

to support one's political party or platform in order to bolster this or that party or platform with a kind of divine mandate or blessing, without taking into account the relative truths mingled with dubious truths in any party or platform today. There is a good deal of talk about God and Jesus, but there is no real theological depth or Christ-centered spirituality that lifts our minds and hearts above the mundane concerns of what essentially becomes an ideology. The thirst spoken of by Jean-Claude Barreau and the genuine Christianity alluded to by Clement - and powerfully expressed by the Fathers of the Church in their mystical writings - are neglected as many Christians are content with the Gospel serving a given ideology, rather than each and every ideology being assessed by the truth of the Gospel. I would even say that the ultimate "sell-out" is found right here when the Truth of Christ is distorted, truncated or manipulated to serve an end other than the fullness of the Kingdom of God as proclaimed by Christ. Many young people can intuitively see right through this. And then their "religion" can become anything but God - from science to nihilism. There is thus plenty of blame to go around when our churches become devoid of "young people." Now is the time to remain as vigilant as possible. We need to manifest a genuinely theological, mystical, liturgical, charitable and *honest* Christianity and leave the rest up to God and human self-determination.

## **Do We Really Need Deacons?**

**By Fr. Lawrence Farley**

Recently I overheard a conversation about deacons and someone opined that if there were no deacons in the Church no one would notice, and that they could be eliminated with no ill effect at all, since they were simply a speed bump a priestly candidate encountered on the way to priestly ordination. I take the point, and admit that this accurately sums up the reality of the diaconate in much of North American Orthodoxy today. The deacon is considered merely as a liturgical ornament, someone the bishop has with him when he comes to serve a hierarchical Liturgy to make the service a little more grand. This devaluing of the apostolic office of the diaconate certainly has a long

history, especially in the West. When one was ordained a deacon in the Anglican church back in my day, the quip was usually made to the newly-ordained deacon, "Now you can do everything that a layman can do!"—which was technically correct, since the deacon then had no liturgical task that could not be performed by a layman. In the West, even the very term "deacon" seemed to lose all meaning, for an "archdeacon" in the Anglican church was in fact a priest, not a deacon. This devaluation seems to have long roots: in the medieval western church, cardinals came in three flavours: cardinal-bishops, who were bishops; cardinal-priests, who were priests; and cardinal-deacons, many of whom were not ordained at all. (This from Hollingsworth's *The Family Medici*, p. 227.) Even my own OCA seems to assume that your average parish will not have a deacon serving along with the priest: in its little DRE booklets containing the services, the rubrics have all the litanies done by the priest. It is as if deacons did not exist.

This DRE peculiarity was not evidence of prejudice against deacons because in most parishes (at least at the time when the DRE booklets were first printed), most parishes did not have a deacon, and all the litanies and liturgical directives, which classically were done by the deacon, of necessity had to be done by the priest. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann (of blessed memory) called attention to this inconsistency of parish life in one of his lectures. He said that despite Orthodoxy declaring that deacons were a divine institution in the Church, there were no deacons in the Metropolia when he first arrived in America. So, we may indeed ask: do we really need deacons?

The observation with which this article began about deacons being simply a speed bump on the road to priestly ordination reveals how much we have changed from the days of the early church. In those days, a Liturgy was simply unthinkable without a deacon. Thus, Dix tells us based on a letter of St. Cyprian, that when the Church wanted to smuggle some of its personnel into the prisons to serve a secret Liturgy for the confessors imprisoned there, they had to smuggle in both a presbyter and a deacon (see his *Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 152). Deacons were not simply a meaningless office that one passed through on the way to a higher office, but an office complete in itself—and one that was *completely* necessary. The Church could no more do without deacons that it could do without bishops and presbyters. That is, if the Church somehow did not have deacons, something **Con't PG 10**

crucial to its life would be lost. That is why deacons were appointed by the apostles at such an early stage of the Church's life—according to Acts 6, as early as its first formation in Jerusalem. We see how necessary deacons were to the Church's life by Paul's inclusion of deacons in his instructions in 1 Timothy 3. This view of the importance of the deacons (and use of an earlier terminology) continued in the Church, as we see reflected in *Didache* 15:1: "Appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord". A divine institution indeed.

