



ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX  
CHURCH

Wonder Worker

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, PINELLAS PARK,  
FLORIDA

Thoughts From Father Michael  
"The Power of Humility"

March 2020

"Humility" is a word seldom heard in today's public square. Rather, we are immersed in a culture that is just the opposite; a culture of pride, self-esteem, and winners. Rarely, if ever, do we see or hear in the media, in sports, in education, or in the pronouncements of public officials any acknowledgement about humility.

Yet, humility is one of the main characteristics of a religious life. Both the Old and the New Testaments contain references to humility and to becoming humble, and in the early years of America it was common for public figures to acknowledge God's beneficence and to humble themselves by calling for a day of prayer and fasting.

At the nadir of the War for Independence, for example, in late September, 1777, the English had seized Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. George Washington was crossing the Delaware after suffering a major loss. The prospects were dire when twenty of the original fifty-six men who a year earlier had signed the Declaration of Independence met in York, Pennsylvania to ponder their fate. Sam Adams of Boston on whose head King George III had demanded he along with John Hancock be arrested and hanged ever defiant gave a rousing address. He called upon his colleagues to stand fast, to put their trust in God because God will reward those who honor Him as the Sovereign of the Universe. God will bless them as He did the ancient Israelites when He rescued them from Pharaoh, and He will rescue us from the tyranny of the British. In less than a month the tide of war turned at the Battle of Saratoga when we captured 5,000 British soldiers. The French were now convinced to come to our aid. Adams then requested that the Continental Congress hold throughout the colonies a Day of Prayer and Fasting on December 18, 1777 *(continued)* to

thank God for His help. Can you imagine a politician speaking like that today? [Ira Stoll, Samuel Adams, “Prelude”]

Moreover, Our God and Savior, Jesus Christ in His Sermon on the Mount blesses the “poor in spirit,” the “meek,” and the “pure in heart.” Christ Himself as St Paul tells us in Philippians: “. . . humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” [2:8] Christ humbled Himself! We can too; and we begin to cultivate the virtue of humbleness in our prayer life.

The root of the word “humble” is the same as the root of the word “humus,” a rich soil. By humbling ourselves we are reminded that we were formed from the earth, and to the earth we shall return. In our Orthodox tradition we are reminded of this connection to the soil when we make a metanoia before crossing ourselves. We touch the ground and then make the sign of the cross. When we do prostrations, we humble ourselves even more by kneeling and touching not just our hands to the ground but our foreheads. These actions express humbleness.

Here are a few references to humbleness found in Scripture:

Sing praises to the Lord, . . .

He does not forget the cry of the humble. [Ps 9:12]

The humble He [the Lord] guides in justice,

And the humble He teaches His way. [Ps 25:9]

The Lord lifts up the humble;

He casts the wicked down to the ground. [Ps 147:6]

For thus says the high and lofty One

who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:

I dwell in the high and holy place,

and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit [Is 57:15]

The sacrifices to God are a broken spirit,

A broken and contrite heart –

These, O God, You will not despise. [Ps 51:17]

*(continued)*

### **Birthdays for February**

2 February, Sarah Pena, Alba Budo; 3 February, Gregory Stevens, Robert Aidan Patterson; 8 February, Rebecca Najjar; 9 February, Samatha Raynovich; 11 February, Joseph Galluccio, Kh Virginia Massouh; 12 February, Tara Yopp; 15 February, George Baidurashvili, Sophia Rahbani; 17 February, Fred Najjar; 18 February, Sonja Knapp; 19 February, Theodora Ohlinger; 22 February, Nicole Khoury; 23 February, Harold Orloff, Tracey Yopp; 25 February, Andrew Massouh; 26 February, Royal & Rami Heart; 29 February, Carolyn Galluccio, Marta Kozlov

### **Anniversaries in February**

3 February, Dumitru & Jennifer Mariuc; 6 February, Bob & Marion Bostley; 23 February, Patricia & Charles Emeraro; 23 February, David & Eva Szabo

### **Departed this Life in February**

2 February, Linda Kassis; 3 February, Ann Salem; 5 February, Edward Hyder; 7 February, George Massouh; 8 February, Katherine Martin Cummings; 9 February, Mikhail Jacob; 12 February, Mildred Radich; 19 February, Olga Specian; 20 February, Linda Kassis; 3 February, Ann Salem; 5 February, Edward Hyder; 7 February, George Massouh; 8 February, Katherine Martin Cummings; 9 February, Mikhail Jacob; 12 February, Mildred Radich; 19 February, Olga Specian; 20 February, Don Schott, Rosalie Galluccio; 22 February, Thomas Modi, Josephine Mansour Albert; 26 February, Lillian Evdokia Ratkovic, Sylvia Elizabeth Jemali

### **Presentation of Our Lord & Savior, Jesus Christ**

Forty days after the Birth of Our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ occurs on February 2nd. On this day we remember His parents, Mary and Joseph, taking Him to be presented to God in the Temple as the law as found in Exodus 2:23 required. As Luke [2:22-24] reports: “they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, *‘Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’*), and to offer a sacrifice.

