

SUFFERING BRINGS GLORY

At this midpoint of Lent, which the Orthodox Church designates as **CROSS VENERATION SUNDAY**, the symbol of the Cross is put before us. Let these words by Matthew the Poor serve to strengthen and refresh us:

"For Christ, the mystery of the Cross is the mystery of His glory. The overwhelming suffering the Lord underwent, His psychological torment at the injustice and crookedness of His trial, the desertion of His disciples, the treachery of Judas, and the knowledge that the high priests had agreed with one of His disciples to put a value of just thirty pieces of silver on His life — all this was a path for Him to leave the world of passing trivialities and enter into the glory of the Father. We in every time and place must tread the same path. The Cross with its enormous suffering cannot be compared with the glory it brought forth. The Cross did not come by chance into the life of the Lord; He was born for it. "For this purpose I have come to this hour" (Jn. 12:27). Man is born for suffering, and suffering was born for man. But at the same time the Cross was not an irrevocable imposition on the Lord. We feel this from His words and are sure of it in view of His holiness and divinity. He made it irrevocable for Himself — "Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given Me?" (Jn. 18:11) — in order to share with us the inevitability of the suffering."



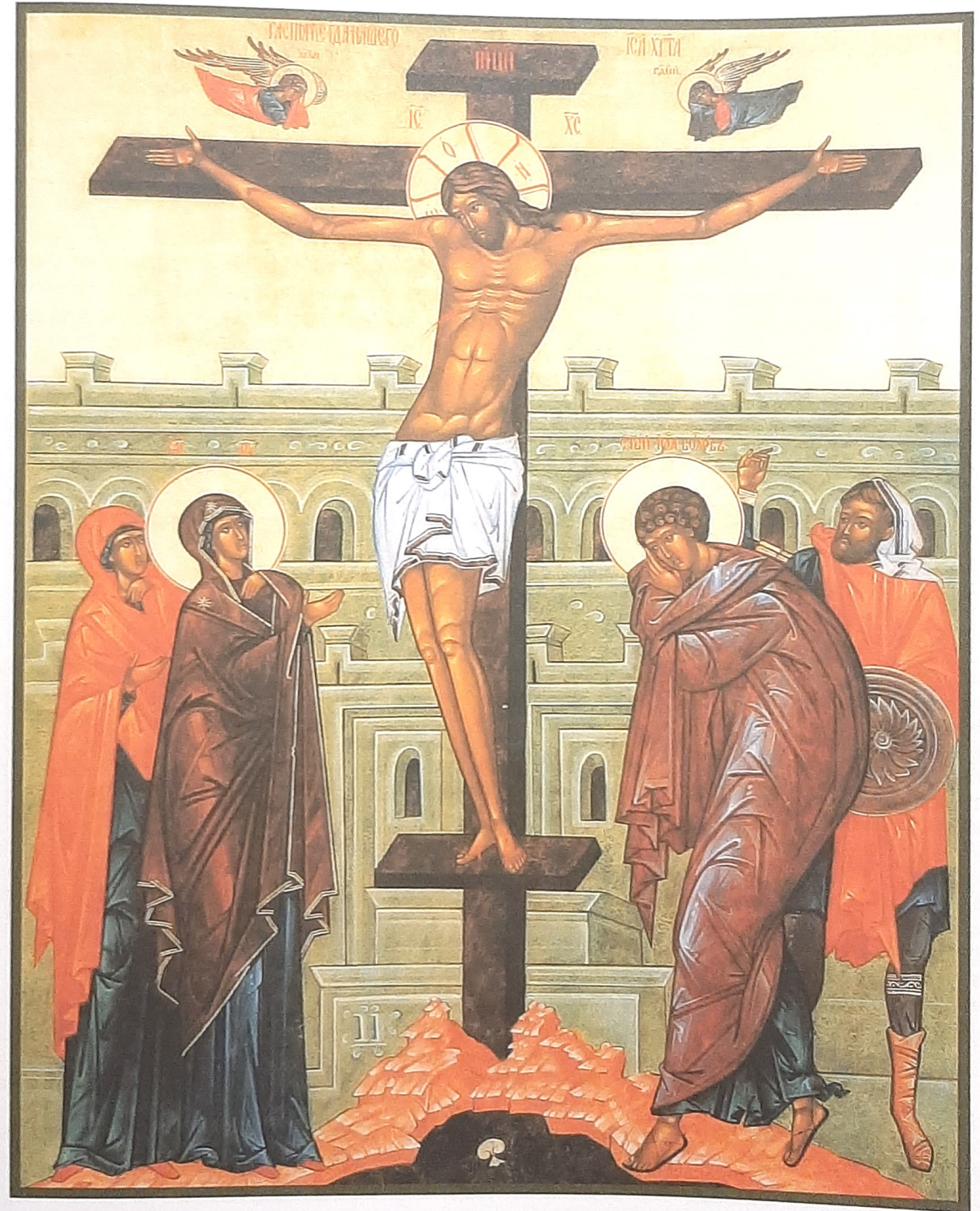
Icon by Nataliya Zharsky

The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey Litho in U.S.A.

ABOUT COMMUNION

We are happy that you have joined us today. Indeed, we pray for the "unity of the Faith" for the day when all of Christianity are united as ONE and can share a common Chalice. However, this is not the case as yet. Please note that Holy Communion, the actual Body & Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, is only for Members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting, and confession, & arrived before the Gospel reading. However, everyone is welcome to partake of the blessed bread and receive a blessing from the pastor at the dismissal. If you are interested, you may inquire with the pastor how you can become a member.

If you are a guest or otherwise not a regular communicant, please give your baptismal name when receiving.





St. Anthony The Great Antiochian Orthodox Church

4031 Aurora Rd., Melbourne, Florida

