

## ***Until Christ Be Formed In You...***

### ***Insights of the Holy Fathers for Guiding Children and Youth Along the Path to Salvation***

Orthodox Youth Workers Conference, Antiochian Village, January 23, 2014

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**Invocation:** *“And when the fullness of time had come, Thou didst speak to us through Thy Son Himself, by Whom Thou didst also make the ages; Who, being the Radiance of Thy glory and the Image of Thy person, upholding all things by the word of His power, thought it not robbery to be equal to Thee, the God and Father. He was God before the ages, yet He appeared on earth and lived among men, becoming incarnate of a holy Virgin; He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being likened to the body of our lowliness, that He might liken us to the image of His glory.”* (second “secret” prayer in the Anaphora of St. Basil’s Liturgy)

**Introductions:** name, city, parish/ministry;

- why you selected this workshop;
- what book has had the greatest impact on your ministry with children or youth.

### **Opening object lesson:**

1. Please look at this picture. [an Orthodox bishop pointing at the camera with the caption appearing underneath: “God wants you!”]
2. Now please close your eyes and don’t open them until I say so.
3. According to St. Athanasius, we have just proven the existence of your soul.
4. Now open your eyes.
5. Now let’s discuss what just happened.
  - How did you do with this exercise? Any difficulties?
  - Did you peek? [If so, write down: obedience]
  - Did you see the picture in your mind’s eye? [write: imagination]
  - If you close your eyes again now, can you see the picture? [write: memory]
  - Why does St. Athanasius say this proves the existence of the soul?

We have the ability to look or to not look. What is it that allows us to make this choice? This freedom of movement, as St. Athanasius and other Fathers refer to what we might in more modern terms call freedom of will, is one of the attributes that comes from our being created in the image of God.

Just now, you were politely obeying my directions (or disobeying as the case may be), but we all do this ourselves many times in the course of a day with each of our senses without giving it much thought. We choose what we will look at, listen to, taste, etc., and what we will not.

In short, we make choices. We make choices based on what is pleasing or desirable or interesting to us. (Or what we hope and expect will be pleasing.)

But we also make choices to endure unpleasant experiences and situations which in many cases are not necessary for physical survival: waiting in line outside some retail store all night in the cold or rain in order to get a “door-buster” best price on a new item of clothing or electronics on Black Friday; or even spending several days in all kinds of weather and discomfort to get tickets to some concert or sporting event that sells out in the first 15 minutes.

The body is involved in either case – choosing pleasurable experiences or choosing to forego them; choosing to endure unpleasant circumstances to achieve a goal we think more important – but it is not just biology that is involved. What is the “other” part that is involved? Who (or what) is it that makes these decisions? Following the Holy Fathers, we call this “decision maker” the soul.

Someone might object saying, “This doesn’t prove the existence of a soul. The behavior you are describing is merely human psychology.” While they do have a point, they do not really know what they are saying, for as you and I know, psychology is the study of the soul. Most people, even psychologists, tend to forget this, and so while such a person is “not far from the truth”, what they are thinking is not, “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” as the saying goes.

## **Organic Unity**

And now, in what may appear to have been a rather roundabout way, we have come at last to the point where we can’t avoid talking directly about the subject of this session. Like it or not, we are standing on the verge of discovering our first Patristic insight on the subject, and that is:

### **1. Before we can talk about raising children, we must know what is a human being.**

The reason we have taken this roundabout route lies in the Patristic mentality itself, which is integral or organic, proceeding from the whole to the parts; rather than constructive or synthetic, proceeding from the parts to the whole. The Holy Fathers present us not with a series of intellectual propositions which may be assented to, modified, rejected or even de-constructed and thus made meaningless.

The Fathers invite us to an encounter with a living and ever-existing reality that is the Truth – the truth about God, about humanity and about the created world – and that is also personal; that is in fact, a Tri-Personal Unity, creating and filling the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and which is calling us into a fellowship of persons. Fellowship meaning a shared life, a communion of persons, not just a euphemism for recreational activities.

Concerning this fellowship, St. John the Evangelists wrote: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)”*

Scripture, theology, iconography, liturgy, the mysteries, anthropology, architecture – all may be studied as separate fields of knowledge, but each is actually an integral part of something greater, a facet of a whole which is larger than the sum of its parts, for the Church is the New Creation, which is to say, a New World, and those who dwell there must first become new creatures. For the Church is nothing less than the Body of Christ, and to touch it in one of its facets is to touch it in its entirety, without ever fully encompassing it or grasping it in its entirety.

