



## ***St. John Chrysostom Church***

A Mission of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America  
[www.stjohnchrysostomchurch.org](http://www.stjohnchrysostomchurch.org)

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## **June SJCC News**

My Joy in the Lord,

In the Holy Day of Pentecost, we celebrate the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and Disciples of the Lord. This “Inspiration” of the Holy Spirit was not sent only to the twelve – but to all the faithful who were gathered together – all the Disciples of the Lord. It came as the sound of a great wind and appearing as tongues of fire. (I use the common English “IT” for the Spirit but in the Aramaic – which our Lord, and all of the apostles and disciples, spoke – the Holy Spirit is “She”.) I want to emphasize that the descent of the Holy Spirit was not for a select few but for all of the faithful. And, that this same Holy Spirit is received by us in turn through the laying on of hands and the anointing with the Holy Chrism.

Each of us has received the same grace as the apostles. Each of us has received the same gifts as the apostles. And, each of us has received the same responsibility as the apostles. The grace, the gift and the responsibility to be the best Christian that we can be. Not all of the apostles and disciples became evangelists, not all wrote epistles, not all became martyrs. Each worked in synergy with the Holy Spirit to develop their own gifts and fulfill the Will of the Father in their own lives.

This is what we are asked to do as well – to seek not our own will, but the Will of the Father for our lives. This does NOT mean that we abrogate our responsibility for our own actions. “I believed it was God's Will” is not acceptable defense at the Judgement Seat, when it is used to excuse our laziness and lack of effort. We have a responsibility to truly search for God's Will, not just accept things in life as if we are powerless to change them.

I write this as we are coming to a close of our second year in existence (coming in August). Also, our lease is up on the storefront at the end of October, and we need to come to some conclusions about our future. Our (2<sup>nd</sup>) annual Picnic is coming up in one week. I hope you can all make it to Anne's to eat some nice food, have some nice fellowship, and to have a discussion about our future. The Holy Day of Pentecost is a good day to spend discerning god's Will!

With love, in Christ,  
Fr. Seraphim

### **Please pray for our Bishops**

Bishops Basil, Alexander, Mark, Thomas, Joseph and Antoun have been called to Damascus to meet with the Patriarch regarding the situation of the Church in North America. They will be meeting with the Patriarch on June 3 & 4, then returning home in time for Pentecost.

### **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 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month after Vespers – beginning this month.

**Parish Picnic at Anne Emmons' House** – June 7 following the Kneeling Prayers. Directions and address will be available at the church on Sunday morning.

As I stated above, we need to discuss the future of our church and the direction we wish to go in – both physically and conceptually. The picnic will be a good time for that discussion. I would like as many of you – members and friends alike - to be there for the discussion so that we can have as full a participation as possible. Hope you can come!!

### **Parish Life Conference**

The Parish Life Conference will be in Wichita from June 10-13. Everyone is invited. Reservations can be made at the Airport Hilton in Wichita. Details are available at the back of the church, next to the refrigerator. It would be nice if we could put together an adult Bible Bowl team (three people). Details for the Bible Bowl are in a flyer at the back of the church. The cost is \$135 per person plus hotel and meals, though the hospitality room often has enough food that no additional meals need be purchased. The Conference begins at 6 pm on June 10 and ends with the Liturgy on Saturday – though all are invited to stay over until after the Sunday liturgy. (I will be returning back to Denver for Liturgy on Sunday, though no Vespers that Saturday).

## **The Christian Concept of Man/Woman relationships Part 1**

From a Lecture by The Very Rev. John Meyendorff

*(This lecture was delivered at the Students' Retreat at St. Vladimir's Seminary in December, 1965.)*

### **The Orthodox Vision of Man**

I SHALL TRY and discuss here an area of ethics and behavior where our Orthodox Church has something very special to say. It is the important area of man-woman relationships.

Our western inheritance in the field is very important. We can visualize the issue as a kind of polarity between two traditions, one of which goes back to St. Augustine, and the other to the predominant philosophies of today, based on Freud. Both traditions are western, both were created in the western world, but they are opposed to one another.

