



From Father Anthony

What happens when you don't go to confession?

The soul is like a little plant. At Baptism it is germinated and brought to life. With Holy Communion and the Divine services it begins to send out roots and push through the hard ground of our “fleshly self”. Through much work and effort a little sprout begins to develop and sees the light of day. Now here is where it gets tricky. If we do nothing and don't attend to this little sprout it will certainly wither and die. It takes attention and care to give it the right amount of sunlight and water to nurture it and help it

grow. There are all kinds of pestilence and diseases that could easily destroy this vulnerable seedling. Weeds can choke it off and steal its nutrients. Worms can devour its leaves and render it unable to collect light and grow. This tiny little plant needs protection and care in order to grow and flourish and one day bear fruit. It doesn't just break through the ground and pop out an orange or an apple. That takes a lot of time and effort; so too with the soul.

“There are plenty of souls that have learned how to cope in this life, but the kind that will, after years of cultivation, actually bear fruit are rare.”

The soul is a very sensitive organ. It reacts to the negative stimuli in our environment and responds in a positive way to those things that feed it and nurture it. Our society is full of examples of what happens to a soul that has not been cared for and nurtured. We find all kinds of distortions and dysfunctional relationships that emanate from an unhealthy soul. Rarer still are the souls that will support and sustain others in their spiritual life in order to bear fruit. We call the possessors of these souls “saints”.

“The accumulated dust over the years that builds up on the greenhouse roof of our soul slowly and imperceptibly diminishes the amount of sunlight reaching our soul.”

A key element in the nurturing of the soul is the holy sacrament of “Confession”, sometimes called the sacrament of Penance or the “Rite of Reconciliation”. In any case it is the sacrament that God has given to us to help us maintain a healthy soul. Through the sacrament of confession we are able to remove the layers of dust that settles on the greenhouse roof and blocks the sunlight and cuts off the source of our growth. Without sunlight, that is the light of Christ, our growth is stunted and we wither and die. It does not need to be major sins that cut off the light of Christ. The accumulated dust over the years that builds up on the greenhouse roof of our soul slowly and imperceptibly diminishes the amount of sunlight reaching our soul. Confession removes the layers of dirt and provides the right conditions for growth, accelerated growth.

Some people are afraid or embarrassed to go to confession. Here are a few thoughts that will help us overcome this reluctance and put us back in the proper environment for spiritual growth.

- First of all, it is to God that we are confessing. That is why we call it a ‘sacrament’ or ‘mystery’, because God is present with us, hearing our confession as we come humbly before Him to take responsibility for our lives and open ourselves totally to Him in truth and humility. Only in this

way can we truly remove the elements that inhibit growth in our lives and have a truly healthy soul.

- The second thing that will help is finding the spiritual father “where our soul rests”. It is an intimate thing to share the deepest secrets of our soul with another person, and we must have full confidence in their integrity, their love for us, and their discernment. The role of spiritual father is not one we should take lightly. It requires of the spiritual father great care and wisdom to help someone along their spiritual journey to becoming like God.
- Thirdly we must prepare properly. If we look at ourselves by our standards we probably come off as pretty good people, but this kind of self examination begins and ends with us and is hardly objective. To truly have self examination we must hold ourselves to the standard God has for us, and this is found in the 10 commandments. This standard examines thoughts, motives, and movements of the hearts and from it we comprehend a more objective picture of ourselves. It is hard to treat a disease that has been mis-diagnosed.
- Also, we must not be afraid to expose our entire being to God’s healing light. If we leave a stone unturned, it only gives Satan a place to hide from the piercing light of Truth, i.e. Christ. If we confess everything before God, He is able to forgive us. This is deliverance from slavery, bondage, mediocrity and complacency.
- Lastly, when we confess, we gather spiritual strength and insight into the working of our heart, and are better prepared to face the temptations of the world and live a more dynamic Christian life. We also have an advocate who is thinking and praying on our behalf, the father confessor.

If we do not confess before Christ, then we cut ourselves off from the source of life. If we continue to approach the communion cup in this state then what is meant for life becomes a source of judgement for our not discerning the holiness of God, and properly preparing. If we abstain from Holy Communion out of reluctance to confess or out of negligence or laziness then we open ourselves to demons because the house is empty and Christ is not on the throne of our heart.

As St. Cyril of Jerusalem tells us, *“The devil then is the first author of sin, and the father of the wicked: and this is the Lord’s saying, not mine, that the devil sinneth from the beginning: none sinned before him...but having been created good, he has of his own free will become a devil, and received that name from his action. For being an Archangel he was afterwards called a devil from his slandering: from being a good servant of God he has become rightly named Satan; for “Satan” is interpreted the adversary.”* St. Anthony and the Desert Fathers and Mothers make clear strongly and emphatically the nature of our adversary and his attacks on us. The devil hates goodness and pushes us away from God. The further away we get from God the more disturbed and distorted our lives become. To the point that we let shame, the result of our knowledge of good and evil in our hearts, keep us away from the healing medicine of the Sacrament of Confession and the relief of a clean heart.

As Metropolitan Alexios has written: “The Second Sunday of Lent is dedicated to St Gregory Palamas who affirmed that we carry within ourselves two tendencies, one for good, the other for evil. However, the tendency for good can only be developed in us by acquiring the grace of God, which can only come to us if we repent, if we accept the process of fasting and prayer, and dedicate ourselves to it. St. Gregory was not talking about an abstract idea, but about the bright reality of God’s grace which he had experienced himself.”

“That’s why at this time of year, we must realize that we are going to have to work hard, to struggle,

to strive to overcome the obstacles that the devil places in our path. We must struggle to resist evil and temptation, to do what is against our conscience. Our Church offers us the tolls of prayer, fasting, confession and increased opportunities for worship and service in order to “fight the good fight.” To these, we can also add reading the Bible, and the Fathers, or spiritually uplifting books such as “The Ladder,” by St. John Climacus, which gives us a beautiful picture of how to elevate ourselves step by step.”

Fr. Anthony

Parish Happenings

Easter Egg Dying - We will be dying eggs on Holy Thursday at the church at 10:00 am. Please let Presbytera know if you can help. We will need at least 5 people. If you would like to dye your eggs for your household that morning, please bring extra. Medium or small sized **brown eggs** work best

The 6th Annual IOCC 5K Run/Walk is only 6 weeks away. Please consider today in joining us and registering for this annual fundraiser for IOCC. Go to the link below to print a registration form and mail in with your donation.

https://www.iocc.org/giving/atlanta_5-6-06.pdf

Philoptochos will have a spiritual enrichment meeting lead by Father after the pre-sanctified liturgy on Wednesday, March 29th.

Catechumen Class

Catechumen classes are available for those who would like to learn more about Orthodoxy. Classes are held every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m.

Building Maintenance:

Last person to leave the building please check the bathrooms to make sure the toilets are not running, as well as turn the heat down to 62, and the air conditioning up to 80. Also make sure all the lights are off.

Clergy Laity Congress is this summer.

For more information please visit

www.clergylaity.org.

St. Philothea is high tech!

See the on-line parish calendar for all the latest information. You can find it through the St.

Philothea homepage:

<http://www.stphilothea.ga.goarch.org/>

Marswood Hall information is included on the same calendar.

Parish News

Much parish information is shared through the parish listserv. All you need is an e-mail address! If interested, please e-mail Peter Gess: pgess@mindspring.com

The Bookstore:

The Bookstore is open every Sunday after the Divine Liturgy and has a wonderful collection of resources to enrich our spiritual lives.

Treasurer's Report: The good news is that we have not had to use our reserve funds during the first three months of 2006. Generous contributions, the two fundraisers, increased usage of Marswood Hall, and monies raised through the fundraising appeal have put us in a strong position going into April.

Income for the first two months was \$32,566 and expenses were \$32,974. Cash on hand in the General Operating account at the start of March was \$12,464. Projected cash on hand at the end of the month is over \$10,000--about 2/3 of what is needed to sustain us through April. Continuing contributions and income from Marswood Hall are expected to fill this gap.

St. Philothea Directory:

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Parish Council:

President: Stacey Cramer

Treasurer: Bill Mahoney

Sunday school:

Dana Johns

Music Director:

Angie Iakovou

Marketing and Maintenance Chair:

Rick Volk

Hospitality Chair:

Georgia Parthemos

Communications Chair:

Tammy Andros

Liaisons to the Caterer:

Dean and Karen Kimbaris

Philoptochos Board:

President: Karen Kimbaris

Vice President: Ann Volk

Treasurer: Presbytera Christine

Secretary: Nina Lamson

Corresponding Secretary: Frieda Dekazos

Outreach: Dana Johns

Advisor: Georgia Parthemos

Sunday Epistle & Gospel Readings

April 2	Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Epistle: St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 6:13-20
April 9	Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Epistle: St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 9:11-14
April 16	Gospel: John 12:1-18	Epistle: St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians 4:4-9
April 23	Gospel: John 1:1-17	Epistle: Acts of the Apostles 1:1-8
April 30	Gospel: John 20:19-31	Epistle: Acts of the Apostles 5:12-20

Philoptochos

This is a reminder that we will be accepting membership renewal and new membership to Philoptochos through the end of this month. The dues is as follows; National--\$10.00, Metropolitan--\$7.00--St. Philothea--at your discretion. The minimum amount of dues owed for 2006 is \$17.00. Please see Pres. Christine or myself if interested in joining or renewing your membership.

The discussion at today's meeting centered on the upcoming Oratorical festival and the election of officers. Please contact me if you are willing and able to help out at the Oratorical festival on Sat. April 1. The festival will be from 8:30-3:00 and we need people to help set-up and clean up for breakfast and lunch.

Due to many different factors, it was decided that Philoptochos will cut back on its fund-raising goals so that we may concentrate our efforts on parish fund-raisers. The officers on the Philoptochos board (for now) will be Karen Kimbaris--President, Ann Volk--Vice-President, Freida Dekazos--2nd Vice-President, Pres. Christine--Treasurer, Nina Lamson--Secretary, Dana Johns--Social/Spiritual Chairman, and Georgia Parthemos--Advisor. Our next business meeting will be in August when the election of new officers will be re-evaluated. Please contact me if you would like further clarification or have any questions concerning this matter.

