



Established 1918

St. George Orthodox Church

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Spring Valley, IL 61362

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*Metropolitan SABA, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
Rt. Rev. Archimandrite JEREMY, Archiepiscopal Vicar Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest*

Our Clergy - Fr. Andrew Kishler and Dn. Jeremy Finzel



Sunday, August 11, 2024 - The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

8:45am - Matins, 10:00am - Deacon's Typika, followed by Fellowship and Adult Education

Coming Up at St. George:

Monday, August 12 at 6:30pm - Paraklesis to the Theotokos

Tuesday, August 13 from 1-3pm - Senior Share

Wednesday, August 14 - Celebration of the Feast of the Dormition

at St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Palos Heights, please see back of bulletin

Friday, August 16 at 6:30pm - Daily Vespers with Fr. Jeremy Davis

Saturday, August 17 at 9:00am - Matins, 10:00am - Divine Liturgy with Fr. Jeremy Davis, followed by Fellowship

Saturday, August 17 at 5:30pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, August 18 at 8:45am - Matins, 10:00am - Deacon's Typika for the Eighth

Sunday of Matthew, followed by Fellowship

Wednesday, August 21 at 6:30pm - Daily Vespers

Sunday, August 25 - 8:45am - Matins, 10:00am - Divine Liturgy with Fr. David Moga, followed by Fellowship and Adult Education

Services available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@St.GeorgeSpringValleyOrthodox>

• *The Glory hymns at the end of Matins:*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Behold the dawn, and the rise of the day; why hast thou stood, O Mary, at the grave? And great darkness hath covered thy mind, and thou asked him: Where hath Jesus been placed? Yea, behold the Disciples, who hastened to the tomb, how they surmised His Resurrection from the coffin wrappings and the turban, and remembered what was said about Him in the books.

Wherefore, we who believed through them, praise Thee with them, O Christ, Giver of life.

Both Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Thou hast transcended all blessings, O Virgin Theotokos! For Hades hath been spoiled by Him who was incarnate of thee. Yea, Adam was recalled, the curse was abolished. Eve was delivered and death was caused to die, and we were made to live again. Wherefore, with praise we cry:

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, who hast thus shown Thy pleasure. Glory to Thee!

• *The Great Doxology:*

Glory be to Thee, who hast shown us Thy Light! Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will among men.

We praise Thee; we bless Thee; we worship Thee; we glorify Thee. We give thanks unto Thee for the splendor of Thy glory.

O Lord, O King, O Heavenly God, Father Almighty; O Lord, only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit.

O Lord God, Lamb of God, O Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us, O Thou that takest away the sins of the world.

Accept our prayers, O Thou that sittest on the right hand of the Father, and have mercy upon us.

For Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Glory of God the Father. Amen.

Every day will I bless Thee, and will praise Thy Name forever and ever.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever. Amen.

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have put our trust in Thee.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy statutes. *(Three times.)*

O Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation. I said: Lord have mercy upon me; heal my soul for I have sinned against Thee.

O Lord, I flee unto Thee; teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.

For with Thee is the fountain of life; and in Thy light we shall see light.

Extend Thy mercy unto them that know Thee.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One: Have mercy upon us. *(Three times.)*

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Holy Immortal One: Have mercy upon us.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One: Have mercy upon us!

- *The Resurrectional Troparion:*

Having risen again from the tomb, and having burst asunder the bonds of Hades, Thou didst unbind the condemnation of death, O Lord, redeeming all men from the snares of the enemy. And having revealed Thyself to Thine Apostles, Thou didst send them forth to proclaim Thee. And through them Thou hast granted Thy peace unto the universe, O Thou who alone art merciful!

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

All: Amen.

- *The Great Litany:*

Deacon: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, have mercy. (*Repeat after each petition.*)

For the peace from above, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

For the peace of the whole world, for the good estate of the Holy Churches of God, and the union of all men, Let us pray to the Lord.

For the Holy House, and for those who with faith, reverence and fear of God, enter therein, let us pray to the Lord.

For our father and Metropolitan Saba, for the venerable Priesthood, the Diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

For this country, its President, all civil authorities, our armed forces and their families, let us pray to the Lord.

