

Fr Lawrence Con't

considered it to be such when he wrote it. It is called *Horton Hears A Who*, and contains the theological assertion, "A person's a person, no matter how small." That would include tiny little persons living inside their mothers. Or, in the more elegant words of our own Holy Synod in the OCA, "the unborn in the womb are already adorned with God's image and likeness." The unborn and the newly born, by the very fact of their being, can teach us a thing or two, and I would like to pass along two of these lessons.

First of all, the unborn teach us that we enter into this world already loved, wanted, and valued. As my own dad always said, "Babies bring their love with them." I remember seeing a young baby wearing a little shirt bearing the words "Another little tax deduction." That is true, of course (thank you, Caesar), but it is not why the child is loved or valued. No one loves the child because of its utility. Babies cannot help cook the meals, or clean the house, or even clean themselves. Strictly speaking, apart from such tax deductions, they have no immediate utilitarian value whatsoever. We love them not because they are useful, but simply because they are. They enter the world pre-loved, even though they may not be self-consciously aware of it (or of much else). In cases of abortion, of course, there is, shall we say, a deficit of such parental love. But even here they are still loved and valued, if not by their parents or by Planned Parenthood or others in the abortion industry, then by God Himself. It is as the Psalmist sings: "Though my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will take me up" [Psalm 27:10]. A Planned Parenthood slogan proclaims, "Every child a wanted child!" As a matter of fact, every child is a wanted child, for God wants and loves every child conceived.

By this the unborn teach us that God loves every one of us regardless of our behavior, loving the worst sinner equally along with the greatest saint. That is because the source and quality of His love is not rooted in us, but in Him. He loves not because of what He sees in us, but simply because He is love. If we refuse to respond to this already given love and choose to spurn Him, doing what He hates and hurting our fellow man, we will receive no benefit from that love. If we choose to love Him in return and strive to live in a way that pleases Him, then we will benefit from this love, and will save our souls. But the love remains nonetheless. As Saint John famously said, "We love because He first loved us" [1 John 4:19]. We enter this world already loved; our task is simply to respond to it and love God in return.

The second thing that the unborn teach us is that we are completely dependent on others, starting with God. People in the abortion debate sometimes talked about "the

viability of the fetus," debating when a child is capable of living life on its own outside the womb. Is the fetus viable at 39 weeks? At 35 weeks? Earlier? But this debate, reasonable in medical terms, is misleading if translated into a theological principle. For, strictly speaking, the baby is not viable even after a full term birth. If the baby is not cared for, and fed, and kept warm, even outside the womb, then it will die — as will you and I. If I am not cared for, and fed, and kept warm, I will die too. We are none of us viable in that sense, for we are all mortal, and only survive because we are part of a vast network of mutual support.

Our culture values independence. We admire the person who loudly proclaims, "I don't depend on anybody for anything!" and who boasts of needing no one. We can feed and clothe ourselves, we say; we are self-sustaining. But these assertions hide the truth that in fact no one feeds himself. The food that I eat every day is grown by someone else (called a farmer), and then processed by someone else (called a manufacturer), and then shipped to my store by yet someone else again (called a trucker), and then sold to me and put into my hands by yet another (called a retail worker). Even the farmer who can grow and eat most of his own food is still dependent upon God for the sun and the rain. We are all united, whether we acknowledge it or not, in a vast world-wide web of mutual inter-dependence. I am viable and survive only because of others.

This is not simply true in the world, but in the Kingdom also. God could have arranged the economy of salvation so that it was simply "me and Jesus." But He chose otherwise; it is "me-in-the-Church and Jesus." Thus, to become born again and begin new life with God, I need to be baptized by others. Then I need to receive Holy Communion from others. I experience the saving and transforming Presence of Christ when I gather together with others, even if that gathering be as small as two or three people [Matthew 18:20]. I cannot be saved apart from the prayers of the Mother of God, and the apostles, and the saints, and the angels. I cannot be saved apart from the prayers of the others in my local congregation. We are all saved together, as we continue to worship together and pray together, both for the world and for each other. That is why all the images of salvation in the Scriptures are so relentlessly corporate: we are saved not as individuals, but as part of a people Israel; not as single sheep, but as a united flock; not on our own, but as citizens of a city — for when the Bride of the Lamb descends in beauty from heaven, it comes down as a city [Revelations 21:2]. And a city, of course, is a place where people live together in community, depending on one another for their daily needs. We are dependent upon one another, both in creation and redemption.

Theology can indeed be found in unexpected places. Our Lord, citing the Psalter, said that out of the mouths of babes, God has brought perfect praise [Matthew 21:16, Psalm 8:12]. He also has brought from there good theology as well.

Orthodox Christians to battle hunger on IOCC's "Souper Bowl of Caring" Sunday

Sunday, February 4, 2018, has been designated "Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday" by [International Orthodox Christian Charities](#) [IOCC].

This year's 20th annual Souper Bowl Sunday—it's name reflects the anticipated Super Bowl on the same day—aims at rallying parish youth to champion feeding the poor and caring for those in need around the world.