Mailing address : P.O.Box 267, Melbourne, FL 32902

Very Rev. Fr. Elia Shalhoub, Pastor & Dean of South Florida Deanery

Phone: (305) 812-4940 , E-Mail: elia_shalhoub@yahoo.com

WELCOME TO ST. ANTHONY'S

Where people from around the world come together to serve God and our community. We are glad you are worshipping with us today! This Church is one community of many in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The Church of Antioch belongs to two thousand years of evangelization, teaching, history, and tradition which expresses the continued commitment of its members to the Orthodox Christian faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

St. Anthony Church is a Pan-Orthodox community, under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan SABA within Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

If you are a first time visitor, please fill out the guest form located on the literature table.

We want you to feel at home in prayer and worship. Please submit your names to the ushers and introduce yourself to Fr. Elia at the end of the service so he may welcome you personally.

Following services, please join us for sharing of fellowship, coffee, and food.

DIVINE LITURGY VARIABLES ON SUNDAY, MARCH 23

THIRD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

VENERATION OF THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS

VENERABLE-MARTYR NIKON OF SICILY AND WITH HIM 199 DISCIPLES

DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT

THE FIRST ANTIPHON

The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, has been signed upon us. Thou hast given to those that fear thee a sign, to flee from the bow.

Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive. Thou hast given an inheritance to those that fear Thy Name, O Lord. **(Refrain)** Glory... Both now... **(Refrain)**

THE SECOND ANTIPHON

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Let us worship at the place where His feet have stood.

Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

God is our King before the ages; He has wrought salvation in the midst of the earth. **(Refrain)**

I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth. **(Refrain)** Glory... Both now... O, only begotten Son and Word of God...

THE THIRD ANTIPHON

Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool. O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. Feed them, and lift them up forever.