Now to honor my father, I must quote you a poem by Tennyson:

### **Flower in the Crannied Wall**

FLOWER in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.

**Back to insight # 1:** We find that before we can talk about raising children, we must know what is a human being. I'll give it to you in a nutshell so long as you are not fooled by the smallness of the package, but rather remember that, like a tree-nut, this explanation is actually a seed that if properly nurtured and cared for, will grow into an immense and fruitful tree.

**The Nutshell:** All human beings are, as the Scripture says, made in the image and likeness of God. We are each, as the Fathers' say, a composite being, made up of two parts, a body and a soul, both parts created by God and given life together as one unique person. *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”* (Genesis 2:7)

Using today's terminology, we might describe this interaction of body and soul as being a “seamless” integration of parts or functions. But when all is said and done, is it really seamless? Is there really nothing that can interrupt or come between this seemingly seamless harmony of body and soul that we call a human being?

### **The Line Between Good and Evil**

**Alexander Solzhenitsyn** once confessed that before he was imprisoned in the Soviet Gulag, he thought that there was such a thing as “good” men and “bad” men. His experience in the Gulag taught him differently. There he discovered that the line between good and evil runs, not between one man and another, but down the center of each man, and that within each man there is a war between good and evil.

This experience is not Solzhenitsyn's alone. **St. Paul** describes the same inward struggle more graphically in his **Letter to the Romans** (7:14-25) [these excerpts from the Jerusalem Bible]

“I cannot understand my own behavior. I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate. ...for though the will to do what is good is in me, the performance is not, ... instead of doing the good things I want to do, I carry out the sinful things I do not want. When I act against my will, then, it is not my true self doing it, but sin which lives in me. ...In my inmost self I dearly love God’s Law, but I can see that my body follow a different law that battles against the law which my reason dictates. ...What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body doomed to death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

**St. John Damascene** also describes these “two laws” in more detail:

*Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book 4:22 [excerpts]

Therefore the law of my mind, that is, the conscience, sympathizes with the law of God, ... and makes that its will. But the law of sin, that is to say, the assault made through the law that is in our members [the flesh], or through the lust and inclination and movement of the body and of the irrational part of the soul, is in opposition to the law of my mind, that is to conscience, and takes me captive, ... and through the softness of pleasure and the lust of the body and of the irrational part of the soul, ... leads me astray and induces me to become the servant of sin. But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (for He assumed flesh but not sin) condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but in the Spirit. For the Spirit helpeth our infirmities and affordeth power to the law of our mind, against the law that is in our members.

**In short**, there is something, something foreign to our original nature, that disrupts the harmonious functioning of body and soul, and that something is sin.

**Wait a minute!** Why are we hearing such a “dark” meditation in a talk about child rearing? Shouldn’t we be talking about techniques for youth programs? The short answer is, because these thoughts expresses a truth we, as Orthodox Christian youth workers, parents, teachers, and clergy, must always have in mind if we are to fulfill the God-ordained task of raising children: namely, the lamentable condition of human life after the fall. **This thought provides focus to all our actions as ministers, teachers and parents of children and youth.**

The entire race suffers from this **brokenness**, this rupture between body and soul, personally and collectively, in such a profound way that, left to ourselves, we are all progressing on a degenerative path that leads to a disastrous separation of body and soul in the permanent condition known as death. St. Athanasius the Great considers this death so absolute that he refers to it as **non-existence**, because at its root is a rupture between our humanity and God our Creator!

Which makes it all the more genuinely **GOOD NEWS** that there is a way to escape this broken condition, and to experience the re-integration, the re-union, not only of body and soul, but also a way to rise to a personal union of the human with the Divine in a permanent condition the Saints know as Life Eternal.

About this St. John the Evangelists says: *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. (John 1:12)”*

Now, suddenly and without much warning, we behold our second Patristic insight of the day:

## **2. Before we can talk about how to raise children, we must know what is the goal of human life.**

### **John and Germanus’ Totally Awesome Teenage Journey to Scete –**

WHEN I was in the desert of Scete, where are the most excellent monastic fathers and where all perfection flourishes, in company with the holy father Germanus (who had since the earliest days and commencement of our spiritual service been my closest companion both in the coenobium and in the desert, so that to show the harmony of our friendship and aims, everybody would say that a single heart and soul existed in our two bodies), I sought out Abbot Moses, who was eminent amid those splendid flowers, not only in practical but also in contemplative excellence, in my anxiety to be grounded by his instruction: and together we implored him to give us a discourse for our edification... . at last being overcome by our prayers he thus began.

