
W^{the}onderworker

Saint George Orthodox Church

Third Quarter, 2012

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

A few notes about this issue of *The Wonderworker*.

First of all, we are continuing to reprint, in English and Albanian, excerpts from the series of books "The Orthodox Faith" by Fr. Thomas Hopko. Beginning with this issue, however, the selections are taken from the fourth volume of the series, which is entitled "Spirituality." We are doing this in conjunction with the **Natural Church Development (NCD)** process which we have entered on this year. The NCD survey that was taken in January identified **Fervent Spirituality** as our Minimum Factor, so these excerpts from Fr. Hopko's book seem particularly appropriate at the present time. The English version is on page 4 and the Albanian on page 5.

Second, continuing with the NCD process, we have listed on page 2 the most frequent and important themes that our **Church Health Team** took from the first round of Focus Groups. We have printed them here for your information and to help you prepare to participate in the second round of Focus Groups which will endeavor to develop specific activities and programs to address **Fervent Spirituality**. We encourage everyone to participate in the Focus Groups and to get involved in the activities and programs that emerge from them.

We look forward to completing this next phase of the NCD process, because it means that we are one step closer to implementing the programs that will result from it and which will, we pray, result in the improvement of the spiritual life of our entire community.

Finally, you will find on page 7 a notice about the resignation of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, the Primate of our Orthodox Church in America.

Of course, there is much speculation "out there" about the real reasons behind this move. Our society seems to love conspiracies and to look for hidden agendas behind every door. You may well have seen some such discussion on the internet already. Don't believe it. Don't pass it along to others.

His Beatitude offers a very simple reason for his resignation. You will find it in his letter which I have reproduced on page 7. Let's all take him at his word and leave the destructive speculations and conspiracy theories where they belong. Above all, let's pray for Metropolitan Jonah as he begins a new phase of his life, whatever that might be; for Archbishop Nathaniel, the temporary Primate of our church; for Bishop Michael, who will be administering the church; and for the Chancellor, Fr. John Jillions, and his staff as they all work to chart the course of the Orthodox Church in America for the future.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Dennis

NCD Focus Group results

Earlier this year, our **Church Health Team** conducted a series of meetings with parishioners to discuss the results of the **Natural Church Development (NCD)** survey that was taken in January. These "Focus Groups" discussed the reasons that "Fervent or Passionate Spirituality" was our Minimum Factor in the survey. The **Church Health Team** is currently planning the second round of "Focus Groups," which will discuss what can be done to improve our spirituality and develop activities to help in that process.

We have listed below the main themes that were identified in the first round of "Focus Groups." The **Church Health Team** asks you to look them over carefully to see if you can come up with any activities to address the issues described and plan to participate actively in the second round.

Themes Identified Through Initial Focus Group Discussions

Minimum Factor: Fervent (Passionate) Spirituality

- Our background/upbringing has caused us to feel more private about spirituality and uncomfortable about openly demonstrating and discussing spirituality
 - We feel that we lack education/knowledge about our faith and don't know how to be spiritual
 - We seem to emphasize being social over being religious
 - Some look at church as an obligation vs. having a desire to worship
 - It is hard to be Orthodox and follow the rules, etc.
 - American culture does not support a demonstration of spirituality, Christian living. Lack of faith in general has become part of our culture.
 - Competing interests - sports, shopping, etc.
 - Participation in the liturgy is not always demonstrated by people in the pews, complaints about length of the service, low attendance, lack of motivation/interest, lack of respect
 - Nothing has changed in our church for many years
 - Fear about being judged by other parishioners
 - Embarrassment about being Orthodox and/or being Albanian
 - A feeling of lack of connection, whether it be due to language differences, small number of children, members leaving to attend church of spouses
 - Too much emphasis on supporting the church financially vs. spirituality in the past
-

Bishop Nikon elevated, visits Albania

At the Spring Session of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, which was held in May at the Monastery of the Holy Dormition in Rives Junction, near Detroit, Michigan, our hierarch, Bishop Nikon, was elevated to the rank of Archbishop in recognition of the tenth anniversary of his consecration to the episcopate. He is now known as "**His Eminence, Nikon, Archbishop of Boston, New England and the Albanian Archdiocese.**"

Also, in June, His Eminence was invited to visit Albania, where he participated in the celebrations surrounding the 20th Anniversary of the reestablishment of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania and the opening and blessing of the new Resurrection of Christ Cathedral, located in the center of the capital city of Tirana.

