The mission of St. Paul’s Greek Orthodox Parish of Savannah, Georgia is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and to serve the spiritual needs of the faithful through worship and sacramental life. We enable individuals to come together in communion with God and with each other through ministries that are centered on the beliefs and values of our Orthodox Faith.

St. Elias, the Prophet
July 20, 2017
We sometimes forget how blessed we are in this day and time. Please enjoy this and hold these words of encouragement in your hearts.

If you attend a church service without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world. If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world. If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

That is because you are living in the United States of America and someone paid for the price of your freedom. We are truly blessed to live in this country, where we have the freedom and the liberty to live out our lives! However, the words "freedom" and "liberty" are often misunderstood as "doing whatever we want," which means there are no longer any set boundaries.

Our children, when they are misbehaving and being defiant, often say, “You can’t tell me what to do! I can do whatever I want!” When they say things like this, we realize that something is missing in their upbringing and that we failed in our cultural and faith education. The Holy Fathers’ words of wisdom define what true freedom is, which is only found through Christ, who is the “Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

“The Lord wants us to love one another. Here is freedom: in love for God and neighbor. In this freedom, there is equality. In earthly orders, there may not be equality, but this is not important for the soul. Not everyone can be a king, not everyone a patriarch or a boss. But in any position it is possible to love God and to please Him, and only this is important. And whoever loves God more on earth will be in greater glory in His Kingdom.” (St. Silouan the Athonite).

Living in this country, “the Land of the Free,” we face many spiritual challenges. Though we have the freedom to worship God, many of us may not take the opportunity to do so. After all, when everything seems to be going well, we face the temptation to forget all about God altogether.

Independence from God is not freedom; it’s just the opposite. We find ourselves in bondage, enslaved and ever-lacking true joy and fulfillment without His Presence. When we try to fill the void in our lives with any substitute for God, we will inevitably be left feeling empty and devastated. I believe that all the tragedies and atrocities taking place in the world today are symptoms of a world that has forgotten God, and replaced Him with the pursuit of being self-reliant, self-centered, self-aggrandizement, and to be pleasure-seeking individuals. There seems to be no boundaries anymore between what is right and wrong, and what is true and false. The greatest error of present times is to make the truth relative, devoid of meaning and consequence.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had so willingly and lovingly taken on our human flesh through His Incarnation to prepare a way toward the fulfilling freedom and liberty we so deeply desire as human beings. He has taught us the heights we can reach through giving us His own example in His Human Nature. The prime example He gives us is His Immeasurable, Self-Emptying Love. Our human pursuit ought to be always our imitation of Him.
The Holy Martyrs, Wonderworkers and Unmercenary Physicians Cosmas and Damian were born at Rome, brothers by birth, and physicians by profession. They suffered in Rome during the reign of the emperor Carinus (283-284). Brought up by their parents in the rules of piety, they led strict and chaste lives, and they were granted by God the gift of healing the sick. By their generosity and exceptional kindness to all, the brothers converted many to Christ. The brothers told the sick, “It is not by our own power that we treat you, but by the power of Christ, the true God. Believe in Him and be healed.”

Saints Cosmas and Damian are venerated as a type of saint known as Unmercenary Physicians (Greek: ἀνάργυροι, anargyroi, “without money” or silverless, without silver, as at the time most of the coins were minted in silver). This classification of saints is unique to the Eastern Church and refers to those who heal purely out of love for God and man, strictly observing the command of Jesus: “Freely have you received, freely give.” («Δωρεὰν ἐλάβετε, δωρεὰν δότε...» Matthew 10:8)

Their life of active service and their great spiritual influence on the people around them led many into the Church, attracting the attention of the Roman authorities. Soldiers were sent after the brothers. Hearing about this, local Christians convinced Saints Cosmas and Damian to hide for a while until they could help them escape. Unable to find the brothers, the soldiers arrested instead other Christians of the area where the saints lived. Saints Cosmas and Damian then came out of hiding and surrendered to the soldiers, asking them to release those who had been arrested because of them.

In Rome, the saints were imprisoned and put on trial. Before the Roman emperor and the judge they openly professed their faith in Christ God, Who had come into the world to save mankind and redeem the world from sin, and they resolutely refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. They said, “We have done evil to no one, we are not involved with the magic or sorcery of which you accuse us. We treat the infirm by the power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and we take no payment for rendering aid to the sick, because our Lord commanded His disciples, “Freely have you received, freely give” (Mt. 10: 8).

The emperor, however, continued with his demands. Through the prayer of the holy brothers, imbued with the power of grace, God suddenly struck Carinus blind, so that he too might experience the almighty power of the Lord, Who does not forgive blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:31). The people, beholding the miracle, cried out, “Great is the Christian God! There is no other God but Him!” Many of those who believed besought the holy brothers to heal the emperor, and he himself implored the saints, promising to convert to the true God, Christ the Savior, so the saints healed him. After this, Saints Cosmas and Damian were honorably set free, and once again they set about treating the sick.

But what the hatred of the pagans and the ferocity of the Roman authorities could not do, was accomplished by black envy, one of the strongest passions of sinful human nature. An older physician, an instructor, under whom the holy brothers had studied the art of medicine, became envious of their fame. Driven to madness by malice, and overcome by passionate envy, he summoned the two brothers, formerly his most beloved students, proposing that they should all go together in order to gather various medicinal herbs. Going far into the mountains, he murdered them and threw their bodies into a river.
Thus these holy brothers, the Unmercenary Physicians Cosmas and Damian, ended their earthly journey as martyrs. Although they had devoted their lives to the Christian service of their neighbors, and had escaped the Roman sword and prison, they were treacherously murdered by their teacher. Their wonderful deeds and their martyrdom made them famous, and so other pairs of twins from all the Christendom were named Cosmas and Damian, educated as physicians, and surely carried in the tradition of their predecessors to heal for free (anargyroi).

The Lord glorifies those who are pleasing to God. Now, through the prayers of the holy martyrs Cosmas and Damian, God grants healing to all who with faith have recourse to their heavenly intercession. The Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Rome should not be confused with the Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Asia Minor (November 1), or the Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Arabia (October 17).

Some people find it implausible that there should be three distinct pairs of Anargyroi named Cosmas and Damian, and conclude that there was only one such historical pair. The Synaxarion of Ormylia Monastery (Vol. 1, p. 409 note) says: The oldest testimony to the veneration of Saints Cosmas and Damian relates to the basilica built in their honor at Cyrrhus, north of Antioch in Syria, mentioned in the Life of St. Rabula of Edessa (c. 400). Their veneration spread rapidly throughout the Empire; in the East, where the famous Cosmidion was founded at Constantinople in 439, as well as in Rome and the West. Their widespread veneration and the dispersal of their relics are probably reasons why Cosmas and Damian came to be regarded as three distinct pairs of saints of the same names. Nevertheless, the Church’s Synaxaria have commemorated three different pairs of Sts Cosmas and Damian from very early times, and still continue to this day.

Besides the three pairs of Cosmas and Damian, the Church commemorates other well-known Unmercenary Physicians as: Sts Cyrus and John (January 31, June 28), Thallalaios (May 20), Samson (June 27), Hermolaos (July 26), Panteleimon (July 27), Diomedes (August 16).

