

THE PROPHET

Monthly Newsletter of

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

Orthodox Church in America
Archdiocese of Pittsburgh

601 Boone Avenue, Canonsburg, PA 15317

724-745-8216 – www.frunner.org –
www.facebook.com/frunneroca/

February 2021



*Candlemas: the Meeting of the Lord (Feb. 2)
AKA the Presentation of Christ
AKA the Purification of the Virgin*

Rector, Fr. John Joseph Kotalik
425-503-2891 – frjohnkotalik@gmail.com

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RECTOR'S REPORT:

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

As we hopefully read in January's edition of *The Prophet*, our beloved bishops reminded us of something so very important:

«Our beloved brothers and sisters, we do not know what we will encounter in the coming year, but we know our ultimate destination. May the Lord's will be done in our lives, that His Kingdom may come! If we can look back on 2020 – truly, a year of Our Lord – with confession, repentance, and thanksgiving, we can face the uncertainty of the future with peace, joy, and hope. This task will not always be easy; we are surrounded by temptations to live in fear, isolation, division, and despair. But let us use the tools God has given us to soften our hearts and open our eyes! We can draw inspiration from the experience of so many who testified that even in the face of so much, the life of the Church continued: the faithful were baptized, married, ordained, and buried. Missions were begun and supported. Praise and thanksgiving to God never ceased.»

Indeed, these efforts *have continued and will continue* in the life of our parish. In particular, at 10a on Sat., Feb. 6, we will be having what we hope to be the first of many Divine Liturgies served at the chapel of Waynesburg University. This is primarily aimed at the students there, but there are NO parishes between Canonsburg and Morgantown along the I-79 corridor; this means that we have a unique opportunity to spread the life of the Church to new and fertile soil! Please consider coming to this Divine Liturgy (Waynesburg University, Roberts Chapel, 51 W College St), showing those who might be from outside the Church that we are serious about our faith!

In Christ, with thanks and love,
Fr. John Joseph Kotalik IV, Rector

MEMORY ETERNAL:**(Вѣчная память!)****We continue our 40 days of prayer for:**

All those slain by the Coronavirus, especially:

Sdn. Andrew Sysock (12/12)

Richard Onest (12/28)

His Eminence, Abp. David of Alaska (11/27)

Michael Pirih (12/2)

Dorothy Petronka (12/2)

John Pavlek (12/4)

Sophie Onufer (12/5)

Ruth Schreiber (12/9)

Sergei Chidlowsky (12/10)

William Evansky (12/18)

We commemorate the anniversaries of:

Robert Esno (2/1/1966)

Matrona Gretsky (2/1/1968)

David Matyuf (2/1/1987)

Paul Vorevoda (2/2/1919)

Mary Chumsky (2/2/1959)

Michael Wyck (2/2/1991)

John Anthony (2/2/1998)

Nicholas Hubiak (2/2/2003)

Sophie Sweda (2/3/1999)

Theodore Artemkov (2/4/1938)

Paul Korotky (2/4/1959)

Elisha Kushnerov (2/5/1920)

Marie Baker (2/5/2000)

John "Jack" Teatino (2/5/2012)

Claudia Oleynik (2/5/2016)

Nicholas Shakayda (2/6/1937)

John Chopak (2/6/1943)

Peter Matyuf (2/6/1983)

Eva Misnik (2/7/1922)

Helen Kozlov (2/7/1923)

Nikifor Kloschen (2/7/1942)

Stephen Mavdus (2/7/1963)

Conrad Perchuk (2/7/1965)

Katherine Dohanich (2/8/1953)

Theodore Wilson (2/8/1964)

Michael Povich, Sr. (2/8/1968)

Apr. Theodore Soroka (2/8/2012)

Peter Shinkarenko (2/9/1923)

Charles Vasili Strogish (2/9/1971)

Julia Yarosh (2/9/2002)

Ann Scarcell (2/9/2003)

Michael Guy (2/9/2016)

Mildred Vargo (2/10/2007)

Helen Melnyk (2/10/2010)

Michael Kotyk (2/11/1920)

Dorothy Maffio (2/11/2010)

Ann Uram (2/12/1974)

Michael Skovrosky (2/14/1928)

Vasily Polyak (2/14/1941)

John Matyuf (2/14/1988)

Joachim "Reed Kim" Yarosh (2/14/2020)

Harold Soroka (2/15/1974)

Max Perchak (2/15/1975)

Irene Lilley (2/15/2016)

Michael Sweda (2/16/1945)

Mary La Savage (2/16/1968)

Anna Matyuf (2/16/1976)

Audrey Sweda (2/16/1984)

Michael Balog (2/16/2003)

Irene Sobczak (2/16/2003)

Michael Yastrubkov (2/17/1923)

Nicholas Strogush (2/17/1946)

Wasil Semnick (2/17/1952)

Mary Suvak (2/17/1956)

George Telesko (2/17/1975)

William Anthony Janousek (2/17/2016)

Pelagia Lazor (2/18/1933)

Andrew Dunda (2/18/1971)

Alexandra Sweda (2/18/1991)

Thekla Skovronsky (2/19/1926)

Michael Repoff (2/19/1996)

John Galichin (2/20/1925)

Walter Boettcher (2/20/1989)

Cecelia Horosky (2/22/1962)

Tekla Kirr (2/22/1967)

Deborah Chobany (2/22/2009)

Albert Burns (2/22/2012)

Olga Surigovich (2/23/1924)

Daniel Koska (2/23/1969)

Anna Sebastian (2/23/1984)

John "Jack" Lazorchak (2/24/1978)

Irene Mikitin (2/25/1956)

Michael Bushko (2/25/2010)

Boris Zubkov (2/26/1935)

Mary Kotyk (2/27/2005)

Mikhalina Pashkevich (2/28/1930)

Anne Udodow (2/28/1964)

Dimitri Matyuf (2/29/1920)

Mary Uram (2/29/1964)

MANY YEARS:**(Многая и благая лѣта!)****Namedays:**

Bridget Onest (2/1)

Shirley Pavla Brookman (2/10)

Paula Phillis (2/10)

Fr. John Joseph Kotalik (2/29)