~ During the Little Entrance, after the verses of the Third Antiphon, chant the Apolytikion of Theophany. the **Holy Cross**. The Eisodikon (Entrance Hymn) is "O come, let us worship... save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead..." as on ordinary Sundays. After the Little Entrance, chant these hymns in the following order:

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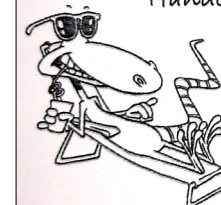


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MESSAGE QUESTIONS TO

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To place your ad in our weekly bulletin call or email Yuliya:

(321) 960-9564 or

2025 PLEDGE DRIVE

(Our Goal for 2025 is \$125,000.00)

**Thank you to the following Parishioners
who already signed their pledge card:**

Anonymous
Armstrong, Samuel
Bobrovsky, Michael & Natalie
Brown, Kevin
Carey, Michealle
Davis, Georgia
Dick, Jeffrey & Holly
Doda, Alina
Dragu, Ionica & Marcel
Ferrell, Zachary
Good, Eric & Marsha
Hall, Alix
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Jackson, William & Sheree
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Mooney, Michael
Morales, Tito
Perers, Susan
Riter, Tristan & Jenny
Shalhoub, Fr. Elia & Odette
Singleton, Steven & Traci
Skaff, Paul & Bobbi
Smith, Patricia
Thieme, Deborah & John
Trainham, Jarod
Vaughn, Isaac
Ziems, Eric

Total from 33 Pledges General Fund \$113,170.00

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE SIX

When Mary stood at Thy grave, looking for Thy sacred body, angelic powers shone above Thy revered tomb; and the soldiers who were to keep guard became as dead men. Thou led Hades captive and wast not tempted thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst give life to the world, O Thou, Who art risen from the dead, O Lord, glory to Thee.

APOLYTIKION FOR THE HOLY CROSS IN TONE ONE

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance, granting to Thy people victory over all their enemies, and by the power of Thy Cross preserving Thy commonwealth.

~ Now sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple

KONTAKION FOR SUNDAYS IN GREAT LENT (AND AKATHIST SATURDAY) IN TONE EIGHT

To thee, the Champion Leader, do I offer thanks of victory, O Theotokos, thou who hast delivered me from terror; but as thou that hast that power invincible, O Theotokos, thou alone can set me free: from all forms of danger free me and deliver me, that I may cry unto thee: Hail, O Bride without Bridegroom.

THE ANTI-TRISAGION HYMN

Before Thy Cross we bow down in worship, Master, and Thy Holy Resurrection we glorify. (thrice)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.
And we glorify Thy Holy Resurrection.

Dynamis!

Before Thy Cross we bow down in worship, Master, and we glorify Thy Holy Resurrection.

THE EPISTLE

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.

Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry, O my God!

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews. (4:14-5:6)

Brethren, since we have a great High Priest, Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to sympathize with our infirmities, but one Who has been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest, being taken from among the people, is appointed on behalf of the people in things pertaining to God, that he may offer up both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant and on those who are erring, since he himself also is encompassed with infirmity. Because of this he is bound, as for the people so also for himself, to offer up for sins. And no one takes the honor upon himself, but as being called by God, as was Aaron. So Christ also did not glorify Himself to become a High Priest, but it was by the One saying to Him, "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee." As He says also in another place, "Thou art a Priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark. (8:34-9:1)

The Lord said, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." And Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

ST. BASIL LITURGY MEGALYNARION

All creation rejoiceth in thee, O thou who art full of grace: the angelic hosts and the race of men. O hallowed temple and spiritual paradise, glory of virgins, of whom God was incarnate and became a little child, even our God who is before all the ages; for he made thy womb a throne, and thy body more spacious than the heavens. All creation rejoiceth in thee, O thou who art full of grace. Glory to thee.

KOINONIKON (COMMUNION HYMN) FOR THIRD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, hath been signed upon us. Alleluia.

~ Post-Communion Hymn: Instead of "We have seen the true light," sing the Apolytikion of the Holy Cross.

Announcements

March is Antiochian Women's Month

During this month, women of will do all of the Epistle readings and Sermons.

	Epistle Readers	Sermon	
Mar 23	Skylla Holland	Yuliya	St. Paul to the Hebrews. (4:14-5:6)
Mar 30	Carrie Matos	Michealle Carey	St. Paul to the Hebrews. (6:13-20)

Mar 23– April 6 Fasting Calendar

Great Lent Fast: Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish, olive oil & wine

Oil and Wine permitted on Saturdays and Sundays

The Feast of the Annunciation is Tues, 3/25. Oil, Wine, and Fish are permitted.

