



St. John Chrysostom Church

A Mission of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
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December SJCC News

My Joy in the Lord,

It has been a month since we moved into our new home. Somehow it feels appropriate that as we prepare to celebrate the birth of God, we, too are born into a new body. The physical part of the Church is really a body that houses the real Church, which is all of us. No building can ever really be the Church, but it helps to establish a sacred space for worship and for Communion with God. We began in a barn, continued in one combined room, and now have moved into what will be two separate areas, one for worship and one for fellowship. Both are important to the Church. We will not stop here, this, too, is temporary, call it the toddler stage for us. In time we will move on, hopefully to a larger place, maybe even our own. But that is for the future.

May you now have a blessed Nativity and a glorious New Year!

With love, in Christ,
Fr. Seraphim

Floyd Frantz will be with us on Dec. 20.

Floyd has been working in Romania under the auspices of the OCMC and of the Romanian Orthodox Church to provide Alcohol Dependency Treatment Centers for the many alcoholics in need. Together with his wife, who provides a shelter and services for unwed mothers, they are a shining example of the social aspect of Orthodoxy in action. Floyd will give a presentation, (including a powerpoint if we get our screen up in time) after the Liturgy. There will be a special collection to help him, and his wife in their continuing work.

Speaking of collections

We NEVER pass a basket or tray around. ALL collections are done via the tray on the desk next to the candles. For Floyd, there will be a second basket on the desk.

My philosophy and hope is to eventually have a basket with money in it and a sign: "If you need some, take some, if you have some, give some!" (We will have a separate basket/box for checks since we don't want those taken.....)

For those who do not wish to deal with either checks or cash, we do not as yet accept credit cards (and probably never will for donations) but we can provide you with our bank routing number and account number for a direct bank to bank transfer, if you would like to set up a monthly schedule of donations or just use that method once in a while. You can also set up BillPay to send us a monthly donation.

Speaking of donations and pledges...

I ask that every person over 18 fill out a pledge form. #1 – this is required by the archdiocese as a method of legally becoming a member of the parish, diocese, and archdiocese. #2 – it helps us try to divide the work among as many people as possible. #3 – it gives us an idea of how to budget for the coming year.

A PLEDGE IS NOT A CONTRACT. Some give more than they pledge. Others give less. It depends on the circumstances that happen during the year and the financial position and desires of each individual. YOU WILL NEVER RECEIVE A LETTER FROM THE PARISH STATING THAT YOU HAVE NOT “FULFILLED” YOUR PLEDGE. You can pledge as a family or individually. If it is a family pledge then only one member of the family would fill in the financial section. But, nevertheless, I ask that each individual at least fill out the Time & Talent section. I omitted one line in the Time & Talent section that has been rectified – to pray. Even if you cannot help in any of the activities, you should always be able to pray – for the parish, for the members, for the Church, and for our nation.

Nativity Services

Last year, a number of people requested to make the Nativity Liturgy in the morning. Since in the next two years the Nativity will be on Saturday and Sunday when we would normally have it in the morning as well, I decided to start this year. There will be Royal Hours and the Vespers Liturgy of Nativity Eve on Thursday morning, beginning at 9 am. For those who are not familiar with those services, Royal Hours are served three times during the year, on Nativity Eve, Theophany Eve (which we will not do) and on Holy Friday. They include the major thematic scripture readings for the upcoming feast as well as some very lovely hymns about the feast. They have been described as the “real definition” of what we are celebrating. The Vespers Liturgy, that immediately follows, is all about the preparation for the coming Nativity. It is the Liturgy of St. Basil rather than of St. John Chrysostom. (except in two years, when the Nativity will be on a Sunday and the order is reversed – St. John Chrysostom's on the eve and St. Basil's on the Feast – don't look at me, this order has been in existence for at least the last millenium [probably millenium and a half].....) The Nativity Vigil service, which is a combination of Great Compline and Matins (Orthros) will begin at 7:00 pm and takes about an hour and a half. Liturgy for the Nativity will be at 9:00 am on the 25th.