ALL the arts and sciences, said he, have some goal or mark; an end or aim of their own, on which the diligent pursuer of each has his eye, and so endures all sorts of toils and dangers and losses, cheerfully and with equanimity, e.g., the farmer, shunning neither at one time the scorching heat of the sun, nor at another the frost and cold, cleaves the earth unweariedly, and again and again subjects the clods of his field to his ploughshare, while he keeps before him his goal; viz., by diligent labor to break it up small like fine sand, and to clear it of all briars, and free it from all weeds, as he believes that in no other way can he gain his ultimate end, which is to secure a good harvest, and a large crop; ... . Those men too who are engaged in mercantile pursuits, have no dread of the uncertainties and chances of the ocean, and fear no risks, while an eager hope urges them forward to their aim of gain. Moreover those who are inflamed with the ambition of military life, while they look forward to their aim of honors and power take no notice of danger and destruction in their wanderings, and are not crushed by present losses and wars, while they are eager to obtain the end of some honor held out to them.

Our profession too has its own goal and end, for which we undergo all sorts of toils not merely without weariness but actually with delight; on account of which the want of food in fasting is no trial to us, the weariness of our vigils becomes a delight; reading and constant meditation on the Scriptures does not pall upon us; ...

Doubtless for this it was that you yourselves despised the love of kinsfolk, and scorned your fatherland, and the delights of this world, and passed through so many countries, in order that you might come to us, plain and simple folk as we are, living in this wretched state in the desert. **Wherefore, said he, answer and tell me what is the goal and end, which incite you to endure all these things so cheerfully.**

**We replied that we endured all this for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.**

**TO which he replied:** Good, you have spoken cleverly of the (ultimate) end. But what should be our (immediate) goal or mark, by constantly sticking close to which we can gain our end, you ought first to know. And when we frankly confessed our ignorance, he proceeded:

The first thing, as I said, in all the arts and sciences is to have some goal, i.e., a mark for the mind, and constant mental purpose, for unless a man keeps this before him with all diligence and persistence, he will never succeed in arriving at the ultimate aim and the gain which he desires. .... And so the end of our way of life is indeed the kingdom of God. But what is the (immediate) goal you must earnestly ask, for if it is not ... discovered by us, we shall strive and wear ourselves out to no purpose, because **a man who is traveling in a wrong direction, has all the trouble and gets none of the good of his journey.** And when we stood gaping at this remark, the old man proceeded: **The end of our profession indeed, as I said, is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven: but the immediate aim or goal, is purity of heart, without which no one can gain that end:** fixing our gaze then steadily on this goal, as if on a definite mark, let us direct our course as straight towards it as possible, and if our thoughts wander somewhat from this, let us revert to our gaze upon it, and check [our thoughts] accurately as by a sure standard, which will always bring back all our efforts to this one mark, and will show at once if our mind has wandered ever so little from the direction marked out for it. (1<sup>st</sup> Conference with Abba Moses, Chapters 1-4)

In considering this our 2<sup>nd</sup> Patristic insight, we have inadvertently discovered another:

**3. For a Christian, daily life on earth and spiritual life cannot be successfully separated. They are not two different things to be kept in separate boxes, but two aspects of a single life which is being lived according to God's original design and intended purpose for all human beings.**

**Now at this point,** you might be disposed to think that the Fathers were not much directly interested in our topic: raising children and guiding youth. You might suppose they were either too preoccupied with living in the desert and avoiding “normal” people, or with explaining how the Son was of one essence with the Father and how the Holy Spirit was equally worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son, or with how the two natures were united without confusion in the one person of Christ. But you would be wrong.

While there are very few Patristic “handbooks” specifically addressing our concerns, there are a few truly great texts which do, and in addition the Fathers have a great deal to say in passing about family, children and education, while addressing other topics.

**All right then, enough evasion, let's get down to cases. What are some of these handbooks -** the sources where we will find if not an entire schema for raising children and guiding youth, at least a clearly focused discussion on this?