View calendar at <https://tinyurl.com/AOCfast2025>

THANK YOU NATALIE BOBROVSKY FOR SPONSORING THE COFFEE HOUR TODAY



PLEASE SIGN UP ON THE CALENDAR IN THE NARTHEX TO PREPARE AND SERVE FOOD FOR OUR COFFEE HOUR .

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

02: James (Alan) Zolo
03: Abby Zabrodskey
04: Noah Bellinger
08: Bryce Shonka
12: Enrique (Henry) Soto
17: Stella White
20: Rayne Zims
21: Faris Adili, Jeffrey Dick
27: Micah Riter
29: Michael Lieberman B-day
30: Adrian and Carrie Matos Wedding Anniversary

May God Grant You Many Years!

Happy Heavenly Birthday to Ann Shark (March 17) and Luke Delida (March 30)
May their Memory be Eternal!



RAFFLE BASKETS - GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY - SEE PRISCILLA OR ETHAN
MONEY WILL HELP TO COVER FATHER'S HOTEL STAY

FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE COIN BOX PROGRAM

Please make sure to pick up your coin BOX to take home.

You can use a calendar in the back of this bulletin to make collecting coins fun with kids. Boxes will be due back on Sunday after Pascha (April 27).

Following in the footsteps of the Ancient ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

with guest speaker:
FR. STEPHEN DEYOUNG

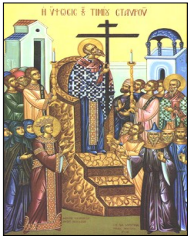
Join us April 5th at 12:00pm EDT
for our Annual DOMSE Women
Hub & Spoke Lenten Retreat

+ SAINT TABITHA + SAINT PRISCILLA + SAINT LYDIA +



she replied: “The languages of touch, the eyes, and the heart!”

1 She served in Greece and many other countries, spending many years serving the poor and the lepers in India. In her old age, she became a nun. The Ecumenical Patriarchate declared her a saint in October 2023.



**SPIRITUAL BOUQUET
FOR THE ADORATION OF THE HOLY CROSS**

has been sponsored by
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IN MEMORY OF

Paul and Maxine Skaff, Ohio and Barbara Hall, Guy and Addie Carey,
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Alfred Fairbrother, Anne Briscoe, Tom and Mary Robinson,
Joseph and Shirley Górczyński, Jerry Dick,

FOR THE GOOD HEALTH OF

Paul Alex and Bobbi Skaff and Family, Michealle Carey, Joey Carmel,
Rebecca Viel, Maire Johnson

The 6th AMEN Lenten Virtual Retreat

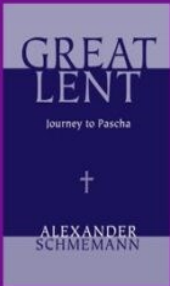
Join us for a book discussion and for shared experiences of Great Lent!



Saturday, April 5, 2025

Starts at 9:00 am Eastern

**Join our email newsletter
to receive the Zoom link!**



Upcoming Events

This Week

Sunday, 3/23

8:45 am: Matins Service

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy, followed by The Veneration of the Holy Cross

Coffee Hour

Monday 3/24: 5:30 pm Great Compline

Wednesday 3/26: 5:30 pm Lenten Vespers

Friday, 3/28: 5:00 pm Akathist Service

Saturday, 3/29

4:00 pm: Catechism Class

5:30 pm: Great Vespers

followed by Confessions

Upcoming Sunday Calendar

Below lists the upcoming Sundays from January 26th until Holy Pascha, which falls on April 20th this year. We invite you to join us each week for Sunday Liturgy to celebrate this special commemoration of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection. Please mark these special dates on your calendar.

