

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Thirty First Sunday after Pentecost

January 18, 2015

**Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;
Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris,
Cantors**

Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 – 8.

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ We are saddened to share with our faithful the death of our good parishioner, +Ann Sabo recently. Today at 9: 15 AM, we celebrate a Memorial Service for the repose of her soul praying the gracious Lord will comfort her survivors and friends and create for her a blessed repose and Eternal Memory! Please pray for the repose of her soul.

+++ Sincere thanks are offered to each soul who secured orders for yesterday's Pirohi Sale, and likewise came and made the product for distribution. May the Lord continue to bless you abundantly!

+++ Every Monday, we have prayerful devotions before the Myrrh bearing icon at 6:00 PM. Everyone is invited to be present in praise. The Birthgiver invites us to manifest our faith in response to her first shown love, to unite our prayers with hers for the salvation of our souls. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Father George, Anna, Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, Nicholas, Pani Anna Marie and Andrea.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$381.00; Candles, \$17.00; Food Coupons, \$320.00; Holyday, \$35.00; Parish Dues, \$75.00; Energy Offering, \$20.00; Nativity of our Lord, \$20.00, for a total of \$848.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls!

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Maria Idronmenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Bob Gorbich, Marilyn Korba and Pani Buletza.

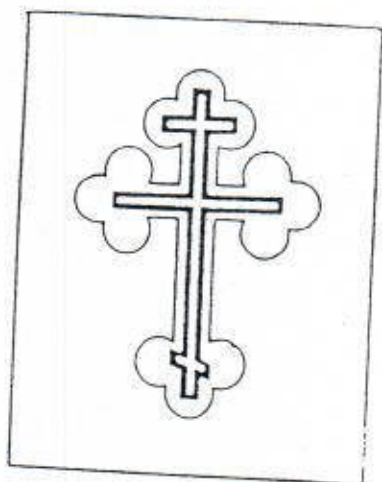
+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1819.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5750 on this project to date!

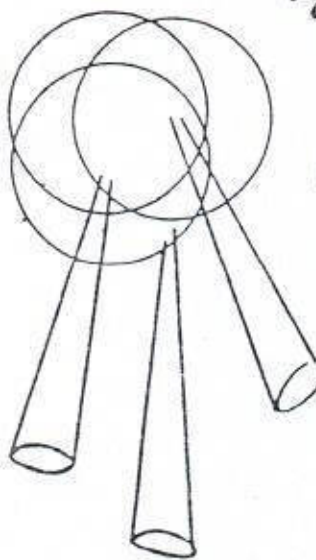
+++ The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.

+++ We invite all pray the Lord our God grants us the grace of enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.

**+++ HELPING
ROMAN RITE CATHOLICS
BECOME AWARE OF
AND APPRECIATE THE
ORTHODOX CHURCH +++**



Father Robert E Lucas



"There is a hunger
in the land, not a
hunger for bread,
and not a thirst for
water, but for the
sound of the words
of GOD."

Amos 8: 11

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Orthodox believers have always had a special intimate relationship with Scripture and God's revelation to mankind. After all, it was their Eastern ancestors in faith who by God's inspiration wrote and lived it. When Roman-rite Catholics and other Christians in our Western society seek to trace their religious and spiritual roots, in all honesty, they must begin by remembering and recalling that theirs is a double heritage. In a deep sense, they must look in two different directions. For while their cultural and artistic tradition is distinctly Western, the origins of their faith, indeed, of all Christianity itself are unquestionably Orthodox and Eastern!

Faithful of the Roman-rite Catholic Church take justifiable pride in their dazzling legacy of art, architecture, liturgy, music, and church administration. But the Eternal Father called His Chosen People to be His witnesses to the entire world out of the East. In the West, the sacred customs and traditions that have passed from generation to generation are cherished and loved as well as perpetuated. Yet, unfortunately, most Roman-rite Catholic faithful do not even know that their practices and faith commitment tell only a portion of our common Christian faith history. The most elementary and very basic theology and philosophy that permeates the whole of the Western Christian fabric of faith is essentially Eastern and Orthodox. The crux and epitome of our common faith was explained and established in the Orthodox East. What has followed and been achieved in the West has been built upon the foundation laid securely in the East.

To come to a discovery of our common faith, we must look to the geographic and spiritual East, to the lands where it all began, where it was nurtured by the mysterious and marvelous hand of God, and where it came to full bloom and fruition by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Son of God entered the sinful history of mankind as a Palestinian Jew and established a new way of life upon the richest storehouse of theological and philosophical wisdom in the ancient world. In the hymnology of the Orthodox Church, He is described and named,

The Orient from on high...
Nativity of our Lord Ritual.

When reviewing the past as well as the multi-cultural challenges of today, Roman-rite Catholics often overlook Orthodoxy and its continuing rich treasure contribution to their Church. In this context, Orthodoxy, as the most ancient special tradition of Christianity, is a way of living that is integral to the salvation of mankind. Its daily life and approach to our Creator is maintained

which gives new meaning and insight as well as spiritual dimension to all of Western Christianity throughout the world.

Our Blessed Lord lived, taught and endured His salutary death on the Cross in the East. The scene of His glorious Resurrection, Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit took place in the confines of the geographical East. His disciples and apostles were citizens of Eastern culture and nationality. As a matter of fact, all the revelation of God to His Chosen People in both the Old and New Covenants, took place in the East. The Church of Christ began there and only gradually spread, nourished by the blood of the Eastern martyrs and saints, to all corners of the then-known world. We were first called by the holy descriptive designation of *Christian* in the Eastern community of Antioch.

At a time when missionaries were beginning to fan out in the expansive and Western Roman Empire, saints and mystics of the Orthodox world had already developed a deep and enduring spirituality and were worshipping God through the majestic Divine Liturgy still witnessed and participated in today in every Orthodox parish. A developed theology and readily understandable and acceptable moral code was already in place in Orthodoxy when Western tribes in their animal skin clothing began to show an interest in Christ.

The sense of an all-powerful, unknowable, eternal and transcendent God of Whom Orthodox believers were already aware at the very inception of the Church of Christ, on the morning of Pentecost, is a legacy that has been bequeathed to the modern day Christian in the West.

