WHO’S THE BLIND ONE AROUND HERE?

Fourth Sunday of Great Lent

John 9:17-31

Very Rev. Timothy G. Bakakos

There is a story about a man named William, who wanted to get away from the “big-city” everyday pressures of life. So, he decided to go up to his seldom-used cottage in the woods for the weekend. When he arrived there, he hardly recognized the place, for it had been over ten years since the last time he was there. So, he proceeded to look around to re-acquaint himself to the cottage.

In a corner of one of the rooms, he saw something that looked like rope. It was black and coiled into a circle as though very carefully placed there. “I don’t remember having a rope like that,” he thought to himself. The next thing he knew, he felt a spray of liquid on his face and in his eye. “It was as though a red-hot nail had been driven through my right eye,” was how he described it. What he thought was actually a rope was a spitting cobra, one of the most poisonous of snakes. Frantically, he splashed cold water onto his face. The pain was excruciating.

Someone nearby heard his scream. Suddenly, three persons he did not even know came to his rescue. The first came and killed the snake, the second was a nurse. She was unsure how to treat him, but then remembered a sample of an eye medication she had stuck in her bag. “I don’t know anything about this medication,” she said, “but it’s all we have.” About a half an hour later, the third stranger appeared, he was a French doctor. The doctor treated William and instructed him to get some rest. After a few hours, the doctor was gone, and he never told them his name. As you can imagine, it was a long day for William. Would he live? Would he have his eyesight? These were the questions he pondered the rest of that day.

The next morning his eyesight was fully restored and so was his energy. In fact, his eye wasn’t even red. William offered a simple, yet heartfelt prayer to God. “I thanked Him for all of those who had had part in my recovery…”

We who are hearing this story have to ask, had William been the object of an extraordinary series of coincidences? Is that how he was healed? Well, William tells us “he” doesn’t think so. Was it just a coincidence that a doctor and a nurse were in the area that day to offer their help? William firmly believes that God had a part in what took place that day twenty-five years ago.

On the Fourth Sunday of our Great Lenten journey, we are read in Church the story about Jesus and His disciples who are confronted with a man who was born blind. He never saw the face of his mother or father. When the disciples saw the blind man they had a question to ask Jesus. It was the common belief in those days to associate “sin” with “illnesses”. It was believed that if a person committed a sin, some illness or accident would happen to that person. In fact, according to the book of Exodus in the Old Testament, it was believed that the sins of the parents were transferred on to the children. So, the disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, who sinned, this man or his parents, that caused this man to be born blind?”

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And Jesus told His disciples, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned...he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.”

JESUS WANTED HIS DISCIPLES TO SEE THAT THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF BLINDNESS... BLINDNESS OF THE EYES, AND FAR WORSE, BLINDNESS OF THE HEART. Our Gospel Reading on this day tells us that Jesus spit and made some mud which He rubbed on the blind man’s eyes. And then, Jesus told him to go and wash it off in the Pool of Siloam. The blind man did what Jesus told him to do, he made his way through the crowd. And when the man washed his face, for the first time in his life, he was able to see. Perhaps the first thing he saw was his hands, or the water, or the face of Jesus. This man was no longer blind, and now he could see people he had only heard before. He would no longer have to rely on others. In effect, he was given new life because Jesus gave him the gift of sight.

Jesus tells us that there are two kinds of blindness: blindness of the eyes and blindness of the heart. That is the first thing we need to see. THE SECOND IS THAT WHEN WE GO FROM BLIND TO SEEING, SOMETIMES WE FACE UNEXPECTED STRUGGLES. The man in the Gospel story read on the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent had been born blind. He had a whole new world to discover, and he probably never realized the struggles he would face as a result of his new eyesight.

For example, there were the neighbors. You would have thought that his neighbors would have shared in his new found joy. But what the man who was born blind did not realize was that since he received his eyesight, he was forever changed. In fact, some in his neighborhood did not even recognize him. “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” they asked. Some said it was, while others said it wasn’t the same person. The man born blind kept saying, “yes, I am the same man.” He was the same person who was born blind, but with one major difference: he could now see. “But how could this be?” they asked. “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes,” the man told his neighbors, “then He told me to go wash my eyes, which I did, and I received my sight.” The neighbors continued to ask about the man who made the mud, wanting to know who He was and where they could find Him. The man with new sight answered, “I do not know.”

Likewise, the Pharisees questioned the man who was born blind. And again, the man told the story of how he was given his eyesight. The Pharisees asked him, “What do you say about him?” The man with the new sight answered, “I believe He is a prophet.” It’s not surprising that the Pharisees did not believe the man’s story because they too were blind...blind to Who Jesus was.

You would have thought that everyone would have rejoiced seeing such a miracle happen in their own village. Here was a blind man who could now see. This man should have lived happily ever after. But that’s not the way life is, sometimes, is it? It’s not always easy to move from darkness to light. Why? Well, because it means and requires change and change is often painful, particularly for those around us. Ask anyone who has ever made a meaningful change in their life...home, school, marriage, the workplace, Church, friends, etc. It’s not easy. Moving from darkness to light can oftentimes bring problems and sometimes can be a very lonely journey because the people around us live in that darkness called sin!

HOWEVER, IT CAN ALSO BRING A CONFESSION OF FAITH AS WE HEAR IN THE GOSPEL READING THAT IS READ ON THIS FOURTH SUNDAY DURING GREAT LENT. The Pharisees were still not convinced, so they once again called the man born blind in for interrogation. They were beginning to lose their patience. The man who was born blind was once again asked how he could now see. And, once again, he explained what had happened. “Well, we know that this man is a sinner,” the Pharisees stated about Jesus. “I do not know whether he is a sinner,” the man replied. “But one thing I do know, that I was blind, and now I can see.”

The Pharisees responded by claiming that they did not know where Jesus came from. The man born blind found this hard to believe, “You do not know where He comes from, and yet he opened my eyes,” he exclaimed. “Never since the world began, has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.” Defensively and with open...
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hostility, the Pharisees replied, “You were born entirely in sin, and now you dare to try to teach us?” And the Pharisees responded by expelling him from the Temple.