Birthdays:

Mary Ann Reck (2/2)

Gideon Ruffing (2/3)
 Gregory Sakovich (2/4)
 Nicholas Schenken (2/4)
 Rose Lazorchak (2/5)
 Mat. Janine Kotalik (2/7)
 Jason Ruffing (2/7)
 Annalise Eismont (2/11)
 Evelyn DeArmitt (2/14)
 Kathy Caligiuri (2/20)
 Nathan Stockman (2/20)
 Lynn Geer (2/23)
 Jude Killmeyer (2/26)
 Simon Killmeyer (2/26)

Anniversaries:

Robert & Denise Kalakewich (2/12/17)

*If you or a loved one are missing, please let
 Fr. John know so that we can correct our records!*

PARISH PRAYER LIST:

**We pray for the health and salvation of ALL our
 parish family members, and especially for:**

All those suffering from the Coronavirus
 Protopr. Daniel (Hubiak)
 Igumen Patrick (Carpenter)
 Apr. George &
 Pres. Dianthe (Livanos)
 Apr. John (Reeves)
 Apr. Michael (Hatrak)
 Mat. Natasha (Lazor)
 Mat. Kelly Elizabeth (Oleynik)
 Mat. Alexandra (Safchuk)
 Mat. Sophia (Sokolov)
 Mat. Susanne (Senyo)
 Diane (Arcoletti)
 John (Boschuk)
 Gregory & Gwen (Bushko)
 John (Carpenter)
 Alfred (Davis)
 Helene (Emerick)
 Todd, Lynn, Chelsea, & Megan (Geer)
 Gregory (Kachmarsky)
 Robert (Kalakewich)
 Michael, Marcie, Layla, Melina, Simon, & Jude
 (Killmeyer)
 Mark (Korabelnikov)
 Rose (Lazorchak)
 Shirley (Lazorchak)
 Janice (Lenart)
 Donald (Marsico)
 Albert (Maruskin)
 Brandon (Mayberry)
 Joyce (Merchep)
 Gregg (Nescott)
 Peter (Petronka)

Mary (Pirih)
 Anita (Prince)
 Gabor (Prince)
 Anastasia (Rudolph)
 Carol (Russo)
 Stephen, Julie, Nicholas, & Jacob (Simko)
 Meretta (Stockman)
 Carol (Sweda)
 Luis (Thompson)
 Richard (Trombetta)
 Mary Kay (Weber)
 Joseph & Mary Ann (Zupancic)
 Alexander & Marissa, and the child Madison born of her
 (Schenken)
 Rd. Michael, Ilariana, and the child to be born of her
 (Galis)
 Jonathan & Courtney, and the child to be born of her
 (Stadelman)
Catechumens/Inquirers: Anthony, Hannah, Matthew,
 Alicia, Paxton & Melissa

Collection for Last Month's Charity (RIP Medical Debt):

\$826,
**that means about \$165,200 of medical debt
 wiped out – Thank You!**

Charity of the Month:

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP (OCF)

*In renewed commitment to loving our neighbour in this
 difficult time, on the last Sunday of each month a special
 collection will be taken for a worthy charitable organiza-
 tion. If you would like a charity to be considered, please
 contact a member of the Outreach Committee, currently
 Fr. John, Julianna Cario, & Marcie Killmeyer; or, if you
 would like to join, please let us know!*

www.ocf.net

Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) is the
 official collegiate campus ministry program un-
 der the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bish-
 ops of the United States of America. OCF trans-
 forms the lives of college students in the United
 States and Canada by guiding them along the
 path to Jesus Christ through His Church, culti-
 vating a campus community of worship, wit-
 ness, service, fellowship and education.

The Orthodox Christian Fellowship, or OCF, is the Orthodox Church's college ministry here in the USA. Sadly, 60% of our youth who begin college as Orthodox Christians leave college having left the faith. OCF strives to stem this tide by acting as the loving presence of Christ and the Orthodox Church on college campuses; to be an integral part of students' spiritual formation by challenging them to explore the Faith; and to inspire students to commit to living an Orthodox Christian way of life daily.

This is accomplished by a growing network of on-campus OCF chapters led by talented students, clergy, and lay advisors as well as through programs such as Regional Retreats, College Conference, Real Break, and the Summer Leadership Institute. However, only 10% of the 30k-40k Orthodox students are currently involved in their university's OCF chapter (if there even is one).

Under the guidance of Fr. John and Rd. John Thompson, we are working to establish an OCF chapter at Waynesburg University. To that end, we have had weekly meetings and starting this month we will begin to have monthly Saturday morning Divine Liturgy at the university's chapel as a missionary effort to the students there. Thank God, these efforts have borne some fruit: three young adults have joined the Church, as well as bringing our newest catechumen to the gates of the Church!

Thankfully, our local efforts are not in need of any great monetary help, but the national OCF is always in need of funds to help in their efforts, such as when Mat. Janine was a college student and they would send her to work with students to establish chapters at colleges and universities throughout Upstate New York. Such efforts and outreach require funds which they can only gather by donation. However, please feel free to offer your time or talent to help with these efforts, and please come to our OCF Liturgies at Waynesburg if you can make it!

So, if we are serious about trying to keep our young adults in the Church as they transition into adulthood while at college (and we have a number of our own children starting college this year!), let us strongly consider offering what we can to OCF at this month's charity collection on Sunday, February 28. One check will then be sent to OCF by the parish. However, if you wish to donate directly, you can do so online, or by check: Orthodox Christian Fellowship, 50 Goddard Ave, Brookline, MA 02445.

Synodal Affirmations on Marriage, Family, Sexuality, and the Sanctity of Life

These affirmations on marriage, family, sexuality, and the sanctity of life were issued by the Holy Synod of Bishops on the occasion of the Tenth All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America, Miami, Florida, July 1992

Introduction

The Orthodox Church in America, being, with all Orthodox Churches in the world, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ, acting upon her mandate to teach God's truth to all people, solemnly affirms that every human person is made in God's image and likeness for everlasting life in God's coming kingdom.