March 23: 3rd Sunday of Lent
(Elevation of the Holy Cross - wear your crosses)
March 30: 4th Sunday of Lent
April 6: 5th Sunday of Lent
April 13: PALM SUNDAY
April 18: GOOD FRIDAY
April 20: HOLY PASCHA
April 27: THOMAS SUNDAY



**TODAY'S HOLY BREAD IS SPONSORED BY RITER FAMILY
IN MEMORY OF JENNY'S FATHER JAMES.
MAY HE REST IN PEACE AND MAY HIS MEMORY BE ETERNAL.**



Sunday School News

We are starting to work on Creative Arts Festival. The theme is "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." +Luke 1:38

Dear Parents, please mark these dates for our meetings: Sunday, March 30 finish up in Sunday School.

March 23 No Sunday School (Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross)
Saturday, April 12 St. Lazarus Retreat at 11am-1pm (Session with Abouna, food, crafts, Easter Egg Hunt).



Teen SOYO Virtual Retreat
Saturday, April 5 at 8pm-9pm
Ask Ms. Holly for details

FOOD FOR THE NEEDY (Basket in the Foyer)
Please remember to bring non-perishable food as you attend church services.
It will be distributed to the needy within the local community.



Please pray for the healing of Michealle Carey, Debbie Thieme, Adriana Theodoropoulos, Beverly Delida, Alix Hall, Nina and Diogo Penas, Beth Manzini, John Archambeau, Alex & Soula, Susan Moran, William Snell, Vasilika Yardines, and Faouzi Najjar



**THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
(VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS)
BELOVED IN CHRIST**

Courage

The virtue of courage and strength must accompany patience. Only the one who has courage can truly be patient in all things. To be courageous means simply not to be afraid. Scriptures readings in both the Old Testament and New Testament are reminders.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord!" (Psalms 27.1,14; 31.24).

"Be vigilant, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong." (1 Corinthians 16.13).

The virtue of courage is expressed not only in times of persecution and suffering, but also in the face of ridicule and disdain. It is expressed as well simply, in the smallest, most common things of everyday life. In Christ's parable of the talents, the man with little lost even the little that he had and was cast into outer darkness because he failed to use his small gift through lack of courage: *"I was afraid and hid your talent in the ground"* (Matthew 25.25–30). The person with courage faces all things with strength and lives every day, in every little thing, with the power of Christ. To be "faithful in little" is a sign of great courage. The saints were eminently courageous in their lives and considered this virtue to be central in their spiritual life.

"If you wish to make a right beginning in your spiritual activity, first prepare yourself for the temptations that will befall you. For the devil has the habit of visiting with terrible temptations those whom he sees starting a righteous life with ardent faith. . . . Therefore prepare yourself to courageously meet the temptations which will surely assail you, and only then begin to practice them." (+Saint Isaac of Syria, 'Directions on Spiritual Training')

"Cowardice is a childish disposition in a . . . vain-glorious soul . . . a falling away from faith that comes through expecting the unexpected . . . a rehearsing of danger beforehand in fear, a loss of conviction... He who has conquered cowardice has clearly dedicated his life and soul to God." (+Saint John Climacus, 'The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 21')
- Fr. Thomas Hopko 'The Virtues'

**Your servant in Christ,
Fr. Elia Shalhoub
Very Rev. Fr. Elia Shalhoub, Pastor**

Bible, is the underlying motive of that good deed. If pure love drives you to serve others, your service will be complete and sound, and will resonate in the other person's heart, even if it falls short of his or her material needs. However, if the motivation is personal (seeking a favor), professional (seeking a transaction), social (seeking status), etc., the others may have their needs met, but they will feel manipulated. How necessary it is for both clergy and laity working in the fields of service and ministry in general - and in the Church in particular - to be alert and aware of the importance of the continued presence of the Christian spirit of service and ministry in their hearts, behavior, and interactions with those in need.