The compelling participation of the entire Church in its worship of the triune God, the encounter of earth with heaven, the assimilation of the soul of the faithful believer with the uncreated energies of the Holy Trinity still flourish today in the Orthodox Church as they did when first revealed by the Holy Spirit. All Western Christians are fortunate heirs of original Orthodoxy. Our God is an Eastern Jew! We are the Chosen People of Christ. The Apostles were His countrymen! From the East, this primitive Church enlivened and enlightened the entire world. Orthodox Christianity founded, formed and nurtured the longest civilization in human recorded history: the Byzantine Empire. This produced the inspiration for the dual-headed eagle as its symbolism.

AN ORTHODOX NATION

Byzantine democracy was not of a secular nature, but rather a theocracy because the Gospel of Christ was essentially adopted as the foundation of the state constitution and its guiding force,

not as a political conviction, but because the city of God on earth was perceived and believed to be organized along such lines. Citizens of the temporal kingdom were above all, also citizens of the eternal kingdom of God, the Orthodox Church and they wanted their state to be a replica, as much as it was humanly possible to duplicate on earth, of the blessed eternity of heaven.

Faith and daily life were intimately intertwined. To bless, to praise, to glorify God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit became the fundamental purpose of the existence of the Orthodox Church and its auxiliary, the Byzantine state. The objectives of both were united. State monuments were erected to Christ the Emperor and Almighty Ruler, and the human emperor was simply looked upon as the servant of God and His human personification in service to all. From its very inception, upon the termination of the troublesome and passing persecutions, the Orthodox Church realized it is not by lofty temporal principal alone that we save our souls, but by faithful, continuing struggling adherence to Christ in a faith commitment lived daily. All its activities, its art, its sculpture, its theology, its philosophy of life were interrelated and interwoven together to make a true expression of the fundamental truth of God's enduring governance of His creation. The life that is begun physically here on earth, lived in its fullness in the creation of this world, would be transformed into a spiritual dimension in the life of Orthodoxy so that it could be continued in heaven for all time without interruption. Orthodoxy influenced and fashioned a way of life and a way of worship that is a natural visible expression of the inner life of the Holy Trinity.

The dual-headed eagle symbolized the union of state and Church for the noble purpose of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It showed it is possible to have a political state permeated with the grace of the Holy Spirit whose purposes exceeded those of other mere political and temporal entities, and pursued not only earthly peace and tranquility, but true and lasting peace in the hearts of its subjects who were first subjected to the grace of Christ before they were subjected to the laws of the state.

In the Orthodox East, at the first seven Ecumenical Councils, fundamental doctrine was explained and explored and expounded and established. Initial Christian missions were planted in the East. This wealth of theology, spirituality, and liturgical expression and tradition as been preserved by Orthodoxy and is the common patrimony of the Western Christian as well. Roman-rite Catholics should seek to know and understand the Orthodox Church better and follow not only the example of history itself, but the mind and heart of fundamental Christianity made known to us.

It is true, there are some in the West who exhort their faithful to recognize the spiritual wealth of faith that has been bequeathed them by the Orthodox East in its spiritual genius and to seriously study and prize the legacy that is rightfully theirs. The very name *Catholic* was coined by Orthodoxy as the only suitable expression of the fullness and wholeness of Christ's legacy of salvation in the world.

PROFOUND PATRIMONY

Orthodox believers, living as they do in the Western world, have been blessed because of their awareness of their own and the values of the rich patrimony of the Western Church. We are familiar with the Roman-rite Catholic Church because of its vast numbers and because we live in a fundamentally western culture in which it is dominant. But it is vitally important for Western Christians to be equally familiar with and cognizant of our ancient heritage which we lovingly share in common with them.

The very book or really, the very collection of books which is an expression and history of our revelation from God, the Bible, was canonized by God's Holy Spirit in the Eastern Councils. The master of its interpretation and expositive study verse by verse is the universally recognized, St. John Chrysostom, Patriarch of the illustrious see of Constantinople in the fourth century. It was he who was also inspired to compile the Eucharistic Liturgy which Orthodox believers have found meets the spiritual needs of the faithful unchanged for some 1500 years! The spiritual legacy preserved in the Orthodox Church humbly exalts God and witnesses to the enduring presence of the Holy Spirit in its midst. Our common understanding of the two universal and all encompassing life styles for everyone - marriage and virginity - has its life source in the inspired souls and pens of the Eastern Fathers.

It is most important for us who confess a belief in the Saviour and His Resurrection to celebrate this glorious feast, but is equally vital to recall it was the Orthodox bishops at the first Ecumenical Council that gave us the formula for establishing and fixing its date. It is vital to be knowledgeable with the theological exposition of St. Thomas Aquinas, but equally as important to be aware he established his system of study upon that of the Orthodox inspired writer, and theologian, St. John Damascene. It shows us insightful to know monasticism founded in the West preserved Western culture during the Dark Ages under the rule of St. Benedict, but it is just as well to come to the realization he based the format of his rule upon that of the Founder of Monasticism, another great Orthodox Eastern Bishop, St. Basil the Great, who is also remembered and honored for his classic treatise on the Holy Spirit, unsurpassed for its insightfulness and depth. All that we know and understand about Marian theology was

formulated and enunciated at the Eastern Councils. Her very name and description and our common veneration of the Mother of God has its source in the Fathers of the Orthodox Church and the inspired vision they left behind. As a matter of fact, it has been affirmed that not one new original piece of inspired theological or philosophical valid thinking has emerged in the West that is acceptable to the judgment of Christians worldwide.

The classic "On the Incarnation" by St. Athanasius and "On Christian Virginity" come to us from the inspired hands of this deacon and respectively, married bishop of the Orthodox Church, St. Gregory Nyssa. What the initial Seven Ecumenical Councils passed on to us in their spiritual legacy of church governance, daily living and jurisprudence, has not been altered over the centuries except by heretics and those who have made themselves unworthy of God's grace. The very exposition of the Creed which we commonly profess has its source in the Orthodox East and even when controversies arose regarding its wording, a silver plaque containing the original version was erected in the Roman basilica of St. Peter to safeguard it against change and innovation, thus witnessing to ancient Orthodox inspired insight. These Ecumenical Councils, attended by an overwhelming preponderance of Eastern prelates passed on to us the Church with its prescriptions on fasting, rich celebration of feast days and worship cycles, all its depth of appeal to the world because of its fundamental fidelity to the truth of Christ. The original image of the Church as we understand and perceive it today was established in the Christian East. Orthodoxy gave the Church its personality, endowed it with its values and perceptions as well as hopes and aspirations after the coming and descent of the Holy Spirit.