As the crown of God's good creation, redeemed by Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, all men, women and children—young and old, sick and healthy, rich and poor, powerful and weak, educated and uneducated, born and unborn—are eternally precious in God's sight.

All human beings will be raised from the dead on the last day. Those who seek the truth, do good and follow God's law written on their hearts and fully revealed to the world in Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Word, will inherit everlasting life. Those who persist in their evil ways, following their own will, will be forever lost (cf. Romans 2:14-16; John 1:1-18, 5:25-30).

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, assembled in council with priests and elected parish lay delegates, is gravely concerned about the degradation of human life in our day. We are especially concerned about the desecration of marriage and family life, the vilification of celibacy and virginity, the perversion of human sexuality, the devaluation of human suffering, and the destruction of the natural environment. We therefore take this opportunity, being gathered at our Tenth All-American Church Council, to reaffirm the God-given vision of these elemental aspects of human being and life.

The Mystery of Marriage

God creates human beings in His own image and likeness, male and female. He declares human

life, with all that He makes, to be “very good” (Genesis 1:27-31).

God wills that men and women marry, becoming husbands and wives. He commands them to increase and multiply in the procreation of children, being joined into “one flesh” by His divine grace and love. He wills that human beings live within families (Genesis 1:27; 2:21-24; Orthodox Marriage Service).

The Lord Jesus blessed marriage in which the “two become one flesh” when, by his presence with his mother Mary and his disciples at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, he revealed his messianic glory in his first public miracle, evoking for the first time the faith of his disciples (Genesis 2:24; John 2:1-11).

The Lord Jesus Christ abrogated the practice of divorce which was permitted in the old covenant due to the people’s “hardness of heart,” insisting that one unique marriage between man and woman was God’s will from the beginning (Mark 10:2-9, Matthew 19:3-12). He stated clearly that “every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity [porneia, i.e. sexual immorality], makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matthew 5:32).

The Lord went even further to declare that people who look at others in order to lust after them in their hearts have “committed adultery” (cf. Matthew 5:27-30).

Christ’s apostles repeat the teachings of their Master, likening the unique marriage between one man and one woman to the union between Christ and His Church which they experience as the Lord’s very body and His bride (Ephesians 5:21-33; 2 Corinthians 11:2).

While condemning those who forbid marriage as an unholy institution, along with those who defile marriage through unchastity (1 Timothy 4:3, Hebrews 13:4), the apostles commend as “the will of God” that Christians, as examples for all human beings, “abstain from unchastity [porneia] and know how to marry “in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God.” They insist that “whoever disregards this [teaching] disregards not man but God, who gives His Holy Spirit” to those who believe (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

Husbands are commanded to be the heads of their wives as Christ is the head of the Church. They are called to love their wives as their very selves, as Christ loves the Church, giving themselves in

sacrifice to their brides as to their own bodies. And wives are called to respect and reverence their husbands as the Church devotes itself to Christ with whom she too, like the wife with her husband, is “one flesh” (Ephesians 5:21-33; Orthodox Marriage Service).

The “great mystery” of marriage (Ephesians 5:32) is the most used image and symbol in the Bible for God’s relationship with His People in the old and new testaments where the Lord is the husband and His people are His wife—so often unfaithful and adulterous (cf. Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Song of Songs, Corinthians, Ephesians, et. al.). And the ultimate union between the Lord and those saved by Christ for eternal life in God’s kingdom by the indwelling Holy Spirit is likened to the communion of marriage (Revelation 21-22).

Convinced of these God-revealed truths, we offer the following affirmations and admonitions for the guidance of the faithful:

Every human being of whatever religion, race, nationality or moral convictions is to be respected and valued as a creature of God with the potential for everlasting life in God’s coming kingdom.

No human being, whatever his or her religion, race, nationality or moral convictions, is to be treated in a wicked, evil or unjust manner.

Orthodox Christians are to make supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings (lit. eucharists) for all people. This, according to Christ and the saints, includes one’s enemies, cursers and abusers, as well as persecutors of the Church, heathens and heretics (Luke 6:27-49; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; St. John Chrysostom, On First Timothy, Homilies 6 and 7; St. John of Kronstadt, My Life in Christ).

Marriage and Sexuality

Marriage and family life are to be defended and protected against every open and subtle attack and ridicule.

Sexual intercourse is to be protected as a sacred expression of love within the community of heterosexual monogamous marriage in which alone it can be that for which God has given it to human beings for their sanctification.

Sexual love in marriage is to be chaste and pure, devoid of lewdness, lechery, violence and self-gratification.

Couples planning to marry are to be properly counseled and prepared to confront the challenges

of the married life, being guided in the ways to find within family life the way to spiritual fulfillment and sanctity.

Divorce, Widowhood, and Remarriage

Victims of broken marriages are to be counseled to repent of the evils which caused the failure their original marriages, and to seek God's mercy and guidance in transforming the defeat into spiritual victory.

Widows and widowers are to be counseled whenever possible, particularly in the absence of small children in need of care, to remain faithful to their departed spouses who are alive in the Lord, maintaining the nuptial unity of love to be fulfilled in the kingdom of God for which they were crowned as husband and wife.

Widowed and divorced persons who remarry do so not as their right but as recipients of a special gift of God's mercy to be accepted with repentance, gratitude and the firm intention faithfully to fulfill all that belongs to married life.

The Procreation of Children

The procreation of children in marriage is the "heritage" and "reward" of the Lord; a blessing of God (cf. Psalm 127:3). It is the natural result of the act of sexual intercourse in marriage, which is a sacred union through which God Himself joins the two together into "one flesh" (Genesis 1-2, Matthew 19, Mark 10, Ephesians 5, et. al.).

The procreation of children is not in itself the sole purpose of marriage, but a marriage without the desire for children, and the prayer to God to bear and nurture them, is contrary to the "sacrament of love" (Orthodox Marriage Service; St. John Chrysostom, On Ephesians, Homily 20).

Married couples are encouraged to abstain from sexual union at times for the sake of devotion to prayer (as, for example, on the eves of the Eucharist, and during Lenten seasons). They are to do so, however, only "for a season by agreement" since their bodies are not their own but belong to each other; and they are to "come together again lest Satan tempt" them (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:2-7).

