THEOSIS PROGRAM

LEADER'S MANUAL

DIOCESE OF NEWTON

Office of Educational Services
19 Dartmouth Street
West Newton MA 02165
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INTRODUCTION

A combination of factors prompted the Office of Educational Services to develop what it calls the Theosis Program. The first of these is the spiritual condition of our parishes. Up until now the principle of adhesion in many parishes has been a mixture of social, familial and ethnic ties among people who really had not yet come to be at home in the wider society. The Church was our 'reservation': a place where we could be comfortable in the company of our peers and thus fulfill our religious 'obligations' in a relatively painless environment.

All that is over. We can purchase hummus and tabboule in supermarkets. We can socialize in the wider society more comfortably. We can take part in nonethnic civic groups or fraternal organizations without feeling out of place. We no longer look to the church to be our social center. Those who have seen the primary function of the Church as a place to be with 'our own kind' while simply tolerating its spiritual identity or even the Christian life itself, will identify with the Church less and less. Their descendants have no need of these 'nonchurch churches'. People will look to our Church only because (or if) they find a vibrant spiritual life there. Once more, as in its earliest years, the Church has no other purpose than to live the life in Christ!

As individuals within our congregations come to realize, through various means, that they are the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:19), they need to be brought together in groups where they can freely and easily speak their faith, in groups where they can share their lives as Christians and hear with their 'new ears' the teaching of the Spirit that their own commitment to the Lord may be deepened. When this happens, the liturgical life flourishes, people get involved in the life of the community, even the collection goes up! These committed believers become the nucleus of faith which can gradually spread its influence throughout the worshipping community and involve others in the following of Christ. Unless such communities develop in our parishes, we cannot in conscience encourage people to join our Church. We will be promoting a spiritual heritage which has no contemporary expression, which is found in the pages of books but not in the local congregation.

The first goal of the Theosis Program, then, is to assist in the development of spiritual life groups in our parishes. The name we have given this program is the Greek word for deification, the Eastern Churches' key understanding of what the Christian life is all about. The program aims to arouse within us a deeper awareness of what God is doing in us, so that we can grow in the Christian life ourselves within the framework of our Eastern Christian tradition.

A second factor influencing the design of this program is the existential situation of our diocese. Although we have had a hierarchic jurisdiction for almost twenty years, most of our parishes are functioning much as they had before we received a bishop. Each parish functions on its own with little if any reference to other parishes in the diocese. The geographical distances involved accounts for some of this, but there is also the reluctance we all feel to change. In response to this situation we felt the need to enable our communities to experience a further dimension of theosis: what the Fathers called the 'community of the Holy Spirit'. For this reason the program includes interparish weekend retreats and days of prayer, leaders meetings and conference calls.
as we seek to link together people of faith in parishes throughout the diocese in a common experience of our Eastern spiritual tradition. The Theosis Program would thus be a vehicle through which this eparchy could move from being simply a canonical entity to a discernible community in the Holy Spirit.

The first stages in the program, reflecting these two factors, include:

a) A Weekend Retreat bringing together members of all our Melkite parishes in a given area;
b) The formation of Ongoing Study and Support Groups back home in each parish;
c) Periodic Days of Prayer bringing weekend participants back together for prayer and sharing.

Christ has promised us a life full of adventure: "I came that they might have life and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10). His coming has as its purpose to bring us to a fulness of life, to energize us in a way that sets no limit to our potential by making us sharers in the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4). The Theosis Program seeks to bring us to a deeper perception of this reality and, by a greater experience of the community in which He has placed us, to give us a richer experience of that life here and now.

ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This text provides directions and sample talks for the initial Theosis Weekend as a guide for weekend leaders. It is divided into several sections. The introductory section details the weekend schedule, the materials needed and the tasks to be performed by various team members. The next section offers outlines of the various talks delivered on the weekend. The third section includes samples of these talks. These are not intended to be copied or read, but to give an idea to presenters of possibilities for their own talks. Where a specific thought is deemed essential to the development of the teaching of the program it is printed in boldface.