RICH LEGACY

The various local Orthodox Churches are particular bodies of the Universal Church of Christ under the leadership of their local bishops, archbishops and Patriarchs, all gathered together as first among equals by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. They all share the same identical profession of faith, the celebration of the self-same sacramental Mysteries, the same hierarchical unity. Only the patterns and styles of living as well as expressing the same Orthodox faith differ somewhat, colored by the local and national identity of each Church, to which Orthodoxy wholeheartedly assents and offers encouragement. Orthodoxy has its own approach to theology, spirituality, liturgical practice and ecclesiastical law which are viewed as an integrated whole and totally interdependent. We are special and particular communities of faith with an ancient and ever new spiritual and cultural tradition of practicing and living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The several different branches and national Churches of the same universal Orthodox Church evolved historically and culturally from several ancient centers of Christianity in the East where diversity of expression of the gospel of Christ was esteemed and respected. This spiritual mentality and understanding of diversity did not reach the West until some two thousand years later with the last so-called Vatican Council which recognized the internal manifest wisdom expressed by various Eastern Churches which have their own rightful freedom in all that is bound up with their history and their own spiritual genius and liturgical character, preserving always the truth and the integrity of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. The Church of Christ is neither Latin nor Greek, not Slavic, but Christian so there is no discrimination leveled between her children because all possess equal status in the sight of our God.

It was a valuable lesson learned through much agitation and pain at the last Roman Council when so many liturgical reforms were proposed. Among the important points of discussion were: the use of the vernacular, Communion under both species, concelebration, and a married diaconate, all of which have been important parts of the tradition of Orthodoxy down through the years. Ideas which seemed to many of the Council participants new and revolutionary in the West, turned out to be *old* and *traditional* in the cradle of Christianity. Orthodox usage was recalled and quoted so frequently that bishops soon realized that the Christian East was not as decadent as some would have liked to make her. In the early Church there was a great inter-communication and contribution of Christian-Hellenistic culture in times when communication and travel were difficult and slow compared to our present standards. As a result, there grew out of this manifestation of faith for Roman-rite faithful a new appreciation and deeper understanding of the riches of Orthodoxy and what it has preserved and valued from the early apostolic Church to practice and live relevantly today.

The United States particularly is a young nation in which the heritage of immigrating peoples may mutually enrich one another, discarding outworn animosities and antipathies which rest like an incubus on life in the "old country," especially if that country happened just recently to be behind the Iron Curtain. In the jurisdiction of the Roman Church we have former Orthodox groups who have been absorbed historically from time to time because of political pressures with the Catholic Church which they could not resist. Over the years they were so drastically latinized that their original purpose and expression could hardly be recognized. Today, however, because of the interworking of Orthodoxy with Roman authorities, a complete restoration of their rich and invaluable liturgical rites have been restored so that they, at least in part begin once again to give witness to the depth and integrity of Orthodoxy in its fullness in this alien surrounding.

The entire variety of poetic prose and hymnology which forms the literary liturgical heritage of Orthodoxy cannot be underestimated. St. John Damascene and St. Ephrem the Syrian are typical of the Orthodox poet theologians who have embellished the divine office of the Church of Christ and can also be appreciated and used in the West as well.

The whole mission psychology of the Orthodox Church, accentuating the actual participation of the congregation in the vernacular worship of God adapts itself not only well to Roman rite Catholic faithful, but to the Protestant mentality as well. Both should love to sing congregationally the hymns together. They should be attracted by Communion under both species which has been preserved in Orthodoxy since Pentecost. A married clergy would also be more acceptable to segments of Western believers. The magnificent ceremonies, symbolism and pageantry of various Orthodox celebrations would surely appeal to the Black American experience in the United States.

BUILT ON ORTHODOX FOUNDATION

A great liturgist of the Roman rite Catholic Church, Ildefonso Cardinal Shuster, formerly Archbishop of Milan, wrote in his *Sacramentary* the following comment: "Rome has borrowed from the East, the region whence we receive light, whether in the order of nature or that of grace. By this wise eclecticism, Rome has given the world a further proof of her truly cosmopolitan character, which enabling her to expand beyond her seven hills, has caused her to adopt all that is good and beautiful wherever she finds it, without needing to shut herself up within a barrier of narrow and repellent nationalism as so many lesser Churches have done" (Vol. 1, Chapter 1, pp 13, 14).

Many of the early Popes came from the Christian East and many of the papal representatives sent into the East returned to Rome imbued with Orthodox culture and influence. This would indicate that a certain Orthodox and Eastern influence would be normal. Unfortunately today, with the division of the Churches, there is not a completing Eastern influence being brought to bear on the Roman-rite Church, nor for that matter is there a completing valid Western influence making itself known in Orthodoxy except from the pagan and non-believing culture in which we are immersed.

In the eight century, the influx into Europe of many Orthodox monks fleeing the iconoclastic persecutions illustrated this influence. Returning crusaders during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries reinforced it when they brought back with them relics, icons, ecclesiastical treasures and customs stolen from the Orthodox East, which includes the much publicized Burial Shroud

of Christ known as the Shroud of Turin today. The entire contents of the museum and spiritual treasure of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice is filled with items illegally appropriated from Orthodoxy during the Crusades.

Rome does like to boast she has not forgotten her very source of existence and life in the East from whence she received her faith in Christ. The solemn chanting of the Nicene Creed in Greek from time to time at ceremonies in St. Peter's Basilica attests to these ancient roots.

St. Evaristus, a Palestinian born in Bethlehem, reigned as Bishop of Rome from 97 AD to 105 AD. Noted for his great administrative ability, it was he who first divided Rome into parishes and organized the clergy of the city. He ordered that all bishops, when preaching, should be accompanied by an entourage of seven deacons. A later Greek Pope, St. Telesphorus (26 - 136 AD) introduced into Roman liturgical life the Divine Liturgy celebrated at Midnight on the feast of the Nativity of our Lord and inserted the "Glory to God in the highest" into the Roman mass, the substance of which is found in the Orthodox office of Little Compline. Pope Theodore I (642 - 649 AD), a Palestinian born and reared in Jerusalem, placed the feast of the Dormition of the Birthgiver of God on the Roman calendar even though later it was changed to Assumption, recalling no doubt the great devotion to this ancient tradition in Jerusalem from Apostolic times among Orthodox faithful there.