[A variety of resources](#)—posters, bulletin inserts, and announcements—is available on the IOCC web site to generate a "team spirit" in the weeks leading up to the first Sunday of February.

IOCC offers parishes and youth groups easy, step-by-step tips for organizing a successful parish Souper Bowl Sunday.

- Parishes should announce that they will be part of the Souper Bowl of Caring while asking parishioners to bring nonperishable food items and monetary contributions to the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, February 4.
- Youth and/or other groups should discuss plans as they relate to community outreach and serving the poor. Reading the Parable of the Good Samaritan [Luke 10:25-37] is a great starting point in relating "helping our neighbor" to Souper Bowl service activities.
- Local food banks and/or soup kitchens should be identified as recipients of the nonperishable foods collected on Souper Bowl Sunday. A monetary goal for raising and collecting funds for IOCC's programs around the world also should be determined.
- After services on February 4, youth may stand at exits with large soup pots to receive monetary donations. Other young people can help pass collection trays at the appropriate time.
- During the week after Souper Bowl Sunday, nonperishables should be delivered to designated local hunger-relief charities.
- Monetary donations may be sent to IOCC, 110 West Road, Suite 360, Baltimore, MD 21204 using the Souper Bowl Sunday mailers sent to all parishes.

Established in March 1992 as the official humanitarian organization of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas—today's [Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America](#)—IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and

development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond. By God's grace, IOCC enables those suffering and in need to continue to improve their own lives and communities and to have the means to live with dignity, respect, and hope. Since its inception, IOCC and its partners have provided over \$600 million in relief and self-help programs to people in more than 60 countries. Current programs focus on emergency relief, agriculture and food security, education, health, water and sanitation, and economic opportunity in places including Syria, Greece, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, the Balkans, and the United States. IOCC celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2017.



ZOE for Life! to sponsor Supplication Service for Unborn in Cleveland January 21

[ZOE for Life!](#) will sponsor a Supplication Service for the Unborn at [Saint Innocent Church](#) [OCA], 8526 Usher Road, Olmsted Falls, OH on Sunday, January 21, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

Priest Alessandro Margheritino, Rector of Saint Innocent's and President of the Greater Cleveland Council of Orthodox Clergy, will lead the service. The Spiritual Father of ZOE for Life!, Priest Nicholas Mihaly, Pastor of Saint Nicholas Church, Erie, PA [American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese] also will serve.

Archmandrite Demetri [Carellas] of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh will give a presentation, "Love Saves Lives," following the service, which is open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. For further information, call ZOE for Life! at 440-893-9990.

ZOE for Life! is a non-profit Christ-centered support organization with three major goals: to help women who need confidential emotional and spiritual support during crisis pregnancies, to assist Orthodox Christians seeking to adopt, and to provide an education for pure living and other resources. ZOE is endorsed by the [Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America](#).

Sunday of Zacchaeus

Commemorated on [January 21](#)

The paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is also preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent comes five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is about Zacchaeus the tax-collector. It tells how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man, and how his life was changed simply because he “sought to see who Jesus was” (Luke 19:3). The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through Lent towards Pascha. It is the first movement of salvation.

Our lenten journey begins with a recognition of our own sinfulness, just as Zacchaeus recognized his. He promised to make restitution by giving half of his wealth to the poor, and by paying to those he had falsely accused four times as much as they had lost. In this, he went beyond the requirements of the Law (Ex. 22:3-12).

The example of Zacchaeus teaches us that we should turn away from our sins, and atone for them. The real proof of our sorrow and repentance is not just a verbal apology, but when we correct ourselves and try to make amends for the consequences of our evil actions.

We are also assured of God’s mercy and compassion by Christ’s words to Zacchaeus, “Today salvation is come to this house” (Luke 19:9). After the Great Doxology at Sunday Matins (when the Tone of the week is Tone 1, 3, 5, 7) we sing the Dismissal Hymn of the Resurrection “Today salvation has come to the world,” which echoes the Lord’s words to Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus was short, so he climbed a tree in order to see the Lord. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). We are also short in our spiritual stature, therefore we must climb the ladder of the virtues. In other words, we must prepare for spiritual effort and growth.

St Zacchaeus is also commemorated on April 20.

SAVE THE DATE

Golfing outing (Sandbagger’s Open) on June 1, 2018 to benefit St Theodosius Cathedral Parish’s Hall Improvement Fund.

WHERE: Hilliard Lakes Golf Course
31665 Hilliard Blvd
Westlake, OH 44145

Contact for more information or to learn about sponsorship opportunities:

Jennifer Boerio: 216-513-5667 (janolan23@hotmail.com)
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110 E Main Street, Marblehead, OH 43440
www.holyassumptionmarblehead.org

Bishop Paul’s remarks at opening ceremony at March for Life Chicago

His Grace, Bishop Paul was among the speakers at the annual March for Life Chicago on Sunday afternoon, January 14, 2018.

