



## From Father Anthony

### October Message

I was speaking with Max after school one day as he was working on a school assignment. He was doing a poem exercise that asked him to write statements about himself. He asked me "What am I afraid of?" It was one of the questions on the list. I started out with the usual things we might fear, heights, snakes, criticism, rejection. None of those seemed to strike a chord so I asked him if he knew the antidote to fear. "No" he replied. I pointed out that it was in the Bible. "Perfect love casts out fear," I said. I went on to explain that the Martyrs were so filled with love for God and their fellow man that they were not afraid of anything. People could threaten them, torture them, even kill them and they would still praise God and pray for their persecutors. His face brightened and he said, "I know what I am afraid of, 'Perfect Love'!" Since this year is the year we have chosen the saying of Christ "Be ye perfect as my Father in heaven is perfect" I think it appropriate to take a critical look at this topic and see how we can attain perfection in this world. Twice in the Gospels we are commanded to be perfect. Once, when the rich young man is told by Jesus that if he wanted to be perfect, he should ". . .sell all that he had and come follow Me and you will have treasures in heaven." The other was at the end of Christ's teaching on love when we are exhorted to "love our enemies" and we will be perfect, as our Father in Heaven is perfect. Both of these examples hit at the center of our deepest spiritual struggles, resentment against those who have hurt us, and too close of an attachment to material possessions. God gives us these examples as something to strive for; not to torment us, but to show us the way to true freedom. He knows that if we harbor resentment against another, then we are prisoners of hate. Peace is not present in the heart filled with bitterness. The solution is simple but not easy. We must "love" the other person. Being the complex human beings that we are it is not easy to trick ourselves into loving someone that we strongly dislike. But God is not asking us to like this person. Like is something we can not control because it is an emotion that either happens or does not. We can love someone without liking them, just like we can respect someone without finding them a very agreeable person. To accomplish this goal requires deeper thinking of a spiritual nature. Through prayer we can reprogram our thoughts to recognize our own shortcomings and weaknesses, and then be more merciful to the shortcomings and weaknesses of others. We can also realize that God is sovereign and that "All things are under His care."

Therefore whatever situation we find ourselves in, can be recognized as an opportunity for redemption, either for our salvation or the salvation of another in whose life, according to God's providence, we find ourselves entwined. Of course there are the extreme cases of out and out evil that boggle the mind. "How can we love enemies that try and kill us and blow us up"? These situations reach the height of human perfection and are a mystery beyond my experience. However, God sends rain and blessings upon the righteous and the unrighteous, and reserves ultimate judgment for Himself. So should we.

Be perfect,

Fr. Anthony

## Sunday Epistle & Gospel Readings

<u>October</u>	<u>Epistle</u>	<u>Gospel</u>
October 3	2 <sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:6-11	Luke 6:31-36
October 10	2 <sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:31-33; 12:1-9	Luke 7:11-16
October 17	Titus 3:8-15	Luke 8:5-15
October 24	Galatians 2:16-20	Luke 8:26-39
October 31	Galatians 6:11-18	Luke 16:19-31

### ***Parish Happenings***

#### *Philoptochos:*

\* On September 21, Philoptochos hosted a luncheon for local-area clergy. By all accounts the lunch went very well, and the 12 priests and guests were very pleased. Special thanks to Frieda Dekasos, Panos Dekasos, Nina Herrington, Barbara Knisely, Georgia Parthemos, Liz Seiss, Presvytera Christine and Ann Volk.

\* On September 25, Philoptochos held its garage sale at the church. It was a grand affair, and nearly \$1,000 was raised for the society's charitable efforts. Some parishioners ended up taking more items home than they brought! Thanks to all who helped.

\* Philoptochos and the Parish will be participating in OCAF again this December. In October and November we will be baking for this event as well as for a community Greek Tavernia Night to be held in January. Be on the lookout for more information and a chance to help.

#### *Pew Kneelers*

If you would like to take on the awesome task of refinishing the kneelers for our pews (which includes sanding, staining, padding, and reupholstering), please see Father or a parish council member.