This event is celebrated as one of the twelve great feast days in our Orthodox world. It is on this day that Jesus’ parents continue to do what the law required as at the eighth day He was circumcised according to the Law. Jesus had said He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets.

An important occurrence on this day was that the devout and just Simeon who had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until “he had seen the Lord’s Christ” takes the baby in his arms and said this prayer that we chant at every Vesper Service:

Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word,  
for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou has prepared  
before all peoples, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy  
people Israel.

“Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’” [Luke 2:25-35]

We continue to “church” a new born on the 40th day of his or her life in accordance of following Christ. Yet, for Jesus the occasion is one of soberness for Mary as she is alerted to her Son’s death on the Cross. Simeon’s prayer alerts us to Jesus reaching out to the Gentiles and establishing a new covenant that will include all people.

## Please Pray for the Following Brothers and Sisters

**Departed:** Linda Kassis, Ann Salem, Edward Hyder, George Massouh, Katherine Martin Cummings, Mikhail Jacob, Mildred Radich, Olga Specian, Don Schott, Rosalie Galluccio, Thomas Modi, Josephine Mansour Albert, Lillian Evdokia Ratkovic, Sylvia Elizabeth Jemali, Mathilde Atik

**Shut-ins/Sick:** Metropolitan PAUL, Archbishop YOHANNA, Nicholas Hughes, Schauki Kassis, Rose Beede, Alice Flaherty, Theodora Ohlinger, Sally Bell, Bob Bostley, Bill Yopp, George Joseph Rolfes, Aurelia Buda, Eveyon Lonack, Richard Pippy, Diane Zorich, Lisa McCoy, Thomas Ziegler, Susana Kassis

**For the Health of:** Fr Lazarus Sucanto, Kh Virginia Massouh, Pf. Margot Siniari, Viola Haddad, Anna Jacob, Angela Jacob, Farhat David, Helen Massarelli, Carole Massarelli, Evelyn Salem, Helen Salem, Ruth & Evern Hazel, Gerorgette Abraham, Mariam Haddad, Annette & Bryan Haddad, Nasir Kassis, Geri & Mitch Kanaan, Alice Faccenda, David & Eva Szabo, Marion Bostley, Theodore Todorow, Alex Gimon, Diane Karns, Leo Poirier, Sophie Massouh, Bob Poirier, Steve Bové, Natalie Floreancig, Millicent Palko, Leila Bashara, Philip Lemieux, Mary Magdalena Foltz, Charlene Toney, Gail & Charles Barnett, Suha Mansour, Bruce Bingham, Dorothy Milelic

**Service Members:** Christopher Salem (Air Force): Nephew of Helen Salem), Peter McIntire: Nephew of Viola Haddad, Curtis Brickwood (Navy): Fr. Michael's Cousin, James Sexton(Army): Grandson of Michaelina Sexton, David Butler (Navy): Son of Joanna Kassis Butler, Trenton Wesley (Army): grandson of Leila Bashara, Luka Dundua (Army): Grandson of Salome Rollins

## Upcoming Events

Sunday, February 2 - Presentation of our Lord into the Temple

Saturday, February 29, 2020 - Yard Sale

Monday, February 24, 2020 - 5:30 PM, A-Men Dinner Meeting, Fellowship Hall

Monday, March 2, 2020 - Great Lent Begins with Evening Services,

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

Saturday, March 28, Lenten Retreat led by Abbott Sergius of St Tikhon Monastery

Weekend of May 22-23, 2020 - Annual Visit of His Grace, Bishop NICHOLAS

## Lenten Retreat

We are pleased that The Abbott of St Tikhon's Monastery, Archimandrite Sergius, will lead a Lenten Retreat on Saturday, March 28, 2020 starting at 9:00 AM and concluding at 2:00 PM. A continental Breakfast will be available and lunch at noon. His topic will be Acquiring the Mind of Christ, Embracing the Vision of the Orthodox Church. His book by that title is available in our Bookstore. He will be here for Vespers on Saturday and Liturgy on Sunday. The charge of \$10.00 will cover the meals and the handouts. Please sign the Sign-Up Sheet in the Fellowship Hall; indicating also if you would like to purchase his book.