REMARKS BY HIS GRACE BISHOP PAUL MARCH FOR LIFE CHICAGO SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2018

In Orthodox Christian Churches we offer several petitions at our services on Sanctity of Life Sunday. We ask our Lord “to grant to the people of this nation the will to do good, to flee evil and to makes us respectful of life.” We ask our Lord to “banish wickedness from our laws.” We also ask that our Lord will “kindle in hearts the will to care for those in need, to show kindness to those in suffering from poverty, to aid the homeless and help the helpless.”

There is a depth to these prayers that make it clear that we need to hold all life sacred from the womb to the grave. Our concern for the unborn is so important to remember this day because it is the one reality that it is easy to be in denial about. We don’t see the pain of this tragedy the same way we did when Jewish people went to the gas chambers in World War II. When people claim that the holocaust never happened, the horrible images of these deaths continue to be published so that people will never forget. So whether people love us or hate us, we pray for the unborn and for those who have had abortions, that God’s love be revealed in the midst of these tragedies where there is a loss of life and ensuing grief.

But we also rejoice that lives are being saved by love. This year’s theme tells us as we pray for the unborn child in the womb let us remember to do acts of kindness and support those women who have decided to keep their children and not abort them. Let us reach out with compassion to those who may have had an abortion and help them heal from this act and to see that there is a pathway to reconciliation because love does save lives.

But let us live out that theme in other areas of our culture that need to benefit from this message. One example comes to mind. Why do we allow private citizens to purchase semi-automatic weapons or items that enable them to become automatic weapons; weapons only meant for war? How many more people need to be killed in schools, hotels, and churches? The huge loss of life due to gun violence in so many shapes and forms; this is a sanctity of life issue. In the same way we show our concern for the unborn and their mothers, let us do so here. There is more to say about love saving lives, but there are others here who will be speaking to this issue as well. May the Lord’s blessing be upon you all.

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THE GREATER CLEVELAND COUNCIL OF ORTHODOX CLERGY

Dear Friends,

The Orthodox Christian community of Greater Cleveland and Lorain will soon honor the Sunday of Orthodoxy. A celebration will take place on Sunday, February 25, 5:00 PM at the Saints Constantine & Helen Cathedral, 3352 Mayfield Road, Cleveland Heights. Paul Finley, the local director of St. Herman's FOCUS Cleveland, will preach the homily.

The Greater Cleveland Council of Orthodox Clergy has assumed the responsibility of soliciting donations to underwrite the celebration and to support the Orthodox ministries that serve our area. We ask you to contribute to this effort by making a donation to the GCCOC. In return you will be listed as a "Patron" in the handout at the Pan Orthodox Vespers, and the donations collected will be used to support local Orthodox charities.

Please make your check payable to the greater Cleveland Council of Orthodox Clergy or "GCCOC" and return it to your priest no later than February 19.

Yours truly,

Fr. Stephan J. Callos

Treasurer, Greater Cleveland Council of Orthodox Clergy

SUNDAY OF ZACCHAEUS

Tropar:

As salvation came to the house of Zacchaeus by your entrance, O Christ; likewise now by your entrance of your sacred ministers, and Your holy angels with them, grant peace to this house and mercifully bless it, saving and enlightening all who live within.

REFLECTION ON ZACCHAEUS SUNDAY

Lord, your mercy is great indeed for all who receive it with sincerity of heart. And we rejoice today with Zacchaeus, the poor little rich man whose house was blessed and sanctified by your entrance and Presence.

Listening to this holy gospel, we understand that even though he had a certain amount of material wealth and earthly riches, he himself realized that there was something missing and that indeed, he was poor.

But he could only have known this because he responded to your invitation, gently but insistently, calling to his heart.

His heart must have been a heart of flesh, warm and giving (and also unusual for a tax collector—a chief tax collector, at that!), For he says that he gives "one half of his possessions to the poor" and will "restore fourfold if he has defrauded anyone."

No, this Zacchaeus is not a cold and calculating man, but a man in search of that "something missing" in his life. Even though he did not know what it was, he did know in his heart that somehow this Jesus might have the answer for him.

Jesus, your answer came, in a manner that by far exceeded his expectations and imaginings. For he came to realize in the instant that You said, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately..." that You, O Lord, were the only "true riches". And how he rejoiced when You invited him, to invite You into his house.

O Noble Zacchaeus, your immediate response shows us your heart: a heart now fully enlightened by the "Enlightener of Hearts". Your heart is ready to know and do the will of He who came, not only to stay in your home, but to make his home in your heart and your life. And so we too, rejoice with you today.

Lord, as the time of the Great Fast so swiftly approaches, give to me the desire of Zacchaeus to see You: the desire that will go any lengths and do anything to get a glimpse of You. For I know, O Lord, that it is far more than just a "glimpse" that You give to those who "seek You with all their heart."

It is you, One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that You desire to give to us...to me. "Create a pure heart in me, O Lord."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- * Put yourself in the Gospel Scene. Who am I? Zacchaeus? One of the people who want to see Jesus? Or one of the people who murmured against Jesus? Who wants to harm Jesus?
- * Why did you pick the choice you did and what will you do to make your relationship better with the Lord?
- * Start to think (but don't write down yet) about what you are going to do during the fast to have a better relationship with God?

Stay warm!

It's cold outside!