Those who serve and minister to others often fall into the trap of limiting their outreach to what they deem sufficient. They no longer care about listening to what the Holy Spirit says and drawing inspiration from the Church's teachings in carrying out their ministry. They prioritize form over content, quarrel among themselves, and compete with other organizations. There are many other pitfalls. Isn't all of this at the expense of those served, for whom the ministry was originally created? Likewise, the primary focus must be on the person being served, not the technology that serves him or her. The person is the goal and the means. Concern over the continuity, development, and advancement of the service, both materially and formally, leads to the temptation of following purely worldly constructs and principles without baptizing them with the spirit of the gospel. There is, of course, no harm in drawing on the successful experiences of others, utilizing media, communication, and contemporary sciences in management, accounting, and organization. However, the danger lies in becoming absorbed in these areas at the expense of neglecting the role of the served and God in blessing and developing the service. God is our reference point when we consider the plans, proposals, and offers presented to us, not the other way around. If, after examining them with the light of the Holy Spirit, they appear to be in line with our Christianity, we embrace them. Otherwise, we discard them, no matter how important they may seem, lest God's presence in our work becomes form rather than substance. It is easy for God to become a name or a facade for a charitable organization which might betray Him, working against His will. Its members are unaware of the deviation taking place and, on the contrary, revel in the worldly, secular success of their organization. There are many varied avenues for expressing love in our ministries nowadays. Some of these require modern sciences such as sociology, education and psychology, plus a thorough understanding of the mindset and phenomena of each age or segment of humanity. This, undoubtedly, greatly helps people who minister to understand the conditions and needs of the people they serve, enabling them to use the appropriate language to address them. However, they must not forget that love is the most important language used in this service. Otherwise, the ministry becomes merely social work, and regardless of its advancement and generosity will be unable to provide the "good portion" necessary for those who are served. Mother Gavrilia1, who dedicated her life to healing all people for free, was asked how many languages she knew (she spoke several), and

Ministering in Love

His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

The term “social service” has come to refer to all the services of charity performed by the Church. Of course, the term "service of love" sounds more beautiful because it reflects the Christian character of this type of outreach. But the predominance of worldly language over spiritual language is evident here. What is the difference between the two terms? When the word love is used, the Christian quality of service is kept, at least in theory, as well as the purpose and motivation of this ministry, and thus the reminder of the keeping of the spirit of Christian love remains possible. When the Christian term “love” is replaced by the secular term “social,” then love could be forgotten. It is then easy to remove personal love and render service incomplete as merely a performance or a function. Even if the social service is highly skilled, it does not penetrate the human soul and can even harm it. The love of Christ for “the least of his brethren,” that is, those with great needs, is supposed to be the first and fundamental motivation for the service of Christian love. Otherwise, "social work" prevails at the expense of Christian spirituality. The Lord's first and great commandment is the Christian starting point in the service of love. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind... The second commandment is like this: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:36-39).

The Christian understanding of love, according to this evangelistic standard, is directly linked to the love of God, which finds its highest expression in the love of creation and humanity. Through the love of God, our love becomes lasting, enduring, patient and sacrificial, seeking not what is for ourselves, but what is for others. At the same time, the act of loving others shines in the loving person as purification, cleansing, endurance, and patience. Thus, that person increases in openness of heart and rootedness in the love of God. The love of God is linked to the love of humanity, and vice versa. The first epistle of St. John the Evangelist states: “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar... This is Christ’s commandment to us: whoever loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21). St. Dorotheus of Gaza depicts this relationship in a very expressive geometric image: a circle, with the center symbolizing God, and the points on the perimeter symbolizing humanity, with each point symbolizing a person. The radius represents the path a person takes to God. The closer the radii are to the center, the closer they are to each other. Conversely, the further they are from each other, the further they are from the center. Such is the relationship between the love of God and the love of humanity.