However, it was really Pope Sergius I (687 - 701 AD) a Sicilian of Antiochean heritage who really characterized his reign by borrowing lavishly from the East. He solemnized the celebration of the four principal feasts of the Birthgiver of God: the Nativity, the Entrance into the Temple, the Annunciation and the Dormition and he introduced into the Latin liturgy the prayer, *Agnus Dei* much the same as it was utilized in the Orthodox Liturgies. This same Pope introduced the practice of torchlight processions on the solemnities of the Mother of God, a practice that originated at Antioch and was brought to Constantinople by St. John Chrysostom. The Feast of the Entrance of our Lord into the Temple with the lighting of candles was borrowed from Jerusalem and became a huge celebration in Rome. The Church of St. Sylvester in Rome has a list of anniversaries of the saints whose relics Pope Paul I (757 - 767 AD), enshrined there with the enumeration being made according to the Orthodox calendar martyrology.

The ancient centers were the sees of the Pentarchy: Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Rome. The Roman or Western rite was the last to develop fully. It drew upon the life and example of the other, older Churches of the East. Even in the West, however, for over three hundred years, the liturgical language in the beginning was that of the East, Greek,

which we still see a brief remnant of when, even in the liturgical changes to the vernacular now abundant everywhere, we often see a reversion to *Kyrie eleison*.

Of course, circumstances of history caused the Roman see to overshadow the other Eastern jurisdictions, particularly the unfortunate Moslem onslaught which almost destroyed Orthodoxy when it overran the Middle East. Today the Eastern patriarchates are not so much territorial jurisdictions or geographical divisions as they formerly were, primarily due to delicate and difficult political considerations. They certainly all continue to pursue Orthodox lifestyles based on the primitive, but authentic tradition of Christ. Consequently, today Orthodox Christians are found in the diaspora on all continents, although they originated in the ancient world of the near east and the Mediterranean basin as well as the areas that were privileged to be touched by their missionary zeal down through the centuries such as the eastern sections of Europe and all of Russia itself. In the United States, there are some five million Orthodox Christians who prize their dignity and grasp intimately the meaning of their vocation in the Western world.

Orthodoxy in the United States has developed into a valuable presence and distinctive witness for over two centuries already. Today, individuals from innumerable ethnic and cultural backgrounds form its membership.

The treasures of Orthodoxy do not belong any longer to any particular culture or people. Membership in the Orthodox Church is open to all who want an authentic apostolic early formulation of Christianity in this modern day.

Orthodox believers view the present as an exciting opportunity and challenge. Living in a time when new parishes are extensively being established in areas where none existed before, where man, worn out by technology, obsesses with his own imagined and seeming importance, is beginning to investigate the unchangeableness and eternal wisdom embodied in Orthodox Christianity. Those not fulfilled and satisfied by the severe practicality of Western Christianity, among them, many former evangelicals, turn to the Orthodox Church to seek life's profoundest answers. Those who belonged to the Roman-rite Catholic Church and have been disenchanted with the loss of the transcendence God in their midst, the bankruptcy of spirituality and a reversion to individual and personal reformist movements, are finding a response to the truest needs of their soul in Orthodoxy.

All are invited to participate in the deep spirituality of the Orthodox Divine Liturgy, to experience the genuine presence of our Lord in the Orthodox Church and to be spiritually overwhelmed by the presence of the heavenly court of saints and angels depicted on the icon

screen and in the frescoed iconography of the Orthodox temple of worship. Iconography, too, is the unique contribution of the Orthodox Church of the only authentic Christian art form to universal culture. The West instead of continuing in the eastern tradition in this regard, espoused the cause of attempting to add a Christian dimension to pagan statuary while Protestantism looks fondly upon secular painting and attributes to it in its own feeble religious perception.

In the Orthodox Church, where the entire creation of God worships, all the senses of man are heightened as he prostrates before the Almighty God of Creation, to encounter the Eternal Father through the only-begotten Son in the Eucharist by the grace of the all Holy and adorable Spirit, can man come to a better perception of the richness and depth of spirituality that is everyone's common patrimony and legacy in the one Church of Christ.

It is true, faithful of the Roman-rite Catholic Church have been periodically taught the august antiquity of our Church which lends dignity to various liturgical celebrations as an adornment of faith and a witness of the divine inspiration of Orthodoxy. Perhaps nothing, in fact, better practically proves the divine inspiration and founding of the Orthodox Church than the singular homage the West has from time to time paid unwittingly to Orthodoxy.

PILGRIMS TO ORTHODOXY

A Spanish pilgrim to the Holy land, Etheria, described at Rome the dramatic character of the liturgical functions of Passion Week in Jerusalem. Consequently, the Romans began to reproduce with some exactitude this spiritual drama. The Roman blessing and procession of palms are clearly derived from fourth century Jerusalem as well as the impressive ritual of Great Friday. The Veneration of the Cross took on a more solemn form from the Orthodox influence, especially in southern Italy which had a sizable population of Orthodox faithful of Greek background. Even the Roman blessing of the Resurrection candle has come to the West from the Orthodox East which itself no longer practices this tradition.

It was Constantine I (708 – 715 AD), a Syrian, who first wore the tiara which is of Eastern origin. The plumed fans in Papal processions were no doubt derived from the *ripidia* (*fans*) of the Byzantine imperial court which were later introduced into liturgical life in Orthodoxy and still today adorn the altar table. Two great Bishops of Rome, Gregory III (731 – 741 AD), another Syrian by origin, and Zachary (741 – 752 AD), a Greek national, were champions against the Iconoclastic heresy which condemned the veneration of icons and influenced thereby the liturgical art of the Roman churches of their times. The magnificent Byzantine

mosaics in Ravenna and other places in southern Italy bear witness to the widespread appreciation of authentic Christian art forms in the early Church, both Eastern and Western. Gregory III, in 743 AD commissioned many Greek artist monastic iconographers to decorate his churches as a reply to the Iconoclasts who operated chiefly in the imperial capital at Constantinople and its environs. He likewise founded the Vatican Library in collecting many ancient manuscripts illuminated in the Christian Orthodox East. In the West the most magnificent and beautiful still existing Byzantine mosaics are to be found in Palermo and Monreale due to the efforts of these Bishops of Rome who were of the heart and spirit of the Orthodox East.