For this city, and for every city and countryside, and for the faithful who dwell therein, let us pray to the Lord. For healthful seasons, for abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

For travelers by sea, by land, and by air; for the sick and the suffering; for the captives and their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

For our deliverance from all tribulation, wrath, anger and necessity, let us pray to the Lord.

Deacon: Help us; save us; have mercy on us; and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lay Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints: let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

All: To Thee, O Lord.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.

- *The First Antiphon:*

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Who settest fast the mountains by Thy strength, Who art girded about with power.

Refrain: By the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment. The mountains shall rejoice at the presence of the Lord, for He cometh; yea, He is come to judge the earth. (*Repeat refrain.*)

- *The Little Litany:*

Deacon: Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, in Thy grace.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lay Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints: let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

All: To Thee, O Lord.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.

- *The Second Antiphon:*

His foundations are in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, thou who wast transfigured on Mount Tabor, as we sing unto Thee: Alleluia!

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. (*Repeat refrain.*)

A man will say: Mother Sion; and: That man was born in her; and: The Most High Himself hath founded her. (*Repeat refrain.*)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Both now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Only-begotten Son and Word of God, who art immortal, and who didst deign for our salvation to be incarnate of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and without change wast made man, and was also crucified, O Christ our God, and didst trample death by death, being yet one of the Holy Trinity, glorified together with the Father and the Holy Spirit: Save us!

- *The Little Litany:*

Deacon: Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, in Thy grace.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lay Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints: let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

All: To Thee, O Lord.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.

- *The Third Antiphon:*

Of Thy mercies, O Lord, will I sing forever. The heavens shall confess Thy wonders, O Lord, and Thy truth in the congregation of saints. Blessed is the people that knoweth jubilation. O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance shall they walk, and in Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day long.

- *The Entrance Hymn:*

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

Choir: Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ.

Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, we who sing unto Thee: Alleluia!

Resurrectional Apolytikion (Tone 6): When Mary stood at Thy grave, looking for Thy sacred body, angelic powers shone above Thy revered tomb. And the soldiers who were to keep guard became as dead men. Thou led Hades captive and wast not tempted thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst give life to the world, O Thou, Who art risen from the dead, O Lord, glory to Thee.

Apolytikion of the Transfiguration (Tone 7): When, O Christ our God, Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, Thou didst reveal Thy glory to Thy Disciples in proportion as they could bear it. Let Thine everlasting light also enlighten us sinners, through the intercessions of the Theotokos. O Thou Bestower of light, glory to Thee.

Troparion for St. George the Great-Martyr (Tone 4): Since thou art a liberator and deliverer of captives, a help and succour of the poor and needy, a healing physician of the sick, a contender and fighter for kings, O great among martyrs, the victory-clad George: Intercede with Christ God for the salvation of our souls.

Kontakion for the Transfiguration (Tone 7): Thou wast transfigured on the mount, and Thy Disciples, in so far as they were able, beheld Thy glory, O Christ our God; so that, when they should see Thee crucified, they would remember that Thy suffering was voluntary, and could declare to all the world that Thou art truly the effulgent Splendor of the Father.

- *The Trisagion Hymn:*

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One: Have mercy on us! (*Three times.*)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Holy Immortal One: Have mercy upon us!

Louder! Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One: Have mercy upon us!

The Epistle for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry, O my God!

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (15:1-7).

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: Brethren, we who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good for his edification. For Christ also did not please Himself; but, as it is written: "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell on Me." For whatever was written beforehand was written for our learning, that we might have hope, through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be of the same mind with one another,

according to Christ Jesus, that with one accord and one mouth you may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, receive one another, even as Christ has also received you, to the glory of God.

Deacon: Peace be to thee who readest.

Reader: And to thy spirit.

Chanter: He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the heavenly God. He will say to the Lord: My Protector and my Refuge; my God, in Whom I trust.

All: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

The Gospel for the Seventh Sunday of Matthew

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (9:27-35).

At that time, as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud: "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When He entered the house, the blind men came to Him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it." But they went away and spread His fame through all that district. As they were going away, behold, a dumb demoniac was brought to Him. And when the demon had been cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons." And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity.