In preparing a talk from this manual for use in a THEOSIS Weekend, the speaker is urged to follow the following outline:

1. Ask the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, our Paraclete.

2. Review the outlines in the manual several times, along with the other recommended literature relating to the topic.

3. Prepare your own outline covering the major points of the talk. If possible, consult others who have given the same talk elsewhere. They can give you some useful tips.

4. Consider what personal witness can be given, where appropriate: how has this facet of Christian truth made a difference in your life. As has been said, the points in the outline present the ideas, but it is the personal testimony which does the convincing.

5. Ask the prayers of your fellow team members and the Society of Publicans as you prepare your talk.
INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Two months to six weeks before an initial weekend, an Informational Meeting should be held in the local parish to familiarize people with the design of the program and encourage participation in the upcoming event. If the parish has already participated in the program, previous participants can conduct the meeting. If not, then team members and/or participants from nearby parishes can conduct the meeting. At this session they receive copies of the program brochure, a reminder of the dates of the upcoming weekend and a registration form, as attached.

A brief outline for such a meeting presentation can be:

A - The Need in Us:

* That ordinary life becomes flat, even in the Church:

"First graduated, then married, Lowell had finally crossed the two mountains that had loomed in his path for what seemed like years, smack in the way of having a life. Now he was over them, and he could get on with it. And what happened then was that things went downhill for a while, and then they went up a little, and got flat - and then stayed that way."

L.J. Davis, "A Meaningful Life"

B - Vision of Christian Life:

* That life is meant to be an adventure, a journey, a pilgrimage, i.e. going somewhere:

Life to the full (Jn 10:10 - 'I came that they may have life and have it to the full."

This life = relationship with God (Jn 17:3 - "Eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God, and Him whom You have sent, Jesus Christ.")

* That we often look for life elsewhere:

Our 'life to the full' is often Atlantic City, hafla, family, whatever.
God is put in a box for wakes, Thanksgiving, maybe Sundays too. Church becomes a place of duty or social structure.

C - Renewal in the Churches:

* All Churches have renewal movements ... to build up as communities of people who know deeply that the Lord is with them (2 Cor 13:5 - "Perhaps you yourselves do not realize that Jesus Christ is in you. Test yourselves whether you are living in faith: examine yourselves...")

* Our particular problems: a) need for an authentic Eastern approach (Western programs, eg. Cursillo, have great dynamics but do not reinforce our spirituality. We have different understandings, a different style of prayer and liturgy. People who but into Western programs are often no longer at home in our Church!
b) need for authentic community in our diocese. After 20 years, still isolated parishes (convention often only exception, and how many attend?)

* The Lord calls us to be Eastern, to be Church; therefore our renewal must deal with these issues.

D - The Theosis Program:

* Theme: "...He has bestowed on us the great and precious things he promised, so that through these you who have fled a world corrupted by lust might become sharers of the divine nature" (2 Pt 1:4).

* Weekend Format: prayer, talks, services reflect Eastern spirituality; necessarily interparish makeup and sharing reflect the need for diocese to become a spiritual community;

* Specific Witness: by a previous weekender if available as to what the weekend was for him or her.

* Parish Group Format: necessary, or weekend is just a high; opportunity for commitment at end of weekend; regular prayer/study/sharing meetings (describe)

* Specific Witness by a group member, if available, as to what the group has meant to him or her.

* Current Groups: Begun in 8 parishes in NY, NE areas in '84-'85 with many groups continuing right through summer at own request.

E - The Upcoming Weekend:

* Dates:
* Place:
* Number required: for a new parish, minimum of 6 to insure follow-up (minimum of 25 for entire enrollment of weekend for dynamic to be effective).
* Cost:
  * Financial policy: There is a certain cost per weekend, most of which goes to the retreat house. If you can pay, fine. If not, give what you can. If you can give more to help those who might otherwise not go, know it as an act of fraternal love.
  * Registration: First pray about your participation; then, if so led, complete registration form and return it to your pastor/designated leader by _______.