#### *Parish Council Meeting*

Next Parish Council Meeting: Oct. 20 (We are trying the third Wednesday of every month).

#### *Sunday School*

If you would like to help teach in Sunday School, please see Angie Shih or Father. Guaranteed high returns on your investment!

#### *Covered Dish Luncheon*

Our monthly covered dish luncheon will be on Sunday, October 3, following the Divine Liturgy. Please join us to enjoy great food and fellowship.

#### *Memory Eternal*

Our condolences to Monica and Lucian Horescu. Monica's father passed away in early September in Romania. A memorial service will be celebrated on Sunday, October 10<sup>th</sup>. May his memory be eternal.

#### *OCF*

A record-setting 19 students attended the OCF event on Sept. 21. Many thanks to Frieda and Panos for a lovely meal which inspired an equally lovely discussion. The next meeting will be Oct. 5 at 6:30 p.m.

#### *Upcoming Festivals*

The Atlanta Greek Festival is October 8-10. We would not have been able to hold so many successful Athens Greek Festivals without the many volunteers from Atlanta, and this is a good time for us to reciprocate. Please let Kurt

know what date and time you can help, and in what area you would like to work.

Prophet Elias will hold their Middle Eastern Festival Oct. 2-3.

### *Unique Spiritual Travel Opportunity*

There will be a historic visit to the Patriarchate to witness the meeting between Pope John Paul II and His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew from Nov. 27-Dec. 5, 2004. His Eminence Archbishop Demetrious is scheduled to attend as well. See Father if you are interested or would like additional information.

### *Greek School, Mens' Group, Prosforon Baking*

With the blessed completion of our house of worship and family life center, there are increasing opportunities for fellowship, education, and spiritual growth. Check the monthly calendar in this bulletin and on the St. Philothea website for chances to participate.

### *Loaves and Fishes*

An important ministry of the Pan-Orthodox Brotherhood is to collect food for the needy. At St. Philothea, there is a canister for this purpose in the Narthex. Please remember to bring a food item each and every Sunday.

### Parish Council Meeting Highlights September 22, 2004

- updates on the building, including status of various liens, signage, bells, maintenance program, and furniture;
- discussed the proposed agreement with Lee Epting, our caterer. Dean Kimbaris is Parish liaison to Lee;
- discussed consolidating the items in the two storage units we are renting as a way of saving money; and

- planned the General Assembly to be held on Sept. 26 (budget report, proposal to reduce the size of the parish council from 11 to 9).

-The YTD expenses through the end of August were \$54,663. Income for the same period was \$61,613. Checking account balance is \$18,060. Donations received are slightly ahead of pledged amounts through August.

### General Assembly Highlights September 26, 2004

-Bill Mahoney presented the St. Philothea general budget to date. A motion was made to accept the budget report, which was approved by acclamation.

-Dean Kimbaris updated the parish on the status of the building and building fund. He noted that after final tasks on the building are completed, we will have approximately \$80,000 in the account, which is a reserve designed to cover the mortgage for one year as a contingency fund. He emphasized the need to increase parish income, through stewardship, increasing membership, and bookings of Marswood Hall.

-Dean also reported on the relationship with Lee Epting, the caterer for Marswood Hall.

-A motion was approved unanimously to empower Kurt Knisely and Dean Kimbaris to negotiate and finalize a mortgage with the bank, subject to parish council approval.

-A motion was approved unanimously to decrease the size of the parish council from 11 members to 9 members. Members will still serve 3-year terms, and three new members will be elected every fall. This year three members' terms are ending, and one parish council member has resigned; the parish will therefore elect two new representatives in November.



Department of Religious Education Announces 2004 Fall Internet Classes

September 10, 2004

Boston, MA – The Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America announces the Fall 2004 schedule of religious education classes for adults, families and parish educators over the Internet. The theme of the ISOS Fall Semester Classes is: The Ten Commandments for the Contemporary Orthodox Christian. The series of eleven 90-minute educational classes are intended to provide Christians the opportunity to examine the spiritual directives of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) in light of contemporary life.