The Apostles incorporated Christ's humbleness in their lives; two of them – Peter and James - in their Epistles quote from Proverbs 3:4:

Likewise you young people, submit yourselves to your elders.

Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for

“God resists the proud,

But gives grace to the humble” [I Peter 5:5]

And from James

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says

“God resists the proud,

But gives grace to the humble.”

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. [James 4:6-7]

In our Orthodox world we are ever conscious of the reality of the devil, and the dynamic of his trying to trip us up in our journey to the Kingdom. St James shows us that by humbling ourselves we can resist the devil so that he will flee from us.

In our secular world we tend to think of humility as weakness, but it is most powerful in that it can turn the devil away from us. Humility is powerful!

This power is expressed most explicitly in one of the saying of St Macarius the Great, one of the founders of Egyptian monasticism in the fourth century. Here is one of his sayings:

Abba Macarius was once coming from the marsh to his own cell carrying reeds when here the devil met him on the way, carrying a scythe; he wanted to strike him but could not. He said to him: “There is a great force about you Macarius, for I cannot get at you. See, whatever you do, I do too. You fast, I do not eat at all; you keep watch, I do not ever sleep. There is only one thing in which you are better than me.” “What is that?” Abba Macarius said to him, and he said: “Your humility; because of that I cannot get at you.”

*(continued)*

How do we cultivate humility? Well, Christ gives us an example in Luke 14:7-11:

When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest a more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come to you and say to you, "Give place to this man," and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes, he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher." Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

In other words, do not put yourself first; do not show off. Then "a great force" – a force from God – will be about us as it was about St Marcellinus.

As we begin our annual walk with Christ and His Apostles let us try to cultivate the virtue of humbleness, and avoid the vice and passion of pride; its opposite. It will not be easy as we live in a culture that promotes pride. Yet, with God's help we can make some progress in this struggle, gain power to resist the devil, and lay the foundation for our entrance into the Kingdom of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### **Spiritual Sayings**

There is no measure (or limit) to the beauty of the man who is humble. No passion whatsoever shall be able to draw nigh unto the man who is humble, and there is no measure to his beauty. The humble man is a sacrifice of God. With him that is humble the hearts of God and His angels rest. Moreover, when the angels glorify him, there is the excuse for him that hath produced in himself all virtues; but for him that hath produced humility in himself thou wilt find no excuse whatsoever needed, besides that he hath become humble.

*St Ephraim the Syrian*

### **Update on Burning the Mortgage**

We are nearing our goal of reducing the Church Mortgage to zero. Thanks to the generosity of Helen & Carole Massarelli and others the mortgage balance as of January 31, 2020 is \$114,605.75. Let's see if we can break through to \$99,999 by the end of February.

Here is the accounting of the funds amounting to \$76,100 we have received so far in this campaign:

Helen & Carole Massarelli \$40,000	Viola Haddad \$500
Anonymous \$10,000	Rob & Bonnie Guirguis \$500
Ron & Anamay Rossomando \$5,100	Nadine Schmidt \$500
Fr. Michael & Kh Virginia Massouh \$5,000	Alice Flaherty \$500
Fady Hakim & Mary Guirguis \$3,000	Samya Semann \$500
Ladies Society \$2,000	Dean Smuro \$500
Anonymous \$1,000	Ralph & Eleanor Parker \$500
Anonymous \$1,000	Fr Emmanuel & Pbs Barbara \$250
Anonymous \$1,000	Bryan & Annette Haddad \$250
Charles & Christine Doerner \$1,000	James & Sheila Mallo \$250
Walter Alexandroff \$1,000	Martin & Katherine Favata \$200
Anonymous \$750	Steve & Lisa Spears \$200
Alice Faccenda \$500	David Yopp \$100

The following people made pledges on Sunday, October 27, 2019 when we announced the start of the Campaign: Luis & Janet Rodriguiz, Pia Cummings, Chip Hanna, Gaby Atik, and Gerald Vizvary.

We humbly ask each of our parishioners to consider making a pledge. Once we pay off the mortgage, we can direct our current monthly payment to ourselves to begin setting aside funds to demolish the First Church and to build a new structure that will house a larger fellowship hall, Sunday School classrooms, a restaurant style kitchen, a clergy office, a library, and meeting rooms.

God and St Nicholas have blessed us to come this far, and with your prayers will continue to bless us in taking the next steps in the history of our beloved St Nicholas parish.

Please consider responding to Helen's and Carole's challenge by making a pledge or donation before His Grace, Bishop Nicholas's visit on May 22-23, 2020 when we look forward to burning the Mortgage.

You can write a check or make a secure on-line donation to St Nicholas using your credit card or through PayPal. Check it out at [www.stnicholasaoc.org](http://www.stnicholasaoc.org)