F - Invitation - The Lord calls us to 'life to the full'

Pray that this program be for you an avenue to discover more of that life. Do it.
THEOSIS WEEKEND SCHEDULE

Friday:
7:00 PM - Registration, Room Assignments
Bingo icebreaker
8:00 PM - Icebreakers
8:30 PM - Orientation
9:00 PM - "Normal Christian Life" Talk & Quiet Time (Chapel)
10:10 PM - Break and Refreshments
10:30 PM - Jesus Prayer
11:00 PM - Meet with Discussion Leaders

Saturday:
8:00 AM - Morning Prayer & Reflection on St. Paul
8:30 AM - Breakfast
9:30 AM - Table Assignments, Table Group Introductions
Expl. of Scriptures, Icons and Prayerbook
9:45 AM - "We Are God's Icon" Talk
10:45 AM - Break
11:00 AM - Questions from floor & table discussions
11:45 AM - Noon Prayer: Canon to Saints & mini-reflections
12:30 PM - Lunch (with personal witnesses by 3 discussion leaders on the growing awareness of theosis in my life)
2:00 PM - "You Have Been Justified" Talk
2:45 PM - Discussion
3:15 PM - Posters
3:45 PM - Break
4:15 PM - "Growing in the Likeness" Talk
5:15 PM - Questions from floor & table discussions
6:00 PM - Break and Dinner (with witness by 3 discussion leaders on their parish support groups)
8:00 PM - The Mystery of Repentance: talk, penitential service & private confessions
10:30 PM - Refreshments
11:00 PM - Liturgy preparation for servers, cantors, ministers

Sunday:
8:30 AM - Orthros
9:45 AM - "Heaven on Earth" talk & discussion
11:00 AM - Divine Liturgy
12:15 PM - Lunch (with personal evaluation of weekend to date by 3 participants)
1:00 PM - A Christian's Vital Signs talks
2:00 PM - Discussion
2:30 PM - Break
2:45 PM - "This is the Normal Christian Life" talk (debriefing) & parish group strategy meeting
4:30 PM - Artoklasia Service with the blessing for Spiritual Fraternity
5:00 PM - Departure
Team and Leaders debriefing
THEOSIS TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

A - Directors - Two laypeople (director and assistant) responsible for:

1. **Set-Up** of registration area (director) and meeting room (assistant)
2. **Registration** including providing name tags and explanation of opening icebreakers (director) and room assignments and supervision of movement to rooms (asst.)
3. **Refreshments** purchase and preparation (assistant)
4. **Supplies** purchase or duplication of: workbooks, New Testaments, Prayerbooks, Partakers & Guides for each participant; markers and poster material for each table; Leader's Guides, akathists and Jesus Prayer tapes for each parish group (director).
5. **Table Groups** breakdown and set up of tables (both)
6. **Discussion Leader** briefing (director)
7. **Meals** table assignments (assistant), arrangement for graces & introduction of programs (ice breaker or witnesses) (director)
8. **Schedule** including keeping to time frame and summoning participants (assistant) and introducing speakers or dynamics (director)
9. **Bookstore** set up and sales (assistant)
10. **Evaluation forms** preparation, explanation and distribution (director)
11. **Talks and Presentations** including:
   - Icebreakers
   - Orientation
   - Jesus Prayer
   - Table Group Format Introduction
   - Explanation of Scriptures, Icons and Prayerbook
   - Mini-Reflections on Saints
   - Personal Witness to Church Life, Domestic Church
   - Debriefing Talk
   - Introduction to Parish Groups
12. **Team and Leaders Debriefing** (director)

B - Clergy - Two clergymen (at least 1 priest) responsible for:

1. **Chapel Set-Up** including securing of all items needed for decor and services such as altar wear, vestments, icons, books, etc. (liturgist)
2. **Icon Corner** including securing of icons, Scripture, etc. and set up (liturgist)
3. **Confession Stations**, including set up of analogia, securing of priests for private confessions (liturgist)
4. **Prayers and Services**, including conducting of all Saturday and Sunday services (liturgist)
5. **Training** of cantors, servers, readers for all services (liturgist)
6. **Assistance** at all liturgical services (spiritual father)
7. **Availability** for spiritual guidance at all times during weekend (spiritual father)
8. **Bookstore** assistance with information, help in choosing material, etc. (spiritual father)
9. **Motivational Talks** including:
10. Teaching Talks including:

"We Are God's Icon"
Mini-Reflection on Saints
"Growing in the Likeness"
"Heaven on Earth"
"A Christian's Vital Signs"

C – Discussion Leaders – several previous weekend participants who have continued to be involved in ongoing parish groups, responsible for:

1. Table Group Leadership including conducting discussions, arranging for reporting (with different reporters each time), supervision of poster session.
2. Mealtime Witnessing for Saturday dinner and supper (three each)
3. Personal Support of participants by developing personal contacts with their tablegroup members
4. Assisting the Directors at the registration and refreshment tables

D – Cantors
Participation in all divine services
Leading of meeting chants and 'theme' song
MATERIALS NEEDED

1. For Each Participant:
   "Burning Bush" nametag listing name and parish
   Copy of Bingo icebreaker
   Copy of Icebreaker Squares
   Theosis Weekend Participant's Workbook
   "Come Receive the Light" New Testament
   "A Book for Prayer"
   "Partakers of Divine Nature"
   "Partakers" Workbook
   Envelope for donation

2. For Team Members:
   Copy of master list of participants
   posterboard for each table group
   assorted markers for each table group

3. For Parish Group Leaders:
   "Partakers" Leader's Guide
   Akathist to the Name of Jesus
   "Jesus Prayer" cassette

4. For Bookstore Sales:
   a) Diocesan Publications:
      "Byzantine Melkite Thinking"
      "A Guide for the Domestic Church"
      "Melkites in America"
      "My Faithful Guide"
      "Nurturing the Seed of God-Life"
      "Take Life from the Light"
      Assorted leaflets

   b) Assorted icons

   c) ECDD Publications:
      "Come Bless the Lord" (icon packet)
      "The Face of God"
      "With Eyes of Faith"

   d) Other Publications:
      "Beginning to Pray"
      "Eastern Rite Catholicism"
      "Living the Liturgy"
      "Partakers of God"
      "Prayer Attitude in the Eastern Church"
      "Prayer: the Eastern Tradition"
      "Reading Scripture as the Word of God"
      "Reflections on the Jesus Prayer"
      "These Are the Sacraments"
      "The Way of a Pilgrim"
5 - For Liturgical Services:

Items as required for the following prayers and divine services:
* Icon corner in meeting room (cross, icons, covers, candle, etc.);
* Chapel arrangement with items for Divine Liturgy, Holy Confession (including confession stations as needed), Holy Unction, the canon to the saints (including icons of the saints discussed) and for Artoklasia (including candles for all participants);
* Service books for all participants for Holy Confession (Mystery of Repentance), Holy Unction, Sunday Orthros, Divine Liturgy and the Order for Spiritual Fraternity.

6 - Refreshments:

Snacks (chips, dips, carrot sticks, broccoli, etc.) and soft drinks (fruit juices and carbonated beverages, including diet drinks) for Friday and Saturday evenings.
FRIDAY EVENING

a) Registration (7 PM)

Participants should be greeted on arrival by a team member at the registration table. There they will be given an already prepared "Burning Bush" name tag, written large enough to be seen across the table. Tags should be placed on the table grouped according to the participants' parishes for easy locating. Blanks tags should also be available with markers in case of error. The table should also be furnished with a complete list of participants, and two copies of the list of room assignments, one to remain on the table and the second to help guide arrivals to their rooms.

Unless they are being brought in a group, participants should turn in their registration forms at this time. They will be given a copy of the "Bingo Icebreaker" with instructions to begin completing it as soon as they are settled in their rooms.

Upon registration, participants can be shown to their rooms. After settling in the rooms, they should return to the registration area for refreshments and to begin the bingo icebreaker.

b) Ice Breakers (8 PM)

This session is conducted in the meeting room which is set up in the following way. Tables for each group of 7 or 8 are clustered before the speaker's lectern and blackboard. The icon corner is set up with sufficient area around it for the participants to gather there for prayer. A further table is set up at the rear of the gathering for the team.

For this session people may sit wherever they wish.