House Blessings / Theophany visits

I would like to visit all of you during January, following the blessing of water on Theophany. I will begin with the Parish Council on the 7th, and continue geographically. I do not have a schedule made up as yet, but will have it after Christmas. I will be happy to bless your home, but I do mean your home – all of it, every nook and cranny, not just a part of it. Whether or not I bless the home, I would love to have some tea or juice with you and talk about the church or anything else that you would like.

Confessions

Every so often I try to remind everyone that Confession is good for the soul – especially the Sacrament. I know it can be uncomfortable, especially if you are not used to it, but “practice makes perfect”. The only way to get comfortable is by coming to Confession. I will remind everyone that Confession is to God, not to the priest. The priest is a witness, who will stand beside you at the Judgment, also as a witness to God of your Confession. Also, neither you nor the priest is permitted to discuss the Confession, except in general terms which preserves the anonymity of the Confessor and the confessee.

Sunday School

Beginning in January, we will start a Sunday School program. For this I need at least one teacher. Any volunteers????

From Fr. Seraphim

When reading the section below, please remember that this was spoken and edited in 1964 – before many of the movements that have so changed our vocabulary. Please read it with innocence – in the way it was intended. Prof. Verhovskoy – as he himself states below – is speaking in generalities and using language formulated before our more gender neutral sensibilities.

I seriously considered updating/changing the language in Prof's (that is how he was known to all students at St. Vladimir's – as Prof) speech but when I started it, I found that I could not do it without rewriting everything – and then it would be my version rather than his words. He was born in Russia in 1907 and grew up in Prague and Paris between the two world wars. His attitudes were somewhat European and even 19th century, but they also were always Orthodox. For those of you who managed to attend Fr. Jeremy's retreat this past Lent, some of the ideas are not new – he gave a very precise explanation of the implicit ideas that the Church has had from the Greek – the same ideas that Prof reflects in his speech.

For everyone – if you have questions – bring them to the Saturday night Open discussion or contact me directly.

The Christian Concept of Man/Woman relationships Part 4

The lecture delivered by Professor S. Verhovskoy at a Church School Teachers' Conference in the summer of 1964 and the response it provoked marks quite a milestone in the development of our Church consciousness. It is a first attempt over a long period of time to face squarely the problem of man-woman relationships from an Orthodox Christian point of view in terms of here and today. Our theologians, priests and educators, have long been silent on this aspect of human relations and personal growth, and yet it permeates our society and our culture and is discussed daily by all kinds of authorities and our young people are so deeply involved in it.

As any first attempt it does not exhaust the subject and does not answer all the questions. The dialogue provoked by Prof. Verhovskoy shows clearly that there is a great need for better semantics,-- for a clearer understanding of just what meaning is injected into the words we use. Let us hope that this booklet will prove to be a starting point for honest, sincere, realistic thinking;., enlightened by our Orthodox Christian vision of life. This kind of thinking will help us to embody a truly Christian way of life, growth and relationships, to which we could then introduce our young people.

Sophie Koulomzin

Transcribed from a tape-recording of the lecture given by PROF, S. S. VERHOVSKOY at the Church School Conference at Douglass College, New Brunswick, VT, organized by the Russian Orthodox Metropolia. Religious Education Department. Prof. Verhovskoy teaches Dogmatics and Moral Theology at St. Vladimir's Seminary,

There is a modern trend of thought that fornication is as simple as eating or drinking, but this is tragically untrue. Fornication is psychologically destructive, it carries within it the disintegration of human personality particularly so in the case of women. Instinctively, almost unconsciously we recognize a "woman of light morals," by some expression in her face, her mannerisms. A person's inner life is affected too, the animal traits of nature become stronger, all respect for the relationship of sex is lost. A man and a woman who are promiscuous cannot resume a serious attitude to their relation. If they would marry, it would merely mean for them having a new lover, or gaining some material or social values, such as a home, prestige, etc., but they would lack the spontaneous readiness and capacity for an act of union with one person. This does not depend on one's good will and though one can fight the consequences, and probably the best way is repentance, one would still suffer from them.