On the feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, June 24, **Archbishop Nikon** joined with the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Albania, **Archbishop Anastasios**, and clergy from all over Albania and around the world in the service of opening and blessing and an anniversary concert held that evening. Also in attendance at the service and concert were the president of Albania, Bamir Topi, and leaders of other religious communities.

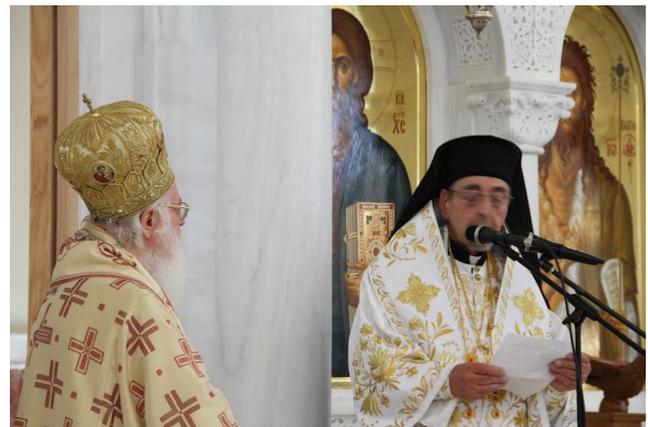
We pray for **Many Years** for His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon, and for the Primate, Bishops, clergy and people of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania!



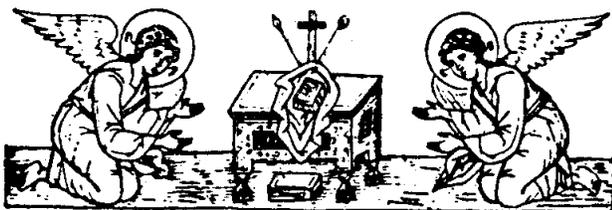
Newly-elevated Archbishop Nikon



Exterior of the new Resurrection of Christ Cathedral



Archbishop Nikon greets Archbishop Anastasios during the services of opening and blessing the new Resurrection of Christ Cathedral in Tirana, Albania



Spirituality

Spirituality in the Orthodox Church means the everyday activity of life in communion with God. The term **spirituality** refers not merely to the activity of man's spirit alone, his mind, heart and soul, but it refers as well to the whole of man's life as inspired and guided by the Spirit of God. Every act of a Christian must be a spiritual act. Every thought must be spiritual, every word, every deed, every activity of the body, every action of the person. This means that all that a person thinks, says and does must be inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit so that the will of God the Father might be accomplished as revealed and taught by Jesus Christ the Son of God.

...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Doing all things to the glory of God is the meaning and substance of life for a human being. This "doing" is what Christian **spirituality** is all about.

God

Christian spirituality is centered in God; in fact, its very goal is communion or union with God, which is attainable through the accomplishment of His will. To be what God wants us to be and to do what God wants us to do is the sole meaning of our human existence. The fulfillment of the prayer "Thy will be done" is the heart and soul of all spiritual effort and activity.

In the Old Testament law, it is written:

I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. (Leviticus 11:44)

In the New Testament, the first letter of Saint Peter refers to this fundamental command of God.

...as He who called you is holy, be holy yourself in all your conduct; since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16)

That human beings should be holy by sharing in the happiness of God Himself is the meaning of union with God. All are "**called to be saints**" (Romans 1:7) by becoming "**partakers of the nature of God.**" (2 Peter 1:4) This is what Jesus meant when He said in the Sermon on the Mount, "**You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**" (Matthew 5:48)

The teaching that man must be holy and perfect like God Himself through the accomplishment of the will of God is the central teaching of the Orthodox Christian faith. This teaching has been stated in many different ways in the Orthodox spiritual tradition. Saint Maximus the Confessor (7th century) said it this way: "Man is called to become by divine grace all that God Himself is by nature." This means very simply that God wills and helps His creatures to be like He is, and that is the purpose of their being and life. As God is holy, man must be holy. As God is perfect, man must be perfect, pure, merciful, patient, kind, gentle, free, self-determining, ever-existing and always, for eternity, the absolute superabundant realization of everything good in inexhaustible fullness and richness... so man must be this way as well, ever growing and developing in divine perfection and virtue for all eternity by the will and power of God Himself. The "perfection" of man is his growth in the unending perfection of God.