The director begins by introducing himself or herself and the other team members (name, city, parish, family status, work, church life) and welcoming participants to the weekend. Note that one of the effects of this weekend is to come to know one another better as brethren in Christ, especially as we have been given to one another by God through the same local Church. Suggest that after each meal participants spend time one-on-one with someone they don't know (repeat this suggestion after each meal).

Note that the bingo icebreaker was a way of getting to know something different about the various participants. Go through each clue and identify each participant to whom it refers, noting pertinent information about each one (parish, activities, etc.). If time permits, quiz the group on what they have heard (who is X, who has 5 children, etc.).

Proceed to the ice breaker squares. Each table group should receive sufficient copies for all to see, but should work together as a group to solve the puzzles. After 15 minutes, the director should tally the answers.
c) Orientation (8:30 PM)

Once people have established a relaxed atmosphere through the icebreakers, the director should explain any housekeeping rules established by the place you are using (eg. smoking, eating areas, entry after hours, etc).

The director then describes the style of the weekend: that there will be a number of presentations on several topics at the heart of the Eastern Christian understanding of life in Christ. After each presentation there will be the opportunity for questions from the floor and/or table discussion. Urge them to take notes in their workbooks, which should be presented and explained at this time.

The director notes that there will be several services during the weekend, with Sunday's Divine Liturgy as the highpoint. Invite full participation and encourage singing, but enable participants to feel free not to sing if they prefer.

Talk about the need for prayer in secret (Mt 6:6) and encourage quiet time for that, either in the chapel or outdoors. Note that there are scripture and patristic readings in the workbook for reflection after each talk, meant for the quiet time.

At this point the director should introduce the cantor whose task it is to invite people to sing the opening prayers. The cantor begins by mentioning the place of psalmody in the Church as a traditional source of reflective chanting. He should also explain the praise gesture of uplifted hands as the traditional sign of exaltation in prayer and encourage people to raise their hands in prayer when they feel so inclined.

The cantor then explains the Theme Song of the weekend and practices it with the group.

The cantor then calls people to the icon corner for a moment of quieting, preparatory to the first talk. He leads the people in singing the invocation to the Holy Spirit, "O Heavenly King".

When people return to their places at the tables, the director introduces the speaker who will deliver the First Talk, "God Calls Us to a Normal Christian Life".
**EXAMPLE:**

**TAKE TAKE**

[Double-take]

---

### Ice-Breaker Squares

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EZ</th>
<th>TOUCH</th>
<th>MOTH CRY</th>
<th>BLACK COAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>[easy on the eyes]</td>
<td>[touch down]</td>
<td>[moth bawls]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>SAND</th>
<th>HURRY ↑</th>
<th>ME QUIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>[time after time]</td>
<td>[sand box]</td>
<td>[hurry up]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>KNEE LIGHT</th>
<th>MAN BOARD</th>
<th>HE'S HIMSELF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>[bi-level or split-level]</td>
<td>[neon light]</td>
<td>[man overboard]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READING</th>
<th>GROUND FEET FEET FEET FEET FEET</th>
<th>R ROAD</th>
<th>ZERO M.D.</th>
<th>Ph.D.</th>
<th>L.L.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>[reading between the lines]</td>
<td>[six feet underground]</td>
<td>[crossroads]</td>
<td>[3 degrees below zero]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEAR LONG</th>
<th>DICE DICE</th>
<th>ECNALG</th>
<th>CYCLE CYCLE CYCLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>[long underwear]</td>
<td>[paradise]</td>
<td>[glance backward]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLITAN</th>
<th>TOWN</th>
<th>II O O</th>
<th>STAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>[crooked politician]</td>
<td>[downtown]</td>
<td>[circles under the eyes]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TALK 1 — GOD CALLS US TO A NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Friday Evening, 9 PM

Aim: To awaken in the hearers an awareness of theosis as the normal Christian life and a sense of the need for it in their own lives.

This talk sounds the keynote for the weekend. In a real sense, its purpose is to make the listeners restless, from a spiritual perspective. Generally people have learned to see the Christian life as a keeping of certain religious observances as the fulfillment of their duty to God. In this talk we try to show a wider vision of the Christian life. It is meant to be nothing less than a sharing in God's own life: what we call theosis.