In the Soviet Union in the twenties, the government preached a program of freedom in sexual relations: Do whatever you want. In the thirties they suddenly changed their policies and they, communists without God and without any particular code of ethics, insisted on sexual morality. Why? They were not interested in moral salvation, but they were interested in having sound workers, reliable, active people, who are capable of achievement. Just as a drunkard will not do a good job, so a fornicator will not be reliable. Fornication means corruption, corruption means decomposition,

something which is introduced into your being and which destroys your soul, your personality, makes you incapable of being a sound and good man.

I have spoken on this subject many times throughout the United States, and very often the reaction is that it's too late, because a free attitude toward sex is already there. It is preached everywhere and nothing can be done about it. One day I asked the headmistress, of a Church School whether she knew what kind of parties are organized by the children of the upper grades of this high school. She said: "Yes, professor, I know." I then asked her whether it would not be possible to do something about it. She said: "No, professor. If I do something about it, the parents will take their children out of my school." And so these parties, and you all know what kind of parties I'm talking about, are considered, even by a religious leader as something which you cannot "touch because of the risk involved. A few days ago I was speaking to another educator, a woman again, and her reaction was the same: "No, I cannot do anything about it, because they will take the students away from me." These parties seem to be something sacred. What does it mean? Is it sacred to leave youth to enjoy themselves in all kinds of unwholesome ways while the parents go out? The teachers do nothing about it, and the priests are silent! What an abomination! Who among our priests speaks seriously about dating and matters connected with it? They are afraid of being accused of being backward, or fanatical, or who knows what else. I do not believe that it is too late to do something. It is not too late, but first, the ones who are responsible for our society must realize that this is not a minor matter. We have to organize a crusade, with the priests and the parents in the first rows. We must not be cowards, but responsible Christian parents. The young generation itself can react to the evil. Believe me, it is not true that all American boys and girls are corrupted. There are many who do not enjoy this type of thing, who condemn it, but who are afraid of saying anything because they will be ridiculed. But you can, young people, stand up for your beliefs and say flatly and clearly: "I don't go this way! You can organize your parties, go into the woods, or bushes, or in the cars, but I will not do this. If you want to be pigs, then be pigs, it's a free country, but I think it's piggish and I will not go this way." You will then gain your own self-respect. People may mock you and refer to you as "saintly," but they will respect you too. I think it is time to begin a reverse movement, to say "enough of this business." Dating is the most stupid and poisonous institution that could have been invented. Who invented it? I don't know, but it has become a kind of plague in the United States. A boy and a girl scarcely know each other, but they "make a date," which means they will go somewhere, for a certain length of time, and the two of them will be alone. They do not know each other but already they have established a male-female relationship, artificially created. What happens then? One line that was quite popular about ten years ago began: Let's discuss something. What shall we discuss? Philosophy? Theology? No, let's talk about sex. From here on it is evident what happens between a male and a female, alone in a dark movie, or in a car, incited by a conversation on sex. In other countries, when a boy and a girl see each other first, it is always in public. They will be part of a group, they may dance, or go for walks, or talk with one another. It is only when a personal relationship has been established, when a boy and a girl know each other's way of thinking, when they feel that they are interested in each other, that they begin to date. Dating, under such circumstances, is the outcome of a good, wholesome relation between a girl and a boy. But in this country today boys and girls are too busy listing the number of dates they have in their notebooks ... The more the better ... This is cold fornication, ready-made and organized by modern tradition. I agree that it is difficult to ruin such a tradition, but it is possible, with the help of the Church, of the parents, of youth organizations. We must create possibilities for the young people to meet each other not in cars, not in movies and restaurants, not in the street, or under the porch, or in the bushes, but someplace where they can meet each other decently, in a friendly way. Let them be friends first, then lovers and not the other way round.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD FOLLOWING PROF. VERHOVSKOY'S LECTURE

Q. Do you think that we should blame the teenagers at this date? Don't you think that it is the sins of their fathers and mothers that are prevailing on them? You can't blame the kids, they don't know any better.