God himself "knits together" the child conceived in the mother's womb, beholding its "unformed substance" as it is being intricately wrought before his all-knowing eyes (Psalm 139:13-18). The Lord Jesus himself was first acknowledged on earth by John

the Baptist when both the Lord and His Forerunner were still embryos within their mothers' wombs (Luke 1:39-45).

Orthodox Christians have always viewed the willful abortion of unborn children as a heinous act of evil. The Church's canonical tradition identifies any action intended to destroy a fetus as the crime of murder (Ancyra, Canon 21; Trullo, Canon 91; St. Basil, Canon 2).

Convinced of these God-revealed truths, we offer the following affirmations and admonitions for the guidance of the faithful:

The procreation of children is to take place in the context of marital union where the father and mother accept the care of the children whom they conceive.

Married couples may express their love in sexual union without always intending the conception of a child, but only those means of controlling conception within marriage are acceptable which do not harm a fetus already conceived.

Married couples may use medical means to enhance conception of their common children, but the use of semen or ova other than that of the married couple who both take responsibility for their offspring is forbidden.

Abortion

Abortion is an act of murder for which those involved, voluntarily and involuntarily, will answer to God.

Those finding themselves confronted with tragic circumstances where the lives of mothers and their unborn children are threatened, and where painful decisions of life and death have to be made — such as those involving rape, incest, and sickness — are to be counseled to take responsible action before God, who is both merciful and just, to whom they will give account for their actions.

Women and men, including family members and friends of pregnant women considering abortions, are to be encouraged to resist this evil act, and be assisted in bearing and raising their children in healthy physical and spiritual conditions.

Women who have had recourse to abortion, men who have fathered aborted children, and others involved in cases of abortion, are to be provided with pastoral care which includes recognition of the gravity of the act and assurance of the mercy of God upon those who repent of their sins.

Orthodox Christians are to contribute to legislative processes according to their knowledge,

competence, ability and influence so that laws may be enacted and enforced which protect and defend the lives of unborn children while being sensitive to the complexities and tragedies of life in contemporary society.

Celibacy and Virginity

Human beings are created and saved to be the children of God, sons of the Father in Christ the only Son, by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Luke 3:38, John 1:12, Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 4:1-7).

With God as our Father in Christ and the Spirit, the heavenly Jerusalem, already here present with us in the Church of Christ, "is our mother" (Galatians 4:26, Revelation 21:2-10). As St. Cyprian of Carthage has said, "A person cannot have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother." (On the Unity of the Church, 5)

Since every fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its name from the fatherhood of God (Ephesians 3:14), fathers in domestic, ecclesial and monastic families, together with holy mothers, are called to mediate God's presence and action to their children. The sacraments of marriage and ordination as well as the rites of monastic tonsure and the installation of abbots and abbesses testify to this spiritual calling.

Fathers are commanded not to provoke their children to anger, but to love them and "to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). And children are commanded to honor their father and mother, and to obey their parents in all things which are godly, realizing as they mature spiritually that they belong ultimately to God's household, receiving their identity not from their flesh and blood parents, but from God (Ephesians 6:1-4. Colossians 18-21, Matthew 10:34-39; 12:46-50; 23:9; Luke 15:26, John 1:12-13; et. al.).

Convinced of these God-revealed truths, we offer the following affirmations and admonitions for the guidance of the faithful:

The family of father, mother and children, with the extended family of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, is to be supported and protected as the basic condition of life for human beings in the this world.

Children are to be provided with the fullest and deepest possible experience of secure family life and activity.

The family is not to be idolized as an end in itself, thereby becoming an obstacle rather than a means to

healthy and holy spiritual life in communion with God in the Church.

Single-Parent Families

Although normal family life consists of a father and a mother together with their children, the growing number of single parent families which exist due to death, divorce and desertion are to be supported and honored.

Attention is to be given to the special spiritual, social and economic needs of single parent families.

Provision is especially necessary for the presence of loving adults of the gender of the missing parent in the family's life and activities.

And special care and support is needed for the single parent to persevere in a life of sexual chastity and holiness.

Adoption

The adoption of children without families to care for them by married couples and single people capable of providing them with spiritual and material care is to be supported and honored.

The blessed action of providing foster care to needy children is also to be supported and praised.

Adoption, not abortion, is the answer to unwilled pregnancy. Unmarried mothers are to be encouraged and supported in bringing their conceived babies to term and offering them for adoption.

Not for any reason, however, and certainly not for making money, are children to be conceived in order to be given up for adoption.

Adoption procedures involving large sums of money, profit motivation and coercion of families and mothers to give up their children is to be soundly rejected and condemned.

Abuse in Family and Society

All forms of physical, spiritual, psychological and emotional abuse of men, women and children are to be condemned.

Parents, and adults generally, are to be assisted in learning to treat children properly, avoiding abusive behavior because of the children's smallness, weakness and dependency.

Although women and children may be abusive in their own right, they are for many reasons more often the victims of abuse by men rather than men's abusers. Special attention is therefore to be given to

the issue of “battered women and children” in our society.

The Christian teaching of the “headship” of the husband and father in the family is not to be interpreted as supportive in any way of abusive behavior; nor is the traditional teaching about the need to discipline children.

Positions of authority in family and society, as well as in churches, can be used in abusive ways. Some examples are the refusal of leaders to be available, to listen and to communicate respectfully and openly with subordinates, and even with peers in similar leadership positions; the use by those in authority of material and economic threats and punishments against those having legitimate disagreements and differences; the unsound and unwarranted appeals on the part of those in authority to the right for love, respect and obedience from their subordinates, and even peers, in order to shame or silence those who question their policies and actions. Every means is to be taken to be aware of the abuse of authority by those in leadership positions, and to expose and correct it.

Those in authority and positions of leadership may themselves be abused by peers and subordinates through unjust criticism, uninformed judgments, ungrounded accusations, careless talk, malicious gossip, disrespect, disdain and outright disobedience. These forms of abusive behavior must also be exposed and eliminated in human communities, including families and churches.