The Fall Semester classes will take place each Tuesday evening (September 28 - December 7, 2004, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM EST) at the Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Weston, Massachusetts and will be taught by Rev. Dr. Frank Marangos, Director of the Archdiocese Department of Religious Education and adjunct assistant professor of Religious Education and Homiletics at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

Apart from those who can physically attend, the classes can also be heard and viewed in real-time by anyone with a computer and Internet access. The broadcast is being made available by the Archdiocese Department of Internet Ministries through the Archdiocese web server. This year's presentations will again be provided in streaming video so that web participants will be able to view the actual class presentations as they are being delivered.

The ISOS web site address is: <http://www.isos.goarch.org>. The presentation will also be archived so that individuals can listen to the classes when their schedule permits. A schedule and class syllabus is available on the ISOS Internet Web Site.

Certificates of educational recognition will be provided to students who participate in the classes and teachers who are engaged in the Teacher Certification Program of the Department of Religious Education.

The series of eleven classes are offered free of charge to all Orthodox faithful. The first class will convene on Tuesday, September 28 from 7:00 - 8:30 P.M. Participants are asked to bring a notebook and their Bibles.

For more information, please contact the Department of Religious Education at (617) 850-1218.

## SCHEDULE AND CLASS TOPICS

September

28 - Introduction to the Ten Commandments (Decalogue)

October

5 - The First Commandment  
12 - The Second Commandment  
19 - The Third Commandment  
26 - The Fourth Commandment

November

2 - The Fifth Commandment  
9 - The Sixth Commandment  
16 - The Seventh Commandment  
23 - The Eighth Commandment  
30 - The Ninth Commandment

December

7 - The Tenth Commandment

# **Renewal**

RENEWING OUR FAITH & OUR PARISH:  
*Making It Real*

## BAPTISM: UNITING WITH CHRIST

Fr. Anthony M. Coniari

### WHAT IS BAPTISM?

The late Fr. Lazarus Moore of blessed memory wrote a booklet entitled *Baptism as Thirty Celebrations* wherein he enumerates thirty blessings that God bestows on us in the celebration of holy baptism.\* It is evident that God's love holds nothing back. He showers His blessings upon us in infant baptism even before we can know Him in what is pure grace. Let us examine briefly a few of those thirty baptismal blessings.\*

### EXODUS

Baptism is our passage through the Red Sea of sin. Augustine wrote, "Your sins are your enemies. They will follow you, but only up to the Red Sea. When you have entered (the Red Sea through baptism), you will escape: they (your sins) will be destroyed, just as the Egyptians were engulfed by the waters while the Israelites escaped on dry land." Thus baptism is an act of liberation, a paschal experience, an exodus, a passage through the Red Sea of sin and death to the glorious freedom of the children of God. It is the transition from the world that is under the power of the evil one to the world that has been redeemed by Christ.

### A DROWNING

Baptism is our trip to the Jordan River. In this water we are crucified with Christ;

\* Available through Light and Life Publishing Co.

flame" for Christ? In the early Church when the priest handed the baptismal candle to the newly baptized, he repeated the words of Jesus, "Let your light so shine before people, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

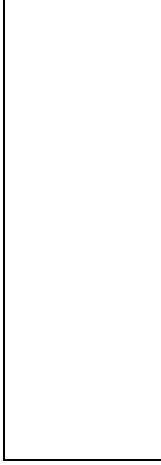
Become "all light" for Him and spread that light to a deeply sin-scarred world. This is the great challenge of our baptism.