St. Augustine, who was a great church father in the fifth century had belonged in his younger days to the Manichean sect which believed that the universe is based on a polarity between good and evil, between a bad God and a good God, and that both had to be worshipped. The whole element of sex was an expression of the bad God in the universe, but he had to be worshipped anyway, because he was the equal of the good God. Later on St. Augustine became a Christian, but his background still influenced him. It was Saint Augustine who introduced a common doctrine of the original sin in western Christianity. You will find a key in it for the understanding of many things which happened in the Western Church. When St. Augustine was a bishop, he was confronted with the problem of whether or not young children should be baptized. In those days the Church had two practices. Some Christians baptized their children when they were babies, while others preferred to postpone baptism to a later age and practiced "a believer's baptism," as we call it today. In the west, St. Augustine was faced by Pelagius who said that babies must not be baptized, that baptism of an unconscious being is no baptism at all. Baptism implies commitment and a baby cannot commit itself. As a bishop, St. Augustine adopted the opposite view. He said that babies could and must be baptized. Why? Because they are born in original sin. How could he explain this? He looked for biblical references and found a particular place in the Epistle to the Romans, ch. 5, v12, where it is said, in the Latin text, that all have committed sin "in Adam." The Greek text says simply that since the sin of Adam, both sin and death became universal. In Christ, man is delivered from mortality, given a new life, and therefore is also liberated from sin. St. Augustine used the Latin translation, however, and built up a doctrine which proclaims that God became angry against Adam, punished him, and this anger of God remains upon the human race. In this light, all are guilty "in Adam," even newly born babes. All have participated in the eating of the apple in Paradise, because we are his descendants. Every baby is, in fact, sinful and must be delivered from sin by baptism.

How is it possible for a baby born in 1965 to be guilty of something that happened at the dawn of creation? How is this guilt transmitted? This is where we come to marriage and man-woman relationships. St. Augustine says that man is sinful, because he is conceived in a sinful way, that concupiscence, or sex energy, as we call it today, is the guilt. It is evil in itself. This concupiscence, which is implied by marriage, is the evil itself penetrating the

universe. He says, therefore, that marriage is permitted only inasmuch as it leads to procreation. Otherwise it is pure sin. In general, marriage is sin and sexual relationships are sinful but the Church tolerates these relationships because they lead to procreation. People have children and therefore this evil, since it produces life, is justified. This Augustinian theory is a doctrine which determines the terrible difficulty which our Roman Catholic brethren have in their problem of birth control. From the Augustinian point of view birth control is something which makes marriage pure sin. It takes away from marriage its only positive aspect and thus it is impossible for the Church to act until it drops the Augustinian view on marriage.

On the other hand you have a revolt against the Augustinian view, which has dominated modern Western civilization. Modern theories, with Freud as their most brilliant and popular spokesman, are in direct opposition to the Augustinian view. Modern theory claims that sex is the real and ultimate explanation of all human existence. It is what creates life. It represents the ultimate meaning of everything in human life. It is not evil, but on the contrary, it is a positive energy, which is the origin of life and the explanation of all that man does.

In our view, both of these theories are deficient. They both isolate sex from the rest of human life. There are many other factors involved, of course, but this one trait is common to both theories. Augustine thought that you could isolate in man his sexual instinct, that man, generally, is good, but this one part of him is bad. In order to be good, one should eliminate sex. In Freudianism, sex is also isolated from the rest of life. It is used as a deep, philosophical explanation of being. And, once isolated, it can of course also be used as a game, or a tool for commercials. It is completely divorced from what man is, actually, as a whole.