While Rome is the heart of Western Christendom, she is also the symbol of the meeting of the Orthodox East with the West. Rome has found it important enough to establish an Oriental Institute to educate priests about the Orthodox East and its liturgical practices along with the Russicum which teaches, albeit for the wrong reasons of evangelization, future priests about celebrating and being intimately familiar with Orthodoxy in Russia.

May Roman-rite Catholics come to appreciate their authentic integrity in Orthodox spiritual foundations and give praise and honor to the God Who inspired them.

GAY CHRISTIANS?

GAY CHRISTIANS?

The Grave Danger Coming Out Poses to Christian Churches

by BRIAN PATRICK MITCHELL

Conflict makes people uncomfortable, so in mixed company, people watch what they say. Instead of speaking their minds on controversial issues, they trim their opinions to fit those around them – sometimes out of charity, sometimes out of prudence, but often out of cowardice.

Gays count on cowardice when they “come out.” They know that announcing themselves as gay will silence most objections to gayness. The person who comes out dares others to disagree with him on the matter, challenging them to either accept him as gay or make him their enemy. Not surprisingly, the closer one is to someone who comes out, the harder it is to maintain one’s disapproval of homosexuality. Pew Research reports that people who know a lot of gays are twice as likely to support gay marriage as people who know none. Even for many professed Christians, family blood is ultimately thicker than the water of Holy Baptism and the sacramental Mysteries. Witness Senator Bob Portman’s recent conversion to the cause of gay marriage at the urging of his gay son.

Coming out, therefore, poses a special danger to Christianity, but not in the way many might think. The greatest danger is not from gays openly living gay lifestyles while still claiming to be Christians. Most such gays will migrate to churches accepting of the gay lifestyle and thus leave other churches undisturbed. The greater danger is from Christians who profess to be born “gay” and chaste-Christians who openly identify themselves as “gay” on account of their attraction to members of their own sex, but who accept their church’s condemnation of homosexual relations as sinful.

In her book, *Gay and Catholic*, (Ave Maria Press, 2014), and in an article in *The American Conservative* entitled "Coming Out Christian: How faithful homosexuals are transforming our churches," self-styled "gay Christian" Eve Tushnet touts the benefits of coming out for both gays and the churches. In the article she writes that coming out is a matter of

honesty and integrity – no more "pronoun games" no more hedging and sudden silence when the conversation turns to romance or visions of one's future. The coming-out narrative transforms a source of shame and stigma into a freely accepted, simple truth, which no longer excludes one from the ordinary social world. Coming out allows deeper bonds to be formed: not only romantic relationships but deeper friendships, more honest familial ties, and more pointed and relevant relationships with spiritual guides such as confessors and pastors.

Make no mistake: "coming out" does not mean confiding one's struggles against same sex attraction in a close friend or pastor; it means openly declaring one's orientation to effect a fundamental change in one's church. The "gay Christians" Tushnet quotes say that coming out makes churches more welcoming and Christ-like; it shifts the focus of pastoral concern away from "the ex-gay narrative" towards assisting gays in simply living with their desires without indulging them; gays can even witness to straights by demonstrating that celibacy or virginity is not only possible but required of all single Christians, so instead of the "prosperity gospel" and a "sentimental, Disney view of marriage," more Christians will learn the lonely painful way of the Cross.

There is, of course, some truth to this, but there is also a great danger, for openly "gay" Christians present churches with extremely difficult problems of both faith and discipline – problems that have lately tended to undermine the faithfulness of whole communions.



What is a "Gay Christian"?

The first problem is the term "Gay Christian," which can mean either kind of gay – the professed Christian who lives gay or the professed gay who lives Christian. This ambiguity complicates the discourse causing considerable uncertainty about how each self-styled "Gay Christian" sees himself or herself and about what his or her public plea for acceptance might entail for other Christians. Since those who call themselves "Gay Christians" differ greatly in what they mean and want, traditional Christians are justified in objecting to the term on the grounds that it is likely to cause misunderstanding and lead people to presume that it approves more than it should.

The ambiguity of "Gay Christian" also hints at a more serious problem, one that challenges fundamental Christian beliefs about sin and human nature. Despite their different lifestyles, both kinds of self-styled "Gay Christians" see gayness as so much a part of who they are that they have no choice but to admit it and embrace it. One embraces it by indulgence, the other by abstinence, but both believe they can be nothing but "gay" and this belief separates them from those Christians who suffer same-sex attraction yet do not identify as "gay" and strive instead to live heterosexually as much as possible in the hope of escaping the attraction. The "Gay Christian" harbors no such hope, as Tushnet's diminishment of the "ex-gay marriage" shows. He therefore resigns himself to living with his homosexuality, inviting others to accept it as his personal norm, "I'm gay," he says "so stop expecting me to marry."

Many "Gay Christians" are inclined to believe their homosexuality is genetically or otherwise biologically based. Some describe it as "ontological" or inherent in their being as God has made them and therefore nothing to be ashamed of, as long as they do not act on it. They "come out" so as to be themselves, in the language of the postmodern, tribalistic, identity-driven Left, "coming out" makes them more "authentic." The "Gay Christian" Matt Jones, whom Tushnet quotes, writes on his blog:

A central part of my decision to be honest about, my sexuality is the desire to foster authenticity. To be closeted usually requires a constant and exhausting self-awareness, a meticulous and intense image-manage-

ment that can only be maintained through various forms of manipulation, half-truths and, at times outright deception.

The impatience expressed here with having to live according to heterosexual norms is remarkably similar to the impatience felt by nineteenth century European Jews struggling to live by gentile norms after centuries of isolation. The Jewish experience inspired Sigmund Freud's theory of the trifurcated psyche consisting of the natural instinctual *id* (who we are deep down); the moral aspirational *superego* (who we strive to be); and the resulting, mediating *ego* (who we end up becoming). It has also contributed to the revolt of the postmodern *id* against the constraints of Christian civilization, seen in the Sexual Revolution and in the multinational/diversity movement. In both, the claim is made that people cannot be expected to live according to Western Christian, European, American middle-class, bourgeois, or heterosexual norms. because that is just not who they are "authentically."