Theosis is proposed as the normal Christian life, i.e. God's plan for all of us (points one and four). It is described as a reasonable expectation, because the Holy Spirit, Christ's "living water", has been given us (points two and three). These two themes are interconnected and indivisible. The Fathers saw theosis as the reason for both the incarnation and the bestowal of the Spirit. Once this connection is understood, it admits for a much grander vision of Christian life.

We wish to stress the fact that the Spirit already dwells in us, that this process has already begun in us, even though we may just be coming to awareness of it. We are perhaps introducing the traditional Byzantine term to these people, but we should make clear that this is what has been going on in them ever since their baptism. We end by inviting them to respond even more to this gift of God by commitment to growing in awareness of His loving plan.

For Further Reading

Georgios Mantzaridis, "The Deification of Man" (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood NY, 1984) — Chapter 1, "The Foundation of the Teaching on Man's Deification".


Timothy Ware (Bishop Kallistos), "The Orthodox Church" (Penguin Books, Baltimore MD, 1963) — Chapter 11, "God and Man", especially the section 'Partakers of the Divine Nature'.

A) Basic Outline

**Introduction:** We all have preconceived notions of what Christian life ought to be: * minimalism ("what do I have to do?")

* church activity (equating it with parish commitment)

* impossible tasks ("I can't live like that!")
Let's see what it really is.

**Point One:** The normal Christian life is theosis:
Sharing the very life of God (true excitement: Jn 10:10, 17:3);
So that we can be transformed into sharers of His divine nature (2 Pt 1:4): an eternal process;

**Point Two:** This process comes about through the Holy Spirit:
God is no longer outside (Jn 14:17, 1 Jn 4:3, Rom 8:9)
Without a conscious awareness of the Spirit, what is meant to bring life brings death instead.

**Point Three:** This life is the Living Water Christ promised.
This is exemplified in the experience of the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:1-42).

**Point Four:** God wants all to have this life (1 Tm 2:4)
This life is the only real life for a Christian:
Everything not in Christ is a counterfeit of life.

**Point Five:** We are often seen to be deprived of life:
when we focus on our hurts, rather than on Him;
when we retain one or more secret places;
when we are suffering from the effects of old hurts;
when we don't want to change or to appear a fanatic (Jn 3:1).

**Conclusion:** Theosis is available to each of us through the power of the Holy Spirit.
The seed has been planted is us already, but we have not fully grasped it;
Let us open ourselves to it this weekend.

Invitation to Quiet Time in chapel.
B) Expanded Outline

Introduction:
We all have preconceived notions of what Christian life ought to be (like ladies in the kitchen: "There's only one way to make kibbee, ma'moul, etc."):
- minimalism ("what do I have to do?")
  (examples of persons with minimalistic attitudes)
- church activity (equating it with parish commitment)
  (being there when the bell rings - priests are good at promoting this attitude)
- impossible tasks ("I can't live like that!")
  ("Gospel living is ok for 'back then', but times have changed" or "That's for the clergy, not for ordinary people")

Let's see what it really is: what the Eastern Christian Tradition understands the normal Christian life to be.
Few are aware of it, because we have not always been exposed to the riches of our Tradition; or Because we have not been exposed to the fulness of the Gospel in any kind of expression.

Point One:
The normal Christian life is theosis:
(We can define normal Christian life as "Sharing the very life of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we may be transformed into sharers of His nature")

"Sharing the very life of God" - This is what Jesus meant by "I am the vine":
We try for life in the strangest places, eg. modern techniques (TM, etc), family, children (eternal life in a physical sense), diversions (cards, shows - like kid with 'ghetto blaster', drowning out the real world), even Church structures (a new building project, social).

We have the offer of God's life: so often we ask Him to "hold us excused."

This is exciting (Jn 10:10 - "life to the full"): we look outside for excitement (diversions), but God's Spirit is within, so excitement is meant to be within (vs. shopping sprees, trips to Las Vegas).

Greatest excitement is knowing God (Jn17:3) - this means more than knowing about God: it means having a relationship with Him.
When we know a person, we share their life: we come alive (personal witness of loving/being loved). This is the most dynamic part of living: if there's no one else, we even look to pets.

