

## ***Gospel Values Con't***

Do we reduce abortions by making them illegal right now—or by persuading people why abortion is such a tragic act, so that no one would even consider it? Or—to come full-circle—do we reduce abortions by addressing poverty and low education rates, which statistically account for what is by far the highest number of abortions? This is a much more controversial topic, but here too, the Gospel does not provide a totally clear-cut answer to that question, and as we've seen, Orthodox Christians—although united in the desire to eradicate abortion—are not in agreement as to the exact means for doing so.

In short, “Gospel values” do not prescribe for us how to shape our governments. They tell us how to live. This leaves us with the responsibility to make our political decisions on the basis of our best judgment as to which actions will yield the most life-giving results. Many Orthodox Democrats, and many Orthodox Republicans, feel with great conviction that their choice is the truly Christian one. In our day especially, we need to discuss these things with one another respectfully, and with the presumption that the other “side” is at least as wise and prayerful as we are in their reasoning. But we might also recall that, however passionate we are about our preferred way of arriving at a God-pleasing life and even a God-pleasing society, we are agreed on what it is we are striving for, what it is that God sent His Son to give us. “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). We recall too that His Son gives us that life through His example of self-emptying (Matthew 16:24 and parallels).

Neither of the two main political parties in America has shown us a perfect path towards that abundant and self-giving life. But the more that we live and pray together, and affirm together the Gospel of the One Lord Jesus Christ, the more we can find common cause as Orthodox Christians.

*Dr. Peter Bouteneff is the Director of the Master of Arts Program and Professor of Systematic Theology at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Yonkers, NY.*

---

### **Striving to bring a “new normal” into our lives! – by a Priest of the Midwest Diocese**

Labor Day has come and gone — as has the ecclesiastical new year, which Orthodox Christians observe on the first day of September. As the days grow shorter, we once again focus on the normal routines we may have suspended during the “lazy, hazy days of summer” — family, school, work and church.

As with the beginning of the civil new year on the first of January, the ecclesiastical new year provides Orthodox Christians with an opportunity to take stock of their spiritual lives while resolving to “do better” with regard to our relationships with our Lord, our families and friends, our coworkers, and yes, even our enemies. The new year brings with it the expectation of “cleaning house” of those things we need to change in our lives — a new beginning, so to speak, in becoming the persons our Lord calls us to be.

In addition, of course, to regularly participating in the Church's liturgy and fellowship — things we may have missed on occasion during the summer months — there are three elements of Church life that we are called to fully embrace not only now, but every day of our lives.

The first is prayer. How often we feel overwhelmed when it comes to making time to pray, given the busy-ness we find ourselves facing as fall approaches. Prayer involves so much more than simply bringing our sorrows and joys before the Lord. It involves embracing a spirit of thanksgiving to God for all of His blessings and gifts — and for our very lives themselves. When we are in need or distress, we rarely fail to ask for God's help and guidance in discerning His will. Yet we often forget to render thanks to Him when our prayers are answered. In the Old Testament book of Psalms — sometimes called the Church's “first hymnal” — we encounter words of repentance and lament, but we likewise find praises of thanksgiving to God: “O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endures forever!” But beyond the words of our prayers is our call to embrace the very presence of the divine as we pray. One certainly should talk to God in prayer, but acknowledging His presence in every moment of our lives is the ultimate goal. At this time of the year it is a good idea to consider that while we may often find ourselves reading prayers, we may not be praying — in the sense of embracing God's presence in our lives, and especially during times of change or difficulty or conflict. Through our words, we indeed connect and communicate with our Lord, even though as one of the prayers of the Church notes: “there are no words which suffice to praise Thy wonders.” What we seek, on a deeper level, is to know God, not to merely know about Him; to experience Him at every junction of our lives; and to anticipate the eternal life He offers to those who respond to His invitation to “come and see.”

Fasting is equally central to our lives as Christians. Our Lord fasted — and for Orthodox Christians, fasting is not an option, but an expectation. In the Gospel of Saint Matthew, our Lord says, “when you fast,” not “if you choose to fast.” And while the Church indeed designates certain days and seasons during which fasting from certain foods is the expectation, now is a good time to consider other things from which we might refrain ***Con't Pg 8***

## New Normal Con't

— such as the amount of time we watch television or spend surfing the internet or post things on Facebook and Instagram. Fasting not only involves refraining from this or that food item, but also involves our ability to control those other things that, left unchecked, we often allow to control us, regardless of what those things might be. While fasting from food, we should also consider fasting from anger, gossip, idle talk, and life's endless distractions that, in reality, only complicate our lives.

Finally, we are called to give alms, to help those in need, to put our faith into action by reaching out to the needy, the homeless, the poor and forgotten and marginalized, even as our Lord reaches out to us so freely and lovingly. In Matthew 25, we read the parable of the sheep and the goats, in which our Lord reveals that giving alms means more than giving money to various causes. Rather, He reveals that what we are called to give is ourselves — our time and our talents, as well as our treasures — to one and all, especially to the least of those among us, recognizing in them the very icon and image and presence of our Lord, and treating them with the same love we would if they were the Lord Himself.

As we return to our predictable routines, let us also fully embrace the opportunity to discover a “new normal,” to begin our lives anew in and with our Lord and those whom He sends our way. May our resolution be one that enables us to re-order our lives in His image, to turn away from those things that prevent us from doing so, and to fully embrace the opportunities available to us through the scriptural practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving

---

## OTTAWA COUNTY HOLIDAY BUREAU

The month of November the food collection's & Special collection will be offered to the Holiday Bureau.

Needed; Soap / hygiene products, toiletry items / paper products / cleaning items / non-perishable foods / money

Our Distribution Center will be St. Mary's Byzantine Church. We will collect all month at our church & will bring it to St Mary's the Monday after Thanksgiving.

If anyone is interested in helping out please contact:

Judy Smolk (Chair) 419-732-2333

Mimi Turinsky 419-798-5057

Linda Twarek: 419-798-4811

Elaine Roth: 419-376-1031

If you plan to help out please let me know as well.

Fr. Andrew



## **STUDY GROUPS EVERYONE IS WELCOME! MONDAY'S @ 6:30 P.M.**

Bible Study Participants  
(10 people so far this year)

Basil Susan Julia  
Tina Laura Ron  
Bobbie Tim  
Matt (Village Police non Orthodox)  
Dan (Village resident non-Orthodox)

Orthodoxy 101 Participants  
(11 people so far this year)

Basil Julia Susan  
Dan (Village resident- non-Orthodox)  
Tina Ron Bobbie  
Laura Natalie Tim  
Matt (Village police non Orthodox)

October Monday's = Bible Study  
November Monday's = Orthodoxy 101  
December Monday's = Orthodoxy 101

**JOIN US!**



## **PATRONAL FEAST DAY at SISTER PARISHES**

Thursday, November 8  
St. Michael's Orthodox Church  
Broadview Heights  
Divine Liturgy: 10am  
Meal following Liturgy

Wednesday, December 5  
St Nicholas Orthodox Church  
Mogodare  
Divine Liturgy: 9am  
Meal following Liturgy

Please contact Fr. Andrew if you are interested in attending.