

# The Voice In The Wilderness

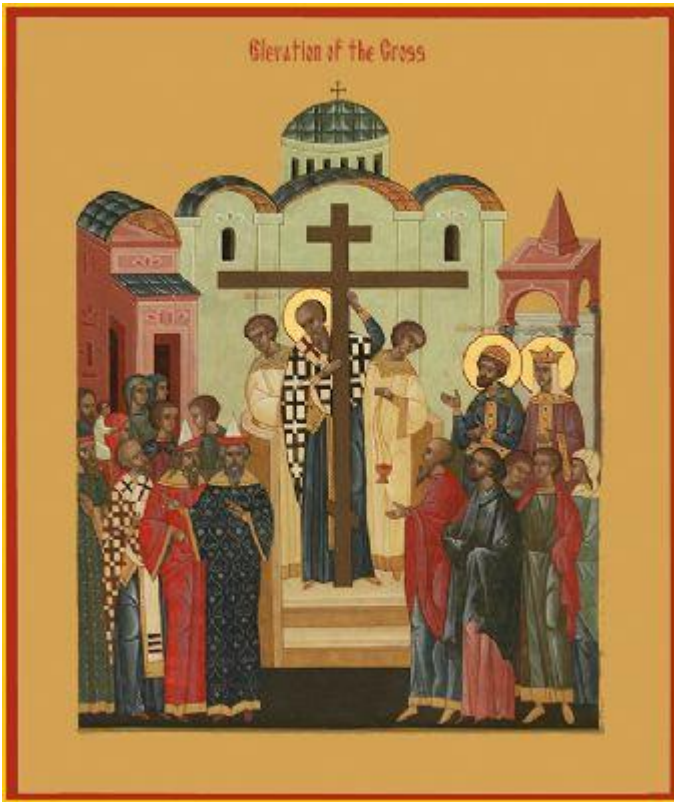
*"A voice crying in the wilderness:  
Prepare ye the way of the LORD..."*

*Matthew 3:3*

The Newsletter of St. John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox  
Christian Church, the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America, an  
Orthodox Christian witness to Cedar Park and Central Texas.

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**The Icon of the Elevation of the Holy Cross**

## September 14 The Elevation of the Holy Cross

The Elevation of the Venerable and Life - Creating Cross of the Lord: The pagan Roman emperors tried to completely eradicate from human memory the holy places where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and was resurrected for mankind. The Emperor Hadrian (117 -138) gave orders to cover over the ground of Golgotha and the Sepulchre of the Lord, and to build a temple of the pagan goddess Venus and a statue of Jupiter.

Pagans gathered at this place and offered sacrifice to idols there. Eventually after 300 years, by Divine Providence, the great Christian sacred remains, the Sepulchre of the Lord and the Life-Creating Cross were again discovered and opened for veneration. This took place under the Emperor Constantine the Great (306 -337). In the year 323 Constantine became the sole ruler of the vast Roman Empire

In 313 he had issued the Edict of Milan, by which the Christian religion was legalized and the persecutions against Christians in the Western half of the empire were stopped. The ruler Licinius, although he had signed the Edict of Milan to oblige Constantine, still fanatically continued the persecutions against Christians. Only after his conclusive defeat did the 313 Edict of toleration extend also to the Eastern part of the empire. The Holy Equal of the Apostles Emperor Constantine, having gained victory over his enemies in three wars with God's assistance, had seen in the heavens the Sign of the Cross, and written beneath: "By this you shall conquer."

Ardently desiring to find the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, St Constantine sent his mother,

the pious Empress Helen (May 21), to Jerusalem, providing her with a letter to St Macarius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Although the holy empress Helen was already in her declining years, she set about completing the task with enthusiasm. The empress gave orders to destroy the pagan temple and the statues in Jerusalem. Searching for the Life-Creating Cross, she made inquiry of Christians and Jews, but for a long time her search remained unsuccessful.

Finally, they directed her to a certain elderly Hebrew by the name of Jude who stated that the Cross was buried where the temple of Venus stood. They demolished the pagan temple and, after praying, they began to excavate the ground. Soon the Tomb of the Lord was uncovered. Not far from it were three crosses, a board with the inscription ordered by Pilate, and four nails which had pierced the Lord's Body (March 6).

In order to discern on which of the three crosses the Savior was crucified, Patriarch Macarius alternately touched the crosses to a corpse. When the Cross of the Lord touched the dead one, he came to life. Having beheld the raising of the dead man, everyone was convinced that the Life-Creating Cross was found.

Christians came in a huge throng to venerate the Holy Cross, beseeching St Macarius to elevate the Cross, so that even those far off might reverently contemplate it. Then the Patriarch and other spiritual leaders raised up the Holy Cross, and the people, saying "Lord have mercy," reverently prostrated before the Venerable Wood. This solemn event occurred in the year 326.

During the discovery of the Life-Creating Cross another miracle took place: a grievously sick woman, beneath the shadow of the Holy Cross, was healed instantly. The elder Jude and other Jews there believed in Christ and accepted Holy Baptism. Jude received the name Cyriacus and afterwards was consecrated Bishop of Jerusalem.

During the reign of Julian the Apostate (361 -363) he accepted a martyr's death for Christ (see October 28). The holy empress Helen journeyed to the holy places connected with the earthly life of the Savior, building more than 80 churches, at Bethlehem the birthplace of Christ, and on the Mount of Olives where the Lord ascended to Heaven, and at Gethsemane where the Savior prayed before His sufferings and where the Mother of God was buried after her death.

