



St. John Chrysostom Church

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

My Joy in the Lord,

So often we hear of the “Summer doldrums” - a time for not moving, just staying in one place and enjoying doing nothing. I got caught up in that same attitude and so this newsletter is late again. I do want to tell you that we are growing – every year we have more people, even every season. But I doubt that many realize that if everyone who comes more or less regularly, came regularly – we would be bursting at the seams. Our little hall would be filled and we would have to pull out more chairs than what we have now.

This is true of almost every community, so we are not unusual or “worse”. God forbid. When I was growing up, the usual attitude was that Sunday attendance was between 5% and 10% of the actual number of people that a given church community would serve. For instance, in my father's church we would have between 80 and 120 on Sundays (I know because I usually was asked to count.) Yet the community was around 3000. Even on Pascha only about 1200 to 1500 would show up. The rest expected to be served by my father when they were in the hospital or needed a baptism or a wedding or a burial, but regular attendance in church was not part of their life. To excuse some of them, it was a distance that they would need to travel – sometimes as much as 6 hours one way to come to church, but for others it was simply a lack of putting the church and the usual services of the church into their schedule. I will not say that it was a lack of faith, because for many it wasn't, it's just that the church community was much more diffuse for them.

Times have changed, somewhat. But it still requires an effort to put the Church into our schedule. We are nowhere near the practices or the people of 50 years ago, thank God. And thank you for being more faithful.

With love, in Christ,
Fr. Seraphim

An invitation:

You are invited to celebrate with me my 60th Namesday on Sunday, July 19 immediately after Liturgy at the church. A namesday is like a birthday – but has more to do with a celebration of our belonging to the Church. At Baptism (or Chrismation) it is the custom to take a saint's name. In some cultures the saint is attached to the family (Serbian), in others the saint is attached to the individual (Russian and Greek). If a saint has more than one day of veneration (St. Seraphim of Sarov has two – January 2 and July 19) usually one is picked. In my case, my parents chose July 19 for me. In the past, the namesday was much more important than a birthday. It is my hope that people will again follow that tradition. In the meantime, please join me on July 19 for some fellowship, some cake, and some joy.

Inquirer's Class – now Discussion Group

Because of difficulty with various schedules, I am canceling the Weekly Saturday Evening Inquirer's class in favor of a monthly class on a Thursday. The first ones will be at my house, but I would encourage people to host it in turn at their place. I will also have an open discussion of “timely” topics on the 3rd Saturday of each month after Vespers – beginning this month.

Parish Picnic

Thank you for everyone who helped make the picnic a success. A special thank you to Anne for opening her home to us. During the discussion, three people volunteered to look for likely sites for our future – Sava Clifford, Miriam Bourquin and Ann Finger. If you have a suggestion or idea please talk to one of them so that we can gather everything together and intelligently examine all our options.

Parish Life Conference

The Conference went through very successfully. Jonathan and Larissa Spencer and I spent an enlightening time there. We will be talking about our experiences after Liturgy soon.

The Archdiocesan Convention begins on July 20. I will be attending and representing our parish there. As a result please note that there will be no Vespers on July 25.

When reading the section below (and over the next few months) 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. Where he says manly – just read male, and where he says womanly, just read female.

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 2

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.

My subject for today is so vast and so much can be said about it that I will take up only a few of its aspects which I think are most important.

My first point is that according to Christian dogmatics there is a basic, essential identity between man and woman, Men and women are not two different species of human beings. This self-evident idea that all Christians, be they men or women, are first of all human beings - are first of all Christians - is a very important one. It is especially so now, when we are faced by a paradoxical contradiction inherent to our twentieth century: on the one hand there is a very clear tendency to identify the two sexes, to proclaim their equality of rights, etc. and on the other hand there is almost a kind of obsession by the theme of sexuality. I believe that rarely in the history of mankind was concern with sexuality as great, and as intense, as it is now penetrating all aspects of life. It would be well for all of us to remember that the most important thing for us, is to be a human being, to be a Christian, and that everything else is secondary.