A short time later, Jesus heard what had happened and found the man sitting all by himself. And Jesus asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The man replied, “Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” Then came the moment of truth. Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you now is He.” “Lord,” the man exclaimed, “I believe.” And, like so many of Jesus’ healings, the person is healed, and then comes back to make a confession of faith. This man was given his eyesight, but now sees much more. Now he is able to see through the eyes of faith.

Finally, in Saint John’s Gospel that is read on this Sunday, we are told that the only sin or blindness here is that of unbelief. The people who “claimed” they could see were, in fact, the ones who were blind. They did not recognize Jesus in their midst. But there was a man who was born blind, who now could see through the “eyes of faith” just Who Jesus was, and he confessed Him as Lord and worshipped Him.

Finally, I end with this story. There was a man by the name of Stanley who was twenty-one years old when he had an accident which left him blind. His faith and a sense of humor carried him over and through the rough times. Eventually, Stanley became a dynamic leader in his community. Stanley’s zest for fun became a driving force to bring some levity into the lives of those who were dreary and depressed. He began to plan parties at the local hospital. He rounded up ninety volunteers each month, hired an orchestra and gave the patients the best time of their lives.

Next, Stanley applied his talents at a local children’s home where he planned picnics with ice cream, pop machines, hot dogs, and an orchestra. All they could eat for free! Over one hundred children enjoyed the picnic thanks to Stanley. He also raised over $25,000 to construct a shelter for outside activities. Then, he planned parties and dances for a retirement home. Again, the food was all free.

Stanley would laugh when he would tell about the time he was called by the American Cancer Society. They asked if he would be willing to drive people to the hospital. Obviously, they didn’t know he was blind. But Stanley called around and found someone to drive. For two years he and his friends drove patients to their appointments. After a heart attack, Stanley wasn’t able to do his volunteer work anymore. It was at that time the people at the Cancer Society discovered that their reliable driver was a blind man.

Life had been full for Stanley. He brought laughter and fun into lives that would have known nothing but despair. Not only had patients’ lives been touched, but also all the volunteers that he had ministered to over the years.

After forty years of helping people, Stanley was quoted as saying, “I count my blessings and thank God for allowing me to go blind. It was very difficult at first…but I wouldn’t have lived the life I’ve lived had I not been blind.” Wow, what a testimony! What does this mean? Well, one can be blind in his eyes, but that doesn’t make him blind in his heart.

Stanley knows that there are two kinds of blindness, blindness of the eyes and blindness of the heart. Sometimes when we are brought from darkness to light, there are problems with those around us. Often times however, by the grace of Jesus Christ, coming to the light means making a confession of faith in Christ Who, after all, IS the light of the world.

My dear brothers and sisters, blindness is very real. But just like Stanley, it can be conquered. Blindness of the heart, however, is far more dangerous. It can close our heart to the loving Grace of Jesus Christ. As we continue on in our Great Lenten journey, let us seek to give sight to the blindness in our hearts that each of carry to some degree, and make that change that is necessary as we progress in this most holy season leading up to the glory of Pascha!

+ AMEN
Lent is here and there are many special services. Make plans to participate in these wonderful traditions with your family. There are personal traditions of fasting, service and charitable giving which all serve to strengthen our commitment to Christ and open our hearts to those around us. In addition, we are encouraged to enter into a deeper understanding of the sacramental traditions of the Church.

There are two ways to make Lent an *empty* and *obligatory* experience:

1) Do it because you are told to; and
2) Go through the motions just because we are Orthodox and that is what we do.

In both cases there is an opportunity for God’s Grace to find our heart, but we left him outside.

**How can we do better?**

Use this season to grow in understanding the rich heritage of our faith by paying more attention to fasting, attending the holy services, making a greater effort to set aside time for prayer and confession, taking time to help others in need or hopefully, a healthy combination of all.

May the greatest possession the great tradition of Our Lord Jesus Christ, fill your heart with the Holy Lent.

**You make a living by what you make; You make a life by what you give**

When it comes to Charitable giving, our Community is one of the most generous in the area. Our Sunday School Children collected over 200 gifts, to share with under privileged children of the Austin neighborhood. This amount well exceeded last year’s total. Various individuals of our Community gathered gifts for DCFS children.

The Ladies of the Philoptochos participated in feeding the hungry. Our Community prepared food baskets for families of the students from the Plato Academy and seniors from the Hollywood House.

Finally our Community made a monetary donation to the St. Iakavos Retreat Center and pledged the proceeds of our second tray to the center during the Metropolitan’s Christmas visit.

The spirit of giving was very much apparent at the Assumption Church. *Bravou sas!*
Metropolis Vasilopita
On January 10th, a full table of Assumption Philoptochos members attended this event at St. Andrew Church despite inclement weather. Proceeds went to the St. Basil’s Orphanage.

Apokreatiko Glendi
This fun event was held at the Diplomat West on January 31st. Guests of all ages came dressed in their favorite sports wear. Entertainment was provided by our own Ted Pappas and his combo. Games for the children, dancing for all, and a raffle followed a delicious dinner. Thanks to Evie Maggos and Tina Sarantos for coordinating this event with the Philoptochos. Thank you also to Christine Giannoulis for donating a hand-trimmed Greek ethnic costume jacket and cap for the raffle.

St. Photios Shrine
Philoptochos board members passed a second tray on February 7th for the St. Photios Shrine in St. Augustine, Florida.

Health Care Kits for Haiti
February 21st - 28th, Sunday School children and the Philoptochos ladies will be preparing small kits for the IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) to send for the earthquake victims. In addition, Philoptochos will be sending a donation of $2,000.00 from our treasury.

Loukoumades Sale
On February 28th and March 14th, our ladies will be selling delicious loukoumades after Divine Liturgy. Proceeds will go to the St. Catherine Chapel Restoration Fund.

Palm Sunday Bake Sale
In preparation for Easter, the ladies will be selling traditional Greek sweets and tsoureki (breads) after Divine Liturgy. Watch your Sunday bulletin for more information.

Apokreatiko Glendi “Super Bowl”, January 2010
12-Day Greek-Orthodox Pilgrimage
to the
Holy Land and Constantinople

Led by: Fr. Timothy Bakakos, Fr. John Kalomas,
Fr. Demetrios Treantafeles,
Fr. Apostolos Georgiaventis & Fr. Theodore Poteres

Departure: September 28, 2010

Price: $2,848 per person/double occupancy, from Chicago

The trip includes:
- Round trip airfare, Chicago/Tel-Aviv/Chicago, on Turkish Airlines
- Ten night hotel accommodations in First Class Hotels (3-nights in Istanbul & 7-nights in Israel)
- Breakfast daily, two lunches in Istanbul and all dinners in Israel
- Eight full days of sightseeing by air-conditioned bus
- Services of English speaking guide throughout
- All hotel taxes and service charges
- All transfers

Not included:
- Airport taxes/fuel surcharge ($371) payable to TriStar Tours (subject to change).
- Tips to the guides, drivers and hotel personnel ($110) payable to the Tour Host.
- Dinners in Istanbul and all lunches in Israel

Our sightseeing will include visits of St. Sophia, St. Savior in Chore Church, Topkaki Palace, Blue Mosque, Grand Covered Bazaar; Caesarea, Haifa, Mt. Tabor, Nazareth, Cana, boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, Tabgha, Mt. of Beatitudes, Jordan River, Jericho, Mt. of Temptation, Monastery of St. Gerasimos, Monastery of St. George Hotzevitis, Dead Sea, Qumran, Mt. of Olives, Church of the Ascension, Garden of Gethsemane, Tomb of Virgin Mary, Via Dolorosa, Pool of Bethesda, St. Ann’s Church, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Golgotha, St. Elias Monastery, Bethlehem, Shepherd’s Field, Room of the Last Supper, Western Wall, Temple Mount, Monastery of the Holy Cross, visit with the Patriarchate and much more.

Please make the following reservation(s) for me / us:

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________________________
(as it appears on your passport)

City: ____________________________ State: _____ Zip: ____________ Tel: (______) _________________

Name of roommate, if known: ______________________________________

I am enclosing $______ ($350 per person) as a deposit for my/our tour.
(Full payment is due no later than July 28, 2010)

Please make checks payable to: TriStar Tours/Escrow Account
and mail to: St. Andrew Church (Holy Land Pilgrimage), 5649 Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60660.

For More information please call: Ms. Pat Christopher 1-630-990-2842 or Fr. John Kalomas, 1-773-334-4515
GENERAL CONDITIONS: (Please Read)

AIR TRANSPORTATION: Transportation is in economy class on regular scheduled IATA Airline. Fare is based on a GROUP/APEX as applicable for groups flying together for entire itinerary.

LAND TRANSPORTATION: As specified in each itinerary is by modern air-conditioned buses designed especially for sightseeing. The cost of the land arrangements as outlined in this itinerary is based on a busload ranging for 20-39 tour participants.

HOTELS: First Class (Four Star) Hotels, twin bedded rooms with private facilities. Limited single rooms are available at an extra charge ($698) and they have to be requested and confirmed by TriStar Tours prior to your departure.

MEALS AND SIGHTSEEING: Meals consisting of breakfast daily, two lunches in Istanbul and all dinners in Israel are included. Local transportation by bus or local conveyance as indicated, the services of English speaking Guide and the entrance fees to places visited on the sightseeing tours as indicated in this itinerary.

SERVICE CHARGES, TIPS, TAXES: Service charges composed by facilities abroad and nominal taxes in connection with the tour price are included. Not included are airport/security taxes and fuel surcharge of $371 per person (subject to change), tips to the guides, drivers and hotel personnel, approximately $110, Turkish Visa $26, issued upon arrival in Istanbul (for US citizens only- non-US Citizen, please contact the Turkish Embassy in Washington, DC or the nearest Turkish Consulate to inquire whether you will need a visa), excess baggage, items of a personal nature such as laundry, after dinner coffees, tips for personal favors etc.

DEPOSITS AND FINAL PAYMENTS: There is a total protection on your funds. All moneys are held in an Escrow Account. A deposit of $350 per person is required at the time of booking, plus passenger’s full name as it appears on passport. Payment for the tour must be made to TriStar Tours/Escrow Account by the passenger through the Tour Host, who is the passenger’s agent for collection and remittance of all payments. No other person is authorized to request or collect payments. Final payment is due no later than 60-days prior to departure. If a booking is made within 60-days of departure, full payment is required at the time of booking. If payment is received within 30-days of departure, please include $75 late fee. Returned checks are subject to an administrative fee of $30.

SPECIAL INCENTIVES: A deposit of $350 received by TriStar Tours no later than February 18, 2010 will entitle the passenger to a $75 Super Saver Discount or March 28, 2010 to a $50 Early Bird Discount.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: Requests for a refund must be in writing. Refunds will be issued within 45-days of receipt of written notice. For all cancellations up to 90 days prior to departure, for whatever reason, there will be an administrative fee of $100 per person to cover handling fees. For cancellations 89-60 days prior to departure a $200 per person, 59-31 days prior to departure a $300 per person, and within 30-days of departure full cancellation will apply. (trip cancellation insurance is highly recommended).

ADDITIONAL CHARGES: If you return individually and not with the group, there is a $150 surcharge, plus any applicable air fare differential for the deviation.

INSURANCE: While every effort is made to ensure that baggage is properly handled, TriStar Tours cannot be held responsible for damage, loss or theft of luggage or personal belongings. Baggage insurance and trip cancellation insurance is highly recommended. Contact your Tour Host for additional details. www.accessamerica.com (ACCAM/APPLICATIONNUMBER # BX F014396).

UNUSED SERVICES: No refunds will be granted for missed sightseeing tours, meals, transfers or accommodations not used.

RESPONSIBILITY: The tour operator agrees to arrange for the tour described in this itinerary, which represents the entire agreement between the passengers and his agent, the Tour Host, and TriStar Tours. No changes or deviations are effective unless approved in writing and signed by an authorized officer of the tour operator. Except as stated herein, no person is authorized to cancel, modify, or vary the tour arrangements or make any representation or warranty concerning the tour. Except for the willful negligence of its direct employees, the tour operator assumes no liability or responsibility for any injuries, damage or loss of property, accident, delay, changes in schedules or itinerary, inconveniences, accident or illness, or irregularity or incidental damages occasioned by circumstances beyond the control of the tour operator, or by any person or season whatsoever including, but not limited to default or omission of and by a third party providing services or facilities related to or included in this tour or any part thereof, or in arranging for the same, or the acts or omissions of the Tour Host. The airlines and steamship lines are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time the passengers are not on board planes ships or conveyances. The passengers contracts, in use by the airline and steamship lines or other lines involved, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airline, ship line and the passenger or purchaser of this tour and/or passenger and the tour operator assumes no liability or responsibility in connection therewith.

PLEASE READ THE TOUR CONDITIONS CAREFULLY, SINCE ENROLLMENT IN AND PAYMENT FOR THE TOUR CONSTITUTES YOUR ACCEPTANCE OF THE TOUR CONDITIONS.
Great Lent: A Period of Repentance

By Father Athanasios Pieri

As we enter into the blessed period of Great Lent, I would like to greet you with “KALI METANOIA” (repentance) because it is the period of the repentance. As you read the ecclesiastical calendar, notice we have more services and especially during this period we have the “Presanctified Liturgies.”

The Presanctified Liturgies are vesperal liturgies that the Holy Gifts are already sanctified from the Divine Liturgy of Sunday. During Great Lent the services have a more humble mode than the rest of the year. There are many times families invite the Priest to visit people who have illness. Sometimes we experience from family members of the patients the fear that they are not ready or they do not want any services from a clergy. For that reason I will share this true story that took place many years ago.

Father Theodore had in his village two people who were ready to die. The one was a very hard person who had love of money and the other was a poor widow woman who had eight children. Father Theodore asked Father Deacon Laurentios to come with him. According to custom, in front was the sexton with the candle, on his side the Deacon and the Priest was holding the Holy Chalice. Father Theodore went first to the house of the rich person. At the time the rich person saw the priest and did not want to hear anything about Holy Communion. He made the comment that he was not going to die. Father Theodore tried to calm him down and get into a dialogue with the man. The Deacon asked Father if he had his blessing to go to Mrs. Maria who was a widow and for Father to stay and talk with the patient and see if he could change his mind about receiving the Holy Gifts.

Father Theodore said to the Deacon that he can go with his blessings. The sexton was in front and behind the Deacon with the Holy Chalice. They arrived to the poor house of the widow and upon entering the house he saw around the bed of Mrs. Maria all her children, grandchildren and the relatives; all of whom were crying.

As the Deacon walked a few more steps into the room his spiritual eyes opened and he saw many angels present around this blessed soul who tried to make her feel more comfortable and above her pillow was the Most Holy Virgin Mary. Mrs. Maria at that time was praying to Panagia and said the Salutations.

When the angels saw the Deacon holding the Holy Chalice with the Holy Gifts they fell to the ground and the Most Holy Virgin Mary kissed the Holy Chalice and directed the Deacon to give Holy Communion to Mrs. Maria. As she received the Holy Gifts the angels received her soul and gave the soul to Panagia and together they went to the heavenly kingdom. The room smelled or holy myrrh and the Deacon, with a great joy, went to the house of the rich man.

As the Deacon entered again the house of the rich man he got scared because he saw with his spiritual eyes many demons that were trying to hurt the body of the rich man and the rich man was screaming from the pain. In this vision the Deacon had to give the Holy Chalice to Father Theodore and the Deacon fainted. As Father Theodore was trying to change the mind of the rich man he died without receiving the Holy Gifts and without confessing his sins.

Many times you hear us speak about the sacrament of the Holy Confession and people say that they do not have any sins or they say that they did not kill anybody or they are not ready. On the other hand we see people that suffer inside themselves with all these thoughts - that they think that everyone is against them or they suffer with many illness.

As we enter the Great Lent let us take another step closer to our Church as we are going to prepare for His Glorious Resurrection so will be found worthy with the holy angels to glorify Him.
Η κρίση είναι πνευματική

Στις ημέρες μας όλοι κάνουν λόγο γιά την οικονομική κρίση που παρατηρείται στην Αμερική και την Ευρώπη καθώς επίσης αναφέρονται και στήν πολιτική κρίση που είναι συνέπεια της πρώτης.

Κανείς δεν αντιλέγεται στο ότι υπάρχει οικονομική κρίση που μας τηρεί την ανθρωπότητα, αλλά και τον καθένα μας, αφού επερεάζει τον τρόπο της ζωής και της εργασίας όλων των ανθρώπων. Αυτός είναι ο λόγος για τον οποίο διάφοροι οικονομολόγοι προσπαθούν να βρουν λύσεις γιά την αντιμετώπισή της και αυτό το επιχειρούν με οικονομικούς τρόπους και πολιτικά μέσα.

Όμως θεωρώ ότι η κρίση που περνάμε δεν είναι απλώς οικονομική και πολιτική, αλλά στο βάθος της είναι κρίση πνευματική. Θα μπορούσα να τονίσω πολλές πλευρές του θέματος αυτού και να υποστηρίζω ότι, όταν ο ανθρωπός απομακρύνεται από τον Θεό, τότε υποφέρει και βασανίζεται σε όλα τα επίπεδα της ζωής του, ακόμη και στά οικονομικά. Επίσης, αν δεί κανείς το θέμα θεολογικά, θα διαπιστώσει ότι, όταν ο άνθρωπος χάσει την Χάρι του Θεού, τότε δημιουργούνται ανθρωπολογικά, κοινωνικά, πολιτικά και οικονομικά προβλήματα. Εδώ όμως θα εντοπίσω τις πρακτικές διαστάσεις της πνευματικής κρίσεως.

Ας δούμε το θέμα στον τρόπο με τον οποίο ζή ένας μέσος οικονομικά ανθρώπος. Προσπαθεί να ζήσει όπως θα μπορούσε να πλούσιοι, ο προσωπικός του τρόπος ζωής είναι ευδαιμονικός, διασκέδαζε υπερμέτρος, αν και έχει μια μικρομεσαία επιχείρηση, επιχειρεί να γίνει μεγαλέμπορος, χωρίς να έχει τις απαραίτητες δυνατότητες και χρηματικά, και όλα αυτά πολλές φορές προκαλούν οικονομικά προβλήματα. Όταν στήν συνέχεια προσπαθεί με διανομισμένο να επιλύσει το πρόβλημα, καταρρέει οικονομικά και επαγγελματικά και πιστεύει.

Το ίδιο μπορούμε να το δούμε και στην κοινωνία, αλλά και παγκόσμια. Οι ανθρώποι δεν ζούν με εγκράτεια και σωφροσύνη, δεν έχουν μάθει να περιορίζουν τις αισθήσεις τους και τις επιθυμίες τους, αλλά διάγον με τον ευδαιμονικό τρόπο ζωής, ξεκινούν πολλά για να πολυποίησουν τις αισθήσεις τους και τις επιθυμίες τους, δανειζόντας ακόμη και για νά κάνουν πολυτελείς διακοπές και όλα αυτά έχουν ως συνέπεια την οικονομική, επαγγελματική, οικογενειακή και προσωπική κατάρρευση.

Με αυτήν την έννοια λέμε ότι η κρίση στήν ουσία δεν είναι οικονομική, αλλά κυρίως και πρό παντός πνευματική και αυτή φέρνει και οικονομική και πολιτική κρίση. Αυτό σημαίνει ότι η αντιμετώπισή της κρίσεως δεν γίνεται με οικονομικά μέσα και πολιτικές πράκτισες, αλλά με την αλλαγή τρόπο τζωής, με την επαναφορά του ανθρώπου στην οικονομία, την εγκράτεια, την σωφροσύνη, την αποφυγή της απληστίας και της υπερβολής.

Η άσκηση προβάλλει σήμερα ως επιταγή, ως προσπάθεια να θεραπευθεί τό πάθος της φιλοτιμίας, από το οποίο προέρχονται τα πάθη της φιλοδοξίας, της φιλοδοξίας και της φιλαργυρίας. Ο Ευαγγελιστής Ιωάννης το περιγράφει αυτό με πολλή σαφήνεια: «πάν το εν τό κόσμο, η επιθυμία της σάρκας και η επιθυμία των οφθαλμών και η αλαζονεία του βίου, ουκ έστιν εκ τού πατρός, αλλ' εκ τού κόσμου εστί» (Α’ Ιω. β’, 16).

Επομένως, η κρίση στήν εποχή μας είναι κρίση πνευματική, πού οφείλεται στήν επιθυμία της σάρκας, την επιθυμία των οφθαλμών και την αλαζονεία του βίου. Και η αντιμετώπισή της γίνεται κυρίως με πνευματικά μέσα και μάλιστα από τον Θεό Χριστιανούς πού ζούν στα λεγόμενα χριστιανικά Κράτη. Αν δεν γίνει αυτό, έχουν δίκαιο όσοι
υποστηρίζουν ότι ο δυτικός κόσμος που παρουσιάζεται ως χριστιανικός στήν
πραγματικότητα προδίδει τον Χριστό και τον Χριστιανισμό, αφού δεν έχει καμία σχέση
με τον χριστιανικό τρόπο ζωής που καθορίσε ο Χριστός και έξησαν οι Απόστολοι και οι
Αγιοι διά μέσου των αιώνων.

Το θαύμα της πόρνης

Μια πονεμένη χήρα μάνα βρίσκεται σ’ ένα νοσοκομείο με το δίχρονο παιδάκι της να
χαροπαλέει από λεγκαμία. Ο πόνος της είναι μεγάλος, διότι ήδη έχει χάσει άλλα δύο
παιδάκια, και τώρα έβλεπε να της φεύγει και το τελευταίο, τρίτο βλαστάρι της. Όσο
περνούσαν οι ώρες, τόσο και πιο πολύ μεγάλωνε η απελπισία της.

Ήταν ήδη 2:00 μετά τα μεσάνυκτα, όταν άλως εκτάκτως πέρασε από το θάλαμο ο
διευθυντής του τμήματος, να δει ένα διπλανό κιονοτάκτη "επί πληροφορία" και από
παρόμοια πρόσεξα και το δίχρονο παιδάκι της χαροκαμένης εκείνης μάνας. Το εξέτασε
και της είπε: Λυπάμαι πολύ κυρία μου. Πάρε το παιδάκί σου και φύγε τώρα, για να
πεθάνει τουλάχιστον στην αγκαλιά σου και στο σπίτι σου.

Σαν το άκουσε αυτή η δύστυχη μάνα από το στόμα του γιατρού, με λυγμούς, τύλιξε το
παιδάκι της με μία κουβέρτα, το έσφυξε στην αγκαλιά της και έφυγε τρέχοντας.

Βγήκε στο δρόμο. Παντού επικρατούσε έρημια και ησυχία. Τίποτα δεν κυκλοφορούσε.
Σε μία στροφή του δρόμου, βλέπει ξανά μια μπροστά της μία νεαρή σχετικά γυναίκα,
περίπου 30 ετών. Μόλις είπε τη λεξείωση τη <"δουλειά της">, ήταν πόρνη.

Μόλις έφυγε αυτή η μάνα μπροστά της, την σταμάτησε και της είπε με βία το παιδάκι της
μέσα στην αγκαλιά της. Ταυτόχρονα, έπεσε στα πόδια της και φώναξε: Σώσε το παιδί
μου! Σώσε το παιδί μου!!

Ta έγινε αυτή! Πόρνη ήταν, αμαρτωλή ήταν, βυθισμένη στο βούρκο της ακολούθιας! Τι
να κάνει; Στα πόδια της μία μάνα, στα χέρια της ένα παιδί που έσβησε. Το είδε ότι
έβλεπε. Σήκωσε τα μάτια της στον υφανό και είπε με δυνατή φωνή: Τι προσευχή να
κάνω τώρα Θεά μου; Εγώ είμαι αμαρτωλή, εγώ είμαι πόρνη! Τώρα μόλις <"τελειώσα">
την δουλειά μου. Αν δεν μ’ ακούσες εμένα –και δεν θα με ακούσες, βέβαια, γιατί είμαι
αμαρτωλή- άκουσε αυτή την επομένη μάνα.

Εκείνη τη στιγμή έγινε το θαύμα!!! Κατέβηκε ένα φώς από τον υφανό και το παιδί
άνοιξε τα ματάκια του, φώναξε <"μανούλα μου!"> και άπλωσε τα χέρια του
αγκαλιάζοντάς τη πόρνη, γιατί νόμισε ότι αυτή ήταν η μανούλα του. Πάρ’ το της είπε. Ο
Θεός είχε πάρει το θαύμα Του! Ο Θεός άκουσε τη προσευχή μιας αμαρτωλής, μιας πόρνης και όχι της μάνας! Αυτό
συντάραξε τα λιμάνια "νερά" στη ψυχή της αμαρτωλής γυναίκας, ώστε με συντριβή
και μετάνοια, και με εξαύλωση, οριστικά πλέον άλλαξε το σκότωμα της αμαρτίας με
τη νέα εν Χριστό ζωή. Δόξα στο Ονόμα σου, Κύριε!
“...We commonly refer to the “three T’s” of Stewardship, but one “T” may be missing or perhaps taken for granted: “Truth.” Truth in Stewardship means that we make an honest effort to focus on the call of Christ to commit ourselves to prayer, to work, and to give so that the body of Christ, the Church, may live and meet Her mission. Saint Paul writes: “It is required in stewards, that a person be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). With this thought in mind, we must be willing to meet the challenge to strengthen the sacred work of our Church in America...”

Stewardship is an important part of our Orthodox faith and is part of a total commitment to Christ. Stewardship is part of a Christian lifestyle that is expected by God as a loving way to give back to God for thanks of what He has given us in life. Stewardship in the Orthodox Faith is to live and practice the teachings of Jesus Christ and the actions in our daily lives confirm our beliefs in our faith. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese refers to the three T’s of stewardship being Time, Talents, and Treasures to the glory of God.

The Stewardship Program our Assumption Church consists of four facets:

**Ordinary Stewardship**

Ordinary Stewardship is the regular practice of returning to God a portion of all that God has given us. It involves teaching ourselves how to create a life built upon the notion that all that we have is a gift from God. This includes spreading the teachings of Jesus Christ and the concept that giving regularly of our time, talent, and money to God’s work on this earth is as much a spiritual practice as prayer and worship.

**Time and Talents**

Time and Talents is getting involved with the Church both in your participation in ministries and offering your volunteer time as well as your talents to help further the Church’s mission and ministries.

**Extraordinary Stewardship**

Extraordinary Stewardship involves the special occasions that arise in the life of our Community that call us to give beyond our ordinary habit. They involve increased risk and encourage us to experiment with sacrificial giving in order to help the Community realize critical and important goals and programs. The best example of extraordinary stewardship is our capital campaigns for renovation and outreach.

**Legacy Stewardship**

Legacy Stewardship is the way in which we address the matter of disposing of the accumulations of our blessing from God that we have accumulated through our lifetime. It is the opportunity to provide a planned gift that constitutes both a legacy to generations yet unborn, and presents a final testimony of the belief in our Orthodox faith.
Stewardship List as of December 2009

MR JOHN ALEXANDER
MS PAULINE ALEXANDER
MRS GEORGIA ALEXANDRakis
MR & MRS ORESTIS ALEXOPOULOS
MR & MRS ERNEST ANALITIS
MS CONSTANCE ANDREWS
MRS COLOTTA ANDREWS
MRS GEORGIA APOSTOL
MR & MRS ORESTIS APOSTOL
MR JOHN ANDREWS
NICK & TAMISHA ANGELACOS
MRS NICOLETTA ANOS
MRS GEORGIA ANOS
MR & MRS NICOLETTA ANOS
MRS GEORGIA APOSTOL
MR & MRS LOUIS APOSTOL
MRS FRIEDA ARAVOSIS
MS CAROL ARGYRAKIS
MR & MRS GEORGE ARVANITES
FATHER TIMOTHY G. BAKAKOS
DR & MRS MICHAEL BAKALIS
MRS NOTA BARKOULIES
MR & MRS DEAN BASTOUNES
MRS TESS BAZIOTES
MR & MRS JAMES BECKER
MR BECKER & MRS NISBETT-BECKER
MR & MRS GEORGE ARVANITES
MRS JOHN BELTRAMO
MR & MRS GEORGE BERBAS
MRS MARY BETINIS
MR & MRS DONALD BIANUCCI
BOB & HELEN BIGGERS
MR & MRS JAMES BECKER
MR BECKER & MRS NISBETT-BECKER
MR & MRS GEORGE ARVANITES
MR & MRS DEMITRIOS LIVADITIS BEJANIS
MR & MRS JOHN BELTRAMO
MR & MRS GEORGE BERBAS
MR & MRS MARY BETINIS
MR & MRS DONALD BIANUCCI
MR & MRS JAMES BECKER
MR BECKER & MRS NISBETT-BECKER
MR & MRS GEORGE ARVANITES
MR & MRS JOHN BELTRAMO
MR & MRS GEORGE BERBAS
MR & MRS MARY BETINIS

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Stewardship List as of December 2009

MR ANDREW KANEL MRS CALLIOPE KUTRUBIS MR & MRS GEORGE MILLER
MRS CHRISTINE KANEL MRS GEORGIA KRYIAZES MR & MRS MARTIN MILOSOVIC
MR JAMES A. KANEL MR & MRS CHRIS LAGEOTAKES MR & MRS WILLIAM MILOSOVIC
MR AND MRS NICHOLAS KANEL MR PETER LAGEOTAKES MR & MRS THOMAS MITROPOLOS
MR MILTON KANELLAKES MRS PANAGIOTA LAGGAS MR & MRS TIMOTHY NASH
MR & MRS CHRIS KAPPOS MRS KYRIAKI LAGON MS PHYLLIS NICHOLAS
MR & MRS JAMES KAPPOS MRS DEMETRA LAKERDAS MR VINCENT NICHOLAS
MRS CATHERINE KARABAS MR JAMES LAKERDAS MRS AMELIA NICHOLAS
MRS PATRICIA KARABAS MRS ANASTASIA LAMBESIS MR & MRS DEAN NICHOLS
MRS THALIA KARABIS MR & MS ELIAS LAMBROU MRS MARIE NICHOLS
MISS SOPHIE KARAGIANNIS MISS EVELYN LAMBROU MRS HELEN NICOLOPULOS
MRS DEMETRA KARAHALIOS MR CHRIS LIMPERIS MR GEORGE NISBETT
MR & MRS ANTHONY KARAS MRS HELEN LIMPERIS MR & MRS ROBERT NISBETT
MR LAMBROS KARKAZIS DR JANICE LIMPERIS MR & MRS LARRY PALMISANO
MR & MRS THOMAS KARONIS MISS BETTY LEONTIOS MS SOFIA PALOUMPIS
MR & MRS ANDREW KAROS MR DEAN MAGGOS MRS FRED PANAGOS
MR & MRS ERNEST KARRAS MR & MRS WILLIAM LIMPARIS MISS ANTOINETTE PANOS
MRS MIA KASIMOS MR & MRS CHRISTOS PANOS MR & MRS PETER PANOS
MR ANASTASIOS KETSIOS MR & MRS PETER PANOS MR KOSTAS PANTAZIS
DR NICHOLAS KINNAS MR & MRS JOHN PANTON DR & MRS PETER PANTON
MR GEORGE KATSIKARIS MR & MRS PETER PANOS DR & MRS ROBERT PANTON
MR & MRS GEORGE KOLETTIS MR & MRS DIONYSIOS PAPAFOTOPOULOS
MR & MRS DEMETRIOS KOLIATIS DR & MRS NICK PAPAFOTOPOULOS
MS FAY KOLLIAS MRS MARIA PAPAFOTOPOULOS DR & MRS STEVEN PAPAGIANNOPOULOS
MRS ALICE KOPAN MRS MARY CLARA LIVADITIS MRS ANITA PAPANEK
MR & MRS LOUIS KAZAGLIS MRS MARY CLARA LIVADITIS MRS GEORGIA PAPPADIMITRIOU
MRS CONNIE KEenan MR & MRS GEORGE MILLER
MR ANASTASIOS KETSIOS MR & MRS JAMES LOFTUS MR & MRS NICHOLAS
DR NICHOLAS KINNAS MR & MRS ILIAS LOULOUSIS MR & MRS DIONYSIOS PAPAFOTOPOULOS
MR & MRS SPYROS KOKOLIS MR & MRS WILLIAM LUCAS MRS MARY NICK PAPAFOTOPOULOS
MR & MRS GEORGE KOLETTIS MR & MRS NICK PAPAFOTOPOULOS MRS MARIA PAPAGIANNOPOULOS
MR & MRS DEMETRIOS KOLIATIS DR & MRS K Cách PAPAGIANNOPOULOS
MISS SOPHIE KOUTSELAS MR & MRS JOHN PANTON DR & MRS PETER PANTON
MRS GEORGIA KOUVELIS MR & MRS THEODORE PAPAGIANNOPOULOS DR & MRS ROBERT PANTON
MR & MRS THOMAS KOSTAS MISS ANASTASIA PAPPAS
MR & MRS NICHOLAS KANELLAKES MISS KATERINA PAPPAS
MR DINO KOTSIOVETIS MR GEORGE PAPPAS
MRS KAREN KOTSIOVETIS MR & MRS MARTHA PAPPAS
MS KATHERINE KOTT MR & MRS THEODORE PAPPAS
MR & MRS WALTER KOTT MR & MRS NICHOLAS MANOS MISS VIVIAN PAPPAS
MR & MRS GUST KOUIMELIS DR & MRS ANGELO PAPPADIMITRIOU
MRS HELEN PAPAGEORGE KOUIMELIS MR & MRS DIONYSIOS PAPAFOTOPOULOS
MR & MS DEMETRIOS KOULOURIS MR & MRS GEORGE PARR-PATERAKIS
MR & MRS TOM KOULOURIS MR & MRS KATERINA PATAROS
MR ANGELO KOURETAS MR & MRS ANDREW PENESIS
MISS SOPHIE KOUTSELAS MR & MRS DIMITRA PEPPAS
MRS GEORGIA KOUVELIS MR & MRS NICHOLAS PEPPAS
MR & MRS PETER KOUVELIS MRS MARY PETENES
MR & MRS MATTHEW KOZIL MR & MRS ANGELA PARR-PATERAKIS
MR & MRS BRIAN KRAPEC DR & MRS KATERINA PATAROS
MS EUGENIA KRIBALES MR & MRS ROBERT NISBETT
MRS HELEN KRILLIES MISS KATERINA PATAROS
MRS BESSIE KUNDANIS MR & MRS ELEANOR PATTINOS

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Stewardship List as of December 2009

MISS NANCY PILAFAS
MRS TOULA PITIS
MRS HELEN PLEVORITS
DR & MRS CONSTANTINE POLITIS
DR & MRS LUCAS POLITIS
MS ESTHER POLYDOROS
MRS HELEN PONTIKES
MRS ELAINE PONTIKIS
MR & MRS GUS PONTIKIS
MRS BEATRICE POTAMIANOS
DR & MRS GAREY POTAMIANOS
MR & MRS ANTHONY POTOGLOU
MS ANNA POULOS
MRS NIKI POULOS
PETER & JOY POULOS
MR & MRS THOMAS POULOS
MRS THERESA PRESELOS
MRS MARY PREVAS
MR GEORGE PREVOLOS
MR & MRS ALEXANDER PSARRAS
MS ANNA POULOS
MRS HELEN PSICHOGIOS
MS PAMELA PSYHOGIOS
MS ALISSA PULLOS
MR MICHAEL PULLOS
DR & MRS SPENCER PULLOS
MS KEKE RAFTELIAS
MS MARY RAFTELIAS
MR & MRS ALEXANDER RAFTOPOULOS
MS ROULA RAFTOPOULOS
MS ANN RANTIS
MR & MRS WILLIAM RANTIS
MRS HELEN RAPTIS
MR & MRS JAMES REGAS
MR PETER REGAS
MRS SOPHIE RENDAS
MR & MRS RAYMOND RIHA, JR
MR AND MRS RAYMOND RIHA, SR
MR & MRS EDWARD RIZER
MR & MRS JEFFREY ROBERTS
MR AND MRS PETER ROMAS
MRS SOPHIE ROMAS
MRS IRENE ROMBAKIS
MR & MS JOHN ROMBAKIS
DR & MRS WILLIAM ROUMAN
MRS KATHERINE ROUPAS
MR & MRS KEN RUBENSTEIN
MR JOHN SANDORS
MR & MRS DEAN SARANTOS
MR & MRS HARRY SAUNDERS
MS MARIA SCHMIDT
MR & MRS NICK SCOURLETOS

