center of unity of the local church and is its chief shepherd. But the bishop does not exist of himself apart from the presbyterium and the local

church. He is always related to and conditioned by the local Church and the presbyterium and vice-versa.

Finally, Archbishop Iakovos through his embrace of the clergy from the time of his enthronement in 1959 and by his bold actions and challenging initiatives created an environment in which the idea for the Council could take root. Archbishop Iakovos knew personally many of the priests of the Archdiocese from his long association with the Church of America. He sought their opinions and cooperation in his efforts to bring about change and he encouraged and enlisted their talents and expertise to formulate and enact new initiatives and programs for the Archdiocese. Proof of his desire to empower the presbyterate was his unequivocal support in the months leading to the 20th Clergy-Congress of the proposal to create a representative advisory body of presbyters to receive and to offer counsel.

The idea for the establishment of a Council of Presbyters was first advanced in the late 1960s among a small group of priests of the greater New York area who were inspired by the writings and the teachings of Fathers Alexander Schmemmann, John Meyendorff, and John Romanides, all of blessed memory, and of the young scholar John Zizioulas, now the eminent Metropolitan of Pergamon. Their insightful and challenging perspectives on Orthodox ecclesiology and especially their understanding of the role and the relationship of bishop and presbyter provided the theological foundations for the creation of the Council.

The proposal for the Council was brought to the attention of the Clergy Syndesmos of the then "First Archdiocesan District," which encompassed the parishes of New York, New Jersey, Washington, D.C., Maryland, Delaware, and parts of Pennsylvania and Connecticut. After due deliberations, the idea received the support of the Syndesmos. I was asked to draft a position paper in support of the Council together with a set of regulations that would eventually form the basis of the initial constitution or bylaws of the Council.

The plan was submitted to Archbishop Iakovos for his review and approval. Happily, within a short period of time the Archbishop gave his approval and accordingly informed the venerable hierarchs of the Church. The plan was to bring the recommendation for the creation of the Council to the forthcoming 20th Clergy-Laity Congress for approval. Indeed, on July 1, 1970 the proposal for the establishment of the Council of Presbyters of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas was put forward and was adopted unanimously by the delegates of the Congress. Two days later, on July 3, the representatives to the Council of the several Archdiocesan Districts convened in special session and elected the officers and set in motion the work of the Council. The following priests, listed in the numerical order of the "Archdiocesan Districts," comprised the first Council of Presbyters (1970-1972).



Metropolitan Soterios

First District (New York): Alkiviadis Calivas, Constantine Eliades, Robert Stephanopoulos, John Tavlarides, and +Constantine Volaites.



Rev. Robert Stephanopoulos

Second District (Chicago): Anthony Coniaris, Evagoras Constantinides, and Emmanuel Lionakis.

Third District (Boston): Andrew Demotsis, +Philip Gialepsos, and Charles Mihos.



Rev. Evagoras Constantinides

Fourth District (San Francisco): +John Geranios and +Elias Stephanopoulos.

Fifth District (Charlotte): Constantine Dombalis and +Phaidon Constantinides.

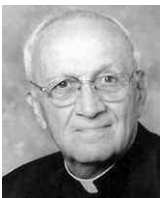


Rev. Constantine Dombalis

Sixth District (Pittsburg): Peter Kyriakos and +Constantine Monios.

Seventh District (Detroit): Ernest Blougouras and Philemon Payiatis.

Eighth District (Houston): William Gaines and +Peter Bithos.



Rev. William Gaines

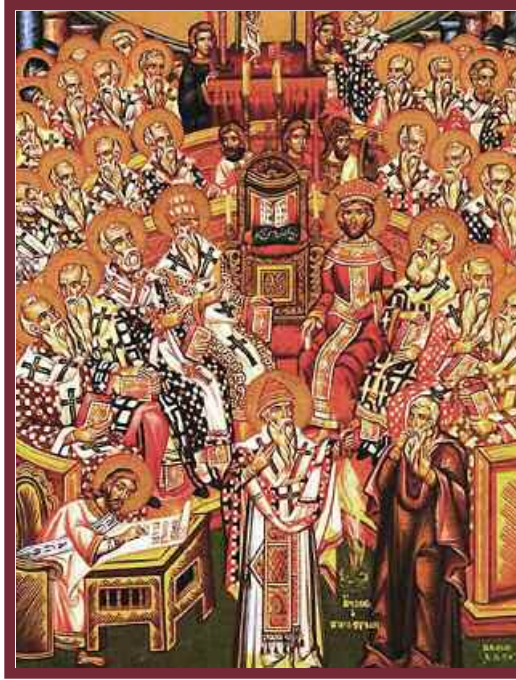
Ninth District (Canada): Soterios Athanasoulas (now the Metropolitan of Toronto).

The officers were: Alkiviadis Calivas, President; John Tavlarides, Vice President; John Geranios, Treasurer; Constantine Eliades, Secretary, Evagoras Constantinides.

+Peter Kyriakos, and Robert Stephanopoulos were the three Board Members. The Council and its officers were installed publicly at the Congress by the Archbishop.

Many of these same priests were elected to serve a second two year term. On a personal note, I was especially honored and privileged to serve the Council as its president for

two consecutive terms. Significantly, the members of the Council honored its role as an advisory and consultative body and avoided the temptation to turn it into an advocacy group of limited pursuits and narrow agendas.



At the very first meeting of the Council in New York, the members established several working committees and voted to meet in Cleveland, Ohio in November of the same year. That meeting would focus especially on the reports of the several working committees it established, namely, (a) Biennial Congresses, (b) Classification of parishes, ministries, and clergy (out of which would come the guidelines for clergy remuneration), (c) The Priest and the Youth of the Church, (d) Methodologies for the resolution of conflicts, (e) Communications, and (f) Pension and health insurance plans.

Before the end of its two-year term, the first Council also formulated recommendations for other items through the following additional working committees.

- (a) Holy Cross Seminary, (b) St. Basil's Academy,
- (c) Religious education,
- (d) Church finances,
- (e) Pastoral problems of marriage and divorce,
- (f) The on-going-education of the clergy, and
- (g) Clergy remuneration.

Happily, several years ago the officers of the Council deposited for safe-keeping with the Archbishop Iakovos Library and Learning Center at Holy Cross a small collection of the Council's documents – including the first constitution and bylaws, various papers and proposals, and the minutes of the proceedings of the Council meetings. The collection is available for examination by appointment with the Librarian.

Much has been accomplished by the Council but much more needs to be done! It remains for each succeeding generation of presbyters to choose freely to honor the work and to build on the achievements of their predecessors, however small, through their own courageous activities and thoughtful contributions.



—Rev. Alkiviadis C. Calivas, Professor Emeritus of Liturgics at Holy Cross School of Theology



Rev. Emmanuel Lionakis



The Archdiocesan Presbyters Council met at Holy Trinity Church in Tulsa, OK

*(L to R) Front Row: Fathers Athanasios Michalos (secretary), Timothy Bakakos (vice-president), Steven Tsihchlis (president, APC), James Rousakis (president, ABC), Sebastian Skordallos (chief secretary of the Holy Synod), William Christ (treasurer);
Second Row: Paul Kaplanis, Jordan Brown, Theodore Dorrance, Jerry Hall, Nicholas Anctil, Christopher Metropulos, Thomas Chininis;
Third Row: Andrew Mahalares, John Kalomas, Michael Kontogiorgis (assistant chancellor of the Archdiocese), Emmanuel Gratsias, Bill Gikas, George Wilson and James Moulketis.*

October 10-12, 2006

The recent meeting of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council was hosted by Father William Christ and the Church of the Holy Trinity in Tulsa, OK. Among the topics discussed and planned for were: continuing education and spiritual formation for the clergy of the Archdiocese focused on enhancing our preaching skills; the National Clergy Retreat for 2007; and the clergy program at the 2008 Clergy-Laity Congress in Washington, D.C. Action was taken to strengthen the APC/NSP benevolence fund;

establish an annual APC scholarship for a needy student at Holy Cross; and develop, in conjunction with other offices of the Archdiocese, an APC communications effort to enhance the missionary and outreach efforts of our priests and parishes. Underlying every discussion and action taken on these and other matters was a basic concern for the total well-being of our priests and their families and supporting them in their individual ministries.



The Priesthood

Contemporary and Classic Excerpts

The Relationship of Clergy and Laity

In the Orthodox Church the clergy are not above the laity nor opposed to them.

No prayer, no sacrifice, no blessing is ever given in the Church without being sanctioned by the Amen which means an approval, agreement, participation.

We are accustomed to think of “ordination” as precisely the distinctive mark of clergy. The clergy are the ordained and the laity, the non-ordained Christians. Here again, however, Orthodoxy differs from Western “clericalism,” be it Roman Catholic or Protestant. If ordination means primarily the bestowing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the fulfillment of our vocation as Christians and members of the Church, each layman becomes a layman — laikos — through ordination. We find it in the Sacrament of Holy Chrism, which follows Baptism. Why are there two, and not just one, sacraments of entrance into the Church? Because if Baptism restores in us our true human nature, obscured by sin, Chrismation gives us the positive power and grace to be Christians, to act as

Christians, to build together the Church of God and be responsible participants in the life of the Church.

We think of worship as a specifically clerical sphere of activity. The priest celebrates, the laity attend. One is active, the other passive. It is another error and a serious one at that. The Christian term for worship is leitourgia which means precisely a corporate, common, all embracing action in which all those who are present are active participants. All prayers in the Orthodox Church are always written in terms of the plural we. We offer, we pray, we thank, we adore, we enter, we ascend, we receive. The layman is in a very direct way the co-celebrant of the priest, the latter offering to God the prayers of the Church, representing all people, speaking on their behalf. One illustration of this co-celebration may be helpful; the word Amen, to which we are so used, that we really pay no attention to it. And yet it is a crucial word. No prayer, no sacrifice, no blessing is ever given in the Church without being sanctioned by the Amen which means an approval, agreement, participation. To say Amen to anything means

that I make it mine, that I give my consent to it... And “Amen” is indeed the Word of the laity in the Church, expressing the function of the laity as the People of God, which freely and joyfully accepts the Divine offer, sanctions it with its consent. There is really no service, no liturgy without the Amen of those who have been ordained to serve God as community, as Church.

Liturgical service always follows the pattern of dialogue, collaboration, cooperation between the celebrant and congregation.

And, thus, whatever liturgical service we consider, we see that it always follows the pattern of dialogue, cooperation, collaboration, cooperation between the celebrant and the congregation. It is indeed a common action (“leitourgia”) in which the responsible participation of everyone is essential and indispensable, for through it the Church, the People of God, fulfills its purpose and goal.

Repentance, Confession and Parish Life

For each conscientious priest confession is without any doubt one of the most difficult and frustrating aspects of his ministry. It is here, on the one hand, that he encounters the only real object of his pastoral care: the human soul, man, as he stands sinful and miserable, before God. But it is here, on the other hand, that he realizes to what degree nominal Christianity has pervaded our Church life. The basic Christian notions of sin and repentance, reconciliation with God and renewal of life, seem to have become irrelevant.



The Symptoms and Consequences of Clericalism

A false idea of clericalism is that of absolute power for which the priest has no account to give. In fact, the priest in the Orthodox Church must be ready to explain his every opinion, decision or statement, to justify them not only “formally” by a reference to a canon or rule, but spiritually as true, saving and according to the will of God.

Tragic news about Father N.’s breakdown. So the symptoms I had noticed three weeks ago were real. I am afraid that the reason is clear: “He buried himself in his activity.” And that is just what one should not do. One becomes unable to put things in perspective, to detach oneself, to push away all the fuss and the petty details that encumber our life and can devour our hearts. Actually, the cause is the same arrogance that seeks to convince me that all depends on me all relates to me. Then the “I” is filling all reality, and the downfall begins.

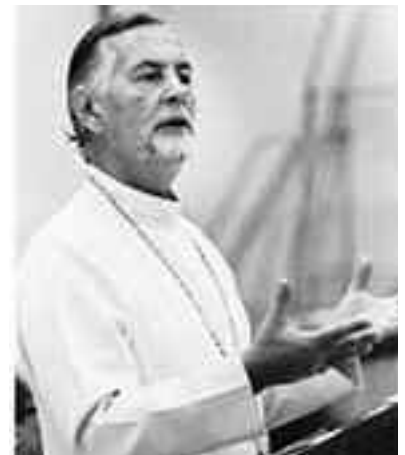
More and more often I think that priesthood should not be a profession; that is, priests should work, have another occupation. Otherwise they transform church life into some

occupation or activity which is simply not needed. What did the first Christians do between their meetings in Church? Nothing is said about that in all the documents that have reached us. In our days, while searching for church occupations, we are down to parish bingo and dinner dances.

I recently visited Father Kallistos Ware. He will be consecrated a bishop on Pentecost. He seems quite happy. But I am always worried because of the inexplicable transformation that often occurs when a man becomes a bishop. Ambiguity and temptation of sacerdotal power!

I know that I am grumpy, but when facing the Church’s empirical state, I am at my lowest. The last 30 years of my life I spent fighting. I know that in me there is a darkness to which I yield, which at times does not allow me to see much good or positive. Fight on...!

—Father Alexander Schmemmann
(1921-1983)



The success of the Church is measured in terms of attendance, financial wealth and numbers.