What happens in our Orthodox tradition in this respect? In many ways the spirituality of the Orthodox Church has been dominated by monastic life. If you take the writings of the Church Fathers, you will find that 95% of it was written by monks and for monks. The monastic tradition served the purpose of educating in the monastic way of life. It often happens that when an Orthodox layman reads Orthodox literature it is of one kind, from one source only, and not the whole tradition, in which monasticism and marriage are but two aspects of the same concept of life in Christ. If you consider the Orthodox outlook on marriage, as it is found in the New Testament, in the Liturgy of the Church, in the writings of such Fathers as St. John Chrysostom, you will find that this concupiscence of sex has never been equated with evil, and marriage has never been justified exclusively by child bearing. The meaning of marriage and man woman relationships is first of all that of love - an encounter between man and woman, not only on the sexual level, but in the entire range of human existence. If a man and a woman are united only on the level of sex, this is simply an encounter on an animal level, and which, as such, is unworthy of the human being. The true encounter is something which happens on all levels - intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical. What we have to fight, essentially, is this isolation of sex, this domination of our existence by sexual ideas and purposes. When we engage in the fight against the misuse of sex, which is the real sin of our day, we can very easily fall into the opposite extreme and ignore the reality of sex, by saying, for example, that boys and girls,

when they meet, should speak exclusively of intellectual and philosophical matters and forget about the fact that they are boys and girls . . . This is utopia and an unnecessary one. The only thing that the Church requires is that the unity, the wholeness of the human being be preserved, that we fight against its disintegration. There are some people who believe that man is just a kind of sexual animal, others who think of man merely as a result of economic conditions, still others who see him as an incarnate spirit which has to be dis-incarnated. All of these theories are equally wrong.

If you take the Orthodox tradition and the Biblical teaching of the New Testament on this issue, you find that first of all it defends the integrity of the human being as a whole. This implies that the real content of what we call sin, is when a man separates himself from God and rejects God either from his entire existence or from parts of his existence. The meaning of marriage in the Orthodox Church is the admission of God's presence into the encounter between man and woman; that this encounter, like everything else we do, takes place in the name of God, and therefore has something to do with the salvation of both ... It is founded on love, and love implies not only physical love, but a sharing in common of life as a whole. Love is forever and love is unique. If you love not forever, if you believe that you can love for two weeks, or two years, then it is not true love, and is to be condemned. It is sinful because it isolates something in our existence, makes it separate from our complete, our whole life in relationship to God.

From this point of view we can understand why the Church, through its entire history and tradition, blesses equally both marriage and celibacy. Man can find his fulfillment in both these conditions. The blessing of celibacy and monasticism in the Church simply implies the possibility for man to overcome the conditions of this world and to find his complete existence in God. We know that it is God who ultimately gives man his fulfillment and what man needs more than anything else is union with God. This union with God - in its fullness, can be completely independent of marriage, or sex, or the fulfillment of any kind of normal human need. Just as man lives not by bread alone, so a monk separates himself not just from marriage but from food, from property, from all aspects of life that are normally considered necessary. In marriage these aspects of life are sanctified and fulfilled. There is no opposition between the two states, or conditions. It is not that one is wrong, and the other is right. Both find the same fulfillment in God.

The understanding of what man is, when he is confronted with God, is something extremely precious. It is the most precious treasure of our Orthodox faith. We are so few, so weak, and so ignorant of what we are all talking about. We are so poor in our behavior and in our ways of showing what we have in mind, that we might easily despair. But there is no truth elsewhere, and we have committed ourselves to this Truth, on the day of our Baptism.

## Schedule of Services and Events

### June

2	Tue	7:00 pm	Parish Council – at M. Borquin's
6	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers
7	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy <b>Pentecost</b> Vespers with Kneeling Prayers <u>Parish Picnic at A. Emmons house</u>
10 – 13			<u>Parish Life Conference – Wichita KS</u>
13	Sat		<b>NO</b> Vespers
14	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy <b>Sunday of All Saints</b>
15	Mon		<u>Apostles Fast begins</u>
18	Thu	7:00 pm	Discussion at Fr. Seraphim's
20	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers “Timely Topics” Discussion Group
21	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy
27	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers
28	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy
29	Mon	6:30 pm	Liturgy <b>Ss. Peter &amp; Paul</b> (end of Apostles Fast)

### July

4	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers
5	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy
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	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