Therein lies the problem, for the sexual attraction of men for men or women for women cannot be said by Christians to be in any sense normal or "authentic" without corrupting Christianity's understanding of human nature. Traditional Christianity has always taken a fundamentally positive view of human nature, believing that God did not make man to sin; that sin is therefore not natural to him, but something he introduced on his own, and that, although the first sin made sinning easier by alienating man from God, human nature, even in the fallen world is still not naturally sinful. The proof of this is the Incarnation, in which the Son's assumption of human nature demonstrates that nothing naturally human is unworthy of God and that when reunited with God, man, too, can live sinlessly and even divinely, like Christ. Healing is therefore always possible through Christ to those who believe.

Logos and Tropos

Orthodox Christians sometimes explain the relationship between human nature and human sin in terms of *logos* and *tropos*. Our *logos* is a matter of nature - what we are made and meant by God to become as human beings; our *tropos* is a matter of manner - our mode or way of being including, not just conscious acts but also thoughts, feelings,

desires, and the conditions they create. Sexual distinction is a matter of both *logos* and *tropos*, involving both natural differences between the sexes and different ways of behaving consistent with those natural differences. Following Jesus Christ is also a matter of *tropos* and the mode of being most consistent with our *logos*, for we are all created to follow Christ. Sin is also a matter of *tropos* but a mode of being always inconsistent with our *logos* behavior contrary to our nature and endangering our very being.

Sin is therefore not ontological – not *what we are*, but a *way we are*. For this reason, Christians have always insisted that we are not our sins, that we therefore need not sin, and that though we often do sin and therefore deserve to be called sinners, being a Christian means not being a sinner, for a Christian is an imitator of the sinless Christ, a repentant sinner who has “put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him” Colossians 3: 9, 10; “Namely that you must lay aside your former way of life and the old self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, and acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. You must put on that new man created in God’s image whose justice and holiness are born of truth” Ephesians 4: 22 – 24.

The label “Christian” thus identifies neither our nature nor our condition but the ideal toward which we strive. We are born human beings, but we are not born Christian; we only *become* Christian by imitating Christ. Christians have therefore never made a practice of identifying themselves or other Christians by their particular sins. They have never publicly professed themselves to be, for example, “Christian gluttons” on account of their attraction to food. They have always regarded the identities imposed on us by our sins as characteristic of the old man thrown off when the new man is put on. “And as such *were* some of you,” says St. Paul, “but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” 1 Corinthians 6: 11.

It makes no sense, then, for someone to call himself a “gay” Christian since “gay” and “Christian” are contradictory modes of being and living. “Gay Christian” makes no more sense than “adulterous Christian.” Such terms rankle Christian ears because no one is being a Christian when he lusts after another man or someone other than his wife.

The Attack on Heterosexuality

To relieve homosexuality of its shame, some Christians have taken a different tack. Instead of treating homosexuality as an ontological category, they have borrowed the notion put forward by such unlikely allies as Michael Foucault and Gore Vidal that both homosexuality and heterosexuality are nineteenth century constructs that fail to reflect the complex reality of human sexuality. "They are recent inventions that are utterly foreign to our faith, inadequate for justifying sexual norms and antithetical to true philosophical anthropology," writes Michael W. Hannon in *First Things*.

Decrying what he calls "orientation essentialism" and "heteronormativity" Hannon has little good and plenty bad to say about heterosexuality. He associates heterosexuality with pride, characterizes it as "nothing but a particular blend of temptation to sin," and plainly denies that it is the "model norm for the evaluation of sexual deviancy"; instead, he says, our "model norm" as Christians is Jesus Christ, whom Hannon seems to regard as neither hetero nor homo on account of his being entirely chaste.

Hannon's argument is subtle enough to allow other interpretations. It is also entirely without foundation in Christian tradition. There is an essentially anti-sexual strain of thinking in both eastern and western Christianity, expressed elsewhere these days in the argument that homosexuality is not a vice because heterosexuality is not a virtue – both, it is said are unfortunate results of the Fall that are overcome by Christ, in whom there is "neither male nor female" Galatians 3: 28.

For support, advocates turn to the philosophic speculations of a handful of Church Fathers who tend to flatten sexuality into a two dimensional concern for procreation and concupiscence, consistent with the generally anti-sexual perspective of pagan philosophy. Christians had Scripture and tradition affirming the goodness of marriage, parenthood, and sexual distinction itself. Genesis chapters one and two obviates this reality and like the philosophers had no such knowledge and held marriage, parenthood and the female sex in low regard. Their sexuality was therefore mere carnality, which they generally disdained. Gnostic Encratites, dualistic Manichees, mystical Platonists, rational Stoics

and even materialistic Epicureans would all have agreed with the Stoic Diogenes Laertius's saying, "Sexual love is a desire which does not afflict virtuous men,"

This conventional wisdom of the pagan world influenced the speculations of many early Christian monastics. In the third century, a controversy arose between Origenists and anti-Origenists over whether the distinction of sex would persist in the resurrection. The anti-Origenists prevailed, but the impermanence of sexual distinction appeared again centuries later in the thought of St. Maximus the Confessor who named sex as one of five fundamental "divisions" overcome by Christ. Scholars disagree on what Maximus meant, but some in both the past and the present have taken him quite literally. Before the modern age, Christian anti-secularism found its plainest expression in the ninth century Neo-Platonist John Scotus Eriugena, translator of Maximus, St. Gregory Nyssa and the Pseudo-Dionysius. In his magnum opus, *Periphyseon* (twice condemned by Rome), Eriugena argued that Christ's transcendence of sex explains why the disciples repeatedly failed to recognize the risen Christ: "For it was not in the bodily sex but simply in man that he rose from the dead."

Some Christians today are returning to such dubious sayings, seeing that they serve two modern ideological objectives, denying both the distinction of male and female and the difference between heterosexuality and homosexuality. But these denials are impossible to reconcile with broader Christian traditions with its firm and fundamental scriptural basis for the distinction of gender, exalted view of marriage, likening it to Christ and his Church, and many precepts and ordinances urging Christians not to shake off the sex that God has given them (as Maximus seems to say they should) but to imitate God's own distinctly male and female models of incarnate human perfection: Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary.