Likewise, Christian love is concerned with the inward, not the outward. Not every action that appears outwardly good is truly a testament to love. Not every good action, in and of itself, is necessarily an expression of Christian love. In other words, not every action that appears good from worldly perspectives is good from a Christian perspective. Christ looks at the heart, not at outward actions. He condemned the Pharisees for their concern to show off their "good" deeds while they were not good on the inside. "You are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inside are full of dead people's bones and all sorts of filth. You appear righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness" (Matthew 23:27-28). "You Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and plate, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness" (Luke 11:39). A person may do good, but what matters most, according to the

TODAY'S FEAST: (VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS)



With the help of God, we have almost reached the middle of the course of the Fast, where our strength has been worn down through abstinence, and the full difficulty of the labour set before us becomes apparent. Therefore our holy Mother, the Church of Christ, now brings to our help the all-holy Cross, the joy of the world, the strength of the faithful, the staff of the just, and the hope of sinners, so that by venerating it reverently, we might receive strength and grace to complete the divine struggle of the Fast.

Adoration of the Holy Cross Sunday (3rd Sunday of Lent)

At this mid-point of the fast, the Church, as our Loving Mother, is reminding us why we are struggling... to celebrate the Great and Holy Week of Christ's Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. The Gospel at the Divine Liturgy for this feast is Mark 8:34 - 9:1. St. Theophan (Thoughts of Each Day of the Year, St. Herman Press, Platina, CA, 2010, p 68-69) commenting on verse 8:34 ("whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.") reminds us how every Christian must carry a cross:

It is impossible to follow the Lord as a cross-bearer without a cross, and everyone who follows Him unfailing goes with a cross. What is this cross? It consists of all sorts of inconveniences, burdens, and sorrows -- weighing heavily both internally and externally -- along the path of the conscientious fulfillment of the commandments of the Lord, in a life according to the spirit of His instructions and requirements. Such a cross is so much a part of a Christian that wherever there is a Christian, there is this cross, and where there is no such cross, there is no Christian. Abundant privileges and a life of pleasure do not suit a true Christian. His task is to cleanse and reform himself. He is like a sick person who needs cauterization or amputation; how can this be without pain? He wants to tear himself away from the captivity of a strong enemy, but how can all this be without struggle and wounds? He must walk counter to all the practices that surround him, but how can he sustain this without inconvenience and constraint? Rejoice as you feel the cross upon yourself, for it is a sign that you are following the Lord on the path of salvation which leads to heaven. Endure a bit. The end and the crowns are just around the corner!

- St. Theophan the Recluse

May God give us strength to fulfill our high calling.

PREPARING FOR GREAT LENT

As our Lenten journey continues with prayer, fasting and almsgiving, please consider the way our membership in The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch allows us to touch people's lives

Giving Alms

"We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give." - Author unknown

Almsgiving is giving of ourselves and having the opportunity to change lives. It is a responsibility that should be taken seriously and its meaning understood within the Orthodox Church.

Everyone has all been asked or called upon to ask others to give to charitable causes. Does giving alms

within the context of the church mean something different? Hopefully, you will be given some thoughts and ideas to allow you to answer "yes" to this question. First and foremost, it helps to prioritize giving. When giving to the Church first, God is put first; then other giving can help serve a community need or some other supportive purpose. Putting God first acknowledges His power and authority to determine what is in our best interests.

There are two common responses when a beggar is asking for money. Some walk by rationalizing all the reasons why this beggar should not have the donation: He probably would buy alcohol or drugs so he has been helped by not being given the money. This writer's typical response was the former, holding back thinking it was the right thing to do. Once, while was visiting a priest friend in Houston and traveling with him along one boulevard, there were people at each corner holding out tin cups. Each time the priest passed one, he put a quarter into a cup and then moved on. He did not engage the individual nor question the need; he simply gave. It is up to God to judge the recipient and not anyone else.

Giving to the poor is like lending to the Lord and He will pay you back. (Compilation from the Old Testament).

