

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN

AUGUST 27, 2017

## THIS WEEK'S NEWS

**FOOD PANTRY.** Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center **next Saturday, September 2nd, from 9 am - noon.** About 4 people are needed. Likewise, donations of food are always needed, and may be dropped off at the Food Pantry housed at St. Spyridon Cathedral. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with **Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola.**

**FR. NICK IS STILL TAKING QUESTIONS FOR SUMMER SERMONS.** This is your chance to ask the question you've always wondered about. **There are forms at the candles or you may e-mail your suggestion to him.**

**WE HAVE THREE MEMORIALS THIS SUNDAY.**

- ✿ **Kaliopi Demma**, fallen asleep 1 year;
- ✿ **Craig Belba**, fallen asleep 1 year;
- ✿ **Dennis Wixted**, fallen asleep 10 years;

*May our good and loving Lord rest their souls with the righteous!*

**THIS SUNDAY'S COFFEE HOUR** is sponsored by the families of those

### GREETERS TEAM 4:

DIMITRI SAFFRON AND SEAN FAHEY

### COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP CREW B:

KARADIMITRIOU/KALPIDO FAMILY

**ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED**



## THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

APOSTOLIC READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11 ☩ GOSPEL: MATTHEW 19:16-26

(THE RICH YOUNG MAN)

TONE 3 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL: 1

whose memorials we celebrate today.

their website: <http://stsanargyroi.org/>

## UP-COMING

**CALLING ALL VENDORS!!! A HOLIDAY MARKET PLACE** will once again be a part of our annual **Thanksgiving Bake Sale and Luncheon on Saturday, November 18th.** We are seeking Vendors to rent table space at a cost of \$25 per table. We would like to include a variety of vendors and ensure there is no duplication of products or services. **If you or a vendor you know is interested in participating, please complete the registration form and return it to the Church.** For more information, **contact Tim Rucho.**

**ST. MICHAEL IN SOUTHBRIDGE** will be holding its **10th Annual Romanian Golf Open on Saturday, September 23rd.** For more information and/or to register, call Luke Yanka at 508-958-4144 or e-mail: [lsyanka@yahoo.com](mailto:lsyanka@yahoo.com).

**STS. CONSTANTINE AND HELEN IN WEBSTER** is holding its annual **Greek Festival on Saturday, September 9, 11:00-9:00pm and Sunday, September 10, 11:00am-5:00pm.** More information can be found at [www.schwebster.org](http://www.schwebster.org).

## COMMUNITY NEWS

**STS ANARGYROI PARISH IN MARLBOROUGH** will be holding its annual **Greek Festival, Labor Day weekend (Saturday through Monday).** For more information check

## DATES TO REMEMBER

- Tues, Aug 29 Beheading of John the Baptist  
*Strict Fast Day*
- Sat, Sept 2 Staff Orthodox Food Pantry, 9am-noon
- Fri, Sept 8 Nativity of Theotokos, Lit 10 am St. Nick
- Thurs, Sept 14 Lit for Elevation of Cross, 10 am  
Sts Anagyroi, Marlboro *Strict Fast Day*
- Tues, Sept 19 Holy Trinity Gen Assembly, 7:00 pm
- Sun, Sept 24 Religious Ed Classes begin

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*A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas*

*HOLY TRINITY IN FITCHBURG* is holding its **Greek Festival, Friday/Saturday, September 15th and 16th.** Rain or Shine. The Church is at: 1319 Main St, Fitchburg. For info: 978-342-1216 or [holytrinity.ma.goarch.org/festival](http://holytrinity.ma.goarch.org/festival)