Those in authority and positions of leadership may themselves be abused by peers and subordinates through unjust criticism, uninformed judgments, ungrounded accusations, careless talk, malicious gossip, disrespect, disdain and outright disobedience. These forms of abusive behavior must also be exposed and eliminated in human communities, including families and churches.

Many of the causes of human abuse are found in television programs, films, music, advertising, and social, political, ethnic and religious demagoguery which, primarily to make money, cater to the baser and weaker aspects of human life in the fallen world. These also are to be identified, exposed and eliminated.

Homosexuality

Created to know God’s divinity and power through creation, human beings have refused to acknowledge God, to honor and thank Him, and to obey his divine teachings. Through their rebellion “they became futile in their thinking and their senseless hearts were darkened” (Romans 1:21). Therefore, as the apostle Paul continues to teach, “God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves...their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error” (Romans 1:26-27).

Homosexual acts, like adulterous and incestuous behavior, are condemned in the law of Moses. Those who do these things, both men and women, are, according to God’s law of the old covenant, to be put to death (Leviticus 18:6-23; 20:10-21).

According to the apostle Paul, those engaging in homosexual acts, with fornicators, adulterers, idolaters, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers and robbers, will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Christians come from all these categories of evil doers who have, voluntarily and involuntarily, been caught up in the sin of the world. They are those who through their personal repentance and faith in Christ, their baptism and chrismation, and their participation in Holy Communion, have been “washed...sanctified...and made righteous in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Orthodox Baptism and Chrismation Service).

Jesus teaches mercy and forgiveness for all sinners, but the Lord does not justify sin. When the Son of God pronounces divine pardon to those caught in evil he always charges the forgiven sinner to “go and sin no more” (John 8:11).

Convinced of these God-revealed truths, we offer the following affirmations and admonitions for the guidance of the faithful:

Homosexuality is to be approached as the result of humanity’s rebellion against God, and so against its own nature and well-being. It is not to be taken as a way of living and acting for men and women made in God’s image and likeness.

Men and women with homosexual feelings and emotions are to be treated with the understanding, acceptance, love, justice and mercy due to all human beings.

People with homosexual tendencies are to be helped to admit these feelings to themselves and to others who will not reject or harm them. They are to seek assistance in discovering the specific causes of their homosexual orientation, and to work toward overcoming its harmful effects in their lives.

Persons struggling with homosexuality who accept the Orthodox faith and strive to fulfill the Orthodox way of life may be communicants of the Church with everyone else who believes and struggles. Those instructed and counseled in Orthodox Christian doctrine and ascetical life who still want to justify their behavior may not participate in the Church's sacramental mysteries, since to do so would not help, but harm them.

Assistance is to be given to those who deal with persons of homosexual orientation in order to help them with their thoughts, feelings and actions in regard to homosexuality. Such assistance is especially necessary for parents, relatives and friends of persons with homosexual tendencies and feelings. It is certainly necessary for pastors and church workers.

Sickness, Suffering, and Death

From the very beginning of human life on earth the rebellion of men and women against God has resulted in sickness, suffering and death. This is the meaning of the story of Adam and Eve, and their children and descendants, found in the first chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1-11).

Jesus Christ has come to save the world. He has come to free human beings from the tyranny of sickness, suffering and death through the forgiveness and expiation of their sins by his own sinless suffering and death.

Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes upon himself the sins of the world. He is the new and final Adam who comes from heaven to give human beings the opportunity to begin life over again by dying and rising in him, and being sanctified and sealed by his life-creating Spirit (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 15).

Jesus Christ shows us that human suffering has redeeming and sanctifying significance. It can be the means of finding God in the fallen world, the means of purification from carnal passions, the means of enlightenment and communion with God for everlasting life.

Through Christ's death, death itself is destroyed and transformed. Man's "final enemy," the "wages of sin," has become through Christ's crucifixion the way into paradise for those who fight it to the end, who refuse to surrender to its power, who destroy its very foundations by faith in God and love for Him and His good creation which has been corrupted and polluted by the evils of men (1 Corinthians 15, Romans 6).

The whole of creation—all the plants and animals, fish and birds, rocks and planets—is "groaning in travail" as it "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God;" for in the final coming of Christ all of creation "will be set free from the bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:18-21)

The apostle Paul tells us that "the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Romans 8:18) He says that our earthly sufferings are but the "slight momentary affliction" which "is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." (2 Corinthians 4:17)

Christians are waiting for the salvation of the world in God's coming kingdom where the Lord "will render to everyone according to his works." (Romans 2:6) The apostle continues, "to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil...but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good...for God shows no partiality." (Romans 2:7-11)

Convinced of these God-revealed truths we offer the following affirmations and admonitions for the guidance of the faithful:

All efforts to heal physical and spiritual sickness, to alleviate physical and spiritual suffering, and to prevent physical and spiritual death are to be supported and defended.

Those who suffer, and those related to the suffering, are to be helped to find God in their affliction, and so to acquire the divine grace and power to transform their pain into a means of purification from evil, illumination from darkness and eternal salvation in the age to come.

Adequate health care is to be made available for all men, women and children regardless of their, race,

religion, social status, or financial condition. Great care must be taken so that healing services are not restricted to the affluent or the apparently “deserving.”

Extreme caution is to be exercised in decisions involving medical treatment, especially in the face of death. Extreme care is always in order to find the “royal path” between providing all necessary healing measures and merely prolonging the biological functioning of organs when human life is no longer possible, or even present.

Scientific research and experimentation are to be undertaken with extreme caution in order not to bring greater evils and sufferings to humankind in place of intended blessings.

The natural world is to be treated as the friend and servant of humanity. It is not to be raped, corrupted and polluted for purposes of power, pleasure or profit. It resources are to be used with respect and gratitude for the well-being of all people on the planet (see *Message of the Primates of the Most Holy Orthodox Churches*, 6. Phanar, March 15, 1992).

Human beings are to be reminded by every means that they are not isolated individuals but are members one of another who will give account to God and to their fellow creatures for their every thought, word and deed; and that their eternal destiny depends on what they have done with their lives on earth.