The same principle must be applied to human relations. If, when two persons meet, a man is so absorbed with the fact that he is dealing with a woman , or, if a woman is only concerned with the fact that she is dealing with a man - then the situation becomes an abnormal one. When two human beings meet, the fact that one of them is a man and the other a woman is still a secondary factor, the primary one being that it is a meeting of two human beings. Everyone knows that we do not have two religions, one for men, and one for women, we do not have different churches for men and women, and we do not even have two different moral codes for men and women. You have all probably studied in your

catechism the famous text of St. Paul, where he says that in Christ Jesus there is no male or female, but that we are all one in Him. Our first Christian concern is to be in Christ - not the development of our personality in a specifically sex-determined way, as male or female.

Yet we must face the fact, that each human being is also either a male or a female. We cannot disregard this fact and we must speak about the very real problems involved in this dual nature of human personality. Even if the difference of sexes is secondary in its nature, it is still a very important difference.

We cannot describe the difference between men and women without reverting to quite well-known and obvious typology. What I have to say may sound like a generalization and probably applies to not more than two thirds of cases, for there are men who are somewhat womanly and there are women who are somewhat manly in their character. Yet I feel that it is worthwhile to remind ourselves of certain general characteristics that are usually ascribed to the psychological type of Man and Woman.

If we try to define the specifically manly nature of man, we have to say that to him belongs, in principle, the quality of courage. Being manly is synonymous with being courageous, and a man who is not courageous is not respected. In olden days a man who was not courageous was not considered to be a man, and though standards have changed, a man is still generally expected to be courageous, there still must be a bit of the "soldier" in man. He has to be ready to risk his life, to sacrifice himself for the sake of his duty or his ideals. He must not be afraid, not only in the physical sense, but also morally, he must not shy away from any responsibility. A man, in general, is supposed to be a born leader. This is why we believe that it is the man's role to be the head of the family, and unless the man possessed these qualities, there would be no reason to give him this position. A man should have a sense of responsibility, a capacity to show initiative. He must also be creative and energetic in his work, whatever it may be. Together with these psychological traits, which are supposed to be natural to man, there IS a certain rationality which is inherent to male thinking and enables him to grasp the nature of any situation, to be a leader, and at the same time to work and to be creative.

As far as a woman is concerned, again in this realm of generalities, she is supposed to be a follower, a helper. She co-operates, she assumes the position of a "second" one. This statement will probably seem offensive to many young women, so that I'd better clarify the concept of "helping" of "being second." It is very typical for the mentality of both men and women to feel that "helping" and "being second" is somehow humiliating. Our pride suffers. But in the Gospel you read that Our Lord Jesus Christ was never ashamed to say and to proclaim that He is second that He is not fulfilling His will, but the will of Another - of His Father, and that He is not preaching His truth, but the truth of His Father. We may not like the idea of submissiveness and "secondness," but it is really a great one, because how can we dare to say that there is something humiliating or degrading about being second, or following, or being obedient, or fulfilling the initiative of another one, if such was the meaning of the life, and work and death of Christ himself? We must overcome the false pride which causes us to feel humiliated or degraded if we are not the "first." Our Church solemnly proclaims an absolute identity, not only in nature, but also in value, of God the Son and God the Father; being "second" does not mean to be "lower." The "secondness" of woman does not mean that she is "less" in value, in nature, or in importance. Women, in their womanhood, in their character as women, are as important, as absolutely necessary in the totality and fullness of life as men, although, from the spectacular point of view, the privilege of leadership, of activity, of mental ability puts man into a more prominent position. Although a woman's rationality is often less well developed than a man's, she possesses a wisdom, a living wisdom, an understanding of life all her own. I think that in personal relations women understand life and other human beings better than do men. This wisdom, this intuition may also be the reason of the very important fact that, generally speaking, women are more religious than men. They understand better the living power of religion. A man either accepts religion intellectually and then he becomes a leader, a priest, a theologian - or he is indifferent. A woman knows in her very being that religion is necessary for her life, and not only for her life, but for the life of the world in general. Religion has a

vital power and meaning which she truly understands. Even if my explanation is inadequate, the fact remains, and gatherings such as the present one illustrate it; for ten women present, there is one man. Women are more interested in the active participation in church life than are men. It seems to me that such restrictions as we have in our church life in the United States, where women cannot be members of church councils, are simply harmful, for women would probably take much better care of the parishes and would better cooperate with the priests than our ambitious and rebellious men. Women would be better precisely because they would be wiser, they would not rationalize about their rights, but would do the work being moved by their hearts and by their faith. I hope that such prejudices will be eliminated soon and that women will be able to take a more active part in our church conventions.