from *The Orthodox Faith*,
by Fr. Thomas Hopko

Spiritualiteti

Spiritualiteti në Kishën Orthodhokse është aktiviteti i jetës së përditshme në kungim me Perëndinë. Termi **spiritualitet** nuk i referohet thjesht vetëm veprimtarisë shpirtërore të njeriut, mendjes së tij, zemrës dhe shpirtit, po i referohet, gjithashtu, gjithë jetës së njeriut të frymëzuar dhe drejtuar nga Shpirti i Perëndisë. Çdo veprim i një të krishteri duhet të jetë një veprim shpirtëror. Çdo mendim duhet të jetë shpirtëror: çdo fjalë, çdo punë, çdo veprim i trupit dhe çdo veprim i personit. Kjo do të thotë se gjithçka që një person mendon, thotë e bën duhet të frymëzohet dhe drejtohet nga Shpirti i Shenjtë, kështu që vullneti i Perëndisë Atë të mund përmbushet ashtu siç është zbuluar dhe mësuar nga Jisu Krishti Biri i Perëndisë.

...të gjitha t'i bëni për lavdinë e Perëndisë
(1 Korinthianët 10:31).

Të bësh gjithçka për lavdinë e Perëndisë është kuptimi dhe substanca e jetës për një qenie njerëzore. Kjo "bërje" është ajo çfarë është spiritualiteti i krishterë.

Perëndia

Spiritualiteti i krishterë përqendrohet në Perëndinë; në fakt, qëllimi i tij i vërtetë është kungimi ose bashkimi me Perëndinë, i cili arrihet nëpërmjet përmbushjes së vullnetit të Tij. Të jesh çfarë Perëndia do që ne të jemi dhe të bësh çfarë Perëndia do që ne të bëjmë është i vetmi qëllim i ekzistencës sonë njerëzore. Përmbushja e lutjes "U bëftë dëshira Jote" është zemra dhe shpirti i çdo përpjekje dhe aktiviteti shpirtëror.

Në ligjin e Dhiatës së Vjetër është shkruar:

Unë jam Zoti Perëndia juaj; shenjtërohuni, pra, dhe jini të shenjtë, sepse Unë jam i shenjtë (Levitiku 11:44).

Në Dhiatën e Re, letra e parë e Shën Pjetrit i referohet këtij urdhërimi themelor të Perëndisë.

...ashtu si është i shenjtë Ai që ju thirri, të jini edhe ju të shenjtë në gjithë sjelljen tuaj, sepse është shkruar: "Jini të shenjtë, sepse Unë jam i shenjtë" (1 Pjetri" 1:15-16).

Që qeniet njerëzore duhet të jenë të shenjta, duke marrë pjesë në lumturinë e Vetë Perëndisë, ky është qëllimi i bashkimit me Perëndinë. Të gjithë janë **"thirrur të jenë shenjtore"** (Romanët 1:7) duke u bërë **"pjesëmarrës së natyrës hyjnore"** (2 Pjetri. 1:4). Këtë kuptonte Jisui kur tha në Predikimin në Mal: **"Jini, pra, të përsosur, ashtu siç është i përsosur Ati juaj qiellor"** (Matheu 5:48).

Mësimi se njeriu duhet të jetë i shenjtë dhe i përsosur si Vetë Perëndia nëpërmjet kryerjes së vullnetit të Tij është mësimi qendror i besimit të krishterë orthodhoks. Ky mësim pohohet në shumë mënyra të ndryshme në traditën shpirtërore orthodhokse. Shën Maksim Konfessori (*shek. 7*) e thotë në këtë mënyrë: "njeriu është thirrur të bëhet nga hiri hyjnor gjithçka që Vetë Perëndia është nga natyra." Shumë thjesht kjo do të thotë se Perëndia i dëshiron dhe i ndihmon krijesat e Tij të jenë ashtu siç është Ai dhe ky është qëllimi i qenies dhe jetës së tyre. Ashtu si Perëndia është i shenjtë, njeriu duhet të jetë i shenjtë. Ashtu si Perëndia është i përsosur, njeriu duhet të jetë i përsosur, i pastër, i mëshirshëm, i duruar, i butë, i dashur, i lirë, vetë-vendosës, përherë-ekzistues dhe gjithmonë, përjetësisht realizimi absolut i mbibollshëm i gjithçkaje të mirë në plotësinë dhe pasurinë e pashtershme...kështu duhet të jetë edhe njeriu në këtë mënyrë, gjithmonë duke u rritur dhe duke u zhvilluar në virtytin dhe përsosjen hyjnore për jetë të jetëve, me anë të vullnetit dhe fuqisë së Vetë Perëndisë. "Përsosja" e njeriut është rritja e tij në përsosjen pambarim të Perëndisë.