Perhaps the oldest text we have approximating a handbook is one we are encouraged to read every Great Lent. With that hint you may have guessed it: it is the **Book of Proverbs**. While it is certainly not a systematic treatment of child raising, the phrase “my son” is used 25 times in this book, and it is clearly meant to be a collection of sayings for the guiding of youth into a righteous way of life.

Especially noteworthy are verses 7-9 of Chapter 1, as it reads in the Greek Septuagint version, which from earliest times was the preferred version of the Old Testament used by the Church: **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and there is good understanding to all that practice it: and piety toward God is the beginning of discernment; but the ungodly will set at nought wisdom and instruction. Hear, my son, the instruction of thy father, and reject not the rules of thy mother. For thou shalt receive for thine head a crown of graces, and a chain of gold round thy neck.”** Later on, at 22:6 we find what is perhaps one of the most often quoted Biblical verse concerning childrearing: **“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”** Of course, this presupposes that there is such a thing as a right and a wrong way that one may go; a concept which is decidedly out of fashion today, and one which takes real discernment to discover which is the right and which the wrong!

We may add to this the long, acrostic **Psalm 119** (118 LXX), which according to tradition was composed by King David to instruct his son, Solomon, both in learning the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and in learning the basic elements of spiritual life. One particular verse provides us with a key to guiding youth by asking and answering a simple question: **“Wherewithal shall a young man correct his way? By keeping Thy words. (118:9 LXX)”** Meaning, of course, God’s words or commandments. There is a profound commentary on this Psalm by St. Theophan the Recluse that draws heavily upon the writings of earlier Fathers, summarizing and expanding upon their teachings. These Biblical texts deserve closer and more frequent reading than we are perhaps used to giving them.

However, it’s really not until we reach St. John Chrysostom in the 4th Century that we come upon a single text, actually a sermon, that deals at length with our topic: **On Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children**. If time allows, we’ll have more to say about this text in a moment [e.g. why connect vainglory and children?]. For now we’ll have to be satisfied with these quotations, most pertinent to the theme of our conference:

To each of you fathers and mothers I say, just as we see artists fashioning their paintings and statues with great precision, so we must care for these wondrous statues of ours [our children]. Painters, when they have set the canvas on the easel, paint on it day by day to accomplish their purpose. Sculptors, too, working in marble, proceed in a similar manner; they remove what is superfluous and add what is lacking. Even so must you proceed. Like the creators of statues do you give all your leisure to fashioning these wondrous statues for God. And, as you remove what is superfluous and add what is lacking, inspect them day by day, to see what good qualities nature has supplied so that you will increase them, and what faults so that you will eradicate them. And, first of all, take the greatest care to banish licentious speech; for love of this above all frets the souls of the young. Before he is of an age to try it, teach thy son to be sober and vigilant and to

shorten sleep for the sake of prayer, and with every word and deed to set upon himself the seal of the faith. [sign of the cross] (Sec. 22)

Let his mother learn to train her daughter by these precepts, to guide her away from extravagance and personal adornment and all other such vanities... . Let the mother act by this ordinance at all times and guide the youth and the maiden away from luxury and drunkenness. ... Thus we shall be able to please God by rearing such athletes for Him, that we and our children may light on the blessings that are promised to them that love Him (cf. I Corinthians 2:9), by the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be ascribed glory, power, and honor, now and forevermore. Amen. (Sec. 90)

Before we leave the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, we must take note of a rather specialized text of **St. Basil the Great**, *An Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature*. In it he is speaking to a particular group of young men, who by virtue of their social station are being prepared for public life, and if St. Basil has his way, service in the Church. His instruction to them, despite its special context, may yet be adapted to our purposes. There we hear such things as this:

We Christians, young men, hold that this human life is not a supremely precious thing, nor do we recognize anything as unconditionally a blessing which benefits us in this life only. Neither pride of ancestry, nor bodily strength, nor beauty, nor greatness, nor the esteem of all men, nor kingly authority, nor, indeed, whatever of human affairs may be called great, do we consider worthy of desire, or the possessors of them as objects of envy; but we place our hopes upon the things which are beyond, and in preparation for the life eternal do all things that we do. Accordingly, whatever helps us towards this we say that we must love and follow after with all our might, but those things which have no bearing upon it should be held as naught. (Sec. 2.1) [reminiscent of Abba Moses' teaching above]

Jumping across the centuries, we find that with the spread of the printing press, a number of practical handbooks are being written for lay people, especially in Russia, beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> and on through the 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries on the proper ordering of the Christian home. Among these authors, **St. Tikhon of Zadonsk** stands out in spiritual stature and insightfulness, as evidenced by his book, *Journey to Heaven: Counsels on the Particular Duties of Every Christian*, which contains sections on the "Duty of Parents Towards Children" and the "Duty of Children Towards Parents". Forty-nine editions of this book were published prior to the Russian revolution! Another example of this type of literature is a collection of homilies by Bp. Irenaius of Ekaterinburg and Sibirsk, *On the Upbringing of Children*, which first appeared in Russian in 1901, and was translated some years ago by the Nuns of St. Xenia Skete in Wildwood, CA.