A. I agree with you that the parents are behaving terribly in their lack of sense of responsibility for their children. I am ashamed on behalf of the parents because they are negligent and corrupted themselves in this respect. But it would show a lack of respect for our boys and girls if we said that they can do only what is suggested to them or impressed upon them by their parents. They are almost grownup, after all. This is a common responsibility.

Q. I would like to ask you a question concerning the period when boys and girls are beginning to get ready for marriage, for the selection of their mate. In our modern civilization this process is left to the initiative of the youngsters themselves, instead of having parents plan, as it used to be done in the past, for opportunities for suitable young persons to meet each other. Whatever old fashioned, or strange form this process took, it was still a process of the adult society helping the young to select the proper mate. Meetings are left to chance now and for a period of several years a girl, say from 16 on, is meeting every boy that circumstances bring in touch with her, with a kind of inner questioning: is he the boy? It is a very difficult period, and yet it is normal, and I wonder whether there are any guidelines that could be helpful at this period?

A. Your question is important but not difficult to answer. The very purpose of human relationships is to learn to know each other. Yet I am disturbed when you say that when a girl meets a boy, she immediately thinks of him as a potential husband. I think it is a degrading, "old maid" psychology, and a young girl can rise above it. As far as human relations are concerned, everything in this world has to start with friendship. Remember what I said: any man, or any girl is first of all a human being, so first you have to learn to know it.

Where and how can they get acquainted? There must be family affairs, when people come together to visit with one another. Our youth organizations and clubs can provide the proper atmosphere for our young people to meet, to become friendly, to know each other. Gradually, in a larger group, smaller units of persons who have a lot in common with one another come together. Eventually this can lead to dating and in this way love will not come from the "brain" where a mate is rated as to his or her attributes, but will develop out of friendship and understanding.

Q. In years past people led religious and moral lives and they were able to work out simple marriage contracts without all this emphasis on premarital relations and love-making. Please explain.

A. We must understand that pre-marital sex relations are simply inadmissible from the point of view of the Orthodox Church. If a man and a woman have found satisfaction in a merely physical union, why marry? They already have each other, there is no need to marry. But there is no sacred character to this union. If we really believe in the sacramental, mystical, sacred, moral, religious character of the union between man and woman, it will be clear to us that this union must first be blessed by God. Marriage is considered by our Church not as just a ceremony for beauty's sake, not as a social affair, but as an action of God who unites a wife and a husband. (...)

Schedule of Services and Events

December

5	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
6	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	St. Nicholas
8	Tue	7:00 pm	Parish Council at M. Bourquin's	
12	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
13	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Sunday of the Forefathers St. Herman of Alaska
17	Thu	7:00 pm	Inquirer's Discussion at the Church	
19	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers Open Topics Discussion	
20	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Sunday of the Fathers
24	Thu	9:00 am	Royal hours Vesperal Liturgy	Nativity Eve
		7:00 pm	Vigil	
25	Fri	9:00 am	Liturgy	Nativity of our Lord
26	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
27	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Sunday after the Nativity

January

2	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
3	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Sunday before the Theophany
5	Tue	6:30 pm	Vesperal Liturgy and blessing of Water	
6	Wed	6:30 pm	Liturgy	Theophany of our Lord
9	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
10	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Sunday after the Theophany
12	Tue	7:00 pm	Parish Council TBD	
16	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers Open Topics Discussion	
17	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	
21	Thu	7:00 pm	Inquirer's Discussion at Church	
23	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
24	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee
30	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
31	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Sunday of the Prodigal Son