Our Church life is simply based on a system of mutual praise and adulation. A parish is always happy about itself and requires the pastor to constantly thank his “fine” people for their contributions, efforts, help and generosity, to be the mirror in which they can admire themselves. The same spirit of success, “good-neighborhood,” and external activities pervades our life from the top to the bottom. The success of the Church is measured in terms of attendance, financial wealth and the number of “parish affairs” of all possible kinds. Where in all this is there any room for repentance? When I recently happened to confess about 50 people in a typical Orthodox parish in Pennsylvania, not one admitted to have committed any sin whatsoever!

The Presbyter

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A.P.C. 2006-2008

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The APC/NSP Benevolent Fund Annual Appeal

One of the most important things that we can do as clergy is care for each other and one another's families. More than a decade ago, the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council and the National Sisterhood of Presvyteres established a benevolent fund to assist clergy families in crisis.

Through the combined efforts of the APC and NSP many clergy families across the nation, faced with a personal crisis and in need of emergency financial assistance, have been helped through difficult times with our Gifts of Love program. Over the past three years, Gifts of Love relief checks totaling over \$60,000 were provided to 28 clergy families during their time of need.

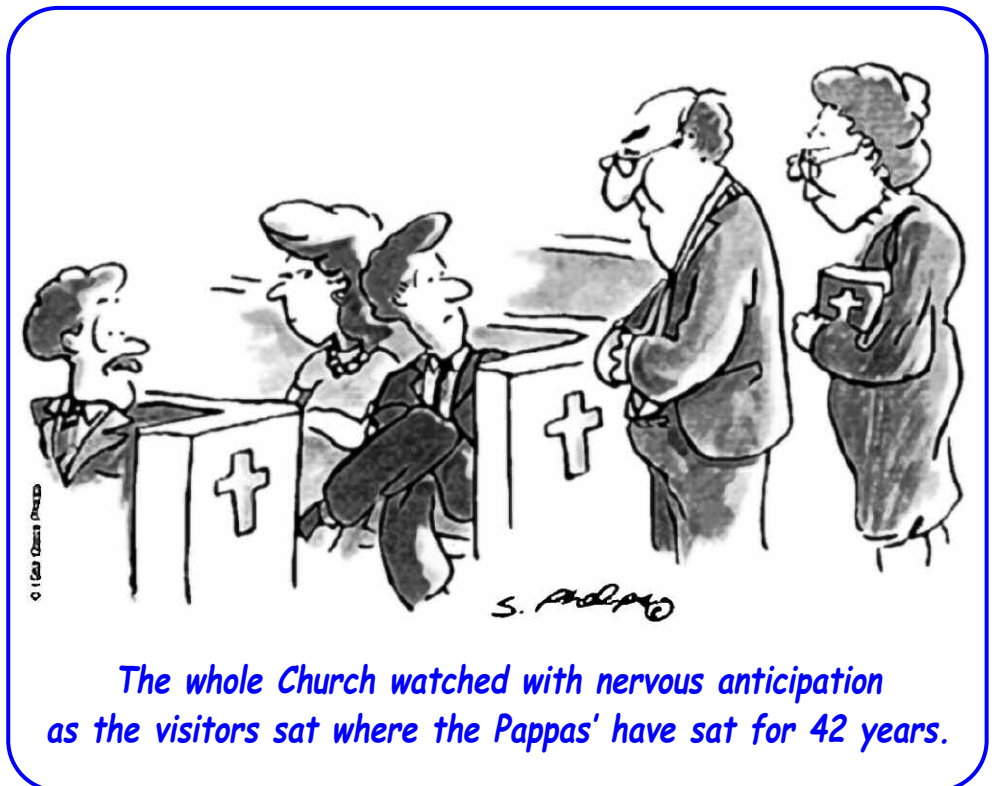
We need your help! We can only continue to support our fellow clergy families in their time of need with your donations. Without this annual request, the APC/NSP Benevolent Fund could soon be depleted. We ask you to donate whatever you are able to the APC-NSP Benevolent Fund, prayerfully keeping in mind our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, who will be assisted through your generosity.

On behalf of all the clergy families who have already received these gifts and all those who will receive gifts in the future, thank you!

Please make your check payable to:
APC/NSP Benevolent Fund

Mail to:

*The APC/NSP Benevolent Fund
c/o Presvytera Stephanie Panagos
34 Paula Lane
Waterford, Ct 06385*



*The whole Church watched with nervous anticipation
as the visitors sat where the Pappas' have sat for 42 years.*