- *The Deacon now preaches a sermon.*
- *The Litany of Fervent Supplication:*

Deacon: Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, we pray Thee, harken and have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy. (*Repeat three times after each petition.*)

Again we pray for all pious and Orthodox Christians.

Again we pray for our father and Metropolitan Saba and for our brethren: the priests, deacons, monastics and all our brotherhood in Christ.

Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation and visitation and pardon and remission of sins of the servants of God we remember today, and all Orthodox Christians of true worship, who live and dwell in this community.

Again we pray for the blessed and ever-memorable founders of this holy church and for the departed servants of God, all our fathers and brethren departed this life before us, who here and in all the world lie asleep in the Lord.

Again we pray for those who bear fruit and do good works in this holy and all-venerable temple, those who serve and those who sing, and for all the people here present, who await Thy great and rich mercy.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

All: Amen.

- *Troparia Before the Creed:*

1st Reader: The heavenly choir singeth Thy praises, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

2nd Reader: Come unto him, and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed. The heavenly choir singeth Thy praises, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

1st Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

2nd Reader: The choir of holy angels and archangels, with all the powers of heaven, singeth Thy praises, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

1st Reader: Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

- *The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed:*

All: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all worlds: Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father by Whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried. And on the third day rose again according to the Scriptures. And ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father. And He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who procedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spake by the Prophets.

And I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Deacon: Forgive, remit, pardon, O God, our sins, both voluntary and involuntary, in deed and in word, in knowledge or in ignorance, committed by night or by day, in mind and in thought. Forgive us them all, for thou art good and lovest mankind.

- *The Lord's Prayer:*

All: Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.

- *The Morning Litany:*

Deacon: Let us complete our morning prayer to the Lord.

All: Lord have mercy.

Choir: One Holy, one Lord Jesus Christ, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

- *The Pre-Communion Prayer:*

All: I believe, O Lord, and I confess, that Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, who didst come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

And I believe that this is truly Thine own immaculate Body, and that this is truly Thine own precious Blood. Wherefore, I pray Thee, have mercy upon me, and forgive my transgressions, both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance; and make me worthy to partake without condemnation of Thine immaculate Mysteries, unto remission of my sins and unto life everlasting. Amen.

Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant; for I will not speak of Thy mysteries to Thine enemies, neither will I give Thee a kiss as did Judas, but like the thief will I confess Thee: 'Remember me, O Lord, in Thy kingdom.' Not unto judgment nor unto condemnation be my partaking of Thy Holy Mysteries, O Lord, but unto healing of soul and body.

- *The Communion Hymn:*

Praise ye the Lord from Heaven; praise ye Him in the highest. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Deacon: With the fear of God, in faith and love, draw near!

Choir: Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord; the Lord is God and hath appeared unto us.

Choir: Receive me today, O Son of God, a partaker of Thy sacramental supper. For I shall not divulge the mysteries to Thine enemies, nor give Thee a kiss like Judas, but like the thief, I shall confess to Thee: 'Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom!'

Deacon: O God, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.

Choir: We have seen the true light, we have received the Heavenly Spirit; we have found the true and saving faith, in the worship of the undivided Trinity.

- *Psalm 33 - Thanksgiving Psalm:*

All: Blessed be the name of the Lord, from this time forth and forevermore. (*Three times.*)

Reader: I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. In the Lord shall my soul be praised; let the meek hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my tribulations. Come unto Him, and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his tribulations. The angel of the Lord will encamp round about them that fear Him, and will deliver them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that hopeth in Him. O fear the Lord, all ye His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him. Rich men have turned poor and gone hungry; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good thing. Come ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is there that desireth life, who loveth to see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Turn away from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are opened unto their supplication. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, utterly to destroy the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous

cried, and the Lord heard them, and He delivered them out of all their tribulations. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and He will save the humble of spirit. Many are the tribulations of the righteous, and the Lord shall deliver them out of them all. The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken. The death of sinners is evil, and they that hate the righteous shall do wrong. The Lord will redeem the souls of His servants, and none of them will do wrong that hope in Him.

