



THE ST. GEORGE Grapevine

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St. George Orthodox Cathedral • Charleston, WV



Orthodox Christian Witness In Our Contemporary Circumstances - Part 2

By His Grace Bp. Thomas

The fact that we have a different understanding of Christian witness from the West does not in any way excuse us from the task of Orthodox Christian witness. Christ commanded us “preach the Gospel”. Given this imperative, the first thing we must ask ourselves is how do we go about doing that? How do we evangelize in such a manner that reflects our Orthodox faith?

The first clue lies in our self-understanding. I had mentioned in the previous talk that the church is a hospital for the soul. As such, our methods of Orthodox Christian witness must be seen as treatment methods designed to heal the sick. We must be willing to go to the sick and offer them treatment. If they don’t come to us, we go to them. After all, an empty hospital is a useless one. Further, it is necessary to remember that even as we work to heal others that we ourselves are not well. We are being healed, but we are still sick. In witnessing to Christ in the wider world we must take on the role of the “wounded healer”, extending to others the healing that we ourselves are experiencing in the life of the Church, and recognizing our limitations. The worst damage we can do to our cause is deluding ourselves about our own spiritual state.

We must make ourselves available in an unobtrusive fashion. We don’t overtly preach the Gospel with our words but with our actions. We do the necessary spiritual triage. We bind wounds, comfort the sick and dying, clothe the naked, and feed the homeless. We visit hospitals, we help out at soup kitchens. If our community doesn’t have a soup kitchen or a homeless shelter, we start one. We visit nursing homes. Essentially, we make ourselves

available to the spiritually sick, wherever they may be. This will vary depending upon the community in which your parish is located. However, I guarantee that there are spiritually sick people who need us in our own communities. We need only seek them out.

While there are many ways to perform this triage, I will focus my remarks on three areas: the hospital/nursing home setting, the homeless/soup kitchen, and outreach to different cultures. However, once you demonstrate a willingness to evangelize, the Lord will show you what He wants you to do.

Hospital/nursing homes- While the priest is responsible for administering the Holy Mysteries to the sick and dying, our Orthodox laity can and should be trained to visit the sick, elderly, and dying. If the laity visit a certain place long enough, it will become clear that there are people who receive no visitors, no family, and no friends. We can reach out to them, offer them a prayer of comfort and healing, if they are so inclined. At this stage, we make a personal connection with the sick or elderly person by our mere presence and our willingness to spend time with them. As these relationships grow, the medical staff becomes comfortable with our presence and recognizes the importance of our visits. As such, those visiting the hospitals and nursing homes become a point of contact/outreach between the Orthodox parish and the sick/elderly person.

Burial Societies- one of our Antiochian Orthodox priests, Father Josiah Trenham, has established an active “burial society” in his parish in California. Father Josiah explains:

Local burial societies are a time-

honored and ancient Christian custom. The modern multi-billion death industry is a historical novelty, and a very expensive one at that. Today the usual burial involves the expenditure of enough money to buy a new car, and involves practices with the deceased that are not traditionally Christian. The loving care of the departed is an act of love. As the body of the Lord Jesus was cared for by Ss. Joseph and Nicodemus and the Myrrhbearing women, washed, anointed, clothed, and placed with prayer into a tomb, so Orthodox Christians have traditionally buried their loved ones. The burial society of St. Andrew Church continues the ancient traditions of the Orthodox regarding the death and burial of those in the Church, and enables our faithful to bury their dead at an affordable cost.

Two teams of parishioners (one male for male deceased, and one female for female deceased) have been trained by a local mortuary with whom St. Andrew Church has a collaborative agreement in the art of basic burial preparation. This ministry starts at the request of the family of the dying or deceased. Parish families make contact with the parish office, and our Burial Society makes the initial contact with the family to assess their needs and wishes. The one who is dying is visited, and at the request of the ailing or family members, members of the society pray with and for the ailing until he falls asleep in the Lord. Prayers are said and bedside vigil is held to usher the dying into the hands of his/her Guardian Angel who will take the deceased into the presence of the Lord. The prayers begin before death and continue through the 40

Cont. on page 5

ANCIENT FAITH RADIO

In the new year, Fr. Stephen’s bible study sessions can be heard on the Internet through Ancient Faith Radio.