## HOLY TRINITY NEWS

The **General Assembly for the Eastern Orthodox Management Corp. (EOMC)**, which operates Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehabilitation Center will be held on **Tuesday, September 19, 2017 at 7:00 pm** at Holy Trinity, 300 Barber Ave., Worcester, MA. This meeting is open to CEOC parish members and all are encouraged to attend. The purpose of the Annual Meeting is to review the organization's financial and operational performance the previous year, progress with new initiatives, results of annual Fundraising efforts, and to provide the supporting community with the opportunity to learn of the organization's strategic direction. In addition, the election for new Board Members, including Clergy, will also be held, and CEOC appointed Directors are also announced at this time. **Anyone interested in becoming an EOMC Board Member** should feel free to contact Tina Niedbala, President of EOMC at (508) 864-5509, or the Chair of the Nominating Committee, Basil Tolos 978-345-4036. For more information, please call Serena Shields at (508) 852-1000, ext. 204 or Jerry Shaffer at (508) 852-1000, ext. 205. Hors d'oeuvres will be served.

**SAVE THE DATE!** Holy Trinity's annual fundraiser, 11th Annual **Food and Wine Fest, Thursday, October 19, 2017** 5:30-8:30pm at St. George Orthodox Cathedral. Watch for details to follow!

The latest issue of **Holy Trinity's "Guardian Angel Gazette"** is available on-line. It full of interesting information about our Nursing and Rehab Center. Check it out: [www.htnr.net/blog/](http://www.htnr.net/blog/)

## NAMEDAYS

**August 15**

*The Falling Asleep of the Most Holy Theotokos*

Maria Blanchard  
Mary Cocaine  
Maria Dumitriu  
Monika Maria Durmillari  
Maria Kalpidou  
Maria Prelipcean  
Nancy Maria Tsongalis  
Mary Tsoules  
Marietta Zaruha

**August 26**

*The Holy Martyrs Adrian and Natalia at Nicomedia*

Natalia Dimitra Karadimitriou  
Natasha Zhaka

**August 29**

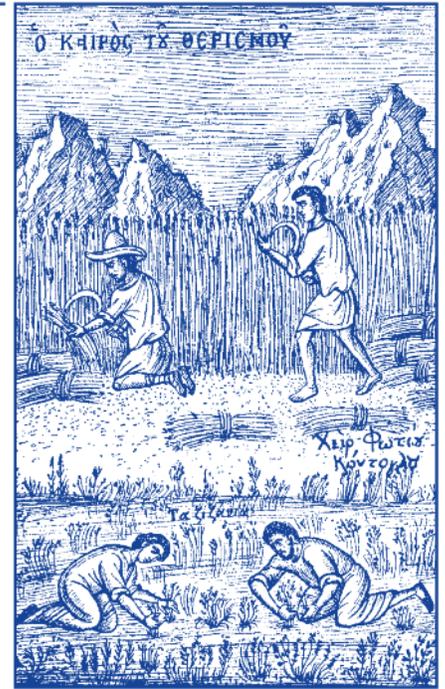
*St. Theodora of Thessalonika*

Gina Theodora Trakadas

**August 30**

*St. Alexander, Patriarch of Constantinople*

Alexander Charalambides  
Emilia Alexandra Galeriu  
Dr. Alexander Gouvelis  
Alexandra Mazanitis  
Alexandru Nace  
Conner Alexander Polymeros  
Alexanna Soter  
Alexander James Trakadas



### A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**H**EAR US, LORD, and have mercy on us, for you are merciful! Enable us to cling to the ways of your law, in your footsteps, lest our feet stumble. Teach us your ways, that we may walk in your truth. Let our prayer reach you. Attend to our plea, for we have had our fill of trouble and our life is on the bring of the grave. Be mindful of us, O Lord, when you show favor to your people; take note of us when you save them.

For you are full of mercy and compassion, O God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.



## ONLY ONE IS GOOD

When my children were small I would play a little game with them. Whenever they would tell me that they were being “good,” I would quip back, “Only one is good.” At first I would get a confused look from them. Over time, when they began to understand the Gospel reference, I would get that special groan that children reserve for their parents. They knew I was teasing them, and enjoying it. They also knew that I was trying to teach them something, but perhaps not enjoying it.