All: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

• *The Dismissal:*

Choir: It is truly meet to bless thee, O Theotokos, the ever-blessed and all-blameless, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, thou who without corruption bearest God the Word and art truly Theotokos: We magnify thee.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.

Information & Announcements

Dormition Fast: Please note that the Dormition fast, observing the falling asleep of the Mother of God, has begun. Please consider the fast when bringing food for fellowship.

Celebration of the Feast of the Dormition: We have been invited to join St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Palos Heights on Wednesday, August 14 from 3:30-9pm. The services are as follows- 3:30pm Preparation, 4:00pm Compline, 4:30pm Great Vespers, 5:45pm Orthos, 7:00pm Divine Liturgy, with a meal to follow. St. Mary's is located at 6330 W 127th St, Palos Heights, IL 60463.

Archiepiscopal Vicar Visit: Please join us in welcoming Fr. Jeremy Davis, the new vicar for the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest, for services on August 16 and 17, see front of bulletin. There will be a potluck brunch following Divine Liturgy on the 17th, sponsored by the Ladies of St. George. Please see the sign up sheet or contact Ruth Baum if you're able to contribute.

You're invited!: On Sunday, August 25, 2024, His Eminence Metropolitan Saba will preside over the ordination of Dn. Jeremy to the Holy Priesthood at St Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church in Grand Rapids (2250 E. Paris SE Grand Rapids, MI 49546). Matins is at 8:50am and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at 10:00am. All are welcome!

"It is better to be a simpleton and approach God with love than to be a learned man and at the same time an enemy of God."

~ St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Parish Council Members

Elected & Appointed Members

Wayne Sanders, *Chair*
Melanie Thompson, *Treasurer*
Sbdn. David Anderson, *Sunday School*

Mark Kerasotes, *Vice-Chair & Order of St. Ignatius*
Rdr. Michael Baum, *Secretary & Ecclesiarch*

Organization Representatives

Genie Sanders, *Chanters/Choir*
Maxwell Colby, *Young Adults*

Ruth Baum, *Antiochian Women*
Robert Abraham, *Facilities*

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Aug. 12 – Marsha Neven Aug. 14 – Lynette Forsa
Aug. 16 – Kelsey Klein Aug. 17 – Lynn Nimee

Church Finances

	July 2024	2024 YTD	2023 Comparison
Income:	\$3,996.00	\$51,298.34	\$62,008.11
Expense:	\$6,898.33	\$38,084.65	\$53,913.65
Net:	-\$2,902.33	\$13,213.69	\$8,094.46

2024 figures do not include proceeds from the sale of the parsonage as they have been invested.

The Christian Priest

By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)



The priest is an apostle, but he can either be faithful to the gospel or become a mercenary. There is no in between. Christianity is not fundamentally a religion, but a path, a way of life. The priest is a guide on this path. He accompanies the believers on their journey towards God and achieving theosis. He provides them with the divine mysteries which grant them divine grace. He accepts their confession. He guides them, lighting their path. He has compassion on them, as Christ had compassion on the sick, the leper, and the widow, as well as on the crowds, whom he often saw as “sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

The priest is a father, and he is not called "father" for nothing. A father is both a nurturer and an embracer, working for his family. The priest's family is his parish. He nurtures them by visiting them, and by giving communion to their sick and elderly. He may be able to give support to the poor, or he may not. But in either case, he loves them tenderly, and people keenly sense his love and know it to be true. The priest's love for his parishioners leads to their obedience. He is obeyed when he speaks the word of God, not acting on his own whims. His word is heard when his concern is for the salvation and good of his children. If he is a little harsh at times and if he rebukes, the parishioners accept his intention, because they realize that he is moved by love for them.

The priest is a spiritual father first. His role, his job, is to elevate his flock to the heights. With his elevated spirituality, he draws them upward. And like his Master, he does not disdain to reach down to their spiritual level to share in their suffering, and then raise them up – just as Christ became incarnate, lowering himself to raise us up. The priest “rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15). All are his children, and what happens to them concerns him deeply. His service is based on raising them from their reality to a better reality, in which God and His goodwill prevail. In order to succeed, he may need to use “pastoral” methods and approaches that they can accept. He is called upon to deduce what God inspires him to convey the divine word to them. These are means and tools for their spiritual ascent. Otherwise, they have no place in his ministry to his parishioners. Beware of considering these means and tools an end in themselves!