"So that we can be transformed into sharers of His nature": Pets may share our life, but never our nature: imagine passing that on to Fido).

This is what we call theosis, the theme of this weekend: it is the heart of Eastern teaching on meaning of life: (Biblical basis: 2 Pt 1:4)

Continuing process, not instant: a whole lifetime, plus eternity too! We're just at the beginning.

Point Two: This process comes about by the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal 2:20):

Before the giving of the Spirit, God was "out there" (King Kong and the maiden cult);

Since Pentecost, not so:

Jn 14:17 ("He shall dwell with you and be in you")
1 Jn 4:13 ("He is in us because He has given us His Spirit.")
Rom 8:9 ("You are not in the flesh, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you")

Always hard to grasp: 1 Cor 3:16 ("Don't you know that you are God's temple")
1 Cor 6:19 ("Don't you know that your bodies are God's temples")
2 Cor 13:5 ("You don't realize yet...")
The kool aid image (mix powder and water; try to separate!)

Too often we don't realize the Spirit is within us, and so it doesn't make a difference. But without the Spirit, what should bring life brings death instead:

"Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away,
Christ stays in the past,
the gospel is a dead letter,
the Church is simply an organization,
authority a matter of domination,
mission a matter of propaganda,
the liturgy no more than an evocation,
Christian living a slave morality.

But in the Holy Spirit, the cosmos is resurrected and groans with the birthpangs of the Kingdom, the risen Christ is there,
the gospel is the power of life,
the Church shows forth the life of the Trinity,
authority is a liberating service,
mission is a Pentecost,
the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation,
human action is deified."

Ignatius IV
Patriarch of Antioch

Point Three: This is the "living water" Christ promised to give (Jn 4:1-42):
we read this story at the Divine Liturgy every year as we prepare
 to celebrate the presence of the Spirit at Pentecost:

The Samaritan Woman was an average person, not a leader.
We know a bit about her religious heritage (Samaritanism) and also
that it didn't affect her life (5 husbands)
she doesn't understand His offer of living water
He doesn't let up on her, but touches her secret place (her
lifestyle). He won't let up, but doesn't condemn her either.
She tries to talk religion, but He refuses: He won't
compartmentalize as she does (and we do).
Finally He reveals Himself to her ("I am He"), and it changes her.

"The Samaritan woman came to the well and saw You with faith as
the Master of wisdom. You satisfied the thirst of her soul and she
inherited the kingdom of heaven forever" (kondakion).

Point Four: God wants all to be saved (1 Tm 2:4), ie to have the fulness of
life:

Samaritan woman knew the Lord from outside and was
transformed. We say 'Oh, if I had been there then...', but we know
the Lord from within, within the Church and its Tradition.
The promise of Living Water has already been kept!

Because the Spirit is within, life in the Spirit is the only life for a
Christian: anything else is death (Didache: life/nonlife).
It is not something extra (being 'into' religion).
If we share God's life, what else can claim the name???

Everything not in Christ is a counterfeit of life (entertainment,
stimulants, even relationships). We prefer to compartmentalize life
like the Samaritan woman (religion for Sunday, politics/religion
debate).

But if the Spirit is within me, how I live is appropriate or
sacrilegious.
And if the Spirit is in you, I treat you as an icon (S. Seraphim).

Point Five: We are often seen to be deprived of life:
Our Christian lives are poverty stricken. We do the forms
(attend, support, but don't experience what God has for us).
We are somewhere in between a corpse/someone on life
support/someone asleep/someone depressed, but going
through the motions/feeling really alive (swimming, jogging, etc.). For the latter, the others aren't really alive!

We are like the Twelve before Pentecost: knew Christ carnally, not in terms of who He really was.

We can know the Church (procedures, customs, etc) and not know the Spirit within (= Corinthians)

This is why many leave (not all for venal reasons: some are looking for life and not finding it!)

We often do not experience this life is us:
when we focus on our hurts, rather than on Him;
  (hurts from spouse, children, friends: when we concentrate on our feelings, we never get beyond them to the Spirit)
when we retain one or more secret places we won't deal with
  (temper, alcohol, sex, pride which I won't seem ready to turn over to the Lord