The feast day of Sts Cosmas and Damian in the General Roman Calendar, which had been on September 27, was moved in 1969 to September 26, because September 27 is the dies natalis ("day of birth" into Heaven) of Saint Vincent de Paul, now more widely venerated in the Roman Catholic Church. In Canada it has been moved to Sept. 25 (as Sept. 26 is the Feast of the Canadian Martyrs in Canada). The date of September 27 in the Roman calendar was chosen on the belief that the two brothers were martyred (after torture) by beheading, along with their three brothers, Anthimus, Leontius, and Euprepius, on 27 September, probably in the year 287. At Rome, Pope Felix IV (526-530) erected a church (basilica) in their honor, the mosaics of which are still among the most valuable art objects that remained in the city.

The basilica is located in the Forum of Vespasian, also known as the Forum of Peace. The apse was decorated with a Roman-Byzantine mosaic, representing a parousia, the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time. The mosaic shows Christ, in the middle, with Saint Peter presenting Saint Cosmas and Saint Theodore (right), and Saint Paul presenting Saint Damian and Pope Felix IV; the latter holds a model of the church. On the second row, twelve lambs, represent the Holy Apostles.

Compiled by Fr. Vasile from different sources
Culture on top of culture: The case for Cosmidion

Travelers to Istanbul (former Constantinople, former Byzantium) marvels about the bridges over the Golden Horn and the area around. They quickly realize that the Golden Horn or Haliç in Turkish is a horn-shaped fyord on the European side of Istanbul and which is fed by two small streams. It is a natural harbor where Byzantine and Ottoman fleet and commercial ships were anchored. Today Golden Horn is surrounded by parks and promenades with some ancient sites around it. Its name comes from the color of the water, when at sunset, it shines with a gold color because of the reflection of the sun.

City of Byzantium was mentioned by Plutarch in his book, The Lives of the Noble Greeks, and qualified as a strategic place between Europe and Asia. Golden Horn was an old trading harbor and a popular residential area during the Byzantine period. As main part of the city, its entrance was blocked by a huge chain across the water, meant to stop unwanted ships to enter. The land area of Golden Horn was a triangle-shaped and fortified area, bounded on two sides buy water (the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara) and on the third side by the famous Theodosian Wall; this area was known as the 14th District of Constantinople.

Nowadays, in this area the main attraction is the Eyüp Mosque Complex (Eyüp Camii), which includes the mosque proper, the tomb of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, and other cultural and social institutions. Prophet Mohammad led himself a siege on Constantinople in the years 674-678 and his standard bearer was a man, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, who supposedly died and was buried there during the attack. (1)

Many people are not aware that in the past this area called now the Eyüp district sits on the place where once important cultural monuments, as Byzantine palaces, churches and monasteries flourished and spread the light of Christianity over the world. Among those, the least known is the Monastery of Cosmidion.

The story of the Monastery of Sts. Cosmas and Damian or Cosmidion is very important, not only for the Byzantine religious and cultural legacy, but also for the way in which it was transformed after the conquest of the Queen City from a sacred Christian institution into a Muslim shrine.

Monastery of Cosmidion

Historians who described the life in the City of Constantinople mentioned that the fourteenth region of the city stood on the sixth hill: and looked like a small city defended by walls on its own. In that area laid the palace of Blacherne, the Monastery of Sts. Cosmas and Damian and the Church of St. Nicholas. According to the description of Dionysius of Byzantium (2), the area was a beautiful place with clean water, green slopes, being in the same time a natural harbor.

Some archeological digs in the area revealed the existence of some buildings and a possible altar from about 200 BC (3), very close to the site of Cosmidion. Ruins of late Roman buildings and fragments of statues dated circa 300 AD were discovered in 1949. But from Cosmidion there is very little archeological evidence, except for some parts of the buildings and burial chambers found during the construction of the bridge over the Golden Horn in 1972-73; that is due to the fact that no approval was given for excavations close to the Eyüp Mosque and to the Tomb of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari.

According to the research done by Martin Hurbanic, the Cosmidion laid on the region known today as Silahtaraga, which in the Byzantine times was known as Ta Paulines or Ta Paulinu, and from the 9th century as Cosmidion, after the names of the Sts. Cosmas and Damian.

The founding of the church/monastery is attributed either to magister Paulinos, one of the high clerks of Emperor Theodosius II in 439 AD, or to rich Syrian woman, Paulina, not later than 480 AD. Arguments for the second hypothesis are amplified by the fact that the cult of Sts. Cosmas and Damian spread, after their

1. Nuray Ozaslan, From the Shrine of Cosmidion to the Shrine of Eyup Ensari, in Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies, 40, (1999), 379-399. Interestingly, the author mentioned that Ayyub Al-Ansary, the friend of the Prophet Mohammad, died in the siege of Constantinople in 669 and buried outside of the city walls, but his grave was “discovered” some eight centuries later, in fact seventy years after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.
3. A Temple dedicated to the Dioscuri probably stood on that site, similarly with the one in Rome. The cult of Dioscuri eventually was transformed into the cult of Christian twins, due to their curative powers. See, Martin Hurbanic, A topographical note concerning the Avar siege of Constantinople; the question of the localization of St. Callinicus Bridge, in Actes de Xlle Congres international des etudes byzantines, Sofia, 22-27 aout, 2011.
martyrdom at the end of the 3rd century, from the region of Cyrrhus, Syria, to regions as Cilicia, Antioch, Thessaloniki, Rome and Ravenna. By the 5th century the cult arrived in Constantinople and then the monastery was built.

Procopius (4), who wrote in 550 AD, described the place of the monastery and mentioned a miraculous healing of Emperor Justinian who was serious ill and close to death; then, healed by intercession to the saints, he decided to enlarge the building and to make it worthy to “such powerful saints.”

The monastery of Sts. Cosmas and Damian appears in the description of the Avar attacks in the time of Emperor Heraclius (610-641 AD). The Avars plundered what was outside of the walls and entered the monastery of Sts. Cosmas and Damian at Blacherne and the church of St. Nicholas and burned them (5).

In 813 AD under the Bulgarian leader, Leo V, Krum, the soldiers “paraded before the walls from Blacherne to the Golden gate” and systematically destroyed everything outside of the walls. Another mention of the monastery appeared in the documents of the Second Ecumenical Council on Nicea (787 AD).

The sanctuary of the church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian was magnificently rebuilt in the 11th century by the Emperor Michael IV, who eventually received the monastic tonsure on the day of his death, December 10th, 1041, and was buried in the church of the monastery.

We learned that Nicholas Mouzalon was the abbot of Cosmidion for thirty seven years before being elected in 1147 as Patriarch of Constantinople. Many notables, royal or religious, passed by or spent time in the monastery (6). During the first Crusade Godefroy de Bouillon and the crusaders lodged in the monastery.

During the Fourth Crusade (1203-1204) the Latin army camped, looted and burned the buildings of Constantinople’s suburbs. Geoffrey of Villehardouin (7) mentioned that the crusaders occupied some buildings and monasteries and set up camp on a hill crowned by an abbey named “Chateau de Bohemund.” According to historians, the abbey was surely the monastery of Sts. Cosmas and Damian. The crusaders used that name because during the First Crusade, one of the commanders, Bohemund of Taranto, established his camp in front of the monastery.

After fifty-seven years of Latin occupation Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos found the city in ruin and started the rebuilding of edifices, having some members of his family as principal benefactors; one was Theodora Palailogina (8), who restored the monastery of Sts. Cosmas and Damian.

Slavic pilgrims to Constantinople mentioned the importance of the monastery to their co-nationals: Antonin Dobrinjha Jadrekovich around 1200 (later Bishop of Novgorod), Stephen of Novgorod with eight companions in 1348, clerk Alexandr, a merchant from Novgorod in 1389, etc.

After the fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453, almost no mention is made about the famous Cosmidion. The only exception is the traveler Angiolello (9), who was in the city in 1470 and on the place of the monastery he noted a tower, which he believed that belonged to the monastery.

The Cosmidion held, among other many relics, the heads of Sts. Cosmas and Damian; Stephen of Novgorod, visited the monastery in 1348 or 1349 and confessed that: “there we kissed their heads very artfully covered in gold.”(10) Another traveler, known as Russian Anonymous, recorded that the relics of the saints, their gold-covered heads, were regularly displayed at the monastery of Cosmidion.

A number of cities and churches, both in the East and the West, claim that they have in their possession the relics of Sts. Cosmas and Damian. From their description it seems that they are not the gold-covered skulls/heads of the saints. Where are they? That may be an interesting project for a curious and determined researcher.

Fr. Vasile Mihai

6. On October 16, 1285, Athanasios I, Patriarch of Constantinople, found refuge in the monastery and from there he sent his letter of resignation to the Emperor Andronikos II.
In the foreword of the Rudder (or the ‘Book of Canons’) there is an interesting reference to St. Euphemia, “Euphemia, the virgin martyrress of old, by embosoming the volume of the Fourth Holy Ecumenical Council, kept it safe and above every calumny of the adversaries . . .”

St Euphemia was a champion among martyrs in Chalcedon, after suffering various tortures, she finally triumphed over beasts in the arena, after which her parents placed her in a sarcophagus. The following account from The Prologue of Ochrid, written by St Nikolai Velimirovich, explains the above-quoted reference by St Agapius and St Nicodemus:

“This saint [Holy Great Martyr Euphemia] is commemorated on September 16th, the day on which she suffered. On this day [July 11th] is commemorated the miracle wrought by her precious relics, revealed at the time of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon. This Council was called together in the reign of the Emperor Marcian and the Empress Pulcheria, in 451 AD, after the death of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, and was summoned because of the heresy of Dioscorus, Patriarch of Alexandria, and Eutyches, an archimandrite in Constantinople, who had disseminated the false teaching that there were in Christ not two natures, divine and human, but only one, a divine nature. At this Council, the chief role was played by Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople and Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem. Because, through the quarrels and evidence on both sides, no decision could be reached, Patriarch Anatolius suggested that the Orthodox and the heretics each write down their confession of faith, and that they be put into the coffin that contained the relics of St. Euphemia. All agreed to this. Two confessions of faith, then, were written and placed in the hands of the great martyr. The coffin was closed and sealed with the imperial seal, a watch then being set over it.
They then all spent three days in fasting and prayer. On the fourth day, when the tomb was opened, they saw the Orthodox confession of faith in the saint’s right hand and the heretical one beneath her feet. Thus was the conflict resolved by God’s power, on the side of Orthodoxy.”

It is said that St. Euphemia, as though alive, raised her hand and gave the scroll to the Patriarch. After this miracle many of the hesitant accepted the Orthodox confession, while those remaining obstinant in the heresy were consigned to the Council's condemnation and excommunication.

This explanation helps us to understand the reference in the foreword of The Rudder related to the “embosoming of the scroll”; the arms of the saint have been crossed on her chest, and that is why Saints Agapius and Nicodemus refer to St. Euphemia “embosoming” the scroll.

Small picture of the relics of St. Euphemia, which reside in the Phanari in the church of St. George, Constantinople. The Patriarchal church also has many other relics, including part of the column on which Christ was flogged, the relics of Sts. Theophano, Solomon, John Chrysostom and Gregory the Theologian.


After an invasion by the Persians during the seventh century, the relics of St. Euphemia were transferred from Chalcedon to Constantinople, into a newly built church dedicated to her. Many years later, during the period of the Iconoclast heresy, the reliquary with the relics of the saint was cast into the sea by order of the Iconoclast emperor Leo the Isaurian (716-741).

The reliquary was rescued from the sea by the ship-owning brothers Sergius and Sergonos, who gave it over to the local bishop. The holy bishop ordered that the relics be preserved in secret, beneath a crypt, since the Iconoclast heresy was continuing to rage. A small church was built over the relics, and over the reliquary was put a board with an inscription stating whose relics rested within.

When the Iconoclast heresy was finally condemned at the holy Seventh Ecumenical Council (in the year 787), during the time of St. Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople (784-806) and the emperor Constantine VI (780-797) and his mother St. Irene (797-802), the relics of the holy Great Martyr Euphemia were once again solemnly transferred to Constantinople.

From the Prologue

Born in Chalcedon, her father was the senator Philopronus and her mother's name was Theodorisia, both devout Christians. Euphemia was a girl beautiful in both body and soul. When the Proconsul, Priscus, celebrated a festival of sacrifice to Ares in Chalcedon, forty-nine Christians absented themselves from the festivities and hid themselves. But they were discovered and brought before Priscus, holy Euphemia being among them. When the furious Priscus asked them why they had not carried out the imperial command, they replied: 'Both the Emperor's commands and yours must be obeyed if they are not contrary to the God of heaven. If they are, they must not only not be obeyed; they must be resisted.' Then Priscus put them to various tortures for nineteen days, from day to day. On the twelfth day, he held Euphemia apart from the others and began to flatter her beauty, hoping to bring her thus to idolatry. When all his flattery proved fruitless, he ordered that she be tortured. First, she was put on a wheel, but an angel of God appeared and broke it. Then he had her thrown into a fiery furnace, but she was preserved by God's power. Seeing this, two soldiers, Victor and Sosthenes, came to faith in Christ, for which they were thrown to the wild beasts and thus finished their earthly course with glory. After that, Euphemia was thrown into a pit filled with water and all kinds of poisonous reptiles, but she made the sign of the Cross over the water as she went into the pit, and remained unharmed. She was finally thrown to the wild beasts and, with a prayer of thanksgiving, gave her soul into God's hands. Her parents buried her body. She suffered in the year 303, and entered into eternal joy. (St Euphemia is also commemorated on July 11th).

From The Prologue From Ochrid by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich. ©1985 Lazarica Press, Birmingham UK
On July 20th, we commemorate the Holy Prophet Elijah (or Elias). We heard of a great miracle in the feeding of the 5000 (Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44; 8:1-99). It's full of great inner meaning, because it really points to the Church. I would like you to know that there are other great miracles in the Scripture, as the Lord pointed to us: "Greater things than these shall ye see." (John 1:50). The great miracle I would like to point is hidden in the Epistle reading for the Prophet Elias. It mentions him a little bit in the epistle - not very much, only a sentence or two, but a great miracle is hidden in the words, and it is not that rain came or didn't come for three and a half years.

It says, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." (James 5:17) This is the great miracle. It was neither the drought, nor the rain after the drought, but a man with passions prayed fervently to God, and God heard him. Something that seemingly is impossible was asked for, to keep rain from falling. To keep rain from falling from the sky? We have no ability to do that. That's not within our province. Can we heal the sick as is mentioned also in this Epistle of St. James? We don't have the ability to cure incurable diseases, to cleanse lepers. All these things are impossibilities to men. We don't have the ability to do them.

The greatest miracle - the greatest miracle - that God works is when He changes a heart. And if you see your heart start to change, if you see yourself turning to God, even if it's only happening slowly, you can be assured that this is a greater miracle than raising the dead. God can raise the dead anytime He wants, but for a man to truly change, this involves great effort as well as God's grace. It is the greatest news, the best news there has ever been, that a heart can turn to God.

We celebrate Prophet Elias so extravagantly because he was a man of like passions as us. When you read his story you realize that he was not perfect, not at all. In fact, he showed great weakness even after he had performed perhaps the greatest of his miracles. This was when he went and rebuked Ahab, and had them set up two sacrifices, one for the priests of Baal (or Baalim) and one for the True God, he gave them a little wager: We will pray. You pray to your god and I will pray to my God, and no fire will be put underneath, and whichever altar is burned, He is God. The people said, 'that's a good proposition'.

The priests of Baal prayed the entire day through the afternoon, and Elias mocked them with great fervor and with great bravery, because these were people who wanted to kill him, and there were many of them and he was the only one. Then we all know what happened. He prayed to God with faith. We are told that he was a man with passions now, a weak man. And the entire sacrifice, and the twelve stones, and the water and everything, the dust, the stones and dirt were all consumed by the fire of the Lord. And then the rain came and during this time of the rain coming, Jezebel, that name which will live in infamy, sent him a message saying my 'gods will do this to me and more besides if I don't have you dead by this time tomorrow.' And what happened to Elias? He was afraid. It says right in the Scriptures, he was afraid: yes, he was moved by passions just like us, he had weaknesses just like us.

It doesn't matter how weak a man is, if he has faith in God. This was just a slight misstep for the Prophet, because a scant 40 days later, God appeared to him in the cave - not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire - but in the still, small voice. Elias was very worthy of receiving this; it didn't matter that he was a weak person.

We should learn from him and try to imitate him, but not his fear. We don't emulate the saints when they are weak. We emulate their strengths, and this is a man with many strengths, great fervor, great love for God, and because of that, he could pray and that which is impossible would happen.
From my experience as a Confessor (Spiritual Father) I can tell you that each one of us has something we consider to be impossible in our life. If you pray with fervor it will no longer be impossible. You've got to believe this. Despite the fact that there is so much evidence in the life of the Church, we find it difficult to really believe this. This is why we celebrate the saints, so we may learn what faith can do. Whether it is stopping the rain from the sky, and then starting again, or whether it is consuming a burnt offering that is soaked in water, or whether it is giving up one's life in order to save another one, this is from God changing a heart.

God can change our hearts; though it will take an effort from us too. If we are sloppy, if we are lazy, if we are pretenders, if we are non-believers, our heart may not change. If our heart may not change, we may become blind or simply discard many miracles happening around us. And what a tragedy is to live a life without faith and miracles.

We read in the Scriptures of these exploits of the saints, and is it going to be for us like watching a movie? Watching a movie about, let's say, a far away place, but never being there? Never experiencing it? Never understanding what it's like to be there? The exploits of the saints are not movies or books for us. They are a way of life and they lead us, if we follow the path, to the greatest of miracles - our heart changing. The lives of the saints show us that we too can live the same life. More important, God has shown in them what we will be like if we follow their example, if we live according to the faith. In the lives of the saints we find not only strength, courage and dedication, but sometimes even grievous sins. Just recall King David who combined two sins in one, adultery and murder, and so many of the saints that had difficulties in their lives. But they also had great faith.

Knowing about the faith is not enough; we must exercise that faith. We must believe that we can be changed and willing to make the necessary efforts. If we believe this, and we do the work, then God will change us. Sometimes, besides work it's going to take some pain as well, because there are things that we like that we don't want to let go of. We hold onto them. We get dragged along the ground with the wild horses that are our passions, but we don't let go of the rope. But the first and foremost thing you must do if we are to conquer our passions - we must believe that they can be conquered. This is just another way of saying that we must believe in the resurrection.

May God help all those who ‘seek the kingdom and his righteousness’ by making as purpose in their lives to get closer to God and to fulfill His commandments. This is our call, this is our destiny. Through the prayers of the Holy Prophet Elias may we have firm, real, living faith in our Savior.

The Word of God: On the brevity and effectiveness

Plato made lengthy discourses to demonstrate the immortality of the soul, yet he did not succeed in persuading even his own disciple Aristotle. Here, on the other hand, are fishermen like John and a tax collector like Matthew and a tentmaker like Paul, and they have persuaded Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, the whole world. Thanks to them very many people are now convinced that the soul is immortal, that it is gifted with reason, that it has the power to control the passions, that if it breaks the commandments it does so through negligence and not through absence of freedom, that after having sinned it is able to turn back to righteousness, to free itself from vice and to recover the mark of God on itself.

These principles are known, not only to the doctors of the Church, but also to shoemakers, smiths, weavers, and every kind of workman. And it is the same among the women. These principles are known not only to those who have studied but also to spinners, dressmakers and household servants. They are known to city people and also to country folk. We find miners and drovers and farmers talking of the threefold nature of God.

All of these, moreover, practice virtue, cleanse themselves from vice, are afraid of future punishment, await the final judgment, reflect continually on eternal life, and gladly accept weariness and trials of every sort for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

So compare the vain chatter of the philosophers with the simple teaching of the fishermen and reflect on the difference. The fables of the poets and the maxims of the philosophers are not followed by anyone. The Word of God on the other hand commands admiration for its brevity and praise for its effectiveness.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus, influential Syrian theologian of the School of Antioch, and Christian Bishop of Cyrrhus (423-457).
Greatmartyr St. Panteleimon

(July 27

The Holy Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon was born in 284 AD in the city of Nikomedia into the family of the illustrious pagan Eustorgias, and he was named Pantoleon. His mother Ebbula was a Christian. She wanted to raise her son in the Christian faith, but she died when the future great martyr was still a young lad. His father sent Pantoleon to a fine pagan school, at the completion of which the youth began to study the medical art at Nikomedia under the renowned physician Euphrosynos, and he came to the attention of the emperor Maximian (284-305), who wished to see him at court. During this time there dwelt secretly at Nikomedia the Priest-Martyr presbyters Hermolaos, Hermippos and Hermocrates - survivors in the Nikomedia Church after the burning of 20,000 Christians in the year 303 AD. Saint Hermolaos saw Pantoleon time and again, when he came to their hideout. One time the presbyter summoned the youth to the hideout and spoke about the Christian faith; after this Pantoleon visited every day with the priest/martyr Hermolaos.

One time the youth saw upon a street a dead child, bitten by a viper, which was still alongside. Pantoleon began to pray to the Lord Jesus Christ for the resuscitation of the dead child and for the death of the venomous reptile. He firmly resolved that if his prayer were fulfilled, he would become a follower of Christ and accept Baptism. The child revived, and the viper shattered into pieces before the eyes of Pantoleon.

After this miracle Pantoleon was baptized by Saint Hermolaos with the name Panteleimon (meaning "all-merciful"). Conversing with Eustorgias, Saint Panteleimon prepared him for the acceptance of Christianity, and when the father beheld, how his son healed a blind man by invoking the Name of Jesus Christ, he then believed in Christ and was baptized together with the blind man restored to sight.

After the death of his father, Saint Panteleimon dedicated his life to the suffering, the sick, the misfortunate and the needy. He treated without charge all those who turned to him, healing them in the Name of Jesus Christ. He visited those held captive in prison -- being usually Christians, who filled all the prisons, and he healed them of their wounds. In a short while accounts about the charitable physician spread throughout all the city. And forsaking the other doctors, the inhabitants began to turn only to Saint Panteleimon.

The envious doctors made a denunciation to the emperor, that Saint Panteleimon was healing Christian prisoners. Maximian urged the saint to disprove the denunciation and offer sacrifice to idols, but Saint Panteleimon confessed himself a Christian and right in front of the eyes of the emperor he healed a paralytic in the Name of Jesus Christ. The ferocious Maximian executed the healed man who was glorifying Jesus Christ, and gave Saint Panteleimon over to fierce torture. The Lord appeared to the saint and strengthened him before his sufferings. They suspended the Greatmartyr Panteleimon from a tree and tore at him with iron hooks, burned him with fire and then stretched him on the rack, threw him in boiling oil, and cast him into the sea with a stone about his neck. Throughout all these tortures the great martyr remained unhurt and with conviction he denounced the emperor.
During this time there was brought before the court of the pagans the Presbyters Hermolaos, Hermippos and Hermocrates. All three firmly confessed their faith in the Savior and were beheaded.

By order of the emperor they threw the Greatmartyr Panteleimon to wild beasts for devouring at the circus. But the beasts lay at his feet and shoved at each other in trying to be touched by his hand. The spectators gathered together and began to shout: "Great God of the Christians!" The enraged Maximian ordered the soldiers to stab with the sword anyone who glorified the Name of Christ, and to cut off the head of the Greatmartyr Panteleimon.

They led the saint to the place of execution and tied him to an olive tree. When the greatmartyr prayed, one of the soldiers struck him with a sword, but the sword became soft like wax, and inflicted no wound. The saint ended the prayer, and a Voice was heard, calling the passion-bearer by name and summoning him to the Heavenly Kingdom. Hearing the Voice from Heaven, the soldiers fell down on their knees before the holy martyr and begged forgiveness. The executioners refused to continue with the execution, but the Greatmartyr Panteleimon bid them to fulfill the command of the emperor, saying that otherwise they would have no share with him in the future life. The soldiers tearfully took their leave of the saint with a kiss.

It is said that the olive tree to which he was tied, immediately bloomed and brought forth fruit. Hearing of this, the Emperor ordered that the tree be cut down and that the body be burned. The soldiers, however, did not return to the palace. They and other Christians took the holy body and buried it on July 27, 305 AD. The body was anointed with myrrh and buried outside of the city in the Place of the Scholar Adamantinos.

The Greatmartyr Panteleimon is venerated in the Orthodox Church as a mighty saint, the protector of soldiers. This aspect of his veneration is derived from his first name Pantoleon, which means "a lion in everything". His second name, Panteleimon, Παντελεήμων, given him at Baptism, which means "all-merciful", reveals itself in the veneration of the greatmartyr as healer. The connection between these two patronages of the saint is readily apparent in that soldiers, receiving wounds more frequently than others, are more in need of a physician-healer. Wherefore Christians in waging spiritual warfare also have recourse to this saint with a petition to heal the wounds of the soul.

The name of the holy Greatmartyr and Healer Panteleimon is invoked in the Sacrament of Anointing the Sick, at the Blessing of Water and in the Prayer for the Sick.

Pantaleon's relics, venerated at Nicomedia, were transferred to Constantinople. Major shrines dedicated to the Greatmartyr were erected in the Jordan Desert and in Constantinople (by the Emperor Justinian, 6th c.) His venerable head is now located at the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon on Mt. Athos. Numerous churches, shrines, and monasteries have been named for him; in the West most often as St. Pantaleon and in the East as St. Panteleimon.

In the East, many monasteries and churches bear the name or hold relics of St Panteleimon: St. Panteleimon Monastery at Mount Athos (11th c.), Church of St. Panteleimon in Gorno Nerezi, in the Republic of Macedonia (12th c.), St. John the Baptist Church in Gandzasar, Nagorno Karabagh (13th c., Armenia), Putna Monastery (15th c., Romania), etc.

In the West, at the Basilica of the Vierzehnheiligen near Staffelstein in Franconia, St. Pantaleon is venerated with his hands nailed to his head, reflecting another legend about his death. After the Black Death of the mid-14th century in Western Europe, as a patron saint of physicians and midwives, he came to be regarded as one of the fourteen guardian martyrs, the Fourteen Holy Helpers. Relics of the saint are to be found at Saint Denis in Paris; his head is venerated at Lyon. A Romanesque church was dedicated to him in Cologne in the 9th century at latest; that church was partly built by the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor, Theophano, who married the Holy Roman Emperor Otto II in 972.

St. Panteleimon’s nameday is celebrated on July 27th in the East and August 9th in the West.

Compiled by Fr. Vasile from various sources.
The Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon at Mount Athos

The St. Panteleimon’s Monastery (Greek: Άγιος Παντελεήμων, Agios Panteleimon; Russian: Ρωσικό, Rossikon) is one of the twenty monasteries located on the peninsula of Mount Athos in northeastern Greece. The monastery is on southwestern side of the peninsula. St. Panteleimon’s has been inhabited for the past two-hundred-plus years by monks of Russian origin and is referred to often as the Russian monastery (Ρωσικόν, Rossikon). The monastery is ranked nineteenth in the hierarchical order among the twenty monasteries on Mount Athos. The monks live in a cenobitic (communal) life. The monastery feast day is that of St. Panteleimon, July 27.

A monastery has existed for nearly a thousand years near the site of the present monastery, with the original buildings dating back to the eleventh century. The monastery was rebuilt after a fire during the thirteenth century with financial support from Emperor Andronicus Paleologos and Serbian rulers. The monastery experienced cyclic periods of economic prosperity and recession.

The construction of the present monastery was carried out during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, with the financial help of the ruler of Moldo-Wallachia, Skarlatos Kallimaches. Both Greek and Russian monks occupied the monastery over the centuries with the population strength alternating between them. Since 1875 the Russians have been the dominant ethnicity. In 1875 a decree was imposed that the services held in the katholikon must be chanted in both Greek and Church Slavonic. At its height in 1903, over 1,440 monks lived in the monastery.

The monastery possesses a number of other properties, including fifteen chapels, five kellia, the Chromitsa metochion, the Bogoroditsa skete, Nea Thebais, and three other sketes. With its many-storied buildings and tall cupolas on the churches, the monastery appears to be a small city. Until destroyed by a recent fire (1968), one wing of the monastery was used as the guest quarters, with capacity of 1,000 monks.

The Katholikon (main church) is dedicated to Saint Panteleimon. The construction was begun in 1812 and completed in 1821. It was built in the style of the Athonic katholika. The interior was frescoed in 19th century in Russian style. Into the monastery are many chapels dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin, Saint Mitrophanes, Ascesion, Saint Sergios, Saint Demetrios, the Archangels, Saint Gerasimos, Saints Constantine and Helen, Vladimir and Olga, Saint Alexander Nevskij and the Holy Canopy.

Opposite of the entrance of the katholikon is the refectory, built in 1890, frescoed seven years later and planned to host about 800 people. Near the entrance of the refectory stands the phiale (well) for the blessing of the waters.

The treasures of the Monastery of St. Panteleimon are mainly of Russian style; these include numerous portable icons, various vestments, crosses, pectorals, chalices, and Gospels. The monastery library consists of over 20,000 printed books, in both Greek and Slavonic. There are over 1,920 manuscripts in the Greek and Slavic languages.
To be a parish priest is a tremendous privilege. One becomes a part of so many lives, sharer in so many joys and triumphs, conduit of so much grace. Often I wonder, “In what other vocation would I know such wonderful people so intimately?”

In my priestly highlight reel there is no footage from grand banquets or the interminable meetings. Just precious moments of quiet, private beauty: watching the first dance of a couple who overcame all odds to be married; seeing a child who needed baptism right after birth walk up on her own for Communion years later; enjoying a birthday recital for a nonagenarian given by his grandchildren; hearing a confession that marked the turning-point in a life ravaged by severe depression. No one publishes a commemorative album for what really counts in ministry.

Nothing before ordination could prepare me for the immediate and unearned reverence from so many; nor for the contempt of a certain few.

When I first came to my parish, we lost several parishioners in a short time. I thought it hard to do funerals for people I never met. Through the years I came to know my people. Now funerals are truly hard.

I would have been a better deacon if I could have been a priest for a few years first. He could be a better priest, perhaps, who could walk a few miles in the bishop’s shoes first.

Parishioners with burdens on their conscience are slow to come to confession for fear that the priest will forever remember their sin. Not so: the grace that descends to wash away transgressions, I find, wipes clean my memory also.

A thought after confessions at camp: Millstones should be more readily available. For those inclined to abuse children.

In fourteen years I have made almost every mistake in the book. But the parishioners I truly hurt have all been quick to pardon; whereas the ones who blame me for their own problems never, ever forgive.

One of the greatest sins a priest can commit against his flock—aside from the obvious and unspeakable—is to be slow to admit, “I don’t know.”

There is a second like unto it: faking feelings.

Quotation for inscription on seminary walls: Thales was asked what was difficult; he answered, “To know thyself.” Then he was asked what was easy; “To give advice.”

Parish finances should be no more complicated than the average household’s. How can parishioners vote on budgets and financial reports they can’t understand? Complex accounting leads to a dictatorship of the treasurer.

Plutocracy is a poor system of governance always, and most especially for a Church.

Saints walk among us and we know it not. Many “ordinary” people, I have witnessed, choose lives of extraordinary sacrifice and forbearance. Whereas the “important” people are driven by jejune passions and fears.

Stewardship has been a failure, both as an exercise in proportional thanksgiving and as a source of reliable revenue for serious ministries. Should we return to the dues systems of the 1970s? If we adjusted rates for inflation: might we double our churches’ revenues … or lose half our adherents?

After I was first ordained, a veteran priest at the Archdiocese told me that the schedule can be demanding. Actually, the word he used was cruelt: cruel for priests, cruel for their families. His words come often to mind.
I have yet to find a heterodox church of equivalent size to one of ours that does not have at least double the staffing.

There is a special place in my prayers—and I trust in the coming Kingdom—for parishioners who open their vacation homes to priests’ families. Without hyperbole, these people save lives.

Clergy-killers exist. Our next Clergy-Laity Congress would do well to invest a plenary session in discussing current research on this phenomenon.

Democracy in the Orthodox Church? Yes, please! Can you imagine? If, before elections, there were an open debate about the qualifications and track record of Parish Council candidates?!?

“The carpenter solves every problem with hammer and saw.” How hard it is to convince some of our lay-people that the Church is not to be run like a law firm or a pizzeria.

Satan could not succeed in emptying the churches with Roman persecutions, Turkish domination, or Marxist oppression. Then he devised Sunday morning school sports.

Regarding time management: In recent years the greatest boons to the priest have been email and smartphones. The worst black hole? Ditto.

There is a temptation to preach the Church rather than “Christ and Him crucified.” But what does it profit a man to know the color symbolism of iconography, if he does not practice seventy-times-seven forgiveness?

My finest pastoral moments have been the times I kept silent.

Regarding guru priests: Susan B. Anthony words ring true, “I distrust those people who know so well what God wants them to do to their fellows, because it always coincides with their own desires.”

Of early Church writings, I am haunted most by the Epistle to Diognetus. It defends the Christians for living profoundly different lives. Dare any apologist make such a claim in the sports-addicted and celebrity-sick society that is America today?

Some have the goal of establishing Orthodoxy as the fourth major faith in America; others, to establish it as the major faith among its adherents.

We live in the day Huxley foretold: “Everyone belongs to everyone else.” Feigned prudery and willful naïveté keep us from talking to our children about chastity at an age early enough to make a difference. They lose their virginity, lest we lose our dignity.

The trends in Archdiocesan Registry statistics (at www.goarch.org) should be a topic for consideration at every meeting at every level of our Church.

If each of our families gave up cable TV for one month and added the difference to their stewardship, no goal would elude us.

For any parish fundraiser, if volunteers donated the minimum-wage value of all their man-hours, the total would exceed the net of the actual event every time.

So often true: "Humor is the atmosphere in which grace most flourishes." (H.W. Beecher)

Sloth defined (for priests): It’s easier to follow the rules than to think for yourself.

The most effective youth ministry: Whatever gets a dad to worship with his family every single Sunday. Research shows that this more than anything keeps children in the Church into adulthood. If the Church is losing its youth, we should not blame the fathers in the collars, but the fathers not in the pews.

Who are the moneychangers of our temples? Are they not the hawkers of churchy gewgaws and the
purveyors of countless books? The one book that is needful we hardly know, and there is no honor for a keychain icon when it is stuffed into a back pocket.

Once said of a popular preacher: “He can preach Christ better, but he cannot preach a better Christ.” This applies to a parish priest: others may surpass him in liturgics, administration, or working the crowd; but their chalices do not commune a better Body and Blood of Christ.

The priest is a spiritual father—one who prepares those in his care for maturity, independence, godly and reasoned decision-making. Some parishioners wish instead for a spiritual daddy. These are dependent personalities who refuse to grow up, who crave incessant emotional support. No progress is possible with such people; they become carrion for the gurus to pick over.

I have yet to meet the person who touts hypakoe (obedience) as the queen of virtues who is not himself oppositional and defiant when he fails to get what he wants.

In my last year of seminary, I went to every veteran priest I admired and asked, “What would you have done differently?” To a man, they all said, “Spend more time with my own family.”

The greatest threat arising in my time as a priest is the mainstreaming of militant unbelief after 9/11. Faith in “Science” has grown into a quasi-religion; old vices are now touted as social virtues. Through popular culture’s subtle propaganda our most intelligent young people will be coaxed from us and made janissaries of the New Atheism. Darwin prophesied a “descent of man” that will surely follow. How marvelous if our Church would mount an organized response to this trend!

Metropolitan Nicholas formally installed me in my parish in September 2000. At the end of the day he said, “Just love them.” A better Position Description I have not yet found.

Often while writing sermons I recall Pascal’s apology: This is long because I lacked the time to make it shorter.

“Whom the Lord loves, He chastens.” Sometimes we feel wounded when we merely have been wakened.

From the heart I have prayed before the Great Entrance each time: “Those who love us, and those who hate us, O God, forgive.” Even so, Amen.

To be a parish priest is a tremendous privilege. One becomes a part of so many lives, sharer in so many joys and triumphs, conduit of so much grace. Often I wonder, “In what other vocation would I know such wonderful people so intimately?”