nga *Besimi Ortodoks (The Orthodox Faith)*
i At Thomas Hopko

Coming Events

July

- 20: Holy Prophet Elijah (Elia)
- 22: General Parish meeting
- 27: Great Martyr Panteleimon (Pandeli)

August

- 1: Dormition Fast begins
- 6: Transfiguration of our Lord
9:30 a.m. — Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Fruit
- 9: St. Herman of Alaska
- 15: Dormition (Falling Asleep) of the Virgin Mary
- 24: St. Kozma of Berat
- 29: Beheading of St. John the Baptist
9:30 a.m. — Divine Liturgy

September

- 1: Church New Year
- 8: Nativity of the Virgin Mary
9:30 a.m. — Divine Liturgy
- 9: Beginning of Church School
- 14: Elevation of the Holy Cross
9:30 a.m. — Divine Liturgy
- 23: Conception of St. John the Baptist
- 26: St. John the Theologian
- 28/ Archdiocesan Assembly
- 29: St. George Cathedral, Boston, Mass.

Looking ahead...

- July 22: Parish General Meeting
- August 6: Transfiguration of our Lord
9:30 a.m., Divine Liturgy
- August 13 — 18: New England
Youth Rally 2012
- March 18, 2013: Great Lent begins
- March 31, 2013: Western Easter
- May 5, 2013: Pascha — Orthodox Easter



Bible Study

On September 5, the Wednesday-evening **Bible Study Group** will resume its meetings. Instead of meeting on alternate Wednesdays, as they did previously, the group will now meet every Wednesday.

Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. and last until about 8:30 p.m. The discussions are lively and interesting and are not strictly limited to the Gospel text, but can go wherever the interest of the group directs.

They will continue their reading the **Gospel of Saint Mark**. When they have finished that, they will decide on another book of the Bible to read.

The Bible Study group is open to anyone with an interest in the Bible and the Orthodox Faith.

Please join us!

Congratulations to our Graduates

We congratulate and extend our best wishes for future success to our recent graduates!

High School:

- **Nicholas Demetri** graduated from Shelton High School.
- **James Lazor** graduated from Chase Collegiate School in Waterbury.
- **Lauren Rubis** graduated from Masuk High School in Monroe.

College:

- **Julia R. Snedegar** graduated *cum laude* from the University of Connecticut with a B.S. in Allied Health Science.
- **Christopher Michael** graduated from California State University, Fresno with a B.A. in Design and a B.A. in Art History.

Many Years to all!



General Parish Meeting to be held

On Sunday, July 22nd, the **General Meeting** of our parish membership will be held in the Church Hall following the Divine Liturgy.

An important item on the agenda will be the election of *Parish Council members* for next year and the installation of a *restroom* on the main floor of the Church building.

Please be sure to attend and participate in this meeting.

Metropolitan Jonah resigns

On July 6, 2012, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, submitted his resignation as the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America.

Here is the full text of his letter to the Holy Synod:

To the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America,

Brothers,

As per your unanimous request, as conveyed to me by Chancellor Fr. John Jillions, I hereby tender my resignation as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, and humbly request another Episcopal assignment.

I had come to the realization long ago that that I have neither the personality nor the temperament for the position of Primate, a position I never sought nor desired.

It is my hope that due consideration will be made for my financial situation, both in any interim and in consideration for any future position. I am the main financial support for both my parents and my sister, beyond my own needs.

I will appreciate your consideration in this, and beg forgiveness for however I have offended you, and for whatever difficulties have arisen from my own inadequacies and mistakes in judgment.

Asking your prayers, I remain faithfully yours,

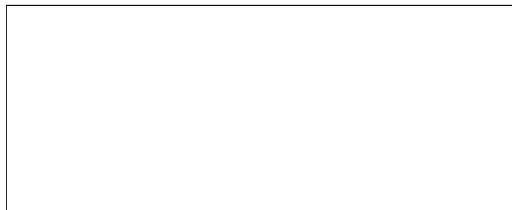
Metropolitan Jonah, Archbishop of Washington

His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel, will act as *locum tenens* of the OCA, and His Grace, Bishop Michael, as administrator of the Church.

We will try to keep you informed of any future developments.

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FORWARD AND ADDRESS CORRECTION



The Wonderworker

The Wonderworker
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Archpriest Dennis R. Rhodes,
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