St Helen took part of the Life-Creating Wood and nails with her to Constantinople. The holy emperor Constantine gave orders to build at Jerusalem a majestic and spacious church in honor of the Resurrection of Christ, also including under its roof the Life-Giving Tomb of the Lord and Golgotha. The temple was constructed in about ten years. St Helen did not survive until the dedication of the temple, she died in the year 327. The church was consecrated on September 13, 335. On the following day, September 14, the festal celebration of the Exaltation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross was established.

Another event connected to the Cross of the Lord is remembered also on this day: its return to Jerusalem from Persia after a fourteen year captivity. During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Phocas (602-610) the Persian emperor Khosroes II in a war against the Greeks defeated the Greek army, plundered Jerusalem and captured both the Life-Creating Cross of the Lord and the Holy Patriarch Zachariah (609 -633).

The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years and only under the emperor Heraclius (610 -641), who with the help of God defeated Khosroes and concluded peace with his successor and son Siroes, was the Cross of the Lord returned to the Christians.

With great solemnity the Life-creating Cross was transferred to Jerusalem. Emperor Heraclius in imperial crown and royal purple carried the Cross of Christ into the temple of the Resurrection. With the emperor went Patriarch Zacharias. At the gates by which they ascended Golgotha, the emperor suddenly stopped and was not able to proceed farther. The holy Patriarch explained to the emperor that an angel of the Lord was blocking his way. The emperor was told to remove his royal trappings and to walk barefoot, since He Who bore the Cross for the salvation of the world from sin had made His way to Golgotha in all humility. Then Heraclius donned plain garb, and without further hindrance, carried the Cross of Christ into the church.

In a sermon on the Exaltation of the Cross, St Andrew of Crete (July 4) says: "The Cross is exalted, and everything true gathers together, the Cross is exalted, and the city makes solemn, and the people celebrate the feast".

# September 1: The Indiction

## The Start of the Church Year

The Holy Orthodox Christian Church has always celebrated the beginning of the New Year on September 1. This was the custom in Constantinople until its fall in 1453 and in Russia until the reign of Peter I. September 1 is still festively celebrated as the New Year at the Patriarchate of Constantinople; among the Jews the New Year, although reckoned according to a moveable calendar, usually falls in September. Some may ask, "isn't January 1 the accepted Orthodox Christian New Years". The answer is "No" if one looks at the service of the Menaion for January 1 is for our Lord's Circumcision and for the memorial of Saint Basil the Great, without any mention of its being the beginning of a new year.

### How did September 1 become the Church New Year?

The Roman emperors decreed every 15 years the taxes that would be paid over the next 15 years by an imperial order known as the "Indictio" meaning, "to impose." With this money the emperor would recruit and pay his soldiers and pay other expenses of the state over the next 15 years. In A.D. 312, when St. Constantine, Equal to the Apostles was the first Byzantine Emperor, he continued this practice establishing it to be done on September 1. Over time the 15 year taxation was disestablished but the Holy Orthodox Church still began their new year on the day on indiction September 1.

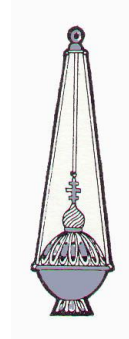
Today the Indiction begins on the 1st of September and is observed with special ceremony in the Church. Since the completion of each year takes place, as it were, with the harvest and gathering of the crops into storehouses, and we begin anew from henceforth the sowing of seed in the earth for the production of future crops, September is considered the beginning of the New Year. The Church also keeps festival this day, beseeching God for fair weather, seasonable rains, and an abundance of the fruits of the earth. The Holy Scriptures (Lev. 23:24-5 and Num. 29:1-2) also testify that the people of Israel celebrated the fest of the Blowing of the Trumpets on this day, offering hymns of thanksgiving. In addition to all the aforesaid, on this feast we also commemorate our Saviour's entry into the synagogue in Nazareth, where He was given the book of the Prophet Esaias to read, and He opened it and found the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for which cause He hath anointed Me..." (Luke 4:16-30). Holy tradition also indicates that September was the month that the Jews entered the land of "Milk and Honey".

## The Orthopraxis of Symbolism in the Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church abounds with the use of symbols. These symbols are those realities which have the power and competence of manifesting God to men, signs which carry us beyond ourselves and themselves into the genuine union and knowledge of things eternal and divine.

Among the Christian symbols we have already mentioned are the icons, the sign of the cross, and the vestments of liturgical celebration. In addition, we can mention the use of various colors which have their particular significance, as well as the use of **light**, normally the natural light of candles, which leads us to Christ, the Light of the world and of the Kingdom of God. Generally speaking, light is a universal symbol for the mystical presence of God as the True, the Beautiful and the Good. This is witnessed in almost all religions, philosophies, and artistic expressions.

The Orthodox Church follows the Bible in its use of **incense** (*Ex 30:8, Ps 141:2; Lk 1:9; Rev 8:3*). Incense is the symbol of the rising of prayers, of spiritual sacrifice and of the sweet-smelling fragrance of the Kingdom of God.



The Church also uses **bread, wine, wheat, oil, water, flowers and fruits** as signs of God's love, mercy, goodness, life and the very presence given to man in creation and salvation. Indeed, all elements of creation find the "truth" of their very being and existence as expressions and manifestations of God, as "symbols" of his presence and action in the world for man. This is the reason for their use in this way in the Church.