Right Governance of Sexuality

Until the twentieth century all Christian societies cultivated the sexuality of their citizens in four ways: (1) The sexes were actively differentiated by obvious and obligatory differences in dress and demeanor; (2) the sexes were segregated to protect individuals from sexual temptations, to avoid unnatural competition and strife between the sexes

and importantly, to reinforce individual identity as either male or female; (3) the sexes were ordered in a way consistent with both human nature and divine economy, according to which the man is the head and the woman is the body 1 Corinthians 11: 3; confer Ephesians 5l; and (4) violations of these norms-blurring the distinction between male or mannishness in women, usurping male headship, or carnal relationships with others of the same sex – were condemned as unnatural and severely sanctioned. Heterosexuality – respect for the divinely ordained distinction between male and female, was the rule

The insistence of Christianity on heterosexuality and a condemnation of homosexuality as unnatural in all forms was a major change in the sexual ethics of the ancient world, as Kyle Harper shows in *From Shame to Sin: the Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Harvard, 2013). Christians can therefore agree with Michael Hannon that homosexuality is not a natural category of human being, but they cannot agree with him that heterosexuality is not our “model norm,” for God himself has made man male and female and also blessed their sexual union.

Human beings are therefore obliged to live heterosexually as either a man or a woman – distinguishing themselves as either a man or a woman in dress and demeanor and assuming the responsibilities incumbent on their sex. Some men and women are also blessed with the opportunity and responsibility to express their heterosexuality through conjugal relationships, but whether married or unmarried, all men and women are obliged to express their heterosexuality celibately much if not most of the time, just as our Lord did all of the time without ever ceasing to be a man, and as our Lady did all of the time without ceasing to be a woman.

Thus, in Christian;understanding, there is a human nature and a human way, and within both the nature and the way, there are two further natures and ways, one male and one female, and within each of these, there are still two more ways, two modes of heterosexuality: virginity or celibacy and marriage – and all of these natures and ways are blessed by God. Heterosexuality is therefore not just the opposite of homosexuality but also the opposite of feminism, for both homosexuality and feminism deny the divinely ordained *logoi* and *tropoi* of the human male and the human female.

Merciful Intolerance

With this understanding, the early Christian Church took an approach to dealing with the age-old problem of homosexuality very different from the approach now advocated by “gay Christians.” On the one hand, the Church publicly condemned homosexuality in the strongest possible terms, denying that there could ever be such a thing as a homosexual Christian. On the other hand, it offered all Christians the opportunity to confess their sins privately; to receive confidential counsel, encouragement and forgiveness; and to be reconciled after penance with Christ and his Church.

The biblical and traditional approach to sexuality edifies everyone, especially those afflicted by homosexual passion. Strong public sanctions against sodomy confirm the norm of heterosexuality, reinforcing the distinction between male and female and eliminating any uncertainty as to the proper sexual use of the human body. Intolerance of homosexuality actually strengthens those afflicted by homosexual passion in their struggle against temptation by impressing upon their conscience the enormity of the evil, giving them even more reason to “put off the old man with his deeds.” It teaches them self-control by minimizing opportunities for temptation and making indulgence unthinkable.

It also encourages them to live heterosexually as much as possible. For the young person just beginning to experience same sex attraction, this means struggling against the attraction, adopting the manners and courses of life appropriate to his sex, directing his romantic attentions towards persons of the opposite sex, and often even eventually marrying, begetting or bearing children, and otherwise living in every way as a normal (yes, normal) man or woman.

In their struggle to live heterosexually, early Christians were not alone. They had spiritual fathers and confessors in whom they could confide and to whom they were accountable. These father-confessors were responsible for administering and also protecting the healing power of the Holy Eucharist by ensuring that those who partook of it did so worthily, “For he who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” 1 Corinthians 11: 27. Exclusion

from communion was the ultimate punishment for Christians. Serious sins like sodomy excluded the sinner from Communion for many years, during which he was forced to confront the consequences of his sin through the experience of separation from the Body of Christ. Excommunication was thus a severe mercy, presenting the sinner with a plain, palpable choice of good or evil – the Saviour or the sin.

For those who so deeply desired the Body and Blood of Christ that they truly repented of their sins through fully humble confessions, the choice of the Saviour could be suddenly and wondrously healing – like having one's brain instantly required to erase habitual thought patterns inconsistent with life in Christ. This was not something to expect, but it did and does sometimes happen.

The result of the Church's merciful intolerance was a society largely free, if not of homosexuality, of homosexual suspicion. Boys and girls could be raised to be men and women, understanding and accepting the requirements of their sex and trusting all others to live accordingly. They could associate freely with members of their own sex without sexual tension developing between them, and they could even form intimate friendships with their own sex without fear of them turning sexual. Men could walk arm in arm and women could exchange kisses without so much as a thought of homosexuality. Persons of the same sex could share houses or apartments without anyone thinking them gay. Friends could allow friends the benefit of any doubt, overlooking the possibility of homosexuality without condoning or excusing it.

Men and women struggling privately against homosexual passion could therefore take part in society without prejudice; they could therefore take part in society without prejudice; they could live up to their ordinations as men or women even while single; they could even know the joy of raising a family, experience the pleasures of heterosexual intimacy, and be slowly relieved and sometimes even quickly healed of their affliction – *but only as long as homosexuality was condemned publicly, homosexual passions were kept not secret, but private, and homosexual acts were not tolerated.*



The Challenge of Coming Out

Today's "gay Christians" defy this biblical and traditional Christian order when they "come out" and publicly profess their homosexuality, as if the old man were who they really are, as if change were not possible, and if Christ could not heal, as if they could not still marry and have children, and as if others were wrong to expect them to conform to the heterosexual norms distinguishing the sexes in many ways.

By coming out, the "gay Christian" testifies to the world that all of these claims are true, when they are all in fact false: Change is possible, Christ can heal, the old man is not who we must be, and people attracted to members of the same sex can and often do marry someone of the opposite sex, raise children, and lead heterosexual lives in every overt way.