Given this importance, we must ask why are deacons so important? Or, to phrase the question differently, what exactly is a deacon and what is his job? The very name of the office hints at the answer: a deacon is a *διακονος/diakonos*, a word usually rendered in the New Testament as "servant". For example, the word (or its cognate) is used to describe all of Christ's disciples (John 12:26), the apostles (Colossians 1:23), and even Christ Himself (Romans 15:8). One could therefore suggest that translating *diakonos* as "deacon" tends more to obscure the significance of the term than to reveal it. If we consistently translated the word as "servant" we might begin to understand why the office is so crucial. In our own little parish in Langley, using this terminology, I would be known as "Presbyter Lawrence" and the three excellent men I am privileged to have working with me would be known as "Servant Gregory, Servant Symeon, and Servant Zacchaeus".

The office of *diakonos* is an embodiment of the servanthood of the Church, and that is why it is so important, because a Church bereft of its servanthood is a Church scarcely worthy of the name. The Church has a number of functions. It must proclaim the eternal truth of God to the world (its task of teaching embodied in the office of bishop); it must order its corporate life together as a community of love, equity, and good order (a task embodied in the office of presbyter), and it must serve the needs and bind up the wounds of the world (embodied in the office of a servant/deacon/*diakonos*).

We may see now just how far our contemporary North American experience is from the apostolic

and historical norms. In many places, this crucial office of servanthood has dwindled and diminished until it is indeed simply a liturgical ornament. If the deacon's only job is the chant litanies and expel the (often non-existent) catechumens on Sunday, there is no real reason why a presbyter could not chant the litanies and dismiss the catechumens himself if the deacon is not there. One sees why deacons are deemed to be dispensable, and why many places have in fact dispensed with them. The deacon's role has been reduced to a few utterances on Sunday morning. He has no role in discovering and meeting the needs of the poor and suffering and thus no role in creating true community throughout the week. Who cares who dismisses the catechumens or who says "Wisdom!" before the lessons are read?

But the Church is more than mere liturgical cult and a provider of Sunday morning services. The Church is also a holy community in which people share their needs, their gifts, and their lives. I suggest therefore that once again the deacons be given their original apostolic role of serving the physical needs of the Church—visiting the sick, discovering the needs of the parishioners, distributing the Church's alms, overseeing its social programmes, and bringing Holy Communion to the sick and absent (a diaconal task according to St. Justin Martyr in his *Apology*, ch. 67)—in other words, their original role as creators of true community.

This pastoral component (obviously fulfilled according to the deacon's available time and energy) would reveal why he has the liturgical ministry that he has. That is, the deacon is the one chanting the litanies which refer to the parishioners' needs (e.g. the petitions for the sick and suffering) because he was the one visiting them and learning of these needs during the week. It goes without saying that the deacon works with the parish pastor (which in earlier days was the bishop), so that the pastor also knows the needs of the flock and can attend to them. But the deacon is his liaison, forming a pastoral link between the presbyter/pastor and his flock during the week in the same way as he forms a liturgical link between the altar and the nave at the Sunday Liturgy.

Our current practice of the priest doing everything (or trying to do everything) is neither apostolic, historical, or sensible. The New Testament teaches that God gives spiritual gifts to all the baptized when they receive the Holy Spirit in baptism, not *Con't Pg 11*

simply to the priest. According to Romans 12:7 one of these important gifts is the ministry of *διακονια/diakonia* "service"; the one having this *χαρισμα/gift* is instructed to use it *εν τη διακονια*/"in the serving". We need everyone in the Church use the gifts given to them by God, and to contribute to the common spiritual good of the Body of Christ. The priest is not a one-man band. We really do need deacons.

## **The Beheading of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John**

**Commemorated on [August 29](#)**

The Beheading of the Prophet, Forerunner of the Lord, John the Baptist: The Evangelists Matthew (Mt.14:1-12) and Mark (Mark 6:14-29) provide accounts about the martyric end of John the Baptist in the year 32 after the Birth of Christ.

Following the Baptism of the Lord, Saint John the Baptist was locked up in prison by Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch (ruler of one fourth of the Holy Land) and governor of Galilee. (After the death of king Herod the Great, the Romans divided the territory of Palestine into four parts, and put a governor in charge of each part. Herod Antipas received Galilee from the emperor Augustus).