Among the more graphic Christian symbols in the Church are the **initials and letters of Christ's name**; the **triangle** of the Trinity; the **circle** of eternity; the **fish** which stands for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour; the **eye** of God's omnipresence; the **anchor** of hope; the **rock** of faith; the **flame** of God's consuming presence; the **vine** which Jesus named himself -- "I am the vine, you are the branches" (*Jn 15:5*); the **alpha** and the **omega** (*Rev 1:8*); the **crown** and **staff** of Christ's kingship; and many others -- all of which indicate some aspect of the saving presence and action of God in the world.

The use of symbols is a mode of revelation and communion which passes beyond that of mere verbal or intellectual communication. The death of symbols comes when they are artificially invented, rationally explained, or reduced to mere "illustrations" whose meaning is not immediately grasped by man on the level of his living spiritual vision and experience.

## STS. THEKLA AND RAPHAEL PILGRIMAGE 2006



With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, The Voice in the Wilderness invites you all join journey to Antiochian Village for a spiritual renewal to honor, love, and further understand Saint Thekla and Saint Raphael. On the weekend of September 22nd - 24th, Antiochian Village will welcome guests from near and far for the annual Saint Thekla and Saint Raphael Pilgrimage. The entire weekend includes sessions for learning and sharing as well as time to enjoy the spiritual oasis offered by the grounds at Antiochian Village. Nestled in the foothills of the Laurel Highlands of western Pennsylvania, it offers an incredible perspective of rolling hills, towering pines, and by September, colorful bursts of changing leaves.

Please visit the Antiochian Village website for registration information. Reserve your space for this wonderful event as soon as possible.

# Our Wondrous Monastic Saints

With the start of the new Church Year, we are starting a 12 month series on " Our Wondrous Monastic Saints". The lives of these monastic saints offer to each of us the special witness and spiritual guidance over the centuries that has come to us from those with this special calling.



## Saint Euphrosynos the Cook

## Saint Euphrosynos the Cook Commemorated on: September 11

Our holy monastic father Euphrosynos was born of simple parents although he surpassed even those of noble lineage in good works. For there are many who are devoid of good works, despite their noble birth, and so are cast down into Hades while the simple in their humility are lifted up to paradise by God as was the godly Euphrosynos. Because of his virtuous life he was translated to paradise, as we will see, and was shown to be an inhabitant there.

Saint Euphrosynos the Cook was from one of the Palestinian monasteries. Euphrosynos lived in a monastery where he served the brethren, laboring in the kitchen and serving them with great humility and submissiveness as though they were not men but God Himself.

He labored in obedience day and night, but he never left off praying and fasting. His patience was inexpressible. He bore much abuse and disparagement and suffered frequent vexations. Scorched by the material fire of the cookstove, he was warmed by the spiritual fire of the love of God, and his heart burned with longing for the Lord. While passing his days preparing food for the brethren, he at the same time prepared a table for himself in the kingdom of God by his virtuous life, where he would eat his fill with those of whom it is said, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.* He served the Lord secretly so that he might be rewarded by Him openly, even as it came to pass.

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The Lord's reward to His servant was made manifest in the following manner. A certain priest who lived in the same monastery prayed fervently to the Lord that He reveal to him the things which are prepared for them that love Him. One night he had a vision. It seemed to him that he was standing in a garden, and as he considered the unutterable beauty of this garden, he saw Euphrosynos, the monastery's cook, walking by. The priest approached him and asked, "Brother Euphrosynos, what is this place? Can this be paradise?"

"It is paradise, Father," answered Euphrosynos.

Again the priest inquired, "How is that you are here?"

Euphrosynos the cook replied, "This is the dwelling place of God's elect, and by God's great goodness I have made my abode here as well."

The priest asked, "Do you have authority over all these beautiful things?"

Euphrosynos replied, "As far as I am able, I distribute to others the things you see here."

The priest inquired, "Can you give me some portion of these things?"

"By the grace of my God, take what you desire," Euphrosynos said.

The priest then pointed to some apples and asked for them. Euphrosynos took three apples, placed them in a kerchief, and gave them to the priest, saying, "Take what you have requested and delight therein."

At that moment, the semantron was struck for Matins, and the priest awoke and came to himself. He thought that he had been dreaming, but when he stretched out his hand to pick up his handkerchief, he found in it the three apples that he had received from Euphrosynos in the vision. They gave off an ineffable fragrance. Amazed, he arose from his couch, placed the apples on the bed, and went to church where he found Euphrosynos standing together with the brethren at the morning service. Approaching Euphrosynos, the priest implored him to reveal where he had been that night.

Euphrosynos replied, "Forgive me, Father; I have been in that place where we saw one another."

The priest said, "You must reveal God's greatness, so that the truth is not concealed!"

But the wise Euphrosynos humbly answered, "You, Father, implored the Lord to reveal to you the reward given to His chosen. The Lord was pleased to make this known to your godliness through me, wretched and unworthy as I am, and thus, we found ourselves together in paradise."

The priest inquired, "What did you give me, Father, in paradise when I spoke with you?"

"I gave you the three fragrant apples which you have placed on your bed in your cell," answered Euphrosynos. "But forgive me, Father, for I am a worm and not a man."