The priest must not lose sight of the goal: the salvation of his people, their holiness, and their adornment with virtues, supporting and assisting them to live up to the Gospel. All pastoral work must serve this goal. Otherwise, the priest will become, God forbid, an agent for an entertainment company. Losing sight of the goal is very easy. Most believers enjoy a priest who suits their taste. Many are disgusted by a priest who demands they follow the Word of God. They want to live as they please. Their priest’s goal may be to elevate them, but they want to stay spiritually low, so they pull him down to their level. They make things difficult for him until he submits to their demands.

The priest maintains faithful service when he is a true man of prayer. Changing and saving people is essentially God’s work. Only God can soften and heal hearts. A good priest presents his flock to God daily in fervent prayer. A priest, by definition, is one who presents the world to God so that He may sanctify and transfigure it. Frequent celebration of the Divine Liturgy aids the priest. It is unfortunate that most priests today celebrate Divine Liturgy only on Sundays and feast days. This is a great loss! The priests of old, in their simplicity, were aware that they were men of prayer, more so than the priests of today. Their churches were opened daily, morning and evening, for Orthos and Vespers. Today’s priests are tempted to be social workers or religious workers rather than men of God.

True, their social service falls within the framework of the service of love, which is the message of Christ and the message of his apostles after him, i.e., the priests. However, the service of Christian love is distinguished from social service, even though the two services intersect in a number of aspects and fields. Christian love embraces the person, without pressure, and is directed towards him as a whole, not limited to merely providing for a specific need. Christian love shares in suffering with the sufferer, and believes that the sufferer is providing an opportunity for the provider to practice Christian love. It focuses on the image of God in the person, and not the person’s individuality. This joyful service is only achieved by a special divine grace, which God gives to those who pray, who are well aware that their daily communion with Him is their true provision.

The priest, with the awesome responsibility placed on his shoulders, and in the face of many needs, may try to be satisfied with two or more ministries, and exempt himself from others. Then he adopts the ministries that comfort him, and he may be oblivious to this mistake. If there is no one to alert him, he gets used to what he is doing, and his conscience no longer reproaches him and demands more from him.

The priest may justify his weak care by saying that his parishioners do not provide for his living conditions. This is possible; not all parishes provide for their priests in an acceptable way. This should push him to give and serve better, relying on his Lord, who feeds the birds of the air, which neither sow nor reap (Matt. 6:26). This increases him in holiness; and seeing his devotion, the Lord must visit him in ways that only He knows. Many are the virtuous priests who experienced this divine visitation when their children neglected them. This is not a justification for the faithful's negligence in caring for their spiritual fathers, but rather a strengthening for fathers, and a reminder to them that they serve God first. And God, who does not forget anyone, will not forget them.

A priest may feel cheated when he compares himself to the richest person in his parish. This is a great demonic temptation for him. All good fathers have experienced that money flees from a priest as much as he runs after it, and comes to him as much as he avoids it.

The priest is both great and small: great, because he is in the image of his Lord, not dwelling on trifling details, but rather transcending them; and small, because he does not disdain to condescend lovingly to the world of sinners, in order to purify them. He is high and lofty, and at the same time very humble and low.

My Lord, make Your priests worthy of Your fulfillment. Support them, console them, encourage them, and give them strength in the face of the many difficulties and trials they face. Enlighten them, my Lord, with Your light, so that they may be fulfilled with You, and may in turn fulfill the world with You.

His Eminence, the Most Reverend Saba Isper is the Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East and the Holy Synod of Antioch elected His Eminence to lead the Archdiocese during its extraordinary session on Feb. 23, 2023, in Balamand, Lebanon.

His Eminence will lead and oversee the Archdiocese's parishes, missions, departments, institutions and organizations in the United States and Canada from the headquarters in Englewood, New Jersey. The auxiliary bishops aid him in his administration across the continent. For more information on His Eminence and his teachings, please visit

<https://www.antiochian.org/dashboard?name=MetSaba>