The prophet of God John openly denounced Herod for having left his lawful wife, the daughter of the Arabian king Aretas, and then instead cohabiting with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip (Luke 3:19-20). On his birthday, Herod made a feast for dignitaries, the elders and a thousand chief citizens. Salome, the daughter of Herod, danced before the guests and charmed Herod. In gratitude to the girl, he swore to give her whatever she would ask, up to half his kingdom.

The vile girl on the advice of her wicked mother Herodias asked that she be given the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Herod became apprehensive, for he feared the wrath of God for the murder of a prophet, whom earlier he had heeded. He also feared the people, who loved the holy Forerunner. But because of the guests

and his careless oath, he gave orders to cut off the head of Saint John and to give it to Salome.

According to Tradition, the mouth of the dead preacher of repentance once more opened and proclaimed: "Herod, you should not have the wife of your brother Philip." Salome took the platter with the head of Saint John and gave it to her mother. The frenzied Herodias repeatedly stabbed the tongue of the prophet with a needle and buried his holy head in a unclean place. But the pious Joanna, wife of Herod's steward Chuza, buried the head of John the Baptist in an earthen vessel on the Mount of Olives, where Herod had a parcel of land. (The Uncovering of the Venerable Head is celebrated (February 24). The holy body of John the Baptist was taken that night by his disciples and buried at Sebastia, there where the wicked deed had been done.

After the murder of Saint John the Baptist, Herod continued to govern for a certain time. Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, later sent Jesus Christ to him, Whom he mocked (Luke 23:7-12).

The judgment of God came upon Herod, Herodias and Salome, even during their earthly life. Salome, crossing the River Sikoris in winter, fell through the ice. The ice gave way in such a way that her body was in the water, but her head was trapped above the ice. It was similar to how she once had danced with her feet upon the ground, but now she flailed helplessly in the icy water. Thus she was trapped until that time when the sharp ice cut through her neck.

Her corpse was not found, but they brought the head to Herod and Herodias, as once they had brought them the head of Saint John the Baptist. The Arab king Aretas, in revenge for the disrespect shown his daughter, made war against Herod. The defeated Herod suffered the wrath of the Roman emperor Caius Caligua (37-41) and was exiled with Herodias first to Gaul, and then to Spain.

The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, a Feast day established by the Church, is also a strict fast day because of the grief of Christians at the violent death of the saint. In some Orthodox cultures pious people will not eat food from a flat plate, use a knife, or eat food that is round in shape on this day.

Today the Church makes remembrance of Orthodox soldiers killed on the field of battle, as established in 1769 at the time of Russia's war with the Turks and the Poles.

## Church New Year

### Commemorated on September 1

The first day of the Church New Year is also called the beginning of the Indiction. The term Indiction comes from a Latin word meaning, "to impose." It was originally applied to the imposition of taxes in Egypt. The first worldwide Indiction was in 312 when the Emperor Constantine (May 21) saw a miraculous vision of the Cross in the sky. Before the introduction of the Julian calendar, Rome began the New Year on September 1.

According to Holy Tradition, Christ entered the synagogue on September 1 to announce His mission to mankind (Luke 4:16-22). Quoting Isaiah 61:1-2), the Savior proclaimed, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me; because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim release to captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord..." This scene is depicted in a Vatican manuscript (Vatican, Biblioteca. Cod. Gr. 1613, p.1).

Tradition says that the Hebrews entered the Promised Land in September.

---

### 1 Corinthians 9:2-12 (*Epistle*)

If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink?

Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?

Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your

material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

---

### Matthew 18:23-35 (*Gospel*)

Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

---

### HEARTBEAT FUNDRAISING EVENT (DINNER, DANCE, DONATE)

WHEN: Saturday, September 28

TIME: 6:00pm-9:30pm

WHERE: Port Clinton Elks Lodge

COST: \$40 per person (419-734-9359)

Join us for a night of food and fun. Special guest: Actress, Sarah Hernandez from the movie "Unplanned"

Featuring: Classic Trendz Entertainment

## Helping our Children Face Death

There are two things to remember in addressing death with our children. First, if a parent is uncomfortable speaking on this issue, then do not try to discuss this with your child. Speak first with your parish priest. He might be able to help you work through your own discomfort. Once that is done and you are at peace, then broach this topic your child. Parents need to be examples to their children in how they cope with death. They need to model the emotions they want their kids to express about death.