MS TESSIE SELIMOS
MR. AND MRS. CONSTANTINOS SIATOS
MR & MRS ANTHONY SIRAUT
MR & MRS KOSTA SKOULIKARIS
MRS POPE SKOULIKARIS
MR & MRS KOSTAS SKOULIKAS
MS IRENE SKUTERIS
MR & MRS SPIRO SKUTERIS
MR & MRS GEORGE SOULELES
MRS ATHENA SOULIDES
MR & MRS HARRY SOUMAKIS
MR & MRS NICK SPYRIDAKOS
DR BASIL SPYROPOULOS
MR & MRS PETER SPYROPOULOS
DR STAVROULA SPYROPOULOS
MRS LILLIAN STAMAS
MRS CATHERINE STAVROPOULOS
MRS GEORGIA STAVROPOULOS
MISS JOANN STAVROPOULOS
MR & MRS PAUL STAVROPOULOS
MR & MRS JOHN STEC
MARGARET & BRIAN STEINHAGEN
MRS ROSE MARIE STEWART
MR & MRS DIMITRIOS STRAVOLEMAKOS
MR & MRS MATHIEU SUSSMAN
MR & MRS PETER SUTTERLIN
MRS MARY T SZCESNIAK
MRS SEVASTI TAGARIS
DR CHRISTOS TAKOUDIS & DR MARIA
MS ANASTASIA TEROVOLAS
MR & MRS ANGELO TEROVOLAS
MISS CRYSTELLA TEROVOLAS
DR & DR NICK THOMPPOULOS
MS ELENI TOLE
MR & MRS GENTJAN (YANNI) TOLE
MR & MRS ANGELO TOLIOS
MR & MRS CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA
MRS HELEN TOULIOS
MR & MRS PETER TROGOS
MR JOHN TRAHANAS
MR & MRS GUS TRAKAS
MR & MRS GEORGE TRAMBAS
MRS BESSIE TRIHAS
MR & MRS ANGELO TSAGALIS
MR & MRS VASILIOS TSAGANOS
MR & MRS NICK TSAGARIS
MR & MRS PETE TSAGARIS
MR & MS JOHN G. TSAGARIS
MR & MRS JAMES TSIOLIS
MR & MRS NICK TSOLIS
MR & MRS DIMITRIOS TSIRIBAS

MRS KATHERINE TZOUUMIS
MRS DENA VAGIAS
MRS ARITA VALESSARES
MRS MARY VARVEN
MR GUST VASILIADES
MR JASON VASILIADES
MR & MRS JOHN VASILIADES
PAULINE VAVASIS
MR & MRS ROBERT VELASQUEZ
MR & MRS THOMAS VELIS
MR & MRS PETER VERROS
MRS STAMATA VERVENIOTIS
MR & MRS ALEX VICKAS
MRS ALAYNA VLAGOS & MR PETER
MR & MRS GEORGE VLAHOS
MR AND MRS JOHN VLAHOS
MRS MARIAN THE VLATHOS
MR & MRS PETER VLAHOS
DR & MRS PERRY VOORNAS
MR & MRS PETER VOUGARAKIS
MR & MRS ROMAN VOUGARAKIS
MR BILL VRANAS
MR JASON VRANAS
MRS PEGGY VRANAS
MS FRANCES WAHBY
MR ANDREW WALDECK
MS ALKISTIS WONAIS
MR & MRS JACK WOODS
MS MARY ELLEN WOODS
MR & MS GUS XINOS
MRS MARIA XINOS
MR & MRS CONSTANTINE YANNIAS
MS DONNA YANNIAS
MR & MRS STEVE YANNIASS
MS TRACY YANNIAS
MRS FRANCES ZACK

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**WEDDINGS**

Eleni Tsiapas and Thomas F. Mollsen  
Sponsor: Effie Theodosopouloos

**40 DAY BLESSINGS**

Daughter of Demetrios and Joanne Skoufis  
Daughter of Harry and Eva Soumkis

**FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE LORD**

+ Georgia Mitchell  
+ Catherine K. Kanelos  
+ Connie (Constandina) Keenan  
+ Harriet (Hareklea) Volakakis

**MEMORIALS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 40 Days | Ethel Gianoulis  
        | Philip Giannopoulos  
        | Christine Andrews  
        | Sophia Banakis  
        | Amalia (Emily) Cotsirilos  
        | Olga Mehalos Golden  
        | Clare (Kalliope) Crambes  
        | Catherine K. Kanelos |
| 2 Years | Olga Sarantos |
| 3 Years | Michael Gekas  
        | Nicholaos Lavaditis |
| 5 Years | Vasilios Laggas |
| 10 Years | Antonia Karras  
        | Edward Limperis  
        | Efstratios Koulouris |
| 1 Year  | Aggilike Nicholas |
| 14 Years | Betty (Vasiliki) Kokenes  
        | Gus (Constantinos) Kokenes |
| 32 Years | George Dades |

**BAPTISMS**

Daughter of Alexandra and Jeff Bartley,  
taking the name Elizabeth  
Godparents: George Adinamis and Alissa Pullos

Son of Syvia and Christos Gochis,  
taking the name Peter (Panagiotis)  
Godparents – Tom and Gina Les

Submit articles to the Church Office or to Tina Sarantos at t.sarantos@sbcglobal.net or (708) 660-0154
First Issue, 2010 Lent

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**Important Upcoming Dates:**

- **Sunday, March 13th 2010**
  Annual Lenten Youth Retreat
  9:30 am Plato Hall

- **Sunday, April 4th 2010**
  Holy Pascha

- **Sunday, May 16th 2010**
  Awards Sunday /
  Last Day of Sunday Church School

- **Sunday, June 6th 2010**
  Annual Outdoor Divine Liturgy
  *in Elmhurst, Illinois*