

The Mustard Seed

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Priest's Corner
Father John Fleser

Pearls of Wisdom
from the Fathers

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:34-36)

We all have accepted the idea that education is essential for our children in order for them to earn a living; to this end families sacrifice in order to send them to school. It has evolved to a point where now the process begins in kindergarten. Thus parents are paying from \$1,500.00 - \$5,000.00 to send a child to private or parochial school in order to insure he is properly educated. When he goes to college the cost will have risen to \$30,000.00 a year; that times 4 will be over \$120,000.00 when you include the incidentals. This does not include the cost of private schools in the earlier years.

Parents have taken out second mortgages on their homes to pay for this education; in addition the child has also had to take out loans. All this debt has to be paid. Today,

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The Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) written in the first century.

"A further commandment of the Teaching: Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not practice pederasty; do not fornicate; do not steal; do not deal in magic; do not practice sorcery; do not kill a fetus by abortion or commit infanticide. Do not covet your neighbor's goods. Do not perjure yourself; do not bear false witness; do not calumniate; do not bear malice. Do not be double-minded or double-tongued, for a double tongue is a deadly snare. Your speech must not be false or meaningless, but made good by action. Do not be covetous, or rapacious, or hypocritical, or malicious, or arrogant. Do not have designs upon your neighbor. Hate no man; but correct some, pray for others, for still others sacrifice your life as a proof of your love. (page 16)"

Anyone coming in the name of the Lord must be welcomed; but, after that, test him and find out - you will of course use your discretion either for or against him. If the arrival is a transient visitor, assist him as much as you can, but he may not stay with you more than two days, or, if necessary, three. But if he intends to settle among you, then, in case he is a craftsman, let him work for his

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most of our graduates from college have debts of \$25,000.00 or more which has to be repaid...this may be too conservative a figure.

Education is important but the purpose of education is not just to earn an income. This is why the quote from St. Mark's Gospel was at the beginning of this article...*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world,*

for when your child becomes educated, he is then a human being. The school opens churches; the school opens monasteries.

and lose his own soul?

The only concern should not just be the secular education of our children; we should pay more attention to educating our children in the teachings of the Orthodox Church.

"The Prophet Moses studied for forty years to learn his letters in order to understand where he walked. You too should study, my brethren; learn as much as you can. And if your fathers haven't, educate your children to learn Greek because our Church uses Greek. And if you don't learn Greek, my brethren, you can't understand what our Church confesses. It is better, my brother, for you to have a Greek school in your village rather than fountains and rivers, for when your child becomes educated, he is then a human being. The school opens churches; the school opens monasteries." (**Father Kosmas the Apostle of the Poor**, page 77)

Our Church uses English so we need to educate our children in the language they speak. Bear in mind that we should also encourage everyone to learn second and third languages, preferably Greek, Russian or one of the languages from the Orthodox countries.

Parents want their child to have more opportunities than they might have had and therefore are willing to pay the price. What is of concern is the type of education the child receives in the school system at any level. It is often for this reason that the children are removed from the school system and placed in private schools. Yet, in spite of this, little effort has been made by Orthodox parents to provide a good education for their children in matters of the faith.

There are different aspects to this problem: 1) to organize a private school so our children can receive a good education and learn about their faith at the same time: 2) to better organize our Church schools.

There are two private Orthodox schools in the Boston area; this at least provides an opportunity to place your child in this school rather than a parochial or private school. It would allow you, as a parent, to be more involved in the

education of your child. The other alternative would be to start another school...this is possible because we have many talented people in the Boston area. This requires an individual(s) to organize the project and then find the resources to fund it. Not an impossible task but one which requires dedication and perseverance.

Perhaps the easier of the two would be to focus on the Church school. Parents complain about the lack of material or the Church schools in general but very few have made an effort to do something about it.

Look at our Church schools...include all the jurisdictions...and few - I know of only one Church - has Church school on a day other than Sunday. As a general rule it is held after the Divine Liturgy is over. Most Church schools have classes for 30 - 45 minutes. That is it. The facilities are meager and materials can certainly be improved upon. Fortunately the teachers have made a most valiant effort to provide some education for the children under these conditions and the children have gained as a result of those efforts.

Parents and clergy...for we are all part of the royal priesthood...it is time to reconsider our responsibilities in this area and to see how serious we all are about educating our children in the Orthodox faith.

At St. Anna's we are able to teach the children approximately 25 minutes on a Sunday; that is the extent of their learning about their faith. Our classrooms are woefully inadequate; the number of children is growing and we have no space for increasing either the size or the number of classrooms.

Compare the time and effort you put into taking your children to other activities with the time for their education in the faith; which has the greatest priority? This is where the problem lies. If you have to choose between those activities and taking them to a Church school either on a week night or Saturday afternoon, the activity usually wins. To turn around the way we educate our children in the faith requires a willingness to discuss the options before us and then to decide upon a course of action. This needs to take place over the summer so we can plan the Church school year which begins in September.

A corollary to the education of children is to bring them to the Church services. Too few of the families ever attend a Vespers either during the week or on Saturday; none ever attend a Matins service on Sunday morning.

If parents do not instruct their children by their willingness to attend Church services, why do you think your child will go to Church when he is an

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adult? If Church is such an integral part of our lives, why isn't everyone at Church at 7:30 am on a Sunday morning? If you know that we greet the bishop at 9:00 am, why aren't you in Church before he arrives? If it were an important event which you had to attend you would be on time, especially if a well known personality was going to be present; yet, to meet Christ and participate in the mysteries of the Church must not be considered important because our faithful come to Church late. Do you make sure your child goes to school every morning on time? Why shouldn't you teach him the same lesson about being at Church on time?

This is all part of the educational process by which our children learn about their faith. It is not just in a classroom but is an introduction into a way of life.

St. Gregory always remained a "lover of learning." "I am the first of the lovers of wisdom," he said. "I never prefer anything over my studies, and I do not want Wisdom to call me a poor

We have all made our mistakes in the past and have formed bad habits regarding Church attendance; what happened before is not the issue. What we must do is look to the future and become willing to make changes in our lives in order to worship God in His Church and learn what our faith teaches about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; about Jesus Christ, God-Man, the Theotokos and all the Saints. Parents, if you are willing to give thousands of dollars to a school to teach your child how to read, write and do arithmetic then how much are you willing to donate to the Church to allow your children to be well instructed in the faith? How much time will you commit to assisting in the education of your child?

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss your solutions to the problems of how to educate our children in matters of the Orthodox faith.

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living; if he has no trade or craft, use your judgment in providing for him, so that a follower of Christ will not live idle in your midst. But if he is not satisfied with

this arrangement, he is a Christmonger. Be on your guard against such people. (page 23)"

Of Patient Endurance - *The Sayings of the Holy Fathers*

"An old man used to say, "If it should happen that a sickness of the body overtake you, let it not be grievous to you, for if your Lord wishes you to be sick in the body, who are you that you should be in despair? Does He not take care for you in everything? Could you live without Him? Be patient, and entreat Him to give you such things as are helpful, and which are according to His will; and besides this eat His food of grace with long-suffering. (page 44)"

Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century
Father Georges Florvovsky

On Education

St. Gregory the Theologian

Gregory always remained a "lover of learning." "I am the first of the lovers of wisdom," he said. "I never prefer anything over my studies, and I do not want Wisdom to call me a poor teacher." He referred to philosophy as the "struggle to win and possess that which is more precious than anything." In this he included secular learning as well: "We derive something useful for our orthodoxy even from the worldly sciences. From that which is inferior we learn about that which is superior, and we transform that frailty into the strength of our teaching." Gregory continued to defend erudition later in his career. "Everyone who has a mind will recognize that learning is our highest good. I mean not only our most noble form of learning, which despises embellishment and verbal prolixity and concerns itself only with our salvation and the contemplation of beauty, but also worldly learning, which many Christians incorrectly abhor as false, dangerous, and distant from God. But we will not set up creation against its Creator. Learning should not be scorned, as some people think. On the contrary, we should recognize that those who hold such an opinion are stupid and ignorant. They want everyone to be just like themselves, so that the general failing will hide their own imperfections, and their ignorance will not be exposed." These words were spoken by Gregory at Basil's funeral. He never wanted to forget the lessons of Athens, and he later denounced Julian the Apostate for prohibiting Christians from teaching rhetoric and the secular sciences. (page 109)"

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Creation of natures outside time St. Basil the Great

“Basil asserts that time was created by God as an environment for the material world. Time is succession and replacement, and it is always flowing and moving forward. At the beginning of time God created the world. But, the beginning of time is not time itself. “Just as the beginning of a path is not yet a path, or as the beginning of a house is not yet a house, so also the beginning of time is not yet time, nor even the very smallest part of time.” The beginning is simple and has no duration. The beginning of time can be approached by moving backwards from the present. If God created heaven and earth “at the beginning,” this means that “the act of creation was instantaneous and not subject to time.” God’s creation of the world by His will did not take place in time, but He created suddenly and instantaneously, or, in the words of the “ancient commentators,” “briefly”. Time began with the world. “Time is continuation which is co-extensive with the existence of the world.”

According to Basil, God created the angels before He created the visible and material world. Therefore angels are created outside of time and without time, an angelic being does not presuppose time or require it. This enables Basil to assert that angels are immutable. “There was, before the beginning of the world, a certain state which was appropriate to powers that have existed before the world, which are superior to time, and which are eternal and everlasting. Within this condition the Creator of all things created the intellectual light which brings bliss to all who love the Lord, the intelligent and invisible natures, and all the other adornments of these creatures, which can only be contemplated by us. They exceed our understanding to such an extent that we cannot even give them a name.”

Angels were brought into existence by the Word of God. They were not created in an immature form, or in such a way that they had to perfect themselves through gradual exercise in order to be worthy of the Spirit. “The angels are not subject to change. There are no children, youths, or elders among them, but their nature is always pure and immutable. Sanctification was infested in their original state, in their very substance.” “Therefore,” Basil says in conclusion, “they are never inclined to sin because they are immediately sanctified as part of their nature. By the gift of the Holy Spirit their virtue is constant.” They have been living in sanctity and spiritual joy from before the beginning of the world. (page 81)”

St. Gregory of Nyssa

The Inner Power of the Soul

The human soul naturally “moves towards beauty which is invisible.” Man has an “inner immaterial power” which enables him to perceive the spiritual. “Whoever purifies his soul even a little will see God’s love for us in all its purity, and he will see the intent God had in creating our souls. He will find that humanity by its very essence has been joined to a desire for goodness and perfection, and that man’s nature has been united to an impassive and holy love for the blessed image of which man is the likeness.” This love and attraction cause man to experience an endless longing for God, Who is the ultimate goal of all desire and of all contemplation.

The Eternity of the Divinity and the Dynamic and Potentially Infinite Nature of Man’s Struggle

“We know that the greatest goal of perfect virtue is for virtue to have no limitation or final goal. There is only one limit to virtue: it must strive to be endless.”

This goal, however, is inaccessible and can never be achieved. “Let us learn about virtue from the Gospels,” Gregory writes. “We know that the greatest goal of perfect virtue is for virtue to have no limitation or final goal. There is only one limit to virtue: it must strive to be endless. Possibly the perfection of our human nature consists in our having a vision of beauty within ourselves which is such that we always desire an even greater beauty.” Furthermore, “it is dangerous to stop in this forward movement, for every good thing is limited only by that which stands in opposition to it...In the same way that the end of life is the beginning of death, a halt on the path to virtue is the beginning of the road to vice.” This striving is endless. It must be uninterrupted because its goal is eternity. The eternity of the Divinity determines the dynamic and potentially infinite nature of man’s struggle to perfect himself, in which every action is always the source of further actions which will extend beyond earthly life and time. Gregory describes it as a “completeness that will never be limited by satiation. (page 153)”

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Moses and the Mystical Ascent to God

Gregory also comments on God's appearance to Moses in the crevice of the rock.

(Exodus 33:17-23) *And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.*

Moses asked God to show him His glory and to reveal the path to Him. "A voice from above,

For this reason God reveals that man cannot see His face and remain alive. To see the face of God one must be coming towards Him. Man should follow after God and not try to approach Him from the opposite direction. The path which leads from the direction opposite the path of virtue is the path of sin.

"Gregory writes, "agreed to this request and did not refuse to grant this grace, but it only caused Moses to despair, for it revealed that what he desired is not possible for man." Moses only saw the "back of God."

All of this has a greater significance. It is the very effort of knowing God that is man's true knowledge of Him. "He who strives for God sees only His back." "Moses was impatient for God but all he learned was how to see Him. This is accomplished

by following behind God and walking in the path He has left us." This is the only way for the one who is led to see the One who leads. "Whoever is following this path and then steps aside, or tries to see the face of the One who is leading him, sets for himself a path that has not been lain by his true Leader." God told Moses that He could not see His face. In Gregory's interpretation this signifies that "you will never stand face to face with the One who leads you because, if you do, your journey will be from the direction opposite Him. That which is good never looks directly at goodness but follows after it." "For this reason God reveals that man cannot see His face and remain alive. To see the face of God one must be coming towards Him. Man should follow after God and not try to approach Him from the opposite direction. The path which leads from the direction opposite the path of virtue is the path of sin.