+ THEODOSIUS

*Archbishop of Washington,
Metropolitan of All America & Canada*

+ KYRILL

*Archbishop of Pittsburgh, Western Pennsylvania
& the Bulgarian Diocese*

+ DMITRI

*Archbishop of Dallas, the South
& the Exarchate of Mexico*

+ HERMAN

Bishop of Philadelphia & Eastern Pennsylvania

+ GREGORY

Bishop of Sitka & Alaska

+ PETER

Bishop of New York & New York and New Jersey

+ NATHANIEL

Bishop of Detroit & the Romanian Episcopate

+ JOB

Bishop of Chicago & the Midwest

+ TIKHON

*Bishop of San Francisco and Los Angeles
& the West*

+ SERAPHIM

Bishop of Ottawa & the Archdiocese of Canada

A Reader's Guide to Orthodox Icons: Presentation of Christ - Temple & Church

iconreader.wordpress.com

According to the Mosaic law recorded in Exodus, the first-born son of every observant Jew should be dedicated to God in the Temple at Jerusalem forty days after his birth, where the mother would also complete her ritual purification. Forty days after the birth of Christ is celebrated, and bringing the Nativity cycle of feasts to a close, the dedication of the infant Jesus is remembered as the Feast of the Presentation (or Meeting, or Dedication) of the Lord in the Temple, known in the West as Candlemas, on Feb 2/15.

Beneath the mere outward act of submission to the Mosaic law by Ss Joseph, Mary, and Jesus lays an epochal point in the history of our salvation. This deeper meaning is revealed in the icons of this feast.

The story of Christ's dedication in the Temple is described in Luke's Gospel (Luke 2: 22-40). The elderly St Simeon, described in hymns as a “priest”, is inspired by the Holy Spirit to take up the Christ-child in His arms and declare: “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Simeon's recognition of baby Jesus as the Messiah is shown in his deep reverence: bowing low and holding Christ with covered hands. Christ Himself is shown as actively blessing those present, appearing as Lord and Saviour, rather than a helpless babe-in-arms.

The Mother of God has just given her Son into the arms of Simeon, whilst nearby is Anna, recognizable as a prophetess by the scroll she holds: sometimes closed, sometimes open. Completing the scene is Joseph, who brings a sacrificial offering to the Temple. In Leviticus, it states that forty days after the birth of the first-born son, the mother must bring a lamb and a turtledove to the priest as a burnt-offering. “*And if she is not able to bring a lamb [i.e. she is too poor], then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons—one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering.*” (Lev 12:8) Joseph is shown with two turtledoves, reinforcing the humble background into which Christ was born. He carries the turtledoves on behalf of Mary, the Mother, which reminds us that despite the doubts described in the Nativity Icon,

Joseph is finally reconciled to his betrothed and trusts the infant Jesus to be truly the Messiah.

This, then, is the basic story being told in the icon.

The Jewish Temple transformed into the Christian Church

The scene takes place in the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem, which was not merely the main temple of Judaism, but the *only* temple of the Jewish faith. As is normal for classic iconography, the scene appears to occur in the open, not concealed by walls, with the outside of the Temple shown in the background. The icon of the Presentation is dominated by a four-pillared dome, which was an architectural feature of the inside of the Temple. It is a *ciborium*, in Greek a *kiborion* (κιβωριου) – a canopy contained in the sanctuary.

Before the building of the Temple, from the time of Moses, the Hebrews had the Tabernacle, which contained the Ten Commandments given to Moses, the manna from Heaven, and an altar. This portable structure was the holy place in which the presence of God was manifest. After the nation of Israel was established, King Solomon built the Temple to house the Ten Commandments and the other contents of the Tabernacle. A permanent tabernacle was created within the Temple, the sanctuary, and this is what is depicted as a *ciborium*.

But the ciborium in the icon is not the tabernacle of the Temple of Solomon, which was destroyed within 50 years of Christ's dedication there. The altar in the icon is behind two gates, reminiscent of Royal Doors. Upon the altar are not the stone tablets of Moses, but a Gospel book that contains the New Testament. Sometimes the altar cloth is conspicuously decorated with the Christian cross; highly anachronistic, yet reminding us of the real significance of the event: not the observance of the old Mosaic law, but the *fulfillment* of it in Christ's incarnation. The ciborium itself was a common feature of first millennium churches, covering the altar and having curtains to veil the consecrated host at particular times of the Liturgy. The icon of the Presentation is therefore clearly and consciously depicting Solomon's Temple as a Christian church, though this is sometimes lost today when ciborium's are not as common in church architecture.

With this "transformation" in mind, it is no coincidence that the infant Christ appears to be handed to St Simeon over the altar. Just as the stone tablets are transformed, in the icon, into a Gospel-book, so too is the heavenly manna of the Jewish tabernacle transformed into the life-giving Lamb of God, Jesus Christ: a food also of divine origin, but inexhaustible, alive, and granting eternal life (see also *The Lamb of God in Orthodoxy*, the section on the *melismos*). Here, the references to St Simeon as "priest" are entirely appropriate, regardless of his actual role at the Temple in Jerusalem, as in the icon he receives the infant Jesus as the life-giving, sacrificial offering at the Christian liturgy. St Joseph even appears like a deacon attending to Simeon, shown in the same posture of supplication as the angels in the head banner of this website, who are painted with a deacon's vestments.

At the Theophany, we learn that Jesus did not need to receive the baptism of repentance from John in the river Jordan; Christ willingly did this to purify the waters, nature, and the ritual of baptism itself. Likewise, Christ did not need to be offered to the God Who begot Him, nor did any sacrifice for purification need to be given for He Who is spotless. Jesus entered the Temple not to be purified, but to purify others: St Simeon, Anna, and the whole system of Jewish worship. The passing away of animal sacrifices, the Mosaic Law, and Jewish Temple worship, were all heralded with Christ's dedication, forty days after His birth. This feast, coming at the end of the winter Feast of Lights, usually occurs close to the beginning of Lent, when the pure sacrifice of "a contrite heart" is required of us, rather than the burnt offerings done away with the advent of Christ.

*By Thy nativity, Thou didst sanctify the Virgin's womb;
And didst bless Simeon's hands, O Christ our God.*

Now Thou hast come and saved us through love.