When Matins had finished, the priest summoned the brethren and showed them the three apples from paradise, and he told them exactly what had occurred. All smelled the ineffable fragrance emitted by those apples and discerned their spiritual sweetness, and they marvelled at what they were told by the priest. They hurried to the kitchen to reverence the servant of God, but they could not find him. When Euphrosynos left the church, he hid from the glory of men, and no one knew where he had gone. It is pointless to inquire into his whereabouts, for if he had access to paradise, where could he not have hidden himself?

The brethren divided the apples among themselves and distributed pieces of them as a blessing to many, especially to those who were in need of healing. Whoever ate of these apples was healed of his infirmities, and thus, all received great benefit from the holy and venerable Euphrosynos. The account of the vision was written down not only on scrolls but also in the hearts of those who were told of it, and all who heard thereof strove to increase their labors and please God.

By the prayers of the venerable Euphrosynos, may the Lord deem us also worthy to dwell in paradise. Amen.

## The Minor Orders and Vestments

Every Sunday we see a vast array of vestments before us. Most of us can identify the vestments of our upper clergy---Bishop, Priest, and Deacon but how many of us could identify the vestments of the minor orders of the church clergy. In our parish, the minor orders you may see include the Subdeacon, Reader, and the Altar Boy/Server who may or may not have a tonsure as a candle-bearer. The vestments of the Church are a beautiful and glorious testament to our tradition and our unchanging faith. As we look at those who serve The Most Holy Trinity upon the Altar, we are able to glimpse into the Order and worship of the Most Holy Trinity as it occurs in Heaven.

### *Readers and Singers*

By its title Readers are called clergy, on whom the duty is laid and lays the reading of the Holy Scriptures, with the exception of the Gospel, during the divine services. Since ancient times they were the keepers of the sacred books as well. The Singers, or Psalti, in the ancient Church were the lowest degree of Readers and also goes back to deep antiquity: singers (Psalti) as a special ecclesiastical rank are mentioned in the liturgies of the Apostle James and the Evangelist Mark. For the first three centuries the position of readers was entrusted by privilege to those Christians who confessed their faith before the pagans. It continues to this day as they are the ones who read or chant the hours of the Church in their evangelical witness of the Word of God to the world.

### *The Sub-Deacon*

Sub-deacons serve with the Deacons, Priests, and Bishops. This order has been traced to the foundation by the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles with it being firmly entrenched as a minor order by end of the first century. There is clear mention of it is found in the letters of St. Cyprian and in the Apostolic Constitutions. According to the ancient canons the Sub-deacon prepared the washing of hands of the priestly celebrants, which he already did during his ordination. Also his duty was to lead the catechumens out after the Deacon intones: "all catechumens, depart". He also secured the Royal Doors, so that the unauthorized do not enter the sanctuary. Today Sub-deacons formally have liturgical roles during a hierarchical service. The Sub-deacon's main calling currently is to serve the bishop: they vest him, protect and support him, give him his candlesticks, the lamps, and to hold these lamps. Traditionally Sub-deacons have been men who are in preparation for the diaconate and are in the process of learning the duties of the deacon by observation while serving on the altar. Today, Subdeacons often serve to maintain order and direction among the altar servers to assure proper decorum and service to God.

## *Vestments*

Both the Major and Minor Orders have vestments that are common to them all. With each elevation, from Altar Server/Candle-bearer to Reader to Sub-deacon to Deacon to Priest and from Priest to Bishop, there are some additions that occur in the vestments. Clergy usually vest in what is called the Sacristy, the room where the vestments are kept. In our parish, the clergy vest in the Altar as we do not currently have a Sacristy to vest in. Prior to putting on their vestments the Altar Boys/Servers, Readers, and Sub Deacon will approach the presiding Priest or Bishop for a blessing to serve and vest in their vestment.



### *Altar Boy Robe*

The long robe or sticharion is similar to that of the deacon, is a reminder of the role the Altar Boy has in the service in the Altar. It is a reminder of the robe of baptism that they wore at their baptism. It symbolizes the cleanliness of mind and heart that the server brings each time he enters the altar. In some parishes, Readers will wear a Sticharion when they read the Epistle.

### *Altar Boy Stole*

The Stole or Orarion is also similar to the deacon but it is worn differently. It is shaped in a cross at the back with two parts hanging down the front. It denotes the calling of the altar boy to be a server much as the angels of God serve Him attentively and willingly. It is given by the Bishop as a special honor for years loyal service as an altar boy



### *The Riassa or cassock (Readers, Sub Deacon, Deacon, Priest, and Bishop)*

The Inner Rason or endoriassa is a floor length garment, usually black, worn by all orders of clergy, monastics, and male seminarians. The Reader and the Sub-deacon are blessed to wear the Rason in the parish setting. In our Parish the Readers wear the Rason when they read the Epistle. The inner rason or endoriassa is usually worn by all clergy members under their liturgical vestments.

### *The Robe Or Sticharion (Reader, Sub Deacon, Deacon, Priest and Bishop)*

This is the basic vestment of the clergy and must be worn for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and Baptism. This is usually along straight robe with wide sleeves and is called" a robe of salvation and a tunic of happiness." It symbolizes a pure and peaceful conscience and spiritual joy.



### *Stole Or Orarion (Sub Deacon and Deacon).*

This is a wide and long band of material that is the distinctive vestment of the Deacon and Sub-deacon. It is crossed over the back or falls over the left shoulder. As the deacon prays, he holds the front part of it while the back part hangs behind his back. During the Lords prayer and during the reception of Holy Communion it is crossed over the back. It symbolizes the wings of angels. The Sub-deacon wears the stole crossed over the back at all times.

