

The Messenger

Archangel Gabriel Orthodox Church, Lafayette, LA
Metropolitan PHILIP, Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese
Bishop ANTOUN, Diocese of Miami and the Southeast
Fr. Philip Rogers, Pastor



The Order of the Mysteries

Every morning I walk into my office at the Church to find stacks of all kinds of papers. On my right, is a crate with all of the applications and registration forms for the 185 campers and staff for Camp St. Thekla 2011. On my left is a stack of books that I am reading to prepare for different lessons and presentations along with any number of other bits of paperwork that I find myself having to wade through. With all of this clutter, and that is what it really is, I get very distracted. I come over to the Church early and stay late, neglecting so many other things: my lawn needs to be mowed, the back porch weeded, etc. I am not saying any of that to point out how busy I am, but because I know I am not the only one to walk into this type of setting everyday. What is stacked on your desk? How much time are you at home versus in your office or on the phone instead of with your family? If you are like me, the answer to all of that is: TOO MUCH! What is to be done?

I am reminded of one of my seminary professors who told all of us future priests to always remember the order that we receive the mysteries in the Church: baptism, marriage, and then ordination. In reminding all of us of this order he was really reminding us of our priorities. This list of priorities can apply not only to the clergy but to everyone in the Church.

Our first priority in life is represented by our baptism, where we are uniquely linked and united to the Risen Christ. Staying faithful to our baptism means that we take the time to ensure that we are remembering to live up to that baptism and the life in Christ that we are yoked. This includes a number of aspects like: establishing and following through with our personal rule of prayer, including readings from the Scriptures every day; actively participating in the liturgical life of the Church through regular reception of Holy Communion, Confession, and celebrating the feast days and fast days that help to guide our lives. By setting this as our priority we are setting ourselves up to have Christ as the center of our life and the guiding principle for every decision that we make.

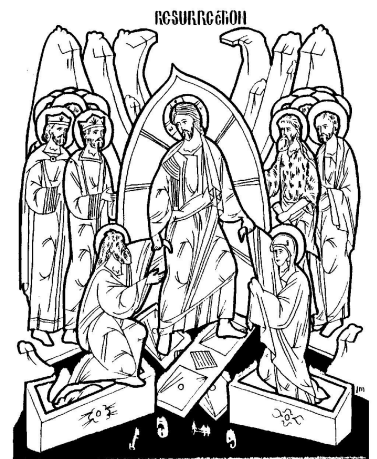
The mystery of marriage shows our second priority to be to our spouse and to our family and all of our relationships. It might be a surprise that this is our second and not our first priority, but what can we expect to offer in the way of guidance and love if we are not ourselves connected to the fount of living water that we receive in our baptism and our regular participation in the mysteries of the Church. In marriage, we are intimately united to another person for the purpose of our salvation; to learn how to love, to be accountable, to be humble, and to genuinely sacrifice. In the narrative of creation, God remarks that it is not good for man to be alone. Even if you are not married we learn and grow through our

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Issue Summary

- *Carefully set your priorities so that you are founding your life in Christ and that all of your decisions in life are based in that foundation.*
- *Aidan's Song is a wonderful book about the day to day life of a parish priest.*
- *The Feast of the Ascension of Christ is an important day in the life of the Church.*



Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life! Our relationship to Him should be our first priority.

The Order of the Mysteries, continued

relationships and interactions with others that are founded in our personal prayer life and struggle with the passions. How we take care of our families is a reflection of our own connection to Christ.

The final mystery on the list is ordination. After being baptized and married in the Church, I was ordained to serve as a priest, this is my “work.” The work that I do as a priest, and the work that anyone does, should not be separated from our personal walk with Christ and our relationships with others. The work that we do should be a reflection of our personal foundation in Christ and our relationships with others. That should be true if you are a priest or if you are a teacher, lawyer, doctor, janitor, astronaut, anything! How we interact with others at work is a direct result of how we stand in our prayer life and in our families.

My desk, and perhaps yours as well, shows a mix-up in these priorities. Too much of the time, my priority is on the “work,” accomplishing something and I focus my energies there. I do not mean to imply that all of us should just quit our jobs. Instead, my encouragement to myself and to all of you is to refocus your priorities. Take the extra time in the morning and the evening to pray and maintain your foundation in Christ; put attendance at the Divine Services as a priority, over and above everything else that you do; focus on your family and your relationships with the people around you; fulfill your job and your work in a manner which reflects your life in Christ and do not let it consume you to the detriment of your life in Christ with your family. This is an extraordinary task, but one that I am confident will revolutionize your work and your relationship to Christ and His Body, the Church.

Archangel Gabriel Reads

Aidan’s Song: A Year in the Life of a Parish Priest by Fr. Aidan Wilcoxson

“In *Aidan’s Song: A Year in the Life of a Parish Priest*, the advice of Fr. Alexander (who advised keeping a journal), has been taken, and the result is a most revealing story, exposing the blessings and struggles of every faithful priest. The Priest Aidan Wilcoxson opens his heart and shares his thoughts as he does what St. Gregory the Great has called the “art of arts,” which is pastoral care.

In a real sense, this book is something like a Far Side cartoon that could well be titled, “What the Priest is Really Thinking.” Fr. Aidan is bold to give us insight into what it means for the priest to love and to admonish those whom he has been given the task of shepherding. When the priest is catechizing, baptizing, serving the divine services, burying the dead, preaching, hearing confessions, and all that is part of his charge through ordination, how does he allow Christ to be seen and heard?

In these pages, a Texas priest, who recognizes that he is an earthen vessel, gives us an answer to both what the priest does and what he thinks. More importantly, we discover what he prays, and this is the foundations stone for every good priest. It is all done with good Texas humor.” - Fr. Chad Hatfield in the Foreword

“*Aidan’s Song* is a delightful diary-style account of the daily life of one of my priests—one who is married with children—serving a growing congregation in one of the burbs bordering a burgeoning metroplex, a congregation which is a real tabouli, a perfect blend of cradle-born and convert Orthodox Christians of just about every imaginable ethnic, racial, cultural and socio-economic background. How Father Aidan juggles his many and varied responsibilities—and juggles them well—while maintaining the exuberance and joy he finds in his many faceted priesthood is what provides the lyrics of *Aidan’s Song*. After a few pages priests will find themselves singing along and lay readers will be humming this really great tune.” - Bishop Basil, DOWMA

Ask Abouna (Father)

What is the Feast of the Ascension of Christ?

The Feast of the Ascension of Christ is celebrated every year 40 days after Great and Holy Pascha. Following His resurrection from the dead, Christ appeared a number of times to His disciples, guiding them and teaching them, and encouraging them in the work that they were to do. After 40 days of this special instruction, Christ took them to a mountain and He ascended into Heaven. He did not just disappear, but He completely, in His full body, ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father. This is an important event because it shows how we will all be raised. Following our own death, we will not merely become a bodiless spirit, but we will actually enter the kingdom of God, along with Christ who paved the way, in our full resurrected body!

Announcements

Special Services. Please see the enclosed calendar to keep up to date with the special services that take place during the month of June.

Camp St. Thekla. For the second half of June and early July, Fr. Philip will be traveling to Camp St. Thekla for his duties as camp director. Please pray for him and the campers traveling from our parish as well. During that time, there will be visiting priests and communion each Sunday.

Donations Needed. One of our ongoing projects is providing fresh underwear and socks for Acadiana Outreach as well as stocking up our own food pantry. Please bring by any of these items for distribution.

Volunteers Needed. Are you looking for an opportunity to help out our Church community? Do you see a need that is not being addressed that you would like to help with? Please let any Parish Council Member or Fr. Philip if you would like to help out with any ongoing projects in the Church community.

Parish Council Update

With the return of the normal schedule of meetings the Parish Council is taking on exciting new projects for the upcoming year:

- 1) Bishop's Visit. Lord willing, Bishop ANTOUN will visit with our community the weekend of November 13. This is the Sunday closest to our parish feast day. Updates will be posted as we draw closer to this event. If you would like to help in the planning phase, please speak with Fr. Philip or Mr. Tony Nassour who is chairing the event.
 - 2) The Parish Council will meet on Thursday, June 9 to talk about the needs for the summer and beginning plans for the fall. If you have any thoughts or new ideas for this coming fall, please do not hesitate to speak with Fr. Philip or any member of the Parish Council.
 - 3) If you are going out of town for the summer, please do not forget about the Church and continue to fill your pledge in support of the Church. Also, use the opportunity if you are away to visit another Church, that is always a good experience.
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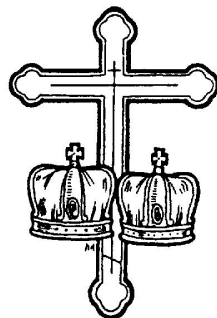
**Please visit our website:
www.stgabrielorthodox.org**

Birthdays

Elias Rashmawi - 6/1
Lisa Nassour-6/16
Lauren Nassour-6/8
Andrea Rizk-6/9
Andre Sfeir - 6/10
Samuel Markowich-6/11
Saida Rashmawi - 6/12
Daniel Osborne - 6/13
Mark Ashkar 6/19
Jock Sheridan – 6/22
Pierre Atwi-6/27

If your birthday is not listed and it should be, please see Fr. Philip and let him know to include you!

Anniversaries
George and Nida Sfeir-
6/12



Teachings of the Church Fathers

“If you are able to be a true disciple, you will receive the fragments of mystical loaves from the hands of the Word Himself and will feed thousands of people.” - Maximus the Confessor