This week’s Gospel lesson is the story of the Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-26) who comes to Jesus asking: “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” (v. 16) Jesus responds by asking: “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good” (v. 17). This phrase sets the terms of the conversation between them. The young man comes to Jesus seeking knowledge about eternal life. Jesus gives him the answer he cannot bear to hear.

Some of the early Biblical commentators seemed to suggest that the young man might have been coming to test Jesus with the question, as had the Scribes, the Pharisees and the Lawyers. But St. John Chrysostom reflecting on the character of this person says that if he were coming to tempt Jesus he would not have left grieving over what he had heard. He had not come with an evil heart, but rather one that was too feeble. He did indeed desire life, but realized he was held captive by another stronger desire.

Let’s go back to the beginning of the story. The young man comes to Jesus asking what good deed he must do. He comes to him not understanding who Jesus really is but thinking him to be a “teacher.” He came for advice, albeit, spiritual advice, about the path to eter-

nal life.

Jesus answers him in a way that compels him to reexamine and contemplate the question he had just asked. Jesus draws the man’s attention to the premise of the question. “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good,” he says to him. The young man thinks he is close to the path. Perhaps he is, but too often we judge ourselves against other people and think “we’re not that bad,” or perhaps even “good,” in comparison to them. Jesus draws our attention to a different comparison, not with other people, but with God Himself.

Jesus tells him to obey the Commandments. The young man tells him that he’s followed them from his youth. St. Mark in his account then adds this powerful detail. He says: “Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me’” (Mark 10:21).

The young man was devastated. He had come to Jesus thinking he was close to perfection, and Jesus, like a skillful physician, diagnoses the illness and with love prescribes the remedy. Only this remedy was too much for the young man. He was held captive by his passion for the things of this world, and he knew it.

Today’s world thinks of things spiritual as “self-help guides.” The personal world of the young man is not so differ-



ent than ours in this regard. He’s asking the same question: what’s the formula for eternal life? He wants a quick fix; something he can do or buy. Jesus quickly disabuses him of this possibility. Salvation comes not from the deed, but from a change of heart. Without a doubt you will be a differently acting person once you repent, but the deed, without a changed heart, will not save.

Too many people in our world think that they are good, or perhaps worse, do not even ponder the question. Our Lord draws us heavenward to the Author of Good, the Father of lights (cf James 1:17). Like this young man we often ask ourselves (and as an afterthought, God), “What good deed must I do to inherit eternal life?” But are we prepared for the answer God will give us? More importantly, will we be grieved when we hear the answer?

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

I won't be saying anything new when I simply point out that we are living through what will perhaps someday be thought of as one of the most critical transition periods in human history. I don't even want to put any sort of adjective in front of it, because the transition seems to be on every front: cultural, economic, social, technological, political, environmental, and so much more. However, one thread that seems to run through it all would seem to be the collapse of trust in almost every institution or expertise. The Church, or organized religion, is no exception. And while this phenomenon has very likely been a while in coming, it seems to have hit like a tsunami, out of nowhere and without a warning.

Having said this, a thinking person might ask: Doesn't expertise and experience matter? Moreover, why would a society position itself for a death spiral by abandoning the collective wisdom embodied in millennia of tradition and institutions simply to opt for an unhinged experiment in societal entropy, a descent into ungluing?

So, at the risk of bucking this trend toward entropy, and clearly at my peril, I'd like to offer a few insights into how I think we might want to look at the situation we're facing, and even more, how we might be of service in trying to stop it.

**WORDS MATTER.** We use a lot of words, often imprecisely. Actually, if truth be told, we appear to be using a lot fewer words than people in only a generation or two past were using. We're giving the ones that we do use rather confused or ambiguous double and triple meanings, or are coining new, silly ones, but all in all, we've become very imprecise in what we say. Some people even contort the meaning of words to send subtle mes-

sages, or to deliberately mislead others. Not that this is a particularly new phenomenon, but we should always pay close attention, so as not to be deceived by it.