Grant peace to all Orthodox Christians,

O only Lover of man.

(Kontakion of the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord)

The Doctrine of Christ:

A Layman's Handbook

by Abp. Dmitri (Royster) of Dallas, 1984

Orthodox Philosopher Teena Blackburn reminds us that *Christian teachings, especially Christian sexual teachings, will not make any sense if you don't know Christ first, and if you don't understand what the Faith says about anthropology: about who Jesus is, what a human is, what life is all about. All that has to come first, or you just get a long list of rules. Christians are following Someone; the pattern of our life is not arbitrary! It is, ideally, rooted in the idea (and experience) that nothing God asks of us is for anything but our good, our joy, our ultimate happiness* (adapted by the editor). In order to help us come to know who Christ is and what the Church teaches us about Christ's divinity and his humanity (a pattern for our humanity!), each month of 2021 we will be looking at a chapter of "The Doctrine of Christ" by the ever-memorable Abp. Dmitri of Dallas (+2011), renowned Orthodox biblical scholar, theologian, missionary, and pastor.

Chapter 1: Christ in the Holy Scriptures

In recent years there has been a great deal of controversy about what Jesus taught about Himself. Who did He say that He was? Why did He say that He had come? Consequently, it is at this point that we will begin our examination in detail:

The Son of God

In a conversation with Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, the Lord spoke the following concerning man's salvation: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man ... For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life ... He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (Jn. 3:13, 16, 18)

Here, the Lord attributes to Himself presence in both heaven and earth. He speaks of His having come down from heaven; and, He calls Himself the only begotten Son of God. Finally, He declares that

without faith in Him as the only begotten Son of God, salvation is impossible for men.

On another occasion, Jesus told certain Jewish priests, scribes and elders a parable. (Mk. 11:27) Jesus not only declares Himself to be the Son of God, but also describes His reason for coming into the world. This is the parable of the vineyard, which a man planted, "and set an hedge about it ... and let it out to husbandmen [tenants]." (12:1 ff.)

He was speaking of the heavenly Father, who planted His church in the midst of the Jewish people and entrusted it to them as the chosen people among all the people of the world.

At the season of the harvest, the Master sent to the husbandmen His servants to receive "the fruit of the vineyard." (12:2) Rather than do as they should have done, rather than remember that they were only tenants entrusted with the vineyard, they became selfish, self-centered, and forgot the one to whom they owed everything. They beat the servants, drove them away, and even killed some of them. (12:3-5)

Then the master decided to send his own son to them. "Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him ..." (12:6-8)

The Lord used this parable to declare Himself to be the only-begotten Son of God, the well beloved, and the heir of the heavenly Father.

Further, He described the reaction of His chosen people to His prophets and to His own presence among them. For the servants were the prophets whom God sent from time to time to His people to proclaim His will and to call them back to remembrance of Him. Many had been stoned, beaten, and killed; their message went unheeded. Finally, the Father sent His Son, who also was rejected and put to death. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (Jn. 1:11)

Again, when the Saviour had cured the paralytic, the Jews persecuted Him "because He had done these things on the Sabbath day." (Jn.5:16) And Jesus responded to them in these terms: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." (5:17)

This response, in which Jesus attributes to Himself equality with God the Father in privilege and

power, was understood precisely in this sense by the Jews. They “sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” (5:18)

Jesus goes on to teach them: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but that He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” (5:19) “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him.” (5:21-23) “For as the Father hath life in Himself: so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” (5:26)

Here the Saviour attributes to Himself the same will, the same power over life, the same self-existence as the Father has. Further, He declares that He is to be worshipped just as God the Father is worshipped.

In the same chapter, He goes on to cite the testimony of John the Baptist concerning Him (vv. 32-35); He refers to His own miraculous works (v. 36); and He recalls the witness of the heavenly Father: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,” (v. 37). Finally, He declares that the Old Testament scriptures refer precisely to Him: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and it is they which testify of me.” (v. 39)

Another incident in which Jesus clearly identifies Himself as the Son of God and puts Himself on a level with God is recorded in the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to John.

One day in the temple some of the Jews insisted that Jesus tell them directly whether He was the Messiah or not. “How long dost thou makes us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.” (v. 24)

In His answer, we find these striking words: “I and my Father are one.” (v. 30) The Jews certainly understood the intention of His declaration, for “they took up stones again to stone Him ... saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. (vv. 30-33)

The Saviour did not deny their accusation. On the contrary, He restated His claim to be the Son of God, inseparable from the Father, even more insistently. “Say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him.” (vv. 36-38)

Finally, when Jesus had been arrested and taken bound to the tribunal of Caiaphas, and several false witnesses had spoken against Him, the high priest stood up and asked Him publicly: “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.” (Mt. 26: 63; cf., Mk. 14:61)

Jesus, without hesitating, answered him, “I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” (Mk. 14:62)

“Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.” (Mt. 26:65,66) And having led Him to Pilate, the Jews told him, “We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.” (Jn. 19:7)

As is obvious in these, and the foregoing paragraphs, the Jews who heard Him certainly understood that He claimed to be the Son of God. About this, there can be no doubt.

The Divine Attributes

In addition to His claim to be the Son of God, Jesus attributed to Himself certain qualities that are proper to the Godhead: omnipresence – being always present everywhere, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Mt. 18:20; see also, Jn. 3:13 and Mt. 28:20); self-existence– having life in Himself, (Jn. 5:26); eternity– having always been, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” (Jn. 8:58; see also, Jn. 17:5); equality with God– (Jn. 10:27- 30); and, divine knowledge– (Mt. 11:27; Jn. 10:15).

It must be noted that by the use of the very expression I Am (cf., Jn. 8:58 above), the Saviour

identifies Himself with the God of Israel, I Am being the divine name given by God to Moses.

“And Moses said unto God, Behold when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” (Ex. 3:13,14)

Christ in the Gospels

One of the most serious errors widely taught and believed in our time is that Jesus Christ was only a man. It is asserted that He not only did not claim to be God, but that this idea was invented by His followers, principally the Apostle Paul. Many people imagine that His “simple” message of love and of doing good was distorted and elaborated in the generations that followed His earthly life into a complicated doctrinal system or religion that He would not even recognize.