Throughout these recent centuries, the teaching concerning children and youth continues to appear in the context of teaching about family life, for the obvious reason that the idea of "youth workers" does not really appear until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Other than the texts mentioned here, to the best of my knowledge, only bits and pieces of this literature have been published in English, and then mostly in obscure Orthodox periodicals with very limited circulations, despite the great interest these texts hold for students of the Orthodox ethos of family life in earlier times.



However, not to disappoint you, I have saved the best for last, namely, the remarkable work by the great Russian luminary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, **St. Theophan the Recluse** (+1894), entitled *The Path to Salvation*, Part I of which deals almost exclusively and in great detail with the proper raising of children and youth from the beginnings of spiritual life in them at Holy Baptism until they reach the state of Christian adulthood. At last here is the handbook for which we have been looking, even though it was provided in the form of a textbook for use in a course in Moral Theology in the St. Petersburg Theological Academy! Once again demonstrating the holistic approach of the Fathers to our subject.

One of the first things we notice about this text is the **remarkable consistency in world view and basic principles** between the teaching of St. John Chrysostom in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century and that of St. Theophan in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This should not surprise us, for as St. Athanasius once said: “We do not follow the times; we follow eternity.” St. John and St. Theophan have a common understanding of God and humanity because they both follow the same Lord and have received the same Holy Spirit. As St. Paul says, “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.* (Hebrews 13:8)”

St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, when yet a young man seeking for enlightenment and a sure guide on the path to salvation, was deeply impressed by the remarkable harmony of the Fathers of all ages. Later he would write: “What was it that above all else struck me in the works of the Fathers of the Orthodox Church? It was their harmony, **their wondrous, magnificent harmony.** Eighteen centuries, through their lips, testified to a single unanimous teaching, a Divine teaching! ... **With this tradition as a priceless possession, the Church nourishes her children.**”

(St. Ignatius; “My Lamentation” *Orthodox Word* Vol. 38; No. 1 (222), Jan-Feb 2002.)

Two more quotations from St. John Chrysostom and St. Theophan side by side will illustrate:

“With us everything is secondary compared to our concern with young people and their upbringing in the instruction and teaching of the Lord. After all, what greater work is there than training the mind and forming the habits of the young? ... Let us then implant in him this wisdom and let us exercise him therein, that he may know the meaning of human desires, wealth, reputation, power, and may himself disdain these and strive after the highest.” – St. John Chrysostom

“The holiest of all holy works is the education of children. ... The most effective means for the education of true taste in the heart is a church-centered life, in which all children in their upbringing must be unfailingly kept. ... This is the chief aim of a Christian upbringing: that a youth as a result of this might say within himself that he is a Christian. ... then in the very midst of his independent existence or the unique, rational ordering of his life, he will place for himself as his first and essential duty to preserve in an independent way and to [keep] warm the spirit of piety in which he previously walked under the guidance of others.” – St. Theophan

This brings us to the most important Patristic insight for our purposes:

**4. The purpose of a healthy asceticism of bodily discipline and moral training under parental authority is as a preparation for exercising self-control through personal**

**discipline in adult life and a preparation for the personal activation of grace and the living of mature spiritual life unto salvation.**

We have already touched upon three areas of Patristic insight – what is a human being; the purpose of human life; and that all aspects of human life must be in harmony with spiritual principles for it to be truly Christian -- leaving for us these really scary issues of asceticism and authority yet to be examined.

**Fr. George Calciu: “... the pain in your knees is part of your prayer.”**

Fr. George Calciu, of blessed memory, many times described to us his life growing up in a pious Orthodox family in Romania. He always stressed how important his mother's piety had been to him as a young boy. It was at her insistence that they would go to church together. He said that often while standing in church his knees and feet would hurt, and he would want to sit down or go outside, and she would tell him that the pain in his knees was part of his prayer to God. In this regard, his mother was truly an Orthodox theologian of prayer.

The teaching and example of Fr. George’s mother to her young son were the essence of simplicity and yet were in perfect harmony with the teaching of our Holy Fathers concerning the Orthodox way of prayer as a threefold progression beginning first with the stage of bodily prayer, proceeding to mental prayer, and finally rising by God’s gift to spiritual prayer (see *The Art of Prayer*, edited by Igumen Chariton). The theological principle is clearly stated by St. Paul when speaking to the Corinthians concerning the body of the resurrection: “*It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual.*” (1Co 15:44; 46)

If we do not teach our children this way of prayer, prayer which begins with the body, they don't ever really begin on the path of prayer. It is like attempting to build a house by skipping the foundation and starting with the roof. We are often tempted to exercise a false compassion towards our children by letting them take the easy way because of their youth – letting them come late, or leave early or stay home altogether – thinking that later “when they understand more” they will come on their own. But if we don't guide them from their early years in the bodily forms of prayer, the first stage of prayer, and indeed in all the practical aspects of Orthodox piety, then how can we expect that they will ever make this beginning on their own?

**The ascetic principle of the Gospel and the virtue of self-control are one and the same: “*if thy hand offend thee, cut it off.*”** It is a hard saying, and one that we must understand correctly, but it is essential to our personal appropriation of the Gospel promise.

Both in the Gospel of Matthew (18:1-9) and in the Gospel of Mark (9:36-50), this teaching is given by Christ to His disciples in the context of answering their questions about preeminence in leadership by putting forth a child as exemplary of the height of spiritual attainment.

*Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And*

*whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. ... Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. (Matthew 18:3-6, 8-9)*

**Authority is given to those who serve, not to those who desire to dominate others:**

*And he sat down, and called the twelve, and said unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and **servant of all**. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receives me: and whosoever shall receive me, receives not me, but him that sent me. (Mark 9:35-37)*

The humble, trusting obedience of the child and the clear eyed discipline of bodily nature for spiritual purposes are blended by the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Fathers into a guideline for mature Christian living. The soul cannot be saved without the body; the body cannot be saved without being submitted to spiritual discipline by the soul.

**4. Conclusion: To embark upon this project - forming and guiding youth according to Patristic principles - is to set about the reformation of family and community life; it is to reinvigorate the parish with the infusion of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of grace.**

Youth ministry done properly is a Trojan Horse. Contained within it is the ability to pull down the fortress of the enemy; better yet, it is to make citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven out of ordinary people living in the midst of a fallen world.

Don't despair. If you weren't raised in this fashion, all is not lost. Most of us weren't. But, there is a second way in which spiritual life is begun for those who come to it as adults, and that is the way of repentance, which comprises Part II of St. Theophan's three part work: *Path to Salvation*.

**By Way of Conclusion – Of Principles and Applications**

*Methods are many; Principles are few. Methods may change; Principles never do.*

During this conference we may hear certain terms – icon, iconographer, iconography – used as metaphors for youth, youth worker and youth work. In fact, we should be thinking of this not in metaphorical terms, but in ontological ones – that is, in terms of a salvific way of life involving an operative spirituality, one with a goal (telos), a method (praxis) and various participants (persons), all of whom are working out their salvation in the One Body of Christ.

Bp. Thomas inspired us last year with his remarks about our need to be living icons, both personally and collectively in terms of the communities that we strive to create in the local church, and that it is this quality of being living icons that will speak to the young people we serve and to the larger society around us in profoundly salvific ways. As His Grace's words resonated in my hearing and in my heart, I did not think of this as a metaphor for youth ministry, but as a quality of being that His Grace was calling us to live out as we labor in the Lord's vineyard. May the Lord help us to maintain and build upon this insight and inspiration!

We must pray for the inspiration to creatively and faithfully apply the principles of the Holy Fathers in this generation. To devise successful methods of Orthodox spiritual formation, we must labor humbly and intelligently to understand and to participate personally in the principles of the Orthodox way of life.

*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. (I Cor13:11)*

St. Paul is here describing not only the natural progress toward earthly maturity, but the ascent of the spiritual man who is growing “from strength to strength” according to the pattern of the “perfect man” – Christ. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, this “growing in likeness to Christ” is the eternal heritage of each soul. May the Lord grant it!

***Through the prayers of the Holy Fathers, O Christ our God, have mercy on us as save us!***