Christians or Church People

By Subdeacon George M. Damous

The term prelest is a Russian word which has come into English usage for lack of a precise equivalent, although it is often translated as "spiritual delusion," "spiritual deception," or "illusion." Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov states that spiritual deception is the wounding of human nature by falsehood. Spiritual deception is the state of all men without exception, and it has been made possible by the fall of our original parents. All of us are subject to spiritual deception. Awareness of this fact is the greatest protection against it. Likewise, the greatest spiritual deception of all is to consider oneself free from it. We are all deceived, all deluded; we all find ourselves in a condition of falsehood; we all need to be liberated by the Truth. The Truth is our Lord Jesus Christ (John 8:32-14:6).

He that is not faithful to Christ's teaching, who follows his own will and knowledge, will submit to the enemy, and will pass from a state of self-deception into a state of demonic deception, will lose the remnant of his freedom, and in the end he will become totally enslaved to the devil. The more advanced a man is in holiness, the deeper is his awareness of his own sinfulness. Conversely, the less refined a man is, the weaker is his awareness of his own sinfulness.

The information provided by our fathers of the Church in explaining prelest helps us to see the potential arrogance we have in ourselves. This arrogance occurs when we do not notice our sinfulness. We

may also think ourselves righteous and good. Remember in the Gospel Jesus is told by the Disciples that He is good. Jesus responds, "Who is good, but the person who follows the law of God." Prelest also is found in people who believe they understand things that no one else does. For example, a Christian was describing an event from Scriptures but was incorrect in the understanding of Jesus' meaning. An argument ensued and when asked what church professed this inaccurate teaching, the person responded, "I am not stupid, I can interpret Scriptures without the Church." Needless to say it is best to stay away from such a person who is so deluded they believe they interpret Scriptures with no guidance. Let us not be deluded and arrogant in thinking we do not have to change our ways.

All things are Christ's, and Christians are his executors or stewards. Therefore we have a responsibility to Christ to care for His House, His Church. So we must care for God's flock, regardless of our standing as clergy or layman. If one member of His flock is lost, any one of us is responsible for returning the lost one. The Bishop wears a vestment called the Omophorion, which looks like a wide stole. You may notice it being removed and placed on the Bishop's shoulders throughout the Divine Liturgy. It represents the "lost sheep" which the Lord found and carried on His shoulders.

Some Christians stray from the Church because of other parishioners or clergy or events from the past. Can one's faith be so weak or one's love for the Creator of all things be so shallow to allow anyone to keep them from their Lord God? On the other hand can one take pride in saying they have "chased" someone from the House of God, whether clergy or layman? Is this not what Satan attempts to do to God's followers? Some of our parishioners may have strayed due to fatigue or weakness of the flesh. Some stray due to errors in their behavior or thoughts. Do we as Christians forgive or as "church people" condemn? "Church people" look at the person or the event such as the church services in a human context; by that I mean, is it interesting, is it too long, he talks too loud, or his sermons are too long, and therefore I do not want to attend Church. A Christian comes and looks upon these flaws and actually overlooks these flaws and sees the bigger picture. Christians come for salvation; to worship



God; and to meet God in His House and to worship with the heavenly hosts. When we attend the Divine Liturgy, our loved ones who have passed on before us are there with us worshiping the Lord also. For us not to attend Church because we are angry; to have venom in our hearts; and for our hearts to be hardened; distresses our loved ones because they see the benefits of the softening of the heart with love. Therefore, although actions are similar between "church people" and Christians, the Christian view of everything is based on love and forgiveness and tolerance; instead of the "church people" basing their views on material and earthly duties that they perform and their unforgiving of others.

We are instructed as Christians to show respect to everything that pertains to divine worship: holy places, sacred things, services and liturgies, as well as the servants of God who are ordained into his service. Through our clergy we receive our salvation as indicated in Matthew chapter 18:18, "Assuredly I say unto you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Jesus said in the book of Luke he who rejects you rejects me and it is also written touch not mine anointed. St. John Chrysostom wrote the lack of respect for ecclesiastical superiors as the source of all evil.

"Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church, let him be to you like a heathen and tax collector." (Matthew 18:15-17)

"Peter came to Jesus and said, Lord how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times? Jesus said to him, I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times. – Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ...one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents. But as he was unable to pay, his master commanded that he be sold with his wife and children and all that he had and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master have patience with me, and I will pay you all. Then the master was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

Cont. on page 3



THE ST. GEORGE Grapevine

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<http://www.stgeorgecharleston.org/>

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Church School News

By Layla Michael

December brings us the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let us not get caught up in the commercialization that comes with the holiday, but instead let us all remember the true meaning of what Christmas is really about. The story of the Nativity of Christ is beautifully told in the Holy Scriptures. The story is found in Matthew 1:18-25 and in Luke 2:1-20. No matter how often the Birth of Jesus is told, we realize that it is an important event.