+Fr. Anthony M. Coniari

*Father Anthony Coniari has served the parish of St. Mary's/KOMHZZE in Minneapolis since 1948. Ordained a deacon in 1950 and a priest in 1953. He retired as proestamenos in January of 1993, to turn his full attention to Light and Life Publishing of which he is President.*

*A native of Boston, Father Anthony is a graduate of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology and Northwestern Theological Seminary in Minneapolis. He has also attended post-graduate studies in the field of religion and psychiatry at the University of Minnesota and St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota.*

*Father Anthony is a noted author and gifted speaker, known for making the Orthodox Christian faith accessible to all as a contemporary and livable faith. He writes and speaks on subjects including preaching, the priesthood, making God real, daily meditations, the Philokalia and surviving the loss of a loved one.*



## DEPARTMENT OF OUTREACH & EVANGELISM

83 Saint Basil Road ◊ Garrison, New York ◊ 10524  
 telephone 646/519-6160  
 Outreach@goreach.org ◊ www.outreach.goreach.org

important thing is that we should side with grace.<sup>1</sup>

### A MATTER OF DAILY CONCERN

There is no end to baptism; it is ongoing, a lifelong journey. The sins committed following baptism also need to be washed away by water, but this time it is the water of our tears, the tears of repentance. As we renounced the evil one in baptism and united ourselves to Christ, so we need to keep saying "yes" to Jesus and "no" to Satan many times each day as we go through life.

### FAN THE SPARK BACK INTO THE FLAME OF THEOSIS

St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain once said that many Christians through indifference and neglect allow the flame of baptism to die down to a tiny spark. He calls on us to fan that spark back into the flame of theosis, or union with Christ, through heartfelt repentance and prayer.

*Because, brethren, we have fallen into sins after baptism and consequently have buried the grace of the Holy Spirit which was given to us at our Baptism, it is necessary that we make every effort to recover that original grace which is found deeply buried underneath our passions, like an ember in the ashes. This ember of grace we must fan into a new flame in our hearts. In order to do that, we must remove the passions from our hearts as ashes from a fireplace, and replace them with the firewood of obedience in the life-giving commandments of the Lord. We can blow upon the spark with heartfelt repentance of the mind and with the repetition of this prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Word of God, have mercy on me." When this prayer remains permanently in our heart, it cleanses us from the ashes of the passions, and finding the ember of grace within, it strikes up a wondrous and strange fire.*

### BECOME ALL FLAME

One of the Desert Fathers said, "if you will, you can become all flame." Why not become "all

**MERE BELONGING TO THE CHURCH: NOT ENOUGH**  
 One does not become a Christian automatically. Fr Schmemann, a respected Orthodox theologian, said, "It is not mere belonging to the Church that saves, for there is no magic in Christianity, but the acceptance of the Spirit of Christ." St. Peter said, "Repent, and every one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). To become truly a Christian, one must agree freely to be converted, to repent, to turn to Christ, and accept His Holy Spirit.

In baptism there is something that is done by God and something that is done by man. Man responds to God's initiative. He accepts the gift and turns with faith to follow Christ as Lord.

### A PROCESS OF UNENDING GROWTH

The new life, initiated by baptism and sustained by the Eucharist, becomes the way to follow as one walks through this world. This means that salvation is not instant. It begins on the day of our baptism and continues when we renounce the devil, receive Christ, and accept the gift of the Holy Spirit. From that moment we begin a process of slow spiritual growth. The sacraments of the Church provide us with the grace we need to become gods by grace, deified, "partakers of divine nature" as St. Peter says. Our salvation (deification) begins at baptism and continues throughout life. It is a process of unending spiritual growth. "Keep working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation," writes St. Paul (Phil. 2:12).

Simon Tugwell, a patristic scholar, expressed it succinctly when he wrote, *There can be no brisk "On with the new man, off with the old!" A long process of growth is required to bring us to perfection. Baptism gives us an "image of perfection" but this has to mature slowly, just as a baby is, in one sense, fully formed, but still has to grow. The immediate result of baptism is that there are now two "persons" at work in us. Sin and grace coexist in us. The*

<sup>1</sup> *The Study of Spirituality*. Edited by C. Jones, G. Wainwright, E. Arnold, Oxford Univ. Press, New York 1986.

nevertheless we live, sharing His living water. The old sinful nature is drowned in these waters and we rise, as from a grave, to share in the new life of Christ. Baptism is indeed a tomb and a womb. The waters of baptism are our waters of Siloam and our pool of Bethesda. The Spirit breathes upon this water and we enter to be bathed with thirty blessings of God's abundant grace.