While some of those who hold this point of view concede that He was a great moral teacher and prophet, perhaps even divinely inspired, they maintain that it was the disciples who made a God of Him and who also rewrote and edited the record of His teachings in the Bible.

The fact is that the primary record that we have of all the things He did and taught is the New Testament, specifically the holy Gospels. In them we find the account of His moral teachings and we also find His declarations concerning Himself. Although some biblical “scholars” question the authenticity of the latter, the Orthodox Church accepts as the truth the entire record of Jesus Christ contained in the Gospels.

The Gospel-writers, the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, made a permanent record not only of what He said about Himself but also showed how He was the Saviour promised by God through the prophets of the Old Testament.

For example, the holy Evangelist Matthew, speaking of the miraculous conception of the Saviour, relates to Him the prophecy of Isaiah: “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel,

which being interpreted is, God with us.” (1:23; Is. 7:14)

St. Mark begins his Gospel account with these words: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” (1:1) Then, telling the story of the Saviour’s baptism, he records the manifestation of the Holy Trinity: “And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove, descending upon Him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying: Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” (1:11)

St. Luke cites the prophecy of the angel to Zachariah concerning his son John, who was to be born and serve as the forerunner of the Messiah: “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he (John) shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah.” (1:16,17)

St. John the Theologian begins his Gospel thus: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.”

Here, he clearly calls the Word, “God.” He presents Him as existing since the beginning or from all eternity, distinct from the Father, and as having created all that exists.

Further, he writes: “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth ... for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (1:14,17) In other words, this Word is precisely the only-begotten Son of God the Father: He became flesh and is none other than Jesus Christ.

A little further along, he says: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son of God the Father, He hath declared Him.” (1:18) In these words, he shows that Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son literally, as being in the very bosom of the Father, and that He has made it possible for men to know God.

Finally, on concluding His Gospel, St. John notes that the purpose of writing it has been to prove the divinity of Jesus Christ. “These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.” (20:31)

Christ in the Epistles

§ The Epistles of John

St. John, also, at the beginning of his first epistle, calls Christ our Saviour “the word of life,” (1:1); “eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,” (1:20); and at the end of the same, says: “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life,” (5:20). Here he calls “true Son of God” and “true God” the One whom he had previously called “eternal life,” thus affirming Christ’s divinity.

Again, in the Revelation (Apocalypse), he cites several times the words of the Saviour, who had appeared to him. “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” (1:10, 12, 17, 18; 22:12,13) He declares that Christ is “the Prince of the kings of the earth,” (1:5) and the “King of kings and the Lord of lords” (19:16).

§ The Epistles of Paul

In his epistles, the holy apostle Paul calls the Saviour **God**:

“[who; was manifest in the flesh,” (I Tm. 3:16);

“the Lord of glory,” (I Cor. 2:8);

“the great God,” (Tit. 2:13);

“God blessed for ever,” (Rm. 9:5);

God’s “own Son,” (Rm. 8:32);

“who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” (Ph. 2:6).

St. Paul gives Christ the divine attributes: **eternity**, (Hb. 7:3); **immutability** (unchangeableness), (Hb. 1:10-12); and **omnipotence** (having all power), (Hb. 1:3; Ph. 3:21).

He attributes to Him the whole creation: “... By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him.” (Col. 1:16) “... He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” (Col. 1:17; Cf., Hb. 1:3)

§ The Epistles of Jude

The holy apostle Jude, furthermore, describes heretics as those who deny the divinity of Christ. “There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into

lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (v. 4)

Here, “and our Lord Jesus Christ” stands as an appositive to “the only Lord God.” Hence, St. Jude uses the terms synonymously and affirms Christ’s divinity.

§ Christ in the Sub-Apostolic Epistles

In the generation following that of the disciples of Christ, a number of bishops who had been taught directly by the Apostles themselves wrote letters (epistles) to the churches. Some of these epistles have come down to us, and in them we find exactly the same doctrine of Christ found in the New Testament. It is extremely important to note that there is a perfect continuity between what the Apostles taught and what their disciples taught.

St. Ignatius of Antioch writes in his epistle to the Trallians: “Guard yourselves from these people [the heretics], and you will have nothing to fear from them if you do not fill yourselves with pride and turn away from God, Jesus Christ, and from the bishop and from the commandments.” (Ch. 7) [Note again that “Jesus Christ” stands in apposition to “God.” as in the Epistle of Jude.]

Furthermore, St. Ignatius writes to the Christians at Ephesus: “Every place of injustice hath been destroyed, ignorance overcome, the ancient kingdom done away by the appearance of ‘**God in the form of man**’, for the new life which shall have no end ... You all with the cooperation of grace, have been joined together in the one same Faith and in the same Jesus Christ, issue of David according to the flesh. Son of Man and Son of God.” (Chs. 19 and 20)

Then again, he wrote to the Church at Rome: “Ignatius, called also the God-bearer, pardoned by the goodness of the Most High and of Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, to the most beloved Church, enlightened by the will of Him who is pleased with all that is done for love of Jesus Christ our God ... I desire you to rejoice with an excellent and pure joy in Jesus Christ our God.” (Ch. 1)

St. Polycarp of Smyrna, writing to the Philippians, greets them in these terms: “Polycarp, and with him the priests of the Church of God, which is in Philippi: may the grace and peace of Jesus Christ, God Almighty, our Lord and Saviour, be increased in you.” (Ch. 1)

Finally, the Apostolic Father known as the author of the Epistle to Diognetus says: "He Himself [God] has given His Son for our redemption, the Holy One for sinners, the Innocent for the guilty, the Just for the unjust, the Incorruptible for the corruptible, the Immortal for mortals. For, what could cover our sins, but His justice? Who else could justify us sinners and impious ones, but the only Son of God ...?" (Ch. 9)

Thus in the sub-apostolic period, the same emphasis on the divinity of Christ was held in the Church as it was during the time of the Apostles.

If there are any topics you would like covered in future editions of the Prophet, or if you have any articles which you found to be a blessing, please let Fr. John know!