"Fear not for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior; which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:11-12).

Please join us for our annual Christmas Program on Sunday December 18, 2016 after Liturgy in the gymnasium. All of our church school children have been practicing for the program so please support them with your presence.

We ask that all church school families donate food on Dec. 18 for the special coffee hour that will follow the program for all to enjoy.

If your last name starts with A-M, please bring a fruit or vegetable tray. If your last name starts with N-Z, please bring a dessert of your choice or cheese and crackers.

Church School will be on break following our program and will resume regular Church school on January 8, 2017.

During the month of January we will be preparing for our

Creative Arts Festival. This years theme will be "My House Shall Be Called A House Of Prayer For All Nations" Mark 11:17

Please encourage your children to participate in this festival, there are 5 different categories. Art, Writing, Poetry, Photography, and Media. Each student is allowed one entry per category for a total of 5 entries per student. For more information please go to <http://www.antiochian.org/festivals>.

During the month of February we will continue preparing for the creative arts festival and will hold at least one art workshop following Liturgy. Lunch will be provided upstairs followed by working on our art projects with Ms. Pam Hughes in the art room.



"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"

Luke 2:13,14.

Cont. from page 2 Christians Or Church People

But the servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 denarii; and laid hands on him by the throat demanding he pay him the debt. So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him saying, 'Have patience with me and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but threw him into prison. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done.....they told their master. Then his master called him in and said, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all the debt because you begged me. Should you not also have compassion on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?' And his master delivered him to the torturers until he should pay his debt. So My Heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Let us celebrate joyously the feast of the Nativity in peace and goodwill. Satan rejoices when God's Church is troubled, in conflict or divided. Do we serve God our Lord or the evil one? Are we Christians or "church people?"

Christ is born! Glorify Him!





Cont. from page 1 Orthodox Christian

day memorial and beyond.

After repose the Burial Society prepares the body according Orthodox tradition: Praying for the departed, bathing and anointing the body with oils, arranging the body in repose (this is an involved process), dressing the deceased in baptismal garments or the garments of choice, helping in the preparation for the wake/visitation, funeral services, and burial. The St. Andrew Burial Society has arranged to work alongside a local mortuary whose services are employed for the securing of the death and bodily transport certificates, as well as for transporting the deceased to the church and/or cemetery per the family's request. Following the funeral and burial rites the departed is put into a Necrology, which is a Book that has a record of every parishioner who has fallen asleep in the Lord and whose memory we keep in the St. Andrew Family. The book records where each of the departed is buried so that each year the Burial Society arranges for visitations to and blessing of the parish graves. The Burial Society also provides the clergy of the church with notification for 40 day and annual memorials of the reposed.

By employing the Burial Society, the

family of the deceased is able to significantly reduce the costs for after death care and burial from a typical \$12-15,000 to under \$5,000. Coffins are secured by the Burial Society and kept at the parish from a local Orthodox Monastery for between \$800-\$2,000. Using the Burial Society allows parishioners to reduce their mortuary costs to approximately \$700. If a grave is secured with Evergreen Cemetery with whom St. Andrew has an abiding relationship, each grave may be purchased for approximately \$2,500.

Soup kitchens/homeless shelters- in the Gospel, Christ specifically commands us to "feed the hungry and clothe the naked." If the community has a soup kitchen and/or homeless shelter, members of the parish should be active members. If not, consider starting something on a small scale to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless. Just as the hospital/nursing home/burial society are initiatives in which the laity are chiefly responsible, the parish priest will offer direction and guidance in these endeavors. Saint John Chrysostom said that such a ministry is doubly effective, since the work ministering to the poor provides sustenance for the poor man and provides spiritual benefit for the helper.

Outreach to different cultures- The United States of America is still the world's largest melting pot. In any met-

ropolitan area in the country, you can be assured to find a diversity of cultures, languages, and faiths. Many of our church buildings, especially in inner cities once populated by ethnic Orthodox, now find themselves surrounded by entirely non-Orthodox and perhaps even non-English-speaking minority communities. In our own context, there is a mixing of jurisdictions within each large city. This is an anomaly within Orthodoxy itself and can lead to certain pastoral issues. However, where there are issues opportunities abound. These may present themselves in the ordinary, mundane life of the local community. Immigration, social justice, English as a second language, etc., all present themselves to us as opportunities to introduce ourselves and Orthodoxy to different cultures. If you know your particular community, it won't be difficult to recognize opportunities. It may even start with the simplest of things such as offering the parish hall for an immigration lecture or an AA meeting. The key to becoming involved with the different cultures that exist around the parish is knowledge of your surroundings and your community. If the surrounding population primarily speaks a language other than English, try to familiarize yourself with some of the language, and use it for parts of the Liturgy.

Further, always be willing to encounter people. I know a Catholic priest who was re-assigned to an inner city parish and the first thing he did upon arrival was walk the neighborhoods introducing himself to the people around him. Orthodox Christian witness requires a human touch, a human encounter. It requires a willingness to offer a helping hand without the expectation of return. This is how Orthodox Christian witness begins. Read the beginning of the Synoptic Gospels and you'll find the Lord Christ did the same thing with His disciples. ✙

Kids Corner Q & A

Q. Do we have to give money to poor people?



A. Christians have the responsibility to help people who have needs, including poor people. One reason for this is that God cares about people in need, and we should all try to be like God. You can help the poor in many ways. For example, you can give food to a community food pantry or soup kitchen, serve meals at a rescue mission, give money to programs that help poor children, or give money to organizations that help the poor. Remember, everything you have came from God's goodness and kindness to you. He wants you to treat others the way he treats you.

Key verse: Leviticus 25:35.

Q. Where does the money I give to church go?

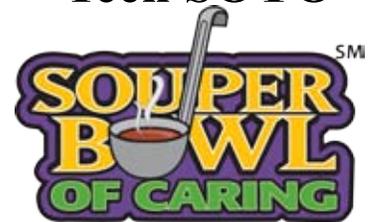


A. It goes to the church's bank account, where it stays until the church treasury writes checks to pay all the church's expenses. The church has to pay for the building, heat, light, phone, postage, Sunday school supplies, priests' salaries, staff salaries, missions and other ministries and expenses. A gift to God's people is a gift to God. Give because you are thankful for all God has given you, and He will take care of you.

Key verse: 1 Corinthians 9:13-14.

From 102 Questions Children Ask about the Bible.

Teen SOYO



Support the teens on "Souper " Bowl Sunday with donations to help the needy in our community.

Correct answers to matching game:
1. G. 2. D. 3.A. 4.F. 5.C. 6.B. 7.E.



Antiochian Women (Ladies Guild)

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you, one and all, who helped to make this year's annual dinner the best ever! Between the carry-out and dine-in diners, we served about 2200. We voted to give \$15,000 to the Flood Relief Mountain Mission Project Hope. We thank Mary Dooley and Diana Shdeed and their committees for a job well done. Everyone's service and contributions were greatly appreciated. "Well done, good and faithful servants."

For the next few weeks we will be collecting monetary donations after church for our annual Christmas greeting card to be sent to all parishioners. The donations received from the Christmas and Easter greeting cards go to the Antiochian Women's Annual Project which this year is "Strengthening the ministry of our church". So please give generously.

We will have our Christmas get-together, for ladies only, on Saturday, Dec. 10, at 7 p.m. at the home of Athena Howard. All ladies attending the Christmas gathering are asked to bring an unwrapped children's book and \$5.00 to purchase

items for a needy family. Our last meeting of 2016 was Monday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m. Newly elected officers are President-Gigi Michael, Vice President-Sharon Zegeer, Secretary-Natalie Tappe, Treasurer-Laura Ede, Corresponding Secretary-Pat Elias, Chaplain-Rita Damous Kee, Parliamentarian-Maryann Skaff. Have a blessed Feast of the Nativity and a Happy and Healthy New Year. ✝

A Toast to the New Year



May you have :
 Enough success to keep you eager,
 Enough failure to keep you humble,
 Enough joy to share with others,
 Enough trials to keep you strong,
 Enough hope to keep you happy,
 Enough faith to banish depression,
 Enough friends to give you comfort,
 Enough determination to make each Day better than yesterday.
 Best Wishes for the New Year.

Senior Fellowship

I, Maryann Skaff, chairman of the Senior Fellowship, do apologize for not having any dinner/programs this year. Due to unforeseen circumstances, I postponed all gatherings until after the new year. Depending on Old Man Winter's "visits", we may get together in January or February. If not, it will be in May! So watch the bulletin for details. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Thank you for understanding. ✝



"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver."

II Corinthians 9:7

Do not forget to make your pledge for 2017 to keep St. George Cathedral up and running as our parents and grandparents would have done, for we are one big family in God's house. ✝

Matching Christmas Customs

Match the lettered answers to the numbered custom.