### *Conclusion:*

As a priest vests he says the following prayer, "My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, for He hath clothed me with the garment of salvation; as a bridegroom He hath set a crown upon me, and as a bride He hath adorned me with ornament, always now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen." Vestments, like icons, can and do serve as reminders of the beauty and magnificence of our call as Orthodox Christians: to worship God with our whole being-

body, mind and soul.. The value in dressing our minor clergy and especially our altar boys in clean and serviceable vestments serves as this very visible icon. When dressed as the angels, is it not easier for that young man to be an example to service to God as the angels are? He will see himself as an ornament and servant of God.

If you would like to assist Sheron LYDIA Jones in either repairing the old vestments or sewing new vestments for our Altar Boys please contact her at [www. sheronjones@austin.rr.com](mailto:sheronjones@austin.rr.com). Donations for the purchase or sewing of new altar boy vestments may be made to the Parish by check please annotate on the check " for altar boy vestments."

## Orthodoxy, the Cosmos and Ecology

*By-Professor Constantine Scouteris  
School of Theology of the University of Athens*

Eucharistic theology reveals that, according to the Orthodox approach, there is a deep and indissoluble bond between the Church and the created world. In fact, in the Eucharist elements of the created world, the bread and the wine, are taken and transformed. They are offered to God by the worshipping community: "We offer to Thee Thine own from Thine own". Thus, the created word is related to God through this eucharistic action of offering and transformation. This means that the human being is not an owner of creation, but a bond or link between it and the Creator.

Orthodoxy refuses to ascribe to the created universe a self-determinate reality or a natural sufficiency. The created universe does not have ontological foundation in itself, but is a gift of God; through the creative word of God a passage from non-being into being is realized. The fact that the created world has the free will and the creative wisdom of God as the unique foundation of its existence is of paramount importance for an understanding of Nature and of the cosmos in general. The point is that the created world has a spiritual significance and orientation. Being created by God "ex nihilo" the natural world is the manifestation of divine wisdom and harmony. This means that, when trying to understand and examine the inner reason of created beings, we finally face divine knowledge and the wisdom of God, the causal principle of the harmonious existence of created beings.

Bearing in mind this brief theological approach, we easily come to the conclusion that ecological evil is the consequence of a mentality which considers creation as desacralized material. The ecological crisis is connected with the loss of the sense of the divine in Nature. Talking of "the divine in Nature" we do not intend to support the pagan approach that the natural world is permeated by divine presence, but rather to stress that Nature, created by God out of love, is associated with God. This means that it has been created by God and also that the human being exists as the organic link between God and creation. In the final analysis the ecological problem is the consequence of the loss of what is described as "spiritual equilibrium" between man and Nature<sup>9</sup>. Thus, the world is considered as something which can be used unconditionally, dominated, manipulated and consumed for our economic and scientific interests. In other words desanctified Nature is the result of the dehumanized human being.

The Orthodox Church is very sensitive towards such an egotistic attitude and utilitarian understanding of Nature. It is for precisely this reason that the spiritual center of the Orthodox Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, decided to dedicate the 1st of September each year as the Feast Day of Creation. On this occasion the Ecumenical Patriarchate calls all Orthodox Churches to hold worship services and distributes Patriarchal messages stressing the responsibility of all Christian world for the protection of the creation. On the other hand the annual Symposium, concerning environmental issues, is also recognized as a constructive project

encouraging and enabling people to take responsibilities and initiatives and to care for creation and the environment.

[Excerpt from **The Orthodox Church** by Professor Constatine Scouteris. Professor Scouteris is highly recognized professor from the School of Theology of the University of Athens. The full text of this article may be read on [http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/misc/scouteris\\_orthodox\\_church.html](http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/misc/scouteris_orthodox_church.html)

## EXALTATION OF THE MOST HOLY CROSS



**Most holy Cross set up for veneration**

This Feast of our Lord is celebrated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, which is conducted on the day of the feast and preceded by the Matins service. A Great Vespers is conducted on the evening before the day of the feast.

On the day of the Feast at the conclusion of the Matins or of the Divine Liturgy, a special service is held. The Cross is placed on a tray surrounded by branches of basil, flowers, and is taken in solemn procession through the church to the chanting of the Hymn of the Feast. [Russian Orthodox often place the cross on a bed of flowers that are mounted in such a way to keep the flowers from falling off during long liturgical processions around the church and into the community.]

The tray is placed on a table, and the priest takes the Cross and offers petitions from each side of the table, the four directions of the compass. This represents the universal nature of the offering of Christ upon the Cross. As the people respond by chanting "Lord have mercy", the priest raises and lowers the cross, a commemoration of its finding and exaltation. At the conclusion of the service, the people come and venerate the cross and receive the basil from the priest. The basil is used and offered, as it was the fragrant flower growing where the Cross was found by St. Helena. *Vasiliko* in the Greek means royal and Basil is seen as the plant of the King of the Universe.

The Antiochian Orthodox church, like her sister Churches of Greece and Romania, use sprigs of sweet basil to sprinkle the congregation with holy water. In the Serbian Church, dry sprigs of sweet basil bound together with twine are used to sprinkle, while Russian Orthodox priests often use long whisks called *Krapeela* to sprinkle the



congregation. A major tradition in all jurisdictions of the Orthodox Church in the United States is the procession of the Holy Cross on this Feast day. Usually this occurs outside but in case of rainy weather the procession is done within the Church.