It is generally recognized that women are more emotional and more uninhibited emotionally. A man is afraid of being emotional, it's too risky for him. An average woman is also more moral and more pure than a man. If you check any kind of statistics of criminality, in any country of the world, you will find this fact confirmed. There are many more men in prison than women. As far as sexual behavior is concerned again, men are more corrupt than women. Without going into the problem too deeply, it seems to me that women, by nature and God-given instinct are more fastidious, more disposed to purity and morality than men. A woman is concerned to avoid transgression of law - not from a legalistic point of view, but to avoid soiling herself, not to become involved with all the tragedies of evil which are so typical of our fallen world. To all this we must add a typical womanly trait, which I hope will remain their prerogative forever - kindness. The day when women would cease to be kind would be a tragic day in the history of the world.

The somewhat conventional contrast between men and women expresses itself in their typical attitude to truth and justice. The male point of view is: this is black, and this is white; you did something wrong, you're guilty, and when you are guilty you have to suffer the consequences of your guilt, be punished ... But the woman says: Whether you are guilty or not, I still love you, I still am able and willing to help you, I still am able and willing to comfort you.

This attitude is the very essence of motherhood and is one of the most important aspects of our veneration of the Theotokos. I am always amazed at the way we petition and glorify the Mother of Our Lord, so intensely and deeply every time, at every service, and in every set of prayers. Yet, I don't think that many of us, and especially not many women, think of the Mother of the Lord as the ideal of womanhood, an embodiment of what any woman must be. But, the basic, essential characteristics of the Mother of Our Lord are her absolute kindness and her absolute purity. It is not an accident that such a woman was chosen by God to be the Mother of His Son and this Virgin-Mother is glorified by the whole world as the most perfect human being after Jesus Christ. What is so perfect about her? Not the fact, in itself, that she is the Mother of Jesus Christ rather, we would have to ask why was she chosen to become His Mother? She was chosen because she possessed absolute purity and absolute kindness - let us say simply - love. This is the eternal ideal of any woman and I believe that any woman is spontaneously attracted by this ideal, even if she does not know or think about the Theotokos. Any woman, who is not corrupt, will be attracted by the ideal of being a bearer of love and purity, of motherly concern for everybody, and at the same time an image of holiness.

One of the greatest functions of woman is to be the bearer of the ideal of purity, holiness, to exemplify them. Men may be dirty, but they must have someone, somewhere in their family, of whom they can say - " ... here is the end of dirtiness, here is the end of corruption, here they are as in the church ... " Every family must be a church, and can be a church, if only the wife, the mother, has this purity. There is nothing more terrible, more disastrous than a woman who is depraved, corrupt. A corrupt wife and mother is infinitely more destructive in the life of a family than a corrupt husband and father.

(to be continued)

Schedule of Services and Events

July

11	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers
12	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy
14	Tue	7:00 pm	Parish Council - at J. Weddingfeld's
16	Thu	7:00pm	Inquirer's Discussion at Fr. Seraphim's
18	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers "Timely Topics" Discussion Group
19	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy
20 - 25			<u>Archdiocesan Convention</u>
25	Sat	5:00 pm	NO Vespers
26	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy

August

1	Sat		<u>Dormition Fast begins</u>
		5:00 pm	Vespers
2	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy
6	Thu	6:30 pm	Liturgy Transfiguration of our Lord Blessing of Grapes and fruits
8	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers
9	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy
11	Tue	7:00 pm	Parish Council at J. Spencer's
15	Sat	9:00 am	Liturgy Dormition of the Theotokos
		5:00 pm	Vespers
16	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy
20	Thu	7:00 pm	Inquirer's Discussion at Fr. Seraphim's (?)
22	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers Open Topics Discussion
23	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy
29	Sat		<i>Beheading of John the Baptist – <u>Strict Fast day</u></i>
		5:00 pm	Vespers
30	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy