



The Advent Prophecy



The ROCOR
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Communities 2016
Retreat & Conference
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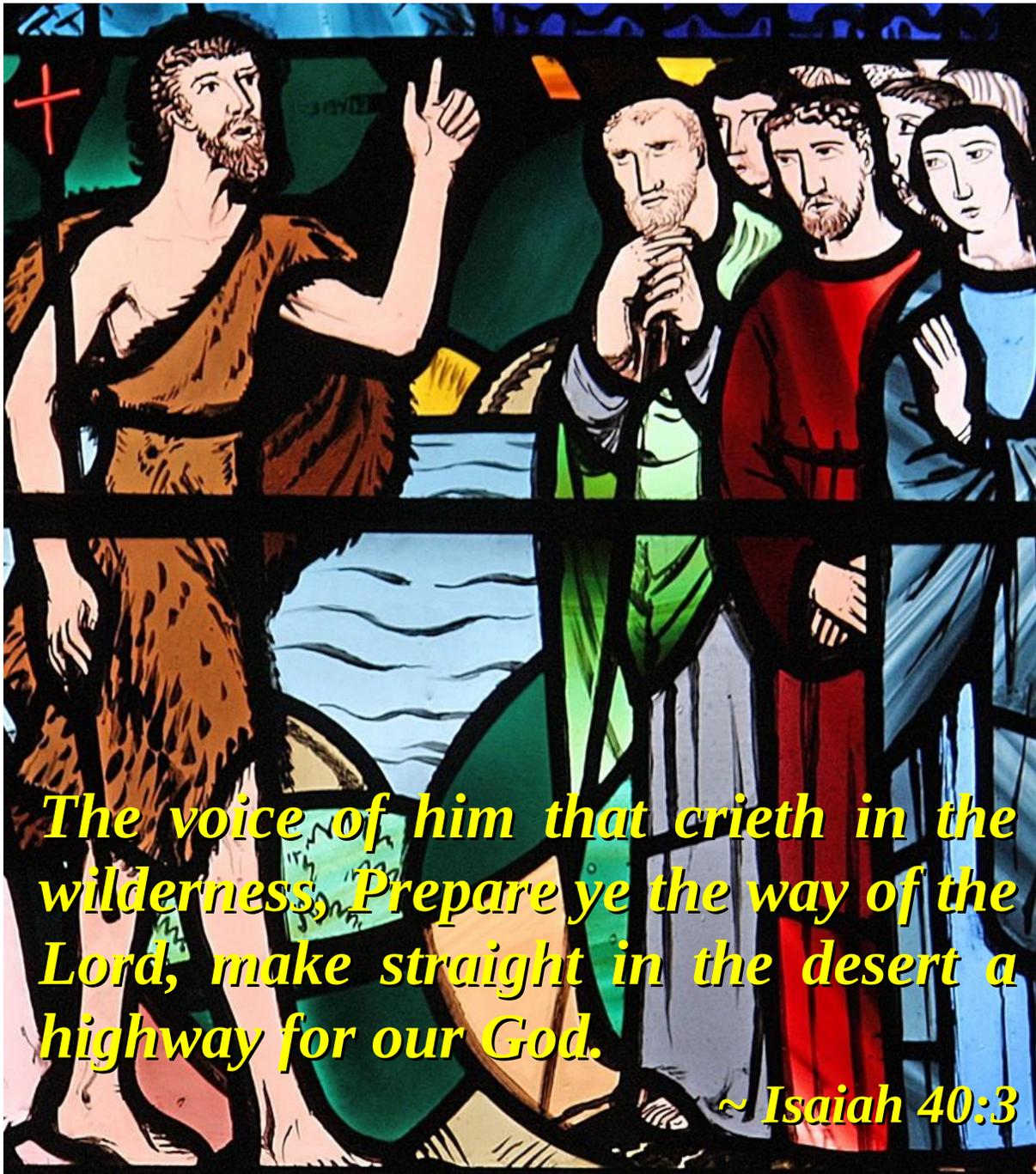


Highlights from the 2016 Annual Retreat

THE WONDERWORKER

The Official Newsletter of the Western Rite Communities of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia

Advent 2016



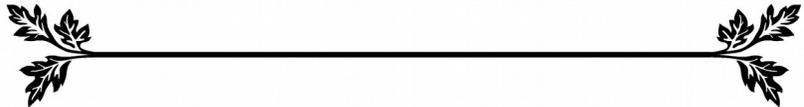
The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

~ Isaiah 40:3

From the Dean's Desk



Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son, Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the Last Day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to life immortal, through Him Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages, Amen.



Archpriest Mark Rowe, Dean of ROCOR Western Rite Communities

Brethren,

Greetings to all during this Advent season! As we anticipate and prepare for the greatest gift of the season- the Incarnation and Nativity of Christ; may we take the time to thank God for the manifold blessings we have received and continue to give thanks to Almighty God. The collect above is truly a majestic prayer that reminds us that we have available to us the armor of God- the armor of Light. As the Apostle Paul tells us as well as the Church in Galatia, ‘...Those who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ (Gal 3:27).’ Christ is about to take flesh into the Divine Godhead for our salvation and that of the whole world.

In Advent, we prepare for the great Incarnation and Nativity of Christ. We hearken unto the Forerunner- the ‘voice crying in the wilderness (Is 40:3 / Jn 1:23),’ - and his call to repentance. We attempt to spiritually pave the way in our hearts to receive Him- the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

We await Emmanuel- ‘God with us (Is 7:14 / Mt 1:23).’ No greater reality has ever been at the forefront of the Christian life than ‘God with us’- Emmanuel. Nothing is more important in history.

As we prepare ourselves for the Nativity, we take note of the humble manner in which our Savior comes to save us. No greater gift has ever been given. No single event has ever had the impact on mankind as this humble beginning as we look toward the crib. And, lest we get too caught up in the season, we must step back and remember to ask ourselves why He had to come in the first place. We are reminded that the wood of the crib will also foreshadow the wood of the Cross.

For now we prepare for this humble arrival. We prepare with prayer and fasting and we take spiritual inventory of ourselves as we await this most precious gift- The Christ child. Emmanuel. “And the Word was made Flesh...and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14).”

“For as by one man’s disobedience sin entered, and death obtained (a place) through sin; so also by the obedience of one man, righteousness having been introduced, shall cause life to fructify in those persons who in times past were dead. ... He who is the Word, recapitulating Adam in Himself, rightly receives a birth, enabling Him to gather up Adam (into Himself), from Mary, who was as yet a virgin.” – St Irenaeus of Lyons



The Advent Wreath

One of the most beautiful traditions of Advent is the lighting of The Advent Wreath; the purpose of which is to deepen your understanding of Christmas as the Church prepares you once again to go in heart and mind unto Bethlehem to see the loving-kindness of our God. As time passes from Advent Sunday to the Vigil of Christmas, the wreath grows in the brightness of illumination - symbolic of the coming of Christ who is the light of the world. The prophecies that are read with the lighting of the Advent Wreath help you to relate to the people of the Old Testament who waited in anticipation for the coming day of the Lord, as the mystery of the Incarnation was unfolded before them by the Lord's prophets through the centuries who prepared the way for His Coming.

Only as you understand the message of the Old Testament, do you come to appreciate the fact of the Incarnation of Christ: that the Second Person of the Godhead humbled Himself to take our nature upon Himself in every way - sin being the only exception. Christ became man in order that He might offer Himself upon Calvary's Cross before His Father in heaven for the sins of the world.

The use of evergreens symbolizes the life that is everlasting by faith in Christ. The bending of the branch so that the ends touch further symbolize that life in Christ is without end because Christ Himself is from everlasting: the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

The candles are symbolic of the coming into the world of God's Son. The first candle, The Prophecy Candle, announces the period of waiting upon God for the fulfillment of His promise. The second candle is The Bethlehem Candle and is symbolic of the preparations being made to cradle the Christ Child. The third candle is The Shepherd Candle and typifies the act of worshipping Christ. The fourth candle is The Angel's Candle and encourages the forth-telling of the Good News to the world.

The Advent Wreath comes to us from pagan sources and has been adapted by the Church to proclaim that the people who walk in darkness have had a great light shine upon them. Advent sets the mood of waiting in the dark. Since Christ was born on the day when the light of the sun begins once again to gain ascendancy over the darkness, the use of The Advent Wreath is an appropriate custom with which to proclaim this truth.

THE BLESSING OF AN ADVENT WREATH

V. Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

R. Who hath made heaven and earth.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

Let us Pray.

O LORD Jesus Christ, who art the true light that lightest every man that cometh into the world (+)bless, we pray thee, this wreath and its candles which we shall light in preparation for thy coming; and so enkindle our hearts with the fire of thy love that we may receive thee with joy and gladness, and evermore stand fast in the faith. Who livest and reignest, unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Advent Prophecies



(Advent 1) Jeremiah 31:31-34

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

(Advent 2) Isaiah 40:1-8

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lords hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

(Advent 3) Malachi 3:1-6

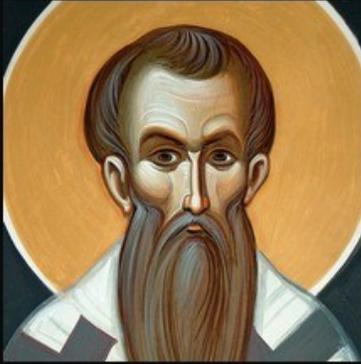
BEHOLD, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiners fire, and like fullers soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

(Advent 4) Malachi 4:1-6

FOR, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts. Remember ye the law of

Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Saint Basil



Human life is but of brief duration. 'All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God shall stand forever' (Isa. 40:6, 8). Let us hold fast to the commandment that abides, and despise the unreality that passes away.



In Defense of Western Orthodoxy

By Father Matthew Joyner

For over a century, the question of the Western Rite within the canonical Orthodox Church has been one of tremendous debate. Many Orthodox Christians of Western ancestry find within it a home, an answer to their deepest longings for a “rebaptism” of Western Christianity, and an opportunity to draw Western Christians back into the fold of the True Church. Others see the Western Rite as something foreign, misleading, and dangerous. These see the Western Rite as an innovation, and even (possibly) heretical.

What, though, are we Orthodox, to think of the Western Rite? Is it dangerous and wrong, or is it holy and good? What is the substance of the objections which well-intentioned Orthodox people have, clergy and laity alike? In what follows, I will look at several frequent arguments which are utilized in the opposition to the use of the

Western Rite. I will examine them, and will answer them, not only from a Western Orthodox perspective, but also with honest evaluation from Eastern positions.

I will apologize here at the outset for the blunt, and possibly even polemical nature of much of what is said here. However, as our culture quickly descends into a politically correct world, where no one says what he or she actually means, bluntness is sometimes needed to make a firm point. Forgive me, a sinner, for the sake of Christ.

The Western Rite is Simply Reverse Uniatism

Perhaps the most frequent objection to the Western Rite movement is that it is simply “reverse [Uniatism](#).” Of course, as many of us know, the Unia, or the Eastern Catholics, are those groups of people in historically Orthodox lands who, under political pressure, came under the Roman Pope, while retaining their Orthodox liturgical rites.

The claim that the Western Rite Churches are simply Orthodox Uniates is not only untrue, it shows something of a problematic ignorance of what the Unia actually is. First, Uniate Churches are *former* Orthodox bodies, which came under Rome for reasons which were mainly political, not religious in the least, and most of the time this union was forced by political leaders.

Further, the Uniate Churches (i.e.; the Ukrainian Greek Catholics, Melkites, Ruthenians, etc...) do not hold the same theological views as the Roman Church on many issues. Most notably, Uniates are not required to say the “filioque” in the Nicene Creed, and do not hold to Papal Supremacy in the same way that their Roman counterparts do. Rather, they hold to a view of the papacy that we Orthodox would, most likely, agree with, that does not coincide with the theology of their Roman brethren. Further, their theological views on the Sacraments are also completely different, such as the differences in theology and practice around Baptism, Chrismation/Confirmation, and first Communion.

Indeed, another great difference between the Unia and the Western Rite communities is the issue of saint veneration. One can find Eastern Catholics that venerate St. Mark of Ephesus, who stood against the formulas of reunion with the Roman Church, and declared the Roman Church to be in heresy. For the Western Rite Churches to be on the same level here, they would have to commemorate Roman saints like Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, and Anselm of Canterbury, which, of course, they do not do.

From viewing only these basic issues, it is fairly obvious that, even though they may be under the same papal umbrella, the Roman Church and the Eastern Catholics do not hold the same faith. The Western Rite, however, cannot fall under the indictment of being called “reverse” Uniates. In order for this to be true, the Western Rite groups would have to enter under the care of Orthodox Bishops, while maintaining not only their liturgical rites, but also their own heterodox theology, while claiming that only submission to an Orthodox Bishop is necessary for being part of the Church.

The Western Rites, however, are required to embrace, hold, and proclaim the same faith, the same theological positions, and the same sacramental theology, as the rest of the Orthodox world. In reality, the Western Rite is, simply put, Western Orthodoxy. This Western Orthodoxy is not opposed to Eastern Orthodoxy, but, rather, in harmony with it.

Whatever individual parishes might hold or practice that may be in error (which, of course should be dealt with by their respective bishops), the movement as a whole, and all the Western Rite Vicariates in the Canonical Church are required to hold the Orthodox Catholic Faith. Thus, the charge of “reverse Uniatism” falls flat, and is completely false.

The Western Rite is not part of our tradition/it’s not a living tradition

Another very frequently utilized argument against the Western Rite is that it is not a part of the living tradition of the Orthodox Church. The argument usually goes something like this: The Western Church left the historical Christian faith at the time of the Great Schism, and her liturgical rites, which have changed over time, have lost their Orthodox context. Thus, they have not been celebrated within the Orthodox context for a period of time deemed long enough to exclude their Orthodoxy. Therefore, so the argument goes, the Western Rite is not a “living” tradition.

However, this argument raises, by necessity, an essential question, which must be answered. This question is: what is a “living” tradition? For Orthodox opponents of the Western Rite, a liturgical rite must be continually celebrated and, relatively, unaltered for most (or all) of Christian history to be considered “living.”

However, this is not a Christian definition of anything being “alive.” What makes something alive is the presence of Christ, the working activity of the Holy Spirit. If something exists within the Church, and is blessed by the hierarchy, and celebrated by the faithful, in accordance with the True Faith, then it is alive.

Would any of us argue that the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts, or St. Basil’s Liturgy, are not part of the “living” tradition of the Church during the periods of the year when they are not in use? And further still, the Western Rite liturgies have a wider modern use than the Liturgy of St. James, but those who would discredit the Western Rite see no problem with the idea that this liturgy is “alive.”

What makes a liturgical form or rite “alive” is that it is celebrated, that it is used in the Church for the worship of God, and the feeding of His people with the sacraments of the Church. Whether or not something has had continuous use since the time of the Apostles to the present is not a measure of life, because we need only look at some of our own Orthodox parishes and see that though the correct “rite” and theology may be present in an exterior manner, while the parish itself is dead or dying because those rites have not become an interior reality. This is possible in the East or West. There is no distinction here. If the celebration of these liturgical rites brings about a true experience of God, this is the true mark of their validity.

We must remember that we worship the God Who is invested in giving life to the dead. Why would we say that He cannot and would not breathe new life into an ancient Liturgy again? Rather than making some historical or philosophical argument about “living tradition,” we need only to *look* with our eyes (both physical and spiritual), and *see* if something is alive.

Further, to say that the Western Liturgies are not “our” tradition (meaning, of course, Orthodox Tradition) is to say that the liturgical rites celebrated by the Western saints of the first thousand years of Christianity were invalid. The great champion of the Western Rite of the twentieth-century, St. John the Wonderworker, of Shanghai and San Francisco, has told us clearly:

Never, never, never let anyone tell you that, in order to be Orthodox, you must be Eastern. The west was fully Orthodox for a thousand years, and her venerable liturgy is far older than any of her heresies.

This great saint saw the Orthodoxy in these rites, and he saw past the coating of heretical doctrines that have become associated with them since the Schism. He proclaimed that, though the churches may have fallen into error, the liturgy is sound. Therefore, if the liturgy is sound and true, then it is Orthodox.

Are there “orthodox” Traditional Catholics, Anglicans, or Lutherans left?

One frequent question that is raised is the issue of Traditional Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans who are conservative in their theology, but still remaining in their respective confessions. The issue usually is phrased something like this; “I could understand the Western Rite if there was a large group of Irish Catholics in the 1950’s that wanted to become Orthodox. But nowadays, those that are still Roman Catholic, Anglican, or Lutheran don’t remember those rites. So they should just come into the Byzantine Rite if they want to become Orthodox.”

The first point that needs to be raised is in terms of Anglicans and Lutherans. Generally speaking, those that leave these confessions to become Orthodox are coming from very “High Church” backgrounds to begin with. We must remember, that while certainly having “low Church” groups within these confessions, Anglicans and Lutherans are the most liturgical of all Protestant groups, and generally take their liturgy very seriously.

The Anglicans, in particular, have an incredibly deep sense of liturgy that is far more ancient in practice and origin, and deeper in reverence, than the modern Roman Catholic Rite, and is, in fact, quite beautiful. So in terms of “remembering the rite,” Lutherans and Anglicans don’t really need to remember it, they live it every time they step into a church.

Some would also say that the conservatives in the Lutheran and Anglican Communion are all now either Roman Catholic or Orthodox, and would ask of any remaining in these groups, “why would you come to Orthodoxy *now*, and not ten or twenty years ago.” The answer to this is clear: *faithfulness*. Many Anglicans, Lutherans, or even Presbyterians or Methodists, having been raised in these confessions, remain faithful to their churches, even though these churches are no longer faithful to them.

When these people decide to leave, regardless of the timing, to come to Orthodoxy, it isn’t for us to ask “why now?” It is for us to say, “thank God.” Further, if these people were that faithful to confessions which were running away from their historical faith, how faithful, then, will they be to Holy Orthodoxy when they find it! These are the people that we want in our parishes! These faithful give up so much to leave all they know, and it is possible for the Orthodox to bring them home, and embrace them, while giving them their liturgical forms that they know.

While it must certainly be conceded that the modern Roman Catholic liturgy is a far cry from the beauty and splendor of their former Mass (the liturgy normally used in Western Rite Orthodox parishes), we must also note the tremendous growth in Traditional Catholic parishes across the U.S. especially. Indeed, in the last 20 years, the parishes in the American Roman Catholic Church that have seen the most consistent growth have been those that celebrate the Latin Tridentine Mass daily. This growth has not been older people coming for nostalgia, as

one might expect. Rather, these parishes are filled with twenty and thirty-somethings, who are longing for their roots.

What makes the Western Rite so necessary are exactly these facts. There are many High Church Protestants and Traditional Catholics who are searching for their Orthodox Christian heritage, and their own confessions are leaving them behind. In the case of the Traditional Catholics, in many cases they are actually treated like second class, with the new Charismatic-driven Novus Ordo parishes receiving favor.

It is precisely these people, these traditional conservative members of these liturgical bodies, that we must show the light of Orthodoxy to. Indeed, we can offer them something incredible: their deepest longing for participation in the form worship that their Western ancestors used, within the context of the True Faith of Jesus Christ. This is a tremendous gift, and we would be foolish not to use it, because it could, theoretically, change the world, and, for many Christians, heal the Schism, one Baptism at a time.

The Western Rite Liturgies are too Patri-centric

A very common objection that is used by Western Rite detractors is the idea that the Western Rite Mass is too “Patri-centric.” To put this another way, it is said that the prayers of the Western Liturgies are almost entirely directed at the Father, at the expense and negation of the Son. While this may or may not be true, the idea behind it is an interesting one.

It is often said by Eastern Rite objectors, “we pray ‘to Christ our God,’ they [the Western Rite] pray, ‘through Christ our Lord.’” In saying this, they are making the claim that Western Rite prayers are somehow deficient, and that God will not answer them, or some other such nonsense.

What we often forget in this line of argument is that we Byzantine Rite Christians do not pray exclusively to Christ in our Liturgies either, and there are even Patri-centric prayers in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. The most obvious example is actually in the most solemn moment of our Liturgy: the Anaphora.

As we progress through the Liturgy, and approach the Mystery of mysteries, the prayer that is utilized is not a Christo-centric one, but rather, Patri-centric;

*It is meet and right to sing of Thee, to bless Thee, to praise Thee, to give thanks to Thee and to worship Thee in every place of Thy dominion. For Thou art God ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same, Thou **and Thine only-begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit**. Thou it was who brought us from non-existence into being, and when we had fallen away, didst raise us up again, and didst not cease to do all things until Thou hadst brought us up to heaven and hadst endowed us with ‘Thy Kingdom which is to come. For all these things we give thanks to Thee, and to Thine only-begotten Son and to Thy Holy Spirit; for all things of which we know and of which we know not, whether manifest or unseen; and we thank Thee for this liturgy which Thou hast found worthy to accept at our hands, though there stand by Thee thousands of archangels and hosts of angels, the Cherubim and the Seraphim, six-winged, many eyed, who soar aloft, borne on their pinions, singing the triumphant hymn, shouting, proclaiming and saying: Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*

Further, as our Liturgy is beginning, the very first prayer of the priest before the Altar is not a prayer to Christ, but a prayer to the Holy Spirit, the “O, Heavenly King.”

Now, one might bring forth an objection here saying, “we concede that some prayers in the Eastern Liturgy are not Christo-centric, but in the Western Church, all the prayers are Patri-centric.” Even this, though, isn’t true. While the great majority of Western Rite prayers are, indeed, directed to the Father, there are many exceptions. First, one of the first moments of the Mass in the Western Rite is the “Kyrie,” in which the Priest and people antiphonally chant together, “Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.” Indeed, further, in the prayers just before Communion, the Western Liturgy gives us three beautiful prayers to Christ, the first of which says:

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Who didst say to Thine Apostles: Peace I leave you, My peace I give to you: look not upon my sins, but upon the faith of Thy Church; and deign to give Her that peace and unity which is agreeable to Thy will: One God, Who livest and reignest unto ages of ages. Amen.

Finally, it is simply a fact that, in the Western Church, the formula for prayer has *always* been Patri-centric. It is curious that this was not a problem for the Eastern Christians when they were in communion with Rome before the Schism, but that some Orthodox Christians would use this as an objection to the Western Rite now.

Modern Orthodox Theologians Oppose the Western Rite

A further argument used against the Western Rite is that modern Orthodox “theologians” and scholars argue against its use. Among these are names such as Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, Metropolitan Kallistos [Ware], and others. These scholars will make varied claims to historicity, Roman Catholic innovations, post-Schism devotions, and many other objections from an academic position.

This argument, though, can be easily deflected, however, in answering the following question; do academics determine Orthodoxy, or do the saints? The answer, of course, is the saints, or more specifically, the living activity of the Holy Spirit working within the saints of God in His Church, in accordance with Sacred Tradition. We can plainly see that no matter how many “academics” may argue against the use of the Western Rite, they must stand up against the saints who supported it, including St. John Maximovitch, [St. Tikhon of Moscow](#), [St. Nicholas of Japan](#), and [St. Raphael of Brooklyn](#), among others. There are also many other Orthodox academics, scholars, and leaders in the Church that support the Western Rite, men such as Vladimir Lossky, Patriarch Sergius I of Moscow, [\[1\] Metropolitan Anthony \(Bloom\)](#), [Metropolitan Philip \(Saliba\)](#), and [Bishop Basil \(Essey\)](#) of Wichita.

Will we, embrace the same scholastic mindset that we criticize in the Western Churches, and allow our faith and practice to be determined by academics? Or will we follow the testimony and lived experience of the saints? The answer is clear; if the saints of God and various Orthodox Synods have accepted something, *there ends the matter*. There is no more room for discussion on the acceptance of the Western Rite as something Orthodox. It has been proclaimed so, and has been accepted, and must be given every chance to grow and succeed.

The Western Rite incorporates non-Orthodox elements into the life of the Church

Another frequent argument is that the Western Rite brings into Orthodoxy elements of Church life that are not Orthodox in their origin. This can range from liturgical practices, paraliturgical devotions, and even vestments

or clergy attire. This accusation is very often flung at Western Rite Orthodox by, especially, more “hardcore” or traditionalist Orthodox Christians. They argue that the introduction of certain Western elements into Orthodoxy pollutes the purity of Orthodoxy, and should be avoided by the suppression of the Western Rite.

One can only comment that these detractors are several centuries too late to make this argument. There are, indeed, many elements that exist within Orthodoxy that are not only of non-Orthodox, but even non-Christian origin. Aside from our theological language, with terms like *hypostasis*, which come from pagan Greek philosophy and are decidedly non-Christian, the average Orthodox parish, in America and elsewhere, has countless Western elements, whether they are aware of them or not.

Whenever we walk into a church and hear four-part music, see pictorial stained glass windows, meet a priest in a clergy collar or vestments that are in a particular “seasonal” color, these are western influences. These elements are now commonplace in our Orthodox Churches, and we don’t even consider that they are of Roman Catholic origin. We take for granted that they are Orthodox, and that they are a part of the worship of the Church.

Further, to answer those who are of a more “traditionalist” bent, we should point out that there are elements that are considered “traditionally” Orthodox that are not even Christian in origin. Some of these elements are very interesting in this regard, because some argue that they are the *very markers* which determine how an Orthodox priest should look, in terms of appearance.

Take for example, the *riassa*, and the wearing of long hair and unkempt beards, especially by non-monastic clergy. These are often considered the foundation of how an Orthodox clergyman should appear in public. There is a huge problem with this, however, as they are not Christian, but Islamic in origin. These were the markers of government officials during the Muslim Ottoman Turkish Empire, a period of time in which we, as Orthodox Christians, were subjugated under Islamic rule.

The same is true of the *kamalavkion*, or *klobuk*, as it was a Turkish judicial hat, as well as the [sakkos and mitre](#), worn by bishops in the Liturgy, which were clothes worn by the Byzantine Emperors, and not historically by bishops until the Ottoman conquest. These items, worn today by all Orthodox clergy everywhere, bishops and priests, *are not even Christian in origin*, and, in terms of the *riassa*, long hair, and the *kamalavkion*, are even signs of Muslim domination over the Church, and yet we continue to wear them, and call them signs of the Orthodox priesthood, because they have been blessed by their use in the Church.

The traditional attire of an Orthodox priest is a simple cassock, black for monastics, and in various colors for married clergy, a beard, which is neatly trimmed if he lives in a city or town, and *short* hair, which is the Byzantine clerical tonsure. This is our true Orthodox heritage, but we ignore it in favor of Islamic norms. It is a strange curiosity that those who would argue against the introduction of Western Rite elements in the Church are the same people who embrace Western Christian, and even Islamic elements to their Liturgy and Church life.

Further, wherever the Orthodox Church has found Herself, She has embraced pieces of the local culture, and “baptized” them. Here in America, in [Alaska](#), the Church came to the natives and permitted them to hold to certain rites and ceremonies (i.e.; spirit houses, smudging ceremonies) which are of animistic tribal pagan

origin, but were baptized, and are now considered fully Orthodox. This practice is not limited to native Alaska, but can be found all over the Orthodox world.

Finally, the Julian calendar, which is a sticking point of discussion to so many in the Orthodox Church, is not of Christian origin, but of pagan beginnings. Will we continue argue along these lines, splitting hairs, and making nonsensical arguments? Or, will we be truthful with ourselves, and look at the origins of what we do, and simply acknowledge the truth, that we have taken what is good in the world around us, and baptized it, to the glory of Almighty God.

Only the Byzantine Rite is acceptable for use in the Orthodox Church

An absolutely ludicrous and absurd claim, made by detractors of the Orthodox Western Rite, is that only the St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. James, and Pre-Sanctified Liturgies are acceptable for use in the Orthodox Church. This idea is a complete innovation, and one cannot even be claim to see its origin in the Great Schism, but rather long after.

In actuality, the Orthodox Church had its own local liturgical rites in various geographical regions throughout the East. These included a distinctive Antiochian Rite, and Alexandrian Rite which were ultimately suppressed in favor of the Constantinopolitan Rite. This plurality of rites existed long after the Schism with Rome, and elements of these historically Orthodox rites can be seen in various liturgical variations throughout the Church. There is no argument for the Byzantine liturgical primacy other than a pride, and historical ignorance, either innocent or deliberate. What is essentially being said by this argument is that God Himself only honors that Liturgy that is celebrated by the Byzantine Church in the modern era. This is an argument that negates not only the liturgical validity of *every* Western saint that the Orthodox commemorate, but also the saints of ancient Antioch, Syria, Alexandria, and others.

Is this what we really believe? Of course it isn't. Every Orthodox Christian acknowledges the Orthodoxy of St. Gregory the Great, St. Benedict of Nursia, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Moses the Ethiopian, and all the other non-Byzantine saints. Why on earth, then, do we venerate their sainthood, but dismiss the Liturgies that formed them into saints?

Another factor here is a *denial* that the liturgical expression of the Byzantine Rite has changed, believing that it has been static since its beginning. This is, of course, ridiculous. Liturgical formation and evolution over time is simply a documented fact. Let us note an extremely early example; the difference between epicleses in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom and that of the *Didache*, or that used by the most ancient Church. They are very different, and are examples of liturgical development within the Orthodox Church. We could also point to doxologies and liturgical prayers in the Holy Scriptures, in the letters of St. Paul and elsewhere, that were used in the early Church and are no longer in use by the Orthodox Church. There is nothing wrong with this. Rather, it shows the maturing of the Church.

Finally, we should also look back to our not-so-distant past, to the post-Revolution Russians living in the diaspora. Specifically we should look to France, where the Russian Church, under the leadership of St. John Maximovitch, saw it as part of their duty to restore the Gallican Rite Liturgy, which is the indigenous Orthodox

Liturgical rite in France (Gaul). St. John and his followers obviously did not cling to any notion that only the Byzantine Rite liturgies were suitable for Orthodox worship.

Let us call a spade a spade, and simply answer this criticism for what it is: ridiculous. This kind of argument, one that dwells on a static exterior, is what led to the [Old Believer](#) schism in the Russian Church, and there is not a single one of us that does not lament what a horrible tragedy that was. We must remember our brothers and sisters in Christ, honor their cultural differences in which truth can be found, as Orthodoxy has historically been wont to do. In doing this, let us see true Orthodox diversity as a blessing from God, as a mark of His Creative energies working through men in different places and in different times.

The Western Rite is Divisive

There are those that argue that the existence of the Western Rite within Orthodoxy is, by its nature, divisive. They argue that the liturgical variation brought about by the Western Orthodoxy causes an undue separation between the Western Rite Orthodox and their Eastern Rite brethren, driving a wedge in Orthodox Unity.

This argument could conceivably have some traction, because it has been manifestly true. However, the divisive attitudes that have emerged have not been a result of the Western Rite itself, nor have they usually been manifested in Western Orthodox Christians themselves. Rather, these attitudes are generally the result of a lack of any attempt to truly understand the Western Rite at all.

Western Orthodox Christians are our brothers and sisters in the Orthodox faith, not our enemies or competitors. What we see in this line of argument is, indeed, nothing less than the rampant phyletism that exists within the Orthodox world. This divisive attitude does not exist only between Eastern Rite and Western Rite Orthodox, but between Greek and Russian, cradle and convert, and the many “warring” jurisdictions in the diaspora which shamefully allow a non-canonical Church structure to continue because of pride and power.

Let us, again, be honest with ourselves. If the Western Rite is divisive, it is so because we have not yet obtained a heart that is formed in Christian love and charity. Differences in liturgical ceremony do not cause this kind of division *of themselves*. What does cause divisiveness is pride, and believing that what we are doing is the only “right” way. In being truly honest with ourselves, we must admit that the notion that there is liturgical uniformity, even within a single national Church or jurisdiction, and even from parish to parish in a single diocese, is *complete fiction*. Saying otherwise is simply not honest.

What does the Western Rite have that the Eastern Rite doesn't?

This question, which also has been asked often, I have intentionally placed at the end of my discussion. This is a difficult question to answer due to the fact that it is usually framed in such a way so that however the person may answer, they can be accused of saying that Orthodoxy is lacking in some way.

I think, rather than thinking in terms of one liturgical expression lacking in something, that it would be better to point out the strength that the Western Liturgy brings to Orthodoxy. Simply put, this strength is one thing: the presence of silence.

The Byzantine Liturgies are beautiful, moving, majestic, and they draw us into the eternal now, there is no question about it. But when we examine the liturgy of the West, we find that the strength which it brings, besides being equally beautiful and majestic, is the role that silence plays in the Liturgy.

We cannot over-emphasize the role that silence (*hesychia*) plays in Orthodox spirituality, and we have saints who are hesychasts who devote their entire life to seeking and experiencing God in cultivation interior silence. What the Western Rite offers us is a change, during the Holy Liturgy, to focus on exterior and interior silence. Indeed, there are entire sections of the Mass that are celebrated in complete, or nearly complete silence.

For example, during the preparation of the Holy Gifts, which we in the East call Proskimidia, and which happens during the Liturgy in the West, is done in silence. Also, during the consecration of the Mystery, the only sound is the low voice of the priest, praying over the gifts before their elevation. This allows the people to silence themselves, and to focus on the coming of Christ in the Eucharist, bringing about the possibility for a preparation of the heart which is without distraction.

It would be a mistake to allow this focus, which is so central to our faith as Orthodox, to fade away, and worse yet, to ignore it.

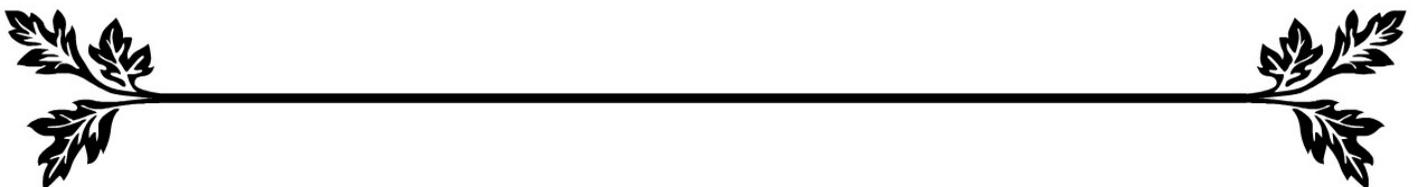
Conclusions

We, as Orthodox, must examine ourselves deeply, and gauge whether our objection to the Western Rite, based on any of these arguments (or others), is based on actual fact, or on our own pride. This is a hard truth to consider, but we must consider it. If we are not willing to set aside our own pride and our own preferences for what we think is correct in this regard, then we will not even be able to flee from divisiveness in our relationships with other Eastern Rite Orthodox faithful. How sad this is. We must, as Christians, be better than this. We must examine anything that comes to us on its own merits, on its fidelity to the Apostolic Faith, and not hold our own opinion up as a measure against it.

At the end of the day, the Holy Church has granted the celebration of the Western Liturgies, and has proclaimed them Orthodox. These Liturgies have been celebrated by modern saints of God, who encouraged their use and growth. The Orthodox Western Liturgies encouraged all the Western saints of the first millennium, and fed the faithful with the Bread of Life. Thus, the weight of their merits is incalculable, because they hold, in truth, the experience of Christ of one thousand years, and beyond, into Eternity.

The many Eastern Rite Orthodox Christians who have a tendency to criticize, demean, or even openly persecute the Western Rite usage must re-examine their motives for doing so. If the Western Rite is examined anew and found lacking in Orthodoxy, then let it fall from use. However, if it be sound in doctrine, in practice, and be present in the acclamation and testimony of the saints, then let it not only stand, but also be encouraged, and given means to grow and flourish, that the West may once again stand beside the East in united proclamation of Holy Orthodoxy.

May it be so, for the sake of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom all glory and honor is due, with His Father Who is without beginning, and His All-Holy, Good, and Life-Creating Spirit, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.



The 2016 ROCOR Western Rite Conference

In Pictures

The 2016 ROCOR Western Rite Communities Annual Conference, held at Mt Alvernia, NY was once again a well-attended time of learning, worship and fellowship with each other and the many guests who came to see about Western Rite Orthodoxy in ROCOR.

Monday evening, after all were checked in to their rooms and given their conference materials, Vespers was served. This year, we had the service of the Solemn Reception of the Bishop. His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad and Ruling Bishop of the ROCOR Western Rite Communities was met with incense, aspergillum and the blessing cross. His Eminence processed in from the narthex, blessing the Clergy and faithful.

This evening, we had one man tonsured Reader and another two tonsured Readers and then ordained Subdeacons. It really was beautiful to have these tonsurings and ordinations in the midst of the brethren at conference.

Monday evening after supper, Compline and confessions were held in the chapel. There were four priests, each stationed at one of the far corners of the church to hear confessions. It has been one of the hallmarks of the conference for years. Finishing off the evening, there was social hour in the refectory where attendees could meet one another or catch up with old friends.

We were also blessed to have with us a streaming icon of the Holy Theotokos of Iveron from the parish of Christ the King in Tullytown, PA. The icon was given as a gift to Archpriest Bernard Andracchio and the parish of Christ the King for hosting the miraculous Myrrh-Streaming Icon of the Holy Theotokos of Iveron from Hawaii. Subsequently, after the visit of that icon, the copy of the icon given to the parish also began streaming myrrh. Throughout the conference, it was streaming freely, with a strong floral fragrant supply of myrrh. What a blessing to have this icon be with us for the conference!

Tuesday morning, the annual WR Communities Requiem Liturgy was served by Dom James of Christminster, assisted by Father David Kinghorn to remember those of the ROCOR WR Communities who have fallen asleep in the Lord in years past. It is always a very solemn and stirring time and one of the highlights of the annual conference.

Tuesday began the lecture series. Presenting a lecture and tutorial on the liturgical text 'The English Office Noted' as well as small group hymnody and the like were Father Nicholas Alford and Matushka Rebecca from the Antiochian Western Rite Vicariate. Father and Matushka gave an excellent presentation, which also served to strengthen the services and how they are served both at conference and also in the parishes. We are also thankful for lending us their voices during the services and serving in the choir.

Interspersed among the lectures Tuesday the Clergy had their annual meeting with the Dean. It was noteworthy that virtually the entire meeting was spent discussing all the new growth and future missionary plans for the WR Communities and success stories from the parishes.

The evening concluded with Vespers, supper, Compline, and the popular social hour in the refectory.

On Wednesday, the Feast of St Michael and all Angels (Michaelmas), Solemn High Liturgy was served in the chapel, with all the clergy concelebrating. The liturgy was served by Archpriest Mark Rowe, Dean of the ROCOR Western Rite Communities along with Fathers Abraham Fortier and Aristibule Adams , The sung liturgy with hymns and sung minor propers was a beautiful expression of Western Rite Orthodoxy, and many commented on the beauty of the service.

Wednesday began a presentation by Adam Roberts, a Subdeacon in the Antiochian Archdiocese. Adam, you may remember, hosts a podcast on Ancient Faith radio called Go Forth. Last year, Fathers Mark Rowe and Victor Novak were guests on this podcast. This year, Adam is working on a parish outreach program entitled 'Becoming Truly Human'. An introduction to the program was given, along with a screening of the accompanying feature film, which is believed to be the first Orthodox feature film made in America.

The website for the program is www.becomingtrulyhuman.com . Next year at conference, we plan to have the facilitator training available to attendees who wish to implement this new and exciting program in their parishes.

Wednesday also hosted the annual meeting of the WR Clergy with His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion. A spiritually edifying time was had by all in attendance as we spent time with our beloved Archbishop.

During the clergy meeting , Hieromonk Aidan served the Sarum Rite churching of Elizabeth Brousseau and baptism of Anyisia, daughter of Subdeacon Joseph and Elizabeth Brousseau. Many years to Anyisia !

Also lecturing Wednesday was Father Matthew Joyner (OCA/ Elijah's Mantle). Father Matthew gave an excellent presentation which was in effect an apologetic on the Western Rite in Orthodoxy. You probably have read it in this magazine, as it was included by request of many, including the Metropolitan. Father Matthew has been a previous presenter at our conferences, and he has been very supportive of the Western Rite and the ROCOR Western Rite Communities.

Thursday morning we were treated to the Sarum liturgy, served by Hieromonk Aidan (Keller). Many were curious to see a Sarum liturgy, and of course, Father Aidan did not disappoint, The only lecture of the day was a final lecture on the Becoming Truly Human program by Subdeacon Adam, and after lunch, the attendees went their separate ways, and all thought the week went by far too quickly.

The conference was well-attended, using all available rooms at the retreat center. We had attendees from all across the globe, including England, Canada and Puerto Rico. We had several invited guests who we wish to thank for coming and for their support:

- **The Most Reverend Metropolitan Jonah**
-
- **The Reverend Father Ephraim Willmarth, Asst Dean, Holy Trinity Seminary, Jordanville**
-
- **Nicholas Chapman and the Holy Trinity Seminary Bookstore**
-
- **Hieromonk Silouan and Hierodeacon Parthenios from Holy Cross Monastery , Setauket NY**

-And all our guests and attendees for their continued support and prayers.

Also, I want to thank Father David and Matushka Pat Kinghorn. Their tireless efforts to help make the conference run smoothly are nothing short of a miracle to me every year. To say they are a huge blessing to me is such a gross understatement.

Similarly, I want to thank Fathers David Kinghorn, Hieromonk Ezekiel, Father Jon Cook, Deacons Abraham Fortier, Aristubule Adams, Sdcn Dan Brown, and so many others involved in serving or reading the Offices and helping make sure the liturgies went smoothly. Your commitment is admirable.

And last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank our beloved Archpastor and Father in God, His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion. We are honored and humbled that you always spend the week with us, and we thank God for you and your Archpastoral guidance and vision. *Eis polla eti despota !* See you all next year (Oct 9-12, 2017) !

And now... The Pictures!!!



Left: His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion
Right: A scene from Vespers with Frs. Nicholas, Mark, David & Hieromonk Ezekiel



From L to R; Fr. Mark Rowe, Fr. David Kinghorn, Hieromonk Ezekiel & Fr. Benedict Simpson



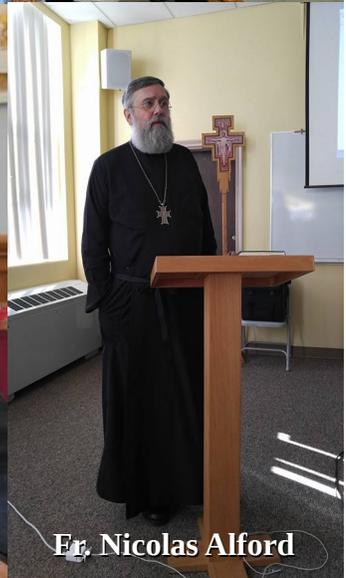
The lectures and presentations were well-attended



His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion gives his Episcopal blessing



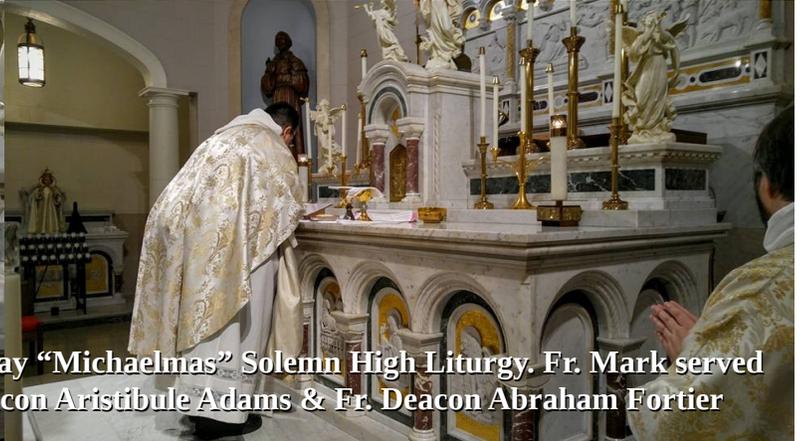
Metropolitan Hilarion and Metropolitan Jonah at breakfast sharing a lighter moment



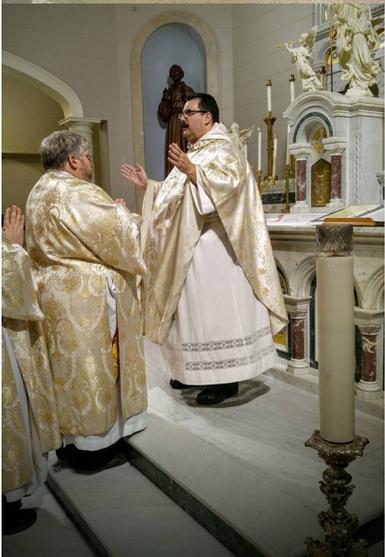
Fr. Nicolas Alford



Left: Dom James (Duchene) of Christminster & Fr. David Kinghorn
Right: Metropolitan Hilarion during the tonsuring of two readers and the ordination of a Subdeacon



The Following photos are from the Wednesday "Michaelmas" Solemn High Liturgy. Fr. Mark served the "English Liturgy", flanked by Fr. Deacon Aristibule Adams & Fr. Deacon Abraham Fortier



Fr. Thomas Cook of the United Kingdom



GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST... AND ON EARTH PEACE AND GOODWILL AMONG MEN.

Rachel's Corner



*Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one's youth.
Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them;
They shall not be ashamed,
But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.*

Psalm 127: 3-5

The most merciful thing that a large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it.
**Margaret Sanger, Founder of Planned Parenthood: *Women and the Race*,
New Eugenics Publ. Co., 1920, 1923).**

One cannot serve God and mammon.
Jesus Christ, Matthew 6:24c

Article by Fr. James Rosselli

There is a consistent, mutually exclusive clash of viewpoints between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of mammon. In the former, human life, is the highest value. Human beings are created in the Divine Image and are therefore icons of Christ. In the latter, the power that comes from control of wealth is the highest value. Human beings are only as valuable as they are powerful. The powerless are, therefore, only as valuable as they are useful and convenient. The ultimate expression of this complexus is our contemporary death culture.

Beginning with a bizarre affinity for abortion, it has blossomed into a headlong rush into a culture of full-blown Hitlerian eugenics. Insurance companies, for instance, are beginning to support “assisted suicide” laws so that they can deny coverage of life-saving medications in favor of the far-less-expensive “alternate therapy.”

Hospitals are clearing bed-space by relying on the increasingly-popular diagnosis of “brain death,” even when neural activity is obvious.

Abortion, however, remains at the heart of the issue. After all, if murdering a baby is “okay,” what isn’t? Babies are not powerful. They can neither attack others nor defend themselves. They own no property and command no vassals. According to the ethics of Mammon they are, by definition, expendable. On the other hand, they’re really cute. They make us feel good when we look at them, and can bring a smile to the grimmest visage.

Babies still in the womb, however, don’t even have that much going for them. What they do have is the Image of God, the and satan hates them for it. In fact, he hates them even more than he hates us, because they are sinless. The image is pure, and has the inherent power to conquer his dominions just by its presence. Accordingly, satan has consistently made it his business to encourage the powerful to eliminate babies.

Historically, hell has used sundry religions, and the worship of demon-gods, to accomplish human sacrifice in general and infant sacrifice in particular. Moloch, the ancient Canaanite demon-god who demanded infant sacrifice, immediately comes to mind. Moloch, however, is by no means alone.

The god of infant sacrifice has many names: Baal of the Carthaginians, Tlaloc of the Aztecs, the Capacocha rite of the Incas, even Mars, the ancient Roman god of war, at the foot of whose hill women would leave their newborns to starve as a sacrifice.

Today the demon goes by the name of “Choice,” and his rites are performed behind the closed doors of “medical” clinics by people in white coats. Their grim business is supported by powerhouse lobbyists like International Planned Parenthood, a United Nations recognized NGO, and by our own government.

Hell has been very successful in creating the illusion of a “secular” society as the same old demonic powers posture under benign and familiar names like “Science,” “Equality,” “Inclusiveness” etc. Its drumbeat has been “Religion (by which it means ‘Christianity’) is responsible for all war and oppression.”

This veil is being lifted, lately. It turns out that some religions aren’t all that bad.

The Islamist death-cult, for instance, is downright acceptable, having supporters throughout academia, the media and the government. This has set the stage for Moloch himself to come out of the shadows.

For example, a retired abortionist named Patricia Baird-Windle had this to say about her former activities:

“I now consider abortion to be a major blessing, and to be a sacrament in the hands of women....At the very crucible of the sacrament of abortion work is the sentence in a letter written to me by a woman when I retired, and that is some women have an abortion out of love for the baby.”

(Live Action News, December 24, 2014, Sarah Terzo)

I confess that my (unworthy) reaction to this was that if ever I should meet this woman I would wish to act as offensively as possible in order to avoid her affection.

Hell’s religion is spreading in many areas, under many guises. We’ll continue the discussion in the next installment.

Glory to God for All Things!!!

Sarum Rite churching of Elizabeth Brousseau and baptism of Anysia, daughter of Subdeacon Joseph and Elizabeth Brousseau



From Top to Bottom, Left to Right: The traditional entry into the Church and reception of the candidates. Those to be baptized are brought into the doors of the Church where they are met by the Priest, Father Aidan. The candidate is spoken for by his sponsors as the ceremony of Baptism is performed.



Let us welcome the newly-illuminated Anysia and the newly-churched Elizabeth into God's Holy Catholic Church!!! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!!!

Compline Conference Call



Tuesday Evenings @ 8:00 pm EST

Phone Number: (515) 739-1030

Access Code: 425875525

**Visit the Liturgics Page of the Western Rite Web
Page for the text.**

<http://www.rocor-wr.org/liturgical-resources>