Answers to matching game:

A. Hungary

B. Spain

C. Hawaii

D. Holland

E. Greece

F. Palestine/Israel /Bethlehem

G. Philippines



- ___ Where the weather is warm at Christmas, great wreaths and chains of cut flowers are carried through the streets by singing children, parading behind bands.
- ___ At midnight Christmas Eve, men in colorful costumes March over the streets chanting "Gloria in Excelsis" and carrying high on a long pole a large star lighted by several candles.
- ___ Children place their shoes on the doorstep on Christmas Eve. Next morning good children find sugar has been placed in their shoes and naughty children have switches in their shoes.
- ___ Pilgrims crowd into the Church of the Nativity, the natural cave in which they believe Christ was born, to pray and kiss the silver cross imbedded in the marble floor.
- ___ Christmas, rather than the Fourth of July, is the time when firecrackers abound. Flowers, blossoming in profusion at Christmas time, are braided and thrown around the necks of holiday merrymakers.
- ___ Before the family sets out for church on Christmas Eve, children place their shoes in rows on the balcony with straw and grain in them for the horses of the Three Kings, so the steeds may not go hungry while the Magi are worshipping at the manger. Returning from church, the children find the Three Kings have toys and candy in their little shoes.
- ___ The "Blessing of the Waters" climaxes the Christmas Season on Jan. 6, the Orthodox Christmas Day. In maritime towns, the priest from the church nearest the waterfront, carries a wooden cross to the water's edge followed by the clergy and whole populace. As he hurls the sacred emblem into the water, youths plunge in to recover it and receive the priest's blessing.



CALENDAR
Weekly Schedule

Check the weekly bulletin for updates, changes or cancellations.

Mon.-Fri.: 12:30 pm Sixth Hour/confession

Wed.: 6:30 pm Vespers & Family Night

Thurs.: 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal:

Sat.: 5:00 pm Great Vespers

Sun.: 9:15 am Junior Choir, 9:30 am Matins; 9:45 am Church School; 10:30 am Divine Liturgy; 6:30 pm Bible Study

- Dec** December
 2: 6:30pm Evening Divine Liturgy w/Talk from Bp. Thomas
 5: 6:30 pm Evening Liturgy - St. Nicholas - Talk by Bp. THOMAS; 7:30 pm Ladies Guild
 6: 6:30pm Vespers w/Talk by Bp. THOMAS; 7:30 pm Parish Council Meeting
 7: 6:30pm Paraklesis/Family Night
 8: 6:30pm Vespers w/Talk by Bp. THOMAS
 9: 6:30 pm Paraklesis
 11: 7:30 pm Choir Cantata
 14: 6:30 pm Paraklesis/Family Night
 16: 6:30 pm Paraklesis
 17: 10:00 am Christmas Play Rehearsal
 18: 12:00 pm Church School Christmas Program

December 2016						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

January 2017						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

February 2017						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

- 21: 6:30 pm Paraklesis
 23: 9:00 am Royal Hours of the Nativity
 24: 10:00 am Divine Liturgy - Forefeast of Nativity; 5:00 pm Great Vespers – Nativity
 25: Christmas-9:30 am Matins of the Nativity of Christ; 10:30 am Divine Liturgy of the Nativity of Christ
 26: Office Closed
 31: 9:30am Manna Meal prep; 5:00 pm Great Vespers – Great Vespers for St. Basil the Great

- Jan** January
 9:30 am Matins for St. Basil the Great; 10:30 am Divine Liturgy for St. Basil the Great
 2: Office Closed
 3: 7:30 pm Parish Council Meeting
 5: 9:00 am Royal Hours of Theophany; 6:00 pm Festal Orthros of Theophany; 7:00pm Festal Divine Liturgy of Theophany w/ Great Blessing of the Waters

- 6: Theophany
 9: 7:00 pm Ladies Guild
 17: 6:30 pm Foundation Board Meeting
 28: 9:30 am Manna Meal prep

- Feb** February
 1: 6:30 pm Evening Liturgy - Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple
 2: Meeting of Christ
 6: 7:00 pm Ladies Guild
 7: 7:30 pm Parish Council Meeting
 21: 6:30 pm Foundation Board Meeting
 25: 9:30 am Manna Meal prep
 27: Lent Begins

Deadline for the next Grapevine issue
 March, April, May, 2017, is Feb. 15, 2017. Place articles in box outside Church office or email ritakee@aol.com

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