Fr. Mark Sietsema is the parish priest of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Lansing, MI.
Wisdom of the Past
On Returning to the Sources

"If you examine the history of the Church at the time when the direct Apostles of Christ were active, you will see that it was built not on bells or bell towers, not on icons, not on glorious temples, not on elaborate altars, not on shining vestments and not on brilliant theology. It was built on the fellowship of people -- in faith, prayer and mutual aid. 'Why do we have to constantly return to the sources of the Church?' In a way each person is purified when he returns to the origins of his spiritual birth, birth, childhood, or spiritual infancy, the time when he took his first steps in the spiritual life. We're always oriented by this, it is how we always correct our path, our Christian path, our churchly path. We correct it through the gospel.

"Church history is a somewhat melancholy study because essentially its is a description of people's sins. The facts of Church history essentially tell us about the falling away of people from Christ, their betrayal of Him in words and deeds. Often the history of the Church is the history of its art, culture, philosophy, wars, conflicts, the persecution of non-believers, and so on. But to find within Christian history the deeper History of the Church with a capital "H," is quite a difficult art. We can compare Church History to a large river which after a flood or some catastrophe carries debris, corpses, logs. Where is the clean water? We have to direct our attention to the early evangelical apostolic Christianity. This is what the Fathers of the Church taught us. The Fathers of the Church are its founders. They are responsible for the Church's foundation as a structure and they had two criteria: first, they always referred to the Apostles; second, they were always open to the world."

Alexander Men, About Christ and the Church

Spiritual Counsels of Saint Seraphim

He who loves himself cannot love God. But he who, for love of God, does not love himself, loves God… A man who has taken upon himself to travel the path of internal mindfulness must have above all the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom. Upon his mind there must always be engraved these words of the prophet: Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice in Him with trembling (Ps. 2:11)... Those who have truly decided to serve the Lord God should practice the remembrance of God and uninterrupted prayer to Jesus Christ, mentally saying: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, by the prayers of the Mother of God, have mercy on me a sinner; or one may have recourse directly to the Most Holy Mother of God, praying: Most Holy Mother of God, save us; or one may repeat the angelic greeting: Rejoice, Mother of God, Virgin... By such exercises in preserving oneself from dispersion and keeping peace of conscience one may draw near to God and be united to Him. For in the words of St. Isaac the Syrian: "Without uninterrupted prayer we cannot draw near to God" (Homily 69).

St. Seraphim of Sarov

The Worshipping Church

In the Eucharist those who are separated and estranged from each other by human frailty are brought together into the perfect and intimate unity of the One Body in Christ. Human exclusiveness and the mutual impenetrability of men are overcome. The faithful are "co-members" of each other through Christ in the Church, or even "con-corporeal" with each other and with Christ in His Body. To use the phrase of St. Cyril of Alexandria, in the Eucharist the essential unity of Christians finds its perfect expression. This unity is not restricted or confined to those who are taking actual part in a particular celebration on a particular day.

Each celebration is in reality universal, and the Eucharist is ever one. Christ is never divided. Every Liturgy is celebrated in communion with the whole Church, Catholic and Universal. It is celebrated in the name, and by the authority of the whole Church. Spiritually, in every celebration the whole Church, “the whole company of heaven”, takes an invisible, yet real, part.

This unity extends not only to all places but also to all times. It includes all generations and all ages. The living and the departed are to be “commemorated” at every celebration of the Divine Liturgy. It is not only a remembrance, in a narrow and psychological sense of the word, not only a witness of our human sympathy and concern, but rather an insight into the universal fellowship of all believers, living and departed, in Christ, the common Risen Lord. In this sense, the Eucharist is a manifestation of the mystery of the Church, or rather of the mystery of the Whole Christ. As has been already stated, every celebration is identical with the last Supper.

Fr. Georges Florovsky
“Here is a photo of the Chief Nursing Officer Memorial Hospital, Karen Boyer, with the fabulous Mary Rose Davis! We are honored and blessed to have Mary Rose here at Memorial; she is incredibly helpful and welcoming to our guests. Not only does she volunteer at the Front Lobby desk, but at the Ronald McDonald and also the “We Care” meals that St Paul’s provide. Memorial now will be honoring volunteers of 20 years or more with the “Mary Rose” award!
We also love having Gabrielle Franklin as a volunteer; she is a huge help and pleasure to have in our Gift Shop!”
- Pictures courtesy of the Memorial Appreciation Luncheon.
Fathers Day at St. Paul's was a success! Many thanks to the GOYAns and their families who brought the yummies.

Jae Crawford, Abby Crawford

Stephen Butchko, Zach Sherman

Tahlia Sherman, Aubriana Butchko

Kayton Usher, Aubriana Butchko

Kayton Usher, Aubriana Butchko and future GOYAn, Katherine Usher
In order to feed the multitudes, one must plan ahead.
“Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.” Unknown
CALLING ALL PARISHIONERS
We have begun preparing for our 67th Annual Greek Festival scheduled for October 12th, 13th & 14th. This is not only a parish project, but one that the entire Savannah community looks forward to every year. Manpower continues to be one of our major concerns, especially during the daytime. We ask all of you to let us know when you will be available during the three days of festival as well with helping with the cooking and baking preparations. We especially extend an open invitation to those of you who have recently joined the St. Paul’s family. Your stewardship is important to us—not just financially, but also your time & talents. Please join us as we prepare for this big event.

Dolmades are being made this month
Please see the calendar for tentative dates for spanakopita in early August.
Pastry baking dates: Kourabiethes will be baked Sept 11 & 12. Baklava will be prepared 23, 24 & 25. We will have a Festival Committee Mtg. July 16th. Please Mark your calendars and save the dates!!

BOOKSTORE
Need a gift? A book on our Greek Orthodox faith? Charcoal or Incense? An Icon for a Name Day, Birthday, Baptism, Wedding, or for yourself? Stop by the Bookstore, we have it all. And can special order, too.

From the Parish Council President
Parishioners of St. Paul’s: You may have noticed the TV on display in the Hellenic Center. We would like to mount a larger, big screen smart TV in the Hellenic Center meeting room. Not only will this modernize the meeting room, but it will also be a way to showcase past and upcoming events during coffee hours as well as honor the lives of our departed loved ones during memorial coffee hours. It can also be used as a display during the festival. We are requesting donations for this project. Please contact Leah Stoupenos (912-897-2744) if you would like to contribute to this project.

Also, we are still in need of volunteers/leaders for both our Joy/Hope and nursery programs. Please contact Jennifer at the front office if you wish to assist with either of these programs.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS
Hope you are enjoying your warm summer days and the slower time of summer. Even though summertime is slower, Philoptochos is still very busy. Last month we feed dinner to the guests at the Ronald McDonald house, and served lunch to the families of the ICU at Memorial Hospital through the “We Care” program. We also had several memorial coffees, sent a representative to the Church Laity conference, and began planning our Savannah International Food and Wine Tasting.

Save the date for the Savannah International Food and Wine Tasting to February 24, 2018. We have changed the time of year of our wine tasting. It is our hopes that February will be a better time of year for our wine tasting, and we will not have to compete with the distractions that September brings. Our focus this year will be the wine tasting, and updating the event. If you want to be involved with the planning, please attend the meetings and or contact Jamie Newman or Lynn Blenkhorn, Chairpersons, for more information.