**Schedule of Lenten & Paschal Services
April 2006**

Date	Day	Time	Worship Service
15th	Sat	9:00 am	Saturday of Lazarus Divine Liturgy Followed by Sunday School Breakfast, palm folding and church cleaning for Holy Week.
16 th	Sun	9:00 am	Orthros, Palm Sunday Liturgy begins at 10:00 am, Christ's Entry into Jerusalem
16th	Sun	7:00 pm	Start of Holy Week: 1st Bridegroom Service , theme: The wise Joseph and the Fig Tree
17th	Mon	7:00 pm	Bridegroom Service , theme: Parable of the Ten Virgins
18th	Tue	7:00 pm	Bridegroom Service , theme: deeds of Mary Magdalene contrasted with deeds of Judas
19th	Wed	7:00 pm	Sacrament of Holy Unction
20th	Thu	7:00 am	Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil
	Thu	7:00 pm	Reading of the Twelve Gospels: The Last Supper, the Betrayal, the Crucifixion
21 st	Fri	9:00 am	Great Hours , being vigilant at the Cross (Adults and children are encouraged to attend and decorate the Bier)
	Fri	3:00 pm	Apokathelosis, The Taking Down of Christ from the Cross
		7:00 pm	Lamentations , being vigilant at the Tomb of Christ
		9:00 p.m.	All Night Vigil , at the tomb of Christ
22 nd	Sat	9:00 am	Vesperal Divine Liturgy
		11:00 pm	Holy Pascha Liturgy beginning at 11:00 pm
23 rd	Sun	2:00 pm	Agape Vespers and meal TBA

BLESSED PASCHA!

Sign Up for Holy Week

LAZARUS SATURDAY BREAKFAST

Food, set up and clean up Ken Lamson, Nina Lamson
Church cleaning, Folding Palms

PROSFORON

(need 7 for the week) Georgia, Presbytera Christine

LINENS & ALTAR CLOTHS

Cleaning & Ironing Georgia

FLOWERS

Ordering and Decorating the Barbara Knisely, Nina Lamson
Kouvouklion

Pangari Duty

Keeping Narthex and Candles neat
and organized for all services Maximos

DAILY CHURCH CLEANING

(vacuuming, windexing &
bathrooms)

Palm Sunday & Holy Monday

Holy Tues. and Wed.

Holy Thursday & Good Friday Stephanos

Holy Saturday Ken Lamson

Bright Mon.& Clean up
Kouvouklion Presbytera Christine

DYING EASTER EGGS

need atleast 5 people Presby. Christine, Nina Lamson

GOOD FRIDAY VIGIL

Food set up and clean up

Setting up & Selling Lambathes

(large white candles) on Good
Friday and the Resurrection Service Maximos

OUTDOOR LIGHTING & SOUND

for Resurrection Service

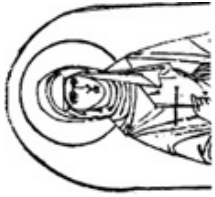
AGAPE VESPERS

Pascha Meal Organizer

EASTER EGG HUNT

Jennifer Gess, Diane Simmons

***Please let Father or Presbytera know which area you would like to volunteer for.
Minimum of 2 names per area. Some need more.



St. Philothea Greek Orthodox Church Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta

April 2006						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
26 9:00a Orthros and Divine Liturgy	27	28	29 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	30 6:00p Funeral 6:00 p.m.	31 5:00p Pendergrass Wedding and Reception 7:00p Salutations to the Virgin Mary	1 10:00a Oratorical Festival, 10-3 3:00p Pendergrass Wedding and Reception
2 9:00a Orthros and Divine Liturgy	3	4	5 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	6 6:00p Great Canon of Andrew of Crete	7 7:00p Akathist Hymn	8 PAM BARBER RENTAL ONLY
9 9:00a Orthros and Divine Liturgy	10	11	12 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	13	14	15 9:00p Saturday of Lazarus, Divine Liturgy 9:00, with palm folding and Church cleaning
16 9:00a Orthros and Divine Liturgy 7:00p Holy Week Services	17 7:00p Holy Week Services	18 7:00p Holy Week Services	19 7:00p Holy Week Services	20 7:00p Holy Week Services 7:00p St. Basil the Great, Vespers Liturgy	21 9:00a Royal Hours 3:00p Taking down from the cross 7:00p Holy Week Services	22 9:00a Divine Liturgy 11:00p - Apr 23, 6: 2:00a Holy Pascha
23 11:00p - Apr 23, 6: 2:00a Holy Pascha 9:00a Orthros and Divine Liturgy	24	25	26 6:00p Catachumen Class	27	28 Preparation for Taste of Greece	29 12:00p Greek Festival
30 9:00a Orthros and Divine Liturgy	1	2	3 6:00p Catachumen Class	4	5	6



**St. Philothea Greek Orthodox Church
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta**

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