#### **AN ADOPTION INTO GOD'S FAMILY**

Through baptism God adopts us as His own sons and daughters. He makes us heirs of all His riches. He makes us members of His family. As members of God's family we are all related to each other and responsible for each other. Yet baptism is more than all of this. Through baptism we are attached to Christ. We become members of His body. Each baptized Christian becomes an extension of Christ. We become other Christs in the world. We become His eyes, His hands His tongue, His feet. Christ has chosen to work in the world through us – the members of His body. It is our special responsibility as baptized Christians to let Christ be present wherever we ourselves are stationed in the world as baptized Christians.

Christ has made Himself dependent on us to do His work in the world today. To quote St. Chrysostom, "Christ is the head of the Church, but what can the head do without hands, without feet, without eyes, without ears, without tongue?"

In baptism the members of our body are anointed with the sign of the cross to signify that they are now dedicated to serve Him since they are members of His Body. Baptism is the sacrament of belonging.

#### **GOD CLAIMS US**

Baptism is God laying claim to you. St. Paul says, "You are not your own, you are bought with a price, so glorify God in your body." God doesn't rent you. He buys you. He holds title to you. He owns you. Through baptism you become His child. And when God adopts you

as His child, He does so for a purpose. He has a plan for you. You're saved from sin. You're saved for service, for love, for good works, for enlarging the kingdom. You're saved into significance. You're saved for theosis. Your life has real worth and meaning. "I know My sheep," said Jesus. "And nobody can pluck them out of my hand."

Following baptism you are God's property. You have the authority to say to the devil, "Take your hands off me. I don't belong to you. I belong to God. I am His property. You have no claim over me. I renounce you!"

#### **A NEW BIRTH**

Baptism is the sacrament of new birth. It is the creation of the new person in Christ. It is to be born anew of water and the Spirit. I had nothing to do with my physical birth. Birth for me was a great gift of God which He wrought through my parents. This first birth was a birth of the flesh. My second birth, the "born-again" birth, was also something with which I had nothing to do. It also was a gift of God wrought for me by God's grace at the baptismal font.

After baptism man is a living member of the Body of Christ. He is no longer mere man, but man transformed, divinized, newly transfigured, begotten as God's own son or daughter. He carries within him the very life of God.

#### **A MANTLE OF SALVATION**

Baptism in the Orthodox Church is far more than the remission of sins. The dominant theme of baptism is positive. As St. Nicholas Cabasilas, a 14<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine theologian points out all the scriptural and traditional terms applied to baptism point to a positive meaning: "birth", "new birth", "clothing", "anointing", "gifts", "washing", "enlightening", "refashioning", "seal", etc. Theodore of Cyrus (393-466 A.D.) confirms this when he writes: *If the only meaning of baptism were remission of sins, why would we baptize newborn children who have not yet tasted of sin? But*

*the mystery of baptism is not limited to this; it is a promise of greater and more perfect gifts. In it are the promises of future delights; it is the type of the future resurrection, a communion with the Master's passion, a participation in His resurrection, a mantle of salvation, a tunic of gladness, a garment of light, or rather it is light itself.*

#### **CLOTHED WITH CHRIST**

St. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote, "The Holy Spirit divinizes (deifies) the person who is baptized." Baptism, according to Orthodox theology, does more than set us free from the bondage of original sin, it clothes us with Christ and makes us partakers of His divine nature. Hence the singing during the baptismal service of the verse from the letter of Paul to the Galatians, "As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ."

At a certain point in the baptismal service, the celebrant priest says to the newly baptized, "You are baptized. You are illumined. You are anointed with the Holy Christ. You are sanctified. You are washed in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." We may add to these words the expression of St. Gregory of Sinai: "Become what you already are," i.e., claim the gift of theosis that God has given you in holy baptism and develop it as you go through life. Grow in the life of Christ which you have received in baptism that you may become a true son or daughter of the heavenly Father.