Gregory comments on other aspects of the Biblical narrative. God told Moses to stand on a rock. This rock is Christ, Who is absolute goodness. God placed Moses on this rock not so that he could rest, but so that he would be free to move forward. "Whoever ascends does not stand still and whoever stands still does not ascend." The man who ascends must be firm and he most not be distracted from the path of virtue. God showed compassion for Moses because "his desire to perfect himself could never be satisfied, and he was always striving for greater virtue." God appeared to Moses but this did not satisfy Moses' longing for Him. "God would not have shown Himself if this vision could have satisfied the yearning of His servant. (pages 157-8)"

Parish News

Baptism

Catherine (Cassidy Shea) Fleser, daughter of Christopher and Donna, was baptized on May 31/18; Susan Deretich was the godmother. Bishop Moses, Father Isaac and Father John Fleser were present: Bishop Moses baptized Catherine. Many years to our newly illumined and to her parents and godparent.

St. Anna's Summer Camp

St. Anna's summer camp will be held from July 27/14 - July 31/18 in the Church hall from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm daily. The exception to this is on Friday; Hours begin at 8:30 am and

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the Divine Liturgy at 9:00 am: the children from the camp will chant the Liturgy. Children from the ages of 6 - 17 are invited to attend. The cost per child: \$25.00 for the week. This includes all the materials for the classes as well as lunches and snacks during the day.

Church Choir

Constantine Snogren is teaching a class on 'How to read musical notes'; the next two classes are on July 20/7 and 22/9 at 7:00 pm in St. Anna's Church hall. Direct all questions to Constantine. Tel: [617] 327-8758/

Individuals are making an effort to improve their skills at the chanting stand; this is very commendable but in order to raise those skills to a higher level a great deal of practice is required. Nothing is accomplished without effort and each of us knows this full well. To become good at anything requires a willingness to sacrifice your time and effort in order to pursue your goal.

To this end we need to discuss with those who are interested in being part of the choir how to schedule choir practices during the year. No choral group performs without at least 4 hours or more of practice a week; yet we have no expectations of our choir members to practice even an hour a week. In order for us to build for the future we need to lay down a foundation today so our children will follow in our footsteps and pick up where we leave off. We have the musical talent among our faithful to develop an exceptional choir capable of singing antiphonally; this will not happen without a much greater commitment on the part of everyone involved in the choir. Let us take time over the summer months and determine what our goal for the choir is to be. We should be involving our children in this process for they are to become the future leaders. All suggestions as to how to accomplish this task are requested.

Recipes

A Tasty Dish - Trifle

(following recipes submitted by Donna Fleser)

Serves 10

- 1 - 3" x 9" pound cake loaf (such as Sara Lee's)
- ½ - cup raspberry preserves
- ½ - cup orange juice
- 2 - Tablespoons Grand Marnier (optional)
- 4 - cups mixed fruit (any fruit will work, but we like sliced bananas, sectioned mandarin oranges, blueberries, sliced pears and hulled strawberries)
- 2 - boxes instant vanilla flavored pudding
- 4 - cups whipped cream

Slice the pound cake (as you would a loaf of bread) into ¼" slices. Make small sandwiches by spreading the raspberry preserves between two slices of cake. Cut the sandwiches into six 1" pieces. Line the bottom of a large glass bowl, or trifle dish with half of the of the slices, saving the other half of cake for later.

Combine the orange juice with the Grand Marnier and drizzle half the mixture over the cake pieces to soak them.

Cover the cake with 2 cups of the mixed fruit. Prepare the instant pudding and spread half over the fruit. Cover with 2 cups of the whipped cream.

Repeat the above process, layering cake, juice, fruit, pudding and ending with the whipped cream.

Garnish with sliced strawberries. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Note: This recipe should be made the same day it is being served, as it does not keep well.

Chocolate Trifle

Serves 10

- 1 - 9" round chocolate cake (a prepared boxed cake mix makes enough cake for two trifles)
- ½ - cup coffee liqueur*
- 4 - frozen Heath candy bars
- 2 - boxes instant chocolate flavored pudding
- 4 - cups whipped cream
- Shaved chocolate for garnish

Slice the cake into 1" cubes and line the bottom of a large glass bowl, or trifle dish with half of the of the slices, saving the other half of cake for later. Drizzle half of the coffee liqueur over the cake pieces to soak them.

Smash the frozen candy bars with a hammer and sprinkle the pieces over the cake. Prepare the instant pudding and spread half over the candy. Cover with 2 cups of the whipped cream.

Repeat the above process, layering cake, liqueur, candy, pudding and ending with the whipped cream.

Garnish with shaved chocolate. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Note: This recipe should be made the same day it is being served, as it does not keep well.

*To make the recipe non-alcoholic you can substitute