The  
Cathedral  
of our  
Diocese □ C  
apital  
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Update

Our "Make Firm  
the Foundation of  
this House, O  
Lord" campaign  
was a real success:  
45 families  
pledged \$474,336!  
But the campaign

isn't over yet! Before we can begin construction of our new facility, we need to collect the money that has been pledged. Most folks have already started fulfilling that commitment; in fact, as of mid-August, we have \$90,755 in the building fund. But there are a few things we can

do to help move the process along:

1. If you haven't been able to give anything towards your pledge just yet—or if you are planning on fulfilling that pledge in one lump sum later in the year—please talk to our Building Committee Chairperson, Father Deacon Basil, or our treasurer, Vickie Knight. If you can let them know how you plan to schedule your giving, then that will help them to know when we will actually be able to begin construction.
2. When you place a gift in the offering basket or when you send a gift in the mail, it is important that you indicate whether that gift is intended for the general fund or for the building fund. We want your money to get to where you want it to go, so please designate your gifts clearly.
3. Continue to keep the campaign in your prayers. Remember, this is a three year process! Ask the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to guide and bless the building committee and each member of our community as we finish out this exciting process.

Finally, if you ever have any questions about what the building committee is doing or how the building fund money is being spent, just ask! All of the committee meetings are public, the financial information is available to anyone who is interested, and the committee wants as many people involved as possible.

## **IOCC on the Ground in Lebanon and Gaza Crisis,**

Baltimore, MD - As Lebanon and Gaza continue to receive attacks on civilian infrastructure with hundreds of thousands fleeing their homes, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) staff is on the ground coordinating food, medical and hygiene supplies.

IOCC will deliver to St. George Orthodox Hospital in Beirut two "New Emergency Health Kits" of 48 boxes containing medicines, IV fluids and disposable supplies expected to aid 20,000 patients over a 3 month period. The kits, worth approximately \$100,000, have been donated by Northwest Medical Teams and are assembled in accordance with emergency aid standards set by the World Health Organization.

IOCC Beirut staff is purchasing and assembling Family Food and Family Hygiene parcels for those who have fled their homes in Southern Lebanon and are now crowded into public schools, parks and other areas. In addition, Church World Service will provide to IOCC a container worth \$100,000 in supplies including 5,000 hygiene kits, 500 water containers and wool blankets.

IOCC, which has been involved in Lebanon since 2001 with a USDA-funded Food for Education program, will use its network of public schools as distribution centers for thousands who need these basic life-preserving supplies.

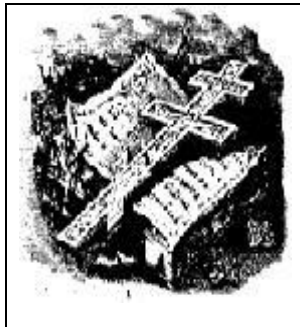
Gaza, which is experiencing near daily artillery fire and aerial bombardment, is reporting scarcity of water, food, and medicine.

IOCC, which has been implementing an emergency response program in Gaza, recently announced a \$90,000 (70,000 euro) donation by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to continue its provision of child and adult medicines, medical examinations, and nutritional supplements through local hospitals.

"We urge the Orthodox in America, and all those concerned about the escalating humanitarian crisis in both Lebanon and Gaza, to support IOCC's \$500,000 Emergency Appeal for the Middle East," says IOCC CEO Constantine M. Triantafilou. "The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making a direct cash contribution that will allow us to continue to acquire and transport these life-saving supplies."

To make an online contribution, go to <http://www.iocc.org> or call toll free 1-877-803-IOCC (4622).

## *From the Pastor's Desk*



Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings in the Name of the Lord.

I'm writing to announce an addition to our educational program at St John the Forerunner. In September, we will begin our first annual Orthodox Theological Seminar. This year's seminar is going to be called:

"This is how the World will End": Apocalypticism and the Orthodox Faith

Okay, the title is a bit stuffy, but that's just the old English professor in me (by the way, the first half of the title is a quotation from one of my favorite T.S. Eliot poems). The seminar itself is going to be anything but stuffy, because what we are going to be dealing with is what the Church teaches about the end of the world—and you can't top that for excitement!

But the material we will be covering in this 20 week course is not going to include sensational facts and time-lines that are designed to be filed away in a lead lined box so that you can pull them out and quickly review them when the fire starts to fall from the heavens. Nor is this seminar going to be filled with academic 'head stuff' that has no real bearing on anything in the real world. The material in this seminar will be directly applicable to our lives right now. After all, what we Americans believe about the end of the world determines everything from our reading habits (the Left Behind series and Hal Lindsey's books are still among the all-time best-sellers) to our foreign policy (our country's unwavering support for Israel is grounded in what evangelical Protestants teach about the Last Days). Additionally, as we will see, the approach we Orthodox take to the end of the world is one of daily, personal preparation. So this seminar is going to be practical; it is going to be timely, and it is going to deal with a wide range of spiritual, political, and social issues.

The approach we will be taking in this seminar is also designed to appeal to a wide variety of interests. We will be reading one novel (A Canticle For Leibowitz by Walter M Miller, Jr.) one book of theology (A Second Look at the Second Coming by TL Frazier) and one commentary on Holy Scripture (Volume XII of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture which covers the Book of Revelation). There will be material in each of those books which we will find enjoyable and challenging; all of the volumes can be purchased through St John's parish at Christ the Lightgiver Bookstore (call 512-258-1757 or go to [www.theforerunner.org](http://www.theforerunner.org) and click on the bookstore tab).