Second, there is **no** age requirement (i.e. ten or older) for children to go to a funeral home or church for visitation and the funeral service. The best thing to do with your children, even with infants, is to have them attend the services and visitations. This offers the opportunity to speak with young children about death and the fact that in the Orthodox Church death is seen as a pathway to eternal life. Recently I saw a parent bring her infant daughter to the casket of the recently departed Archpriest John Matusiak. Her child looked at his body and stared at it for a while, then the mother moved on. Seeing the dead body of Fr. John in no way traumatized her daughter.

Parents remind your children that it is OK to be sad *and* glad when someone they care about dies; sad because they care about them and will miss them; glad because now he or she rests in the Lord, having passed believing in the hope of the Resurrection. When people die that are not Orthodox Christians or not in good standing with the Church, we pray and commend their souls to the mercy of God. We make no judgment as to “where they are going.” This needs to be shared with children.

It is also important to remind kids that it is OK to cry when viewing a body or during the services. I happened to attend a service a while ago for a three-year-old child that died from a serious illness. There was a lot of crying going on even among the children there. Yet at the same time our funeral services and visitation of the dead person would be meaningless if Christ is not raised from the dead. *“If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14).*

Death is not normal in one sense. It is an enemy

that needs to be defeated. We were not created for death but for life. If a body that has died is left alone it decays, it rots, it smells, and it becomes ugly. Christ came to free us from this ugly enemy that has robbed us of our true destiny. The Paschal Troparion expresses the essence of what our Lord’s Death and Resurrection accomplished: *“Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.”*

That is why whenever someone passes, regardless of their age, there is this feeling among those grieving that one has been robbed. Even when someone is old and ill, there is an experience of something being stolen and taken. This brings with it the full range of emotions a person copes with as death enters one’s life. As one goes about teaching a child about death, kids need to be prepared for the many emotions they will encounter at a service or visitation. Some will cry, some will be stoic, and others happy. Not everyone deals with loss in the same way.

May we all come to an ever-growing understanding of death as a passage (Pascha) to life in the Orthodox Church. This is so because He is risen!

The blessing of the Lord be upon you,  
The unworthy +Paul

---

### Pilgrimage to Holy Land announced for 2020

Faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest are invited to participate in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land February 3-12, 2020.

The pilgrimage, which will be led by Priest Alessandro Margheritino, Rector of Saint Innocent Church, Olmsted Falls, OH, will include visits to the Sea of Galilee, Nazareth, Mount Tabor, Mount Carmel, Jericho, the Jordan River, the Qumran Caves, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem.

The trip is organized by [AMI Travel](#), the same tour operator that arranged the [pilgrimage led by His Grace, Bishop Paul in 2019](#).

For more information, and to know how to sign up, please contact Father Alessandro at [fatheralessandro@gmail.com](mailto:fatheralessandro@gmail.com).

**OTTAWA COUNTY TASK FORCE ON  
AGING**

**”SENIOR SAFETY”**

WHEN: Tuesday September 10

WHERE: Being held at the Ottawa County fairgrounds

Topics: Financial Safety, Home Safety, Fire Safety, Technology Safety, Medication Safety, Disaster Preparation, Mental Health, Driving Safety, and More!

Presentations are being submitted for CEU’S

Registration: \$10 person (Lunch, snacks, Beverages / Info on bulletin board in church basement

Info: 567-262-3174

E-mail: ottawacoaging@gmail.com

**Luke 4:16-22 (Gospel, New Year)**

So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”

**Colossians 3:12-16 (Epistle, St. Simeon)**

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

**1 Timothy 2:1-7 (Epistle, New Year)**

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle – I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying – a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

**Matthew 11:27-30  
(Gospel, St. Simeon)**

All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

**FOR PONDERING**

Ours has been described as the age of radical individualism. If people go to church, they go only if it pleases them. If it does not “Please” them, if it doesn’t give them a “good Feeling,” they will not go. They would never think of going to church to please someone other than themselves, to give glory and worship and praise to the infinitely great God to whom they owe everything including every breath of air they breathe. They go to church to please themselves not God. God exists in order to serve them, not they to serve God. I like what someone said in this respect, “Whoever thinks of God as a universal bellhop, ends up carrying his own bags”!