Thank you to the ladies who came to the center and helped with the Festival baking of Pasticcio. This month, the Dolmades will be made, and prepared in two week sessions. They will have a night crew to prepare the meat mixture and clean grape leaves on July 18, and 25, and then they will roll, cook and freeze on July 19, 20, 26, and 27. Many hands are needed in making dolmadies, and there are lots of different task to do. If you can not roll, there are other things you can do to help. Please plan on attending the festival baking. It is a great way to volunteer for your church and a great way to fellowship with your church family. Spanikopita will be made in August, no dates yet, but we will keep you posted. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

We have several upcoming coffee’s, and we will need help. July 16th, we will host a coffee for Fr. & Presb. Michael Matsko for their 50th Year Wedding Anniversary. July 23rd, we will have a 15 year memorial for the memory of George Pahno. And August 6th, we will have a five year memorial in the memory of George Meritt. If you didn’t know, we have started a small food pantry at the center. From time to time, people come to the center asking for food and help. If you would like to donate food to the pantry, please bring instant items and or cans with pull tab openings. Easy to eat, and open items and items that do not expire soon are the best items to get. We are still collecting Coke can tabs. Our collection jar is on the front table at the Hellenic Center. We have had to empty it a few time, and take tabs to the Ronald McDonald house. Thanks for your donations!
St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine Essay Contest

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in America values the history of its Church and people in America. The first Greek known to have arrived on U.S. soil was Don Theodore. He served on the crew with the Narváez expedition which according to its ship log of 1528, anchored in what is known today as Tampa Bay, Florida.

250 years later, 500 Greeks with their priest, Father Grigorios, arrived in St. Augustine, Florida. Andrew Turnbull contracted them and 900 other people from Mediterranean countries under the British indentured Servitude Act. They would be granted freedom after 7 years of working a 100,000 acres tract into a profitable plantation. Today, the city of New Smyrna Beach is founded on the remains of this highly successful, yet failed, indigo plantation.

The Shrine is built in memory of the Greek Orthodox colonists. Why? Write a 1000-word essay showing your understanding of what happened in 1777 to the survivors of the New Smyrna Colony. Why are they remembered in St. Augustine? Why is the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine built in the Avero House? Why is it called a living memorial?

904.829.8205 ~ info@stphotios.com

St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine
P.O. Box 1960
St. Augustine, FL 32085

The St. Photios Foundation invites all Greek 13 to 19 years of age to research and prepare a 1000-word essay. The Essay Committee accepts submissions through December 31, 2017. The committee sends blind copies of the essays to three judges on January 3rd. They are ranked and returned to the Committee by January 25th. Results will be posted by February 1, 2018.

Prizes are awarded to the top ranking three:
1st place wins $500
2nd place wins $250
3rd place wins $100

All essays become the property of the St. Photios Foundation. Please email your essay with a cover sheet detailing your home parish, name, address and phone number.

The Shrine Essay Program is made possible through the generosity of the Estate of Kalithea D’Anna in memory of her husband Constantine. It is sponsored also by the AMAA Speedyway Chapter #410.

St. Paul Church
514 W. Anderson Street
Savannah, GA 31401
Makarios III Patriarchal Orthodox Seminary Kitchen Project:

“The key to our seminary kitchen had gone missing since before Christmas. Two weeks ago, with the Archbishop traveling out of the country, the key was returned. When we finally got into the kitchen we discovered a complete disaster. A number of leaks in the roof had caused damage not just to the ceiling, but to all of our cabinets, counters and storage areas. Not only that, but an infestation of rats chewed up everything that wasn’t metal, and then invited all their friends to come and join the party. But not only that, the kitchen seems also to be the final resting place of 1970s and ‘80s already used and donated kitchen equipment, none of which works anymore. Needless to say, even if the Archbishop raised all the money we need, we still couldn’t open the school because we have no means to feed our students. With the blessing of our Archbishop, I am authorised to say to you, we need your help. To facilitate this, I have produced a list of what we need to overhaul our kitchen along with the prices. If you would like to adopt and pay for a microwave, or a deep fryer, or a stainless steel counter top or cabinet, or cutlery, you can contribute the amount to this special OCMC Kenya Seminary Repair Fund (Link Here: https://www.ocmc.org/donate/donate.aspx?FundId=12. You could join up with another person, or your fellowship group, or your parish and adopt a cabinet or appliance, or undertake to replace the exhaust fan or hood. Or even help us finish our debt payment once and for all. Let me know what you have done so that I can make sure someone doesn’t reduplicate your effort. And when we purchase the equipment, we will take a picture of it in our kitchen and send it on to you.

I will also be reaching out to other Orthodox institutions in the US. I have no idea what response I will get from them. And remember, we don’t just need this new kitchen, but a further $3000 to close our debt, and then some major institutional help to cover our operating expenses to the tune of $50,000/month. I personally don’t know how we are going to do it. His Eminence is looking to me to help extract us from this hole, not just with the kitchen, which is plenty daunting enough as it is, but our entire funding deficit. I can only hope that God knows more than I do, and that He is able to do more than I can think or imagine in our case. Please pray that God and his people would come to our aid. And that we would be good stewards of what He has entrusted to us.”

St Paul’s note: A complete listing of what is needed, with costs, is available. Copies can be found in the lobby of the Hellenic Center on the table outside the Bookstore.
Families who turned in a 2017 Pledge Form

Please note: This list is derived from the collection of pledge forms. If your name isn’t on this list, we haven’t received a pledge card from you. For those of you that have submitted stewardship payments, but not the card, we appreciate your payments. However, we are unable to determine if that payment is for the month or the year, and the card makes it easier to do so. Additionally, a pledge card helps us determine whether you are in good standing and helps to avoid any misunderstanding. Thank you!
PLEASE HELP SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE BULLETIN!

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COASTAL BUSINESS STORAGE
Volunteers for the month

**July 2nd**
Ushers: Tony Morris, Gabrielle Franklin, Jimmy Anestos, Peter Vatistas, **Billy Norse, Michael Roach**, Alex Koukoulas (c)
Nursery: *Open w/parental supervision*
Bookstore: Marie Danos

**July 9th**
Ushers: Tommy Danos, George Polites, George Donkar (C), Sean Woods, Brad Sherman (A), Mark Brown, *George Vaveris, Alex Koukoulas (C)*,
Nursery: *Open w/parental supervision*
Bookstore: Mary Ann Gonis

**July 16th**
Ushers: Pete Simon, Peggy Pittas, **Leah Stoupe- nos, Tom Sideris, Adam Deleanides, Jerry Welsh, Sr**
Nursery: *Open w/parental supervision*
Bookstore: Anna Gounaris

**July 23rd**
Ushers: Tony Morris, Gabrielle Franklin, Jimmy Anestos, **Peter Vatistas, Billy Norse, Michael Roach**, *Alex Koukoulas (c)*
Nursery: *Open w/parental supervision*
Bookstore: Connie Preston

**July 30th**
Ushers: Tommy Danos, *George Polites, George Donkar (C), **Sean Woods, Brad Sherman (A), Mark Brown, George Vaveris, Alex Koukoulas (C)*,
Nursery: *Open w/parental supervision*
Bookstore: Helen Xenakis

* denotes person opening;  
** denotes person closing
St. Paul’s Greek Orthodox Church
14 West Anderson Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401

Address Service Requested

Happy 4th of July!!!

Next Festival cooking dates:

- July 18-20th
- July 25-27th
- August 2-4th
- Sept 11-12th
- Sept 23-25th

Real Greeks Roll Their Own

Dolmades
Pastries
Spanakopita