Just think, the Lord guarantees the "loan" made to the poor. There is no more secure loan on earth than this. Yet, why are people hesitant to take the Lord up on His offer? Maybe they don't realize that He has already paid back. Just think of all the good things that have been bestowed. St. Arsenios of Paros said: "If you want Christ to bless you and what you have, when you meet some poor individual who is hungry and asks you for food, give him. Also, when you know that some poor man, widow, or orphan is hungry, do not wait for them to ask for food, but give them. Have faith that Christ invisibly blesses your few possessions." The story about the poor woman who gave from her need in Mark 12: 41-44 is familiar: Jesus sat down opposite the offering place in the temple and watched the crowd as they put their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts but a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all others. They gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on." Jesus is saying that it is not the amount given, but how it is given. There is another message - it is not how much is given but how much we leave for ourselves. We learn from the poor widow that there is a connection between our heart and our alms giving. God looks into our heart not at how much we give.

Why is giving from the heart important? If possessions are treasured so much that it pains one to give some of it up then giving is not "God-inspired". While on this earth we are only stewards of God's gifts so when possessions are hoarded it is like stealing from God. St. John Chrysostom said, "Give so you do not lose; do not hoard so that you are not in want, spend so you may gain." When the poor are cared for from the heart, all people involved are transformed.

Why is giving to the church different? In the secular world 1+1=2 but in God's world 1+1=3 as God multiplies any gift. There is importance in giving to and through the Church. The collective actions of the faithful are taken by God and through Him more good is accomplished than could be done individually. Within the Order of St. Ignatius the generosity of The Order helped build cabins, a new dining hall, and most importantly, provide financial support for over 700 young campers who would not be attending an Orthodox camp.

When giving generously from the heart, the more that is given, the more God gives back. In St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 9: 6-11: "BRETHREN, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance

for every good work. As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God."

The key to giving freely will be found in the gift of faith from God - in fully trusting Him as we give. St. Paul calls our attention to the fact that "God is able to provide [us] with every blessing in abundance, so that [we] may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work" (vs. 8). We can give and never look back in regret.

Food for Hungry People 2025
51st Anniversary Lenten Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
23 How many computers do you own? Pay .30 for each. Let's take a "byte" out of hunger!	24 How many pictures do you have on your walls? Just "picture" yourself without food & deposit .15 for each picture.	25 Pay .30 for each pair of contacts or eyeglasses you have. This will help us "see" clearly the need of caring for the hungry.	26 Do you have musical instruments in your home? Pay .75 for each. This is a "key" to sharing and caring.	27 How many loaves of bread do you have in your home? Pay .25 for each. Give them this day their daily bread!	28 Count your tea or coffee cups and deposit .10 each. Our "cup" runneth over, so let's fill theirs.	29 "I've got my love to keep me warm," that's true, but the hungry have only you. Pay .25 for each blanket in your home.
30 How many cars are in your family? You can't "Dodge" the hungry, but you can af"Ford" to pay .50 for each car.	31 "Day by day," from dawn till night, Hunger knows no hour - nor if it's day or night. Pay .20 for each lamp in your home.	April 1 How many cameras do you have? Pay .30 for each. This will help us make all "negatives" positives.	2 How many shows have you "streamed" today? Put in .20 for each. Let's "streamline" food to the hungry.	3 Count the scissors you have in your home and pay .25 for each pair. Let's "cut-out" the hunger in hunger-y!	4 How many members are in your family? Pay .20 for each. The hungry have families to feed also; let's make this a real "family affair!"	5 How many towels are in your home? If you pay .05 for each towel, this may help us "wipe out" hunger for all people.
6 "Hey Big Spender" drop a coin in the slot - give unto others what they haven't got! Put in a coin or bill of your choice.	7 How many heads of lettuce are in your refrigerator? Pay .30 for each. "Lettuce" show the hungry that we care.	8 Count the cans in your cupboard. Pay .05 for each. Don't let their cupboards be like "Old Mother Hubbard's!"	9 How many friends do you have on Facebook? Pay .05 for each friend. Let's be-"friend" those in need.	10 How many sweaters do you have? Pay .10 for each. Sweaters keep you warm. This is one time they won't mind if we "pull the wool over their eyes."	11 How many chairs are in your home? Pay .15 per chair. We can't just "sit" around when so many people are hungry.	12 How many cookbooks do you own? Pay .20 for each. We will be able to "cook up" a better recipe for the hungry to live by.