I will be teaching the seminar, and we will approach the material through close readings of the books, through lectures, discussions, and, also, through presentations by each of the different participants. The class will meet on Wednesday nights at St John's; anyone of any religious background or affiliation is welcome to join us; a complete schedule and syllabus is included with this letter.

I hope that you will begin to pray about your participation in what promises to be one of our parish's annual highlights. I also hope that you will invite your friends. If you have questions—or would like to go ahead and place your name on the class roster—please give me a call or send me an email at [fraidan@austin.rr.com](mailto:fraidan@austin.rr.com).

an unworthy priest  
Aidan

#### Seminar Syllabus

Wed, Sept 6, 7pm Orientation to Each Other and the Topic  
Wed, Sept 13, 8pm Assignment: A Canticle For Leibowitz, section 1  
Wed, Sept 20, 7pm Assignment: Canticle, section 2  
Wed, Sept 27, 7pm Assignment: Canticle, section 3  
Wed, Oct 4, 7pm Wrap-up Discussion on A Canticle For Leibowitz  
Wed, Oct 11, 7pm Assignment: A Second Look at the Second Coming, chpts 1-5  
Wed, Oct 18, 7pm Assignment: A Second Look, chpts 6-7  
Wed, Oct 25, 7pm Assignment: A Second Look, chpts 8-9  
Wed, Nov 1, 7pm Assignment: A Second Look, chpts 10-13  
Wed, Nov 8, 7pm Assignment: A Second Look, chpts 14-16  
Wed, Nov 15, 8pm Assignment: A Second Look, chpt 17 and Appendix  
Wed, Nov 29, 8pm Assignment: Revelation Commentary, pgs 1-55 with presentation  
Wed, Dec 6, 8pm Assignment: Revelation Commentary, pgs 56-117 with presentation

Wed, Dec 13, 8pm Assignment: Revelation Commentary, pgs 117-170 with presentation  
Wed, Dec 20, 8pm Assignment: Revelation Commentary, pgs 170-237 with presentation  
Wed, Jan 3, 7pm Assignment: Revelation Commentary, pgs 237-264 with presentation  
Wed, Jan 10, 7pm Assignment: Revelation Commentary, pgs 264-320 with presentation  
Wed, Jan 17, 7pm Assignment: Revelation Commentary, pgs 320-409 with presentation  
Wed, Jan 24, 7pm Final Reflections and Wrap-Up  
Wed, Jan 31, 7pm Class Party

## St. John's Community News

### Special Services in September

September 1 The Indiction Orthros 7am Liturgy 9am  
September 7 Great Vespers for the Nativity of the Theotokos 7pm  
September 8 Feast of Nativity of Theotokos Orthros 7am Liturgy 9am  
September 13 Great Vespers for the Elevation 7pm  
September 14 Feast of the Elevation of the Cross Orthros 7am Liturgy 9am

### Parish News

**Parish Council** will meet on September 4 at 12:30 pm. All members of the Parish are welcome to attend the council's meetings.

**Macaroni for Missions** will be served September 4 after Divine Liturgy. The lunch is sponsored by the Women's Group to raise funds for mission trips to be taken by St. John's high school students. Donations are \$5.00 per adult and \$2.50 for children 10 and under. **Guests eat free!**

**Orthopraxis of The Domestic Church Workshop** will be held on Saturday September 10 at 3 pm. This begins a new twelve month cycle of workshops for those who wish to deepen their understanding of living an Orthodox Christian life or the practices of the orthodox. These classes are meant to educate catechumen and the newly illumined of the church in the daily Orthodox practices of living the Orthodox Christian life. Anyone interested in living a more traditional Orthodox Christian life is welcome to attend.

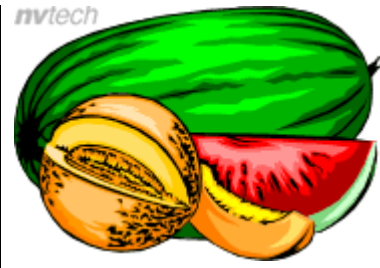
**Soup and Saints** will be held on Tuesday evenings on at 6:30 pm. Come for the Life of the Saint, fellowship, and a free fasting meal of delicious soup.

**The First Annual Orthodox Theological Seminar** to be held at St. John's on Wednesday nights-September schedule:

Wed, Sept 6, 7pm Orientation to Each Other and the Topic  
Wed, Sept 13, 8pm Assignment: A Canticle For Leibowitz, section 1  
Wed, Sept 20, 7pm Assignment: Canticle, section 2  
Wed, Sept 27, 7pm Assignment: Canticle, section 3



Food  
for the  
Kingdom



This month we are presenting two simple dishes that we think you may enjoy together or separately. The refreshing lentil salad is a complete protein and can serve either as a side dish or stand as the main course. The Tofu Burger I think will surprise you with its full flavor and spice (if you include the red pepper) that is missing from those frozen vegetarian burgers in the store.

## **MEDITERRANEAN LENTIL SALAD**

### **Ingredients**

1 cup dried lentils  
1 small onion, chopped  
1 quart water  
1 small red pepper, chopped  
1 small green pepper, chopped  
1 tomato, chopped  
3 scallions, washed and sliced  
1/2 cup Italian no oil salad dressing  
2 Tbsp. lemon juice  
dash pepper

### **Directions:**

1. Cook lentils and onions in water, simmering 20-25 minutes until tender but not too soft. Drain.
2. Mix lentils with peppers, tomato, scallions, Italian dressing, lemon juice, and pepper, and refrigerate until chilled. (Another option adds 1-2 cups of cooked rice and increases the salad dressing to  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup) Makes 6-8 servings.