The testimony against these truths by publicly identified "gay Christians" is most damaging to the young. Many children go through a phase of infatuation with someone of the same sex, but very few such children get stuck in the phase by indulging the infatuation and consummating it carnally. Most recognize the infatuation as unnatural and immoral so they consciously resist it by denial, avoidance, and redirection. It is in this process of resistance and redirection that the heterosexuality of many children is confirmed and secured, but the will of such children to resist is undermined by public acceptance of homosexuality as an immutable aspect of one's identity.

And public acceptance of the immutability of their sexual identity is just what many "gay Christians" seek from other Christians. They have given up on the "ex-gay narrative" and are often not just skeptical but dismissive and even contemptuous of change efforts. To children struggling against same-sex attraction, the public example of "gay Christians" says: "You might be one of us. You might have been born this way. Do not think you can change."

The will of adults to live heterosexually, despite their homosexual passions, is also undermined by the alternative lifestyle proffered by "gay Christians," who tout their

chaste-gay narrative as both easier and more honest, more natural in the sense of being more appropriate to their person, and even more beneficial to other Christians. The truth is that even adults who have fully embraced an unchaste gay lifestyle can and do sometimes change enough to live happily heterosexual lives, but the hope of such healing gets short shrift in the chaste gay narrative. So as more Christians "come out," fewer Christians will attempt change therapy or otherwise endeavor to live heterosexually, and more misguided Christians will lose hope and forsake their families to be "true" to themselves even if it means cursing their children with the knowledge that Daddy or Mommy is gay.

Rightful Distance

The damage does not end there, however, because in mixed company, people will watch what they say. Christians will self-censor their public and private comments about homosexuality so as not to offend known gays in their midst. That is just as "gay Christians" would have it. That is what they want. They do not want to hear "hurtful" things said about homosexuality. They especially do not want straights to express their revulsion from homosexuality. They do not want straights to even *feel* revulsion from it. They want exactly the opposite; they want to desensitize straights to homosexuality so that gays and straights can feel comfortable together as if no difference existed between them. Thus the blogger Matt Jones writes:

LGBTQ people are often kept at a distance which I guess is what makes it so easy for some Christians to fire away with their sniper rifles of "truth-telling." So long as there is distance, beliefs can remain undisturbed and comfortable. But I want those Christians to know that I brush legs with them as I slide into the row; I shake their hand or hug them as we pass the peace of Christ. I share the communion cup and broken bread. We are one body. *There is no distance.*

In fact, Christians have been told to keep sexual rebels at a distance by no less an authority than the Apostle Paul: "But now I have written to you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no not to eat" 1 Corinthians 5: 11.

Confer 1 Corinthians 5: 1 – 13; 2 Corinthians 6: 14 – 18. The reference here is Holy Communion, by which Christians are made “one body.” The apostle directs that fornicators be excluded from Communion, not just for the sake of the Church, but for their own sake as well – that they may be made to choose between the Saviour and their sin. The great fourth century preacher and patriarch St. John Chrysostom explains:

For it is the part of humanity not to humor the sick in every thing or to flatter their unseasonable desires. No one so loved him that committed fornication among the Corinthians as Paul, who commanded to deliver him to Satan; no one so hated him as they that applaud and court him Homily 14 on 2 Corinthians 7.

But note how Jones characterizes this “tough love” on the part of Christians. Note his expressed desire to disturb and discomfort Christians so as to challenge their beliefs and silence their truth-telling. Note also his expansion of the category of supposed victims of Christian distancing; he faults his fellow Christians for keeping at a distance the whole LGBTQ crowd.

Things will get weird

We have already seen where this leads churches that put no distance between themselves and the world become more and more like the fallen world and its values. Pastors and people unwilling to bear the reproach of the Joneses in their midst are cowed into silence. Sodomy becomes unmentionable. The word itself is forbidden as offensive. The church goes gay-friendly and consequently attracts more gays and fewer families of believing faith. Accountability slides. The more comfortable gays feel, the bolder they get. The whole LGBTQ crowd finds a home, and those who object are shown the door.

Tushnet as much as promises this will happen in her book. In a final appendix on making churches more welcoming of gays, she first recommends coming out as a “huge way to change the culture.” Then, after a few more recommendations, she asks the

question, what if people take a church's welcome seriously? She ends the book with these words:

If our churches begin to change to welcome gay and same sex attracted people, the changes won't stop where the church might predict they will or want them to. The churches won't be exactly the same as before, only with more people. The churches themselves will change new concepts of vocation, new questions, new challenges. Things will get weird. If you welcome someone, be ready for them to change you. That is part of what love does to a person.

It takes perhaps a generation for a complete moral inversion to take place. You cannot keep what you will not teach and defend. Older members, taught that heterosexuality is normal and that homosexuality is sinful, will give way in time to younger members, who have never heard homosexuality condemned in church, who instead have been taught by the world to hate the "haters" who condemn it, and who therefore will "think they do God service" when they persecute the faithful for bearing witness against wickedness.



Brian Patrick Mitchell is a protodeacon of the Orthodox Church and the author of several books on politics and religion, including Eight Ways to Run the Country: A New and Revealing Look at Left and Right (Praeger, 2006).

❖ ❖ **THE RIGHT MAN FOR HIS TIME** ❖ ❖

The Lord has given each of His children different talents and abilities. Within the framework of His Holy Church, it is also apparent that He has provided spiritual leaders who were perfectly matched for the type of work that needed to be accomplished.

On the cover of today's Church Bulletin, one such saint is depicted. ST. MARK OF EPHEBUS lived in the 15th century. Blessed with a brilliant mind and deep religious convictions, he quickly ascended the ladder of church leadership, being elevated to the prestigious position of "Metropolitan of Ephesus" while still a young man. At a time when the Church was weakened by the threat of Turkish invasions and other internal and external difficulties, St. Mark of Ephesus was a staunch defender of Orthodoxy. He spoke out vigorously against the attempt at reunion with Rome at the Council of Florence, much to the dismay of the Emperor, who saw this as a possible solution to the problems the Turks posed to the city of Constantinople. After two years of banishment by the Emperor, St. Mark returned to Constantinople, where he was widely heralded as a "hero" of the Faith. He fell asleep in the Lord in 1444 A.D.

The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey Litho in U.S.A.