#### **BETROTHED TO CHRIST**

Through baptism we are betrothed to Jesus. He becomes our Bridegroom. We enter into a marriage relationship with Him that requires love and faithfulness.

#### **THE ROBE OF GLORY REGAINED**

Through baptism we "put on Christ." This has tremendous implications. If we have put on Christ, then we have put on His love, His forgiveness, His peace, His joy. If we have put on Christ, we have put on His servanthood: "if

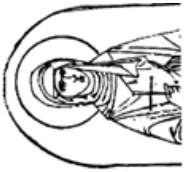
I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, then you also ought to wash one another's feet." If we have put on Christ, then we shall suffer as Christ suffered; we shall be persecuted for the truth as Christ was persecuted. If we have put on Christ, we shall be resurrected as Jesus was. We shall be glorified as Christ was glorified; we shall ascend to the Father as He ascended to the Father. We shall sit at the right hand of the Father with Jesus. We shall partake of His divine nature and share in His life and glory, becoming "gods by grace" as He is God by nature and essence. Some early Church Fathers see this as the recovery of the "robe of glory", lost by Adam at the fall.

#### **A PERSONAL RESPONSE**

Baptism demands a personal response on the part of the baptized child when it grows up. The child must accept what God did for him or her in baptism. For baptism is not a divine pass that will get us into heaven automatically. Dr. Nikos Nissiotis, a well-known Orthodox theologian, once said, "A baptized Christian – especially in the Churches in which infant baptism is practiced – needs to make a personal decision regarding the Christian faith which he has passively inherited from his Christian environment."

Any relationship has to be developed by two parties. The baptized infant has not yet developed a relationship with God. But one party in the relationship has already taken the initiative: God loves us from the first moment of our conception. He takes the initiative to establish the relationship. Infant baptism is an expression of God's wooing love from the first moment of life.

As the child becomes aware of faith in Jesus Christ, he looks back and realizes that something or someone led him to this act of faith. Eventually, he realizes that it all began back there in baptism when God came to him. At that moment he must make a personal response to God, committing his life to Him.



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

## October 2004

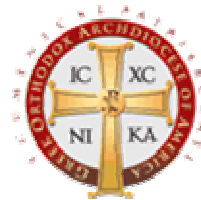
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School 12:00p General Assembly				6:00p Greek School, Mens Group, Catachumen Class.			
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School 12:00p Bourney Memorial		6:30p OCF, dinner and discussion	6:00p Greek School, Mens Group, Catachumen Class.		<a href="#">Atlanta Festival</a>	<a href="#">Atlanta Festival</a>	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
<a href="#">Atlanta Festival</a> 9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School 12:00p Horescu Memorial	<a href="#">Atlanta Festival</a>	<a href="#">Atlanta Festival</a>	6:00p Greek School, Mens Group, Catachumen Class.				
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School		6:30p OCF, dinner and discussion	6:00p Greek School, Mens Group, Catachumen Class.		5:00p - Oct 23, 4: 3:00p OCF retreat at the Diakonia Center	5:00p - Oct 23, 4: 3:00p OCF retreat at the Diakonia Center	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School	5:00p St. Demetrios, Archbishop Demetrios' name day Orthros and Divine Liturgy		6:00p Greek School, Mens Group, Catachumen Class.			<a href="#">Pan-Orthodox Family Retreat and cultural Market at the Cathedral in Atlanta</a>	
31	1	2	3	4	5	6	
9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School			6:00p Greek School, Mens Group, Catachumen Class.				

Rev. Fr. Anthony Salzman  
3761 Mars Hill Road / Watkinsville, GA 30677  
For more information: 770/725-5035



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Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta**

3761 Mars Hill Road  
Watkinsville, Georgia 30677  
For more information: 770/725-5035



Volume 11 — Issue 8  
October 2004