## **Tofu Burger**

### **Ingredients:**

1 package firm tofu, drained  
1/2 cup oatmeal  
1/4 cup carrots, shredded  
1 green onion, finely minced  
1 tablespoon sesame seeds  
2 tablespoons potato flakes  
2 teaspoons soy sauce  
1/4 teaspoon crushed chili peppers (optional)  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper  
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder or one crushed clove

### **Directions:**

1. Mash the tofu.
2. Combine all ingredients and mix thoroughly.

3. Forms about 6 large patties and cook slowly on both sides in lightly oiled skillet over medium heat. Cook the first side with the lid on, then remove lid for the second side.

## Parish Stewardship Drive Begins September 1

Our Annual Parish Stewardship Drive starts September First. Stewardship is measured by how we spend our three 'T's: Time, Talents, and Treasures.

I was pondering the story of the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21), and I thought up a headline: "Christian stewardship as antidote to a world of greed." This nation in the so called First World is a society that is based on greed (too great a desire for money or worldly goods) which is, of course, one of the seven grievous sins along with pride, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth. I wonder if it is too hard to say that it is greed that motivates society. That is a hard saying, is it not, in this particular city, the capital of the nation's involvement in greed? And greed is alive and well in Washington.

You and I know that stewardship is more than money. It is all that we do with all that we have all of the time. It is all that I do after I say "I believe." The faithful exercise of Christian stewardship is the living out of an ongoing converted life in Jesus Christ.

Stewardship is three T's: time, talent and treasure. I would like to reverse the order. Let us begin with the last, TREASURE. Let us call it by what it is: money, Wealth is always dangerous for individuals and for societies. The danger for those who have it, like the rich ruler in the parable, is they tend to hoard it for themselves. The danger for those who do not have it is they become envious of those who do.

The Christian attitude toward money is that you give it away because at the end, it does not matter. Sacrificial giving is a sign of a converted life. Notice that I use the phrase sacrificial giving. A former parishioner once called me and asked me to visit him. During the visit he told me that he wanted to donate a half a million dollars to the church. He said, "I've learned something recently. I am a rich man, and I know that I cannot take it with me." That is a sign of an ongoing converted life.

Here was a man who became NOT JUST RICH BUT BECAME RICH TOWARD God. Christian stewardship means being rich toward God. Why? Because God is rich toward us. TIME. So often people are loathing parting with their money but willing to part with their time. And in the subsequent 20 or so years, that has been reversed. People are loathing parting with their time, which has become such a precious commodity in our society. They would just rather give a check. Do you remember all the talk about what we were going to do with this leisure time we were going to have; three-day weekends four day weeks? But I see 80-hour week. What happened?

Stewardship of TIME. Every second, every minute we have is a gift. Where is our time with God? The priority of the worship of Almighty God in the church, the priority of time with God in our prayer life, the time for oneself, the time for family. Most people on their death beds do not wish they had spent more time at the office. Most people on their deathbeds, in my experience, wish they had spent more time with the God who they will shortly encounter and with the people who matter to them.

Thirdly, TALENT. -the talents with which we have been endowed by God and the spiritual gifts given to us by God and the Holy Spirit. It is in this area we see the most opportunity for the

transformation of our world of greed. All baptized people are called to ministry.

The passage from which this Gospel is taken ends with the well-known verse, "Where your treasure is, there let your heart be also." That is the way it works. Heart follows treasure. This much your soul is required of you. And perhaps it will be. And where will you stand? And as you and I answer that question this day—where is your heart? - First of all find this out: Where is your treasure?

Adapted from an article by By Father George M. Rados, January 2003. St Mary's Greek Orthodox Church, Minneapolis Mn.

**Reading Can Be Fun!**

**Help the Library!**



The Parish Lending library needs your help! We want to purchase SVS Patristics Library A List. They retail for \$331.70, but our cost for 26 titles is only \$200.00. If we had 20 people give \$10 each, we could purchase this set. The titles are posted on the wall in the library. Will you consider helping the library with this special addition **Reading an Orthodox Christian Book can be spiritually uplifting. Stop by the Parish Library This Sunday!**



**ORTHODOX KID'S PAGE**

**Jesus Calls his Disciples to be Fishers of Men**



**Jesus** was teaching the crowds from a boat in the lake. The boat was Simon's. After he finished, he told Simon to go farther from the land. He then told Simon to lower the net into the lake. Simon said, "We have fished all night and caught nothing, but I will do as you say."

Soon, the nets were so full of fish, they were breaking. Simon called for help. By the time they finished, both boats were so full they were almost sinking. Simon Peter looked at the miracle and was amazed. He fell down before Jesus and said, "I am not worthy to be here with you." Jesus told him, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

1. Simon and Andrew were fishermen. Can you find a fishing pole?
2. They are holding a net. The net was lowered into the water to catch the fish. Have you ever caught a fish?
3. Sometimes you wait for a very long time before you catch a fish. Simon and Andrew had fished all night and caught nothing. After Jesus told them to put the nets back in the water, what happened?
4. Jesus told them they would be gathering men to follow Jesus, just as they had caught the fish.