One difficulty we face is that we don't appreciate the true nature of words. We have a utilitarian view toward them. We think of them as a collection of sounds and letters, mere representations of the thing we're talking about, a sort of shorthand. But both Scripture and philosophy have a deeper understanding of what's at play. The Greek word for 'word' is 'logos.' It's where we get words like logic, and its corellaries, like reason, judgment, rationality, and so on. However, rather than a word being understood simply as a representation of a thing, the ancients understood the word as embodying, capturing, the thing itself. If you truly grasped the word, you could understand the 'DNA' of the thing.

Even more profound was the spiritual understanding of this principle. The word has power. God's word has power. God says, "Let there be light" and there was light. (Genesis 1:3). For God, and for those who are one with Him, the word and the thing are the same.

This is one of the things we should take note of in the Genesis account of Creation. God gives Adam the power to name the creatures that God is creating (Genesis 2:19). In this sense (as in others) Adam is granted the grace to become co-creator with God. He knows the creatures, and they also know him. This relationship between 'name' and intimate knowledge can also be seen in Moses' request of God for His name



(Exodus 3:14ff), and God's reluctance to reveal that to him.

Slowly we come to understand that it is God's Word that is at work in the creation. And so, we come to see the Logos of God in everything around us. God's plan is embedded into the very fabric of things. The Evangelist John is saying many things to us in the opening line of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word ...", but perhaps the most important is that Jesus, the Word of God, is the organizing agent of all that is.

Words matter.

**A PERSON IS ONLY AS GOOD AS THEIR WORD.** It is a common expression. We use it a lot. It is grounded in a very profound spiritual principle. There is a direct line between our spiritual well-being and the power of the word we speak. We could call this 'integrity.' A person with integrity is whole and undivided. There's an internal consistency, a lack of corruption. This is the point the Lord is making when he's responding to his critics on how he and his disciples are lax on the dietary rules. "What comes out of the mouth proceeds from

the heart, and this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man” (Matthew 15:18-20).

He’s making the same point when he tells his disciples that it is because of their lack of faith that they were not able to heal the epileptic boy (cf. Matthew 17:14ff). It wasn’t because they lacked the faith that God had given them the power to do it, rather it was because they still had not placed their total trust in Him. Their word lacked power because they lacked a wholeness of faith.

Integrity matters.

**THEY’RE ALL CROOKS. I DON’T TRUST ANY OF THEM.** I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard people say that lately, usually referring to politicians as a whole class, but other categories of people are usually not far behind. It’s the primary manifestation of the ‘collapse of trust’. It is having a corrosive effect.

I play a little game with people. Often when I ask, “How are you doing?” they’ll reply “Good”. As we all know the correct grammatical answer is “Well”.

But, being the mischievous sinner that I am, I usually reply, “Actually, you’re bad, and, so am I. We’re all bad.” The first step toward repentance, toward becoming a human being is to embrace the fact that you are the “chief sinner”, that I am the “chief sinner”, as we half-heartedly say in the prayer before Communion. The companion responses to my naughty reply are as equally unhelpful: “Well, no one is perfect,” or “We all do it.”

Until we expect more from ourselves, until we expect more from our family and friends, until we expect more from those in whom we’ve placed our trust, we will not be able to escape this morass. Until we love one another, even as we recognize the sin in ourselves and each other, until we love even those with whom we disagree and who may be our enemies, we will not be able to escape this morass. The Cross is not just something we hang around our necks.

Loving one another matters.

**FREEDOM AND LIBERTY.** Freedom and liberty are not the same thing. This confusion of word and meaning is playing out with deadly consequence in these

days. We truly need to understand the difference.

Freedom is, first and foremost, freedom from sin and its consequence death. Most human preoccupation is with avoiding the idea of death, or trying to forestall it. Freedom from sin and death is found in the Good News of

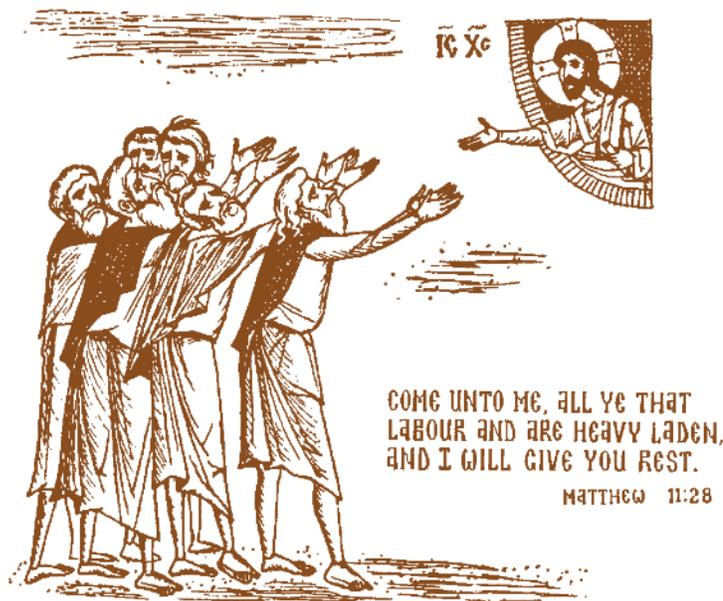
Christ’s coming. Avoiding God’s call for repentance leads to greater anxiety, and much worse.

Liberty is the other side of this coin. Sometimes these words are used interchangeably, but for our purposes we’ll focus on the ‘rights’ or ‘privilege’ nuance of its meaning. Liberty is an assertion. While not inherently wrong or bad, when a person’s or a group’s rights are promoted it is sometimes at the expense of another, perceived or otherwise. It’s easy to understand how your insistence on a particular right or privilege might be felt by me as a limitation on my right or privilege. This is part of what we’re seeing in today’s public tensions. The Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, writing in his work *Moral Man and Immoral Society* in the early part of the last century observed that if one strives for justice, one oftentimes get something less; if one strives for love, one oftentimes realize justice.

It matters that we all are free. It matters that none is oppressed.

**CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM.** There is so much anger and rage around us that it is not only palpable when we’re awake, but many sleep more anxiously and drive more distractedly (if that’s at all possible) as they unconsciously absorb it. St. Paul says two things about anger. “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil.” (Ephesians 4:26-27) These verses are quoted often and have deep spiritual implications, but for our purposes the surface meaning will suffice.

Anger is a powerful emotion and it can motivate us to do a lot of things, hopefully in the service of God’s righteousness. But, as St. Paul correctly warns: **do not sin!** As we can see, uncontrolled anger leads to great danger and even harm. He says: **do not let the sun go down on your anger**, which



means, put a time-limit on it. And finally, **do not make room for the devil.** Well now, we've seen lots of people making superhighway paths for the devil lately, haven't we?

It matters that we calm down and temper our righteous anger with love. It matters that we exorcise our demonic anger and make room for God.

#### **140 CHARACTERS ARE NOT ENOUGH.**

I'll talk about technology generally next, but for now I'd like to focus on the 'bumper-sticker' ways we've been conducting serious public policy discussions. It may reflect the decline in our attention span. It definitely reflects our diminished desire to work through complicated subject matter in a patient and respectful way. However, the real danger of 140 characters is not the shortness of the sentence; it is the shallowness of the content. Often formulated from a person's first thoughts upon waking, or the last groggy thoughts before collapsing in bed, the message suffers from a lack of reflected consideration. Many of the verses in our spiritual anthologies, like the *Saying of the Desert Fathers* or the *Philokalia*, could probably be considered 'tweetable' if the number of characters were the only criteria, but each of these lines is not only the result of great spiritual insight, they also require the reader to examine the content of the text they're reading and, most importantly, their own heart. Much of what is tweeted or posted is like the discarded refuse that builds the land-fill pyramids that are the hallmark of our consumerist society.

Content matters.

**UNPLUG YOURSELF!** Technology is a seductive thing. It's like the line from an old rock song: "Colored lights can hypnotize; Sparkle someone else's eyes." Or, like when I came back to my college alma mater a few years after I had grad-

uated and started perusing the college daily, commenting on how nice it looked. My friend said to me, "Yah, high-tech, low-content."

We are increasingly drawn into a web (no pun intended) of mesmerizing technology that promises much, but usually delivers little of true value. Even more, it often poisons the very things that are of true value: family, personal relationship, meaningful employment, a safe and healthful environment. I am far from a Luddite, but I've become increasingly skeptical about the Faustian bargain we've made with our creations.



Most of the progress made that enhanced our quality of life, technologically speaking, were relatively, simple things: rigorous enforcement of public health provisions, safe housing, quality schools, fresh food, human-scale cities and towns, safe work environments, living wages, social security, accessible health care. You know the list as well as I do. These are the things that really increased life expectancy and reduced infant and maternal mortality. The rest is a Star Trek fantasy; something to hypnotize and draw us away from true life.

Much of what happens on so-called social media is the most destructive thing going, socially speaking. It isn't that people are different, or are worse, but they can be changed. This technological experiment is the largest unvetted human test ever conducted. No one has any idea of what the results will be. Already there is evidence that young minds are changed, re-wired by the workings of this technology. We know that much of what is posted on Facebook and other such media are, at the very least, distortion, if not outright lies. We know that people become more and more depressed and anxious because they think their lives are lesser than their "friends." We know that bullying, vial talk, and worse are much more easily available to each of us, as we sit alone in front of our screens, never accessing the pain and hurt a face to face encounter would generate.

Our human person matters. The humanity of our brothers and sisters matter. A look and a touch matter.

**EVIL IS REAL, AND IT'S SYSTEMIC.** We struggle with evil in our personal lives, but we also struggle with an evil that's built into the institutions, systems, and social customs that form the environment (society) in which we live. One of the more powerful insights of modern thought is the way in which society influences and shapes us. It's not that people didn't understand this before, but we've come in recent times to really appreciate how deeply the ideas around us can become embedded in us, without our being aware of it. When Neibuhr speaks of moral man and immoral society, he is drawing our attention to the fact that personal piety is not enough. Other powerful forces are at play.

So, while evil may be real, we should also remember that it doesn't exist, at least not the way we normally think of existence. Theologically speak-

ing, true existence belongs only to God. We exist because He shares His existence with us. Evil exists because God refuses to withdraw the life He's given to those He created. He respects us and our decisions.

So, then, what is evil? Evil is a parasite. It feeds off of other living things. Lucifer and his cohorts challenged God, thinking they could exist without Him. But they quickly found out that they couldn't. Nonetheless, God allows Satan and his demons to continue to exist. They, like so many other parasites, feed off of us, the pathetic unwitting ones. And the reason is that without true spiritual insight, evil often looks to us like good; it *is* a parasite, after all. Here's a wonderful example.

When the World Trade Towers were attacked and the struggle against terrorism began here on our own soil, President Bush and his aides dubbed this: *The War Against Terror*. In spite of the fact that many who still treasured proper grammar cringed, noting that terror is an emotion, not a nation-state or even an ideology, the Texan folksiness of the phrase won out. And so, the problem.

Remember, words matter. They both reflect and shape our thinking. *Terror*, being an emotion, is the product of some act of *terrorism*, perpetrated by a *terrorist* whose intention is to *terrorize* a person into submission. A child who is beaten and abused — *terrorized* and *terrified* — needs to feel safe and loved. This is the remedy for the feeling of *terror*.

The person who is the *terrorist*, often a trusted adult in their own household, needs to be contained in some way, most likely prison. Their defense is some twisted variation of a *terrorist* philosophy, i.e. *terrorism*. Again, do you see how words matter? How easy it is to twist meaning to hide the truth? To invade nations and wipe out populations

on the basis of a grammatical malaprop? For a generation now, we have been waging a war against an emotion, instead of the people and ideas that have provoked the emotion, against the conditions and forces that have given those terrorists the voice and power to work.

I heard an interview just a few days ago with Andrew Young. Among his many remarkable attributions is that he was the young aide to Martin Luther King, Jr. He argued that the removal of Confederate monuments was a distraction from the real issue: the lives and deaths of those oppressed. Not that the Confederate cause could or should be defended, but fighting about statues takes us away from the real issue: the evil reasons why they were erected in the first place. We need to address that.

The controversy around the 'Black Lives Matter' franchise and the attempt to weaken the message with other competing franchises — like 'All Lives Matter' or 'Add-Your-Color Lives Matter' — demonstrates how a seemingly innocent attempt to expand the concerns raised by this effort to focus on Black lives, to all people who might be persecuted, actually destroys the message.

This is the nature of evil. This is its parasitic quality: distract, distort, lie, seduce. So instead of recognizing the fact that young black men, in particular, are stopped, arrested, shot, imprisoned, and more, at much higher rates than other segments of our population, we now have to respond to the complaints of privileged classes that they are really the ones being discriminated against.



Beware of the person who arouses the passions. This is the first step toward distraction. I spoke of anger above. A common synonym for anger is "to lose one's temper." An even temper is the process by which things are brought into a proper harmony. It's like being even keeled. One can float without sinking. The person who misuses and twists words, which eventually leads to evil actions, is using the tactic of the Evil One.

Lies are the enemy. Truth matters.

**LOVE YOUR ENEMIES.** The Lord tells us: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). The point of the Lord's coming to "pitch his tent with us" (John 1:14) was to teach us the nature of true existence. He showed us by his life, but especially on the Cross, how to destroy Evil's hold on us. He demonstrated the power of 'love-of-enemies,' even to the giving up of your own life, in the brilliance of his Resurrection. We lose our voice and authority as Christians when we ignore and water down this essential aspect of the kerygma (the proclamation of the Gospel).

Love matters.

**W**e often speak of the American experiment. From the time the first immigrants came to the New World, there was this idea that what was being created here would be different, special, perhaps even God-ordained.

Of course, as we looked hard at the history, we came to understand that not everything about America was or is as it was presented to us in our early education. There are many things for which we are embarrassed, if not quite yet repentant. There are recurring impulses to turn back the clock in order to recreate an imagined world that never really existed. This is how we might interpret the desire to recast the Confederacy and the Civil War, or the strength of the various Right-wing movements, or even the

idea that we were founded as a Christian nation.

Since this reflection is intended as a spiritual exercise, it might be helpful to pause on this last point. While some of the European immigration to America had a religious motivation, the Founding Fathers (and Mothers, for that matter) were a mixed bag in terms of their piety. Many were Deists who believed only generally in a higher-being. Many were Masons, which also was and still is seen as outside of Christian orthodoxy. Others were just nominally Christian, conforming to social convention.

Schisms within the Christian communities were common. Roger Williams was expelled from Puritan Massachusetts, became a Baptist and established Providence Plantation, for ex-

ample. But, Enlightenment ideas and ideals did shape these new colonies here and created a place that at least spoke about freedom, and liberty, and the dignity of humans beings as virtues worth striving for, even as they fell far short of actualizing them. The struggle of what and who America is continues.

But there was and is a larger and even more important experiment in human history: the Christian Church. And, here we need to be careful not to reduce the Church to an institution, as we modern people would think of it. The Church is first and foremost the community of believers, the Body of Christ.

From impossibly humble beginnings it reshaped first the Roman world and then the entire world. In societies

were people were trapped by class, and wealth, and even gender, the truth that we are all created in the image and likeness of God allowed a way out. It is no exaggeration to say that every ideal and freedom we hold dear is due to the Good News brought to us by the Lord. In spite of ourselves, we were shaped by the truth revealed in the Scriptures.

As Christians we need to strive to live the Life in Christ as completely as we can. As Christians, we need to help as many of those in need as we can. As Christians we need to protect the weakest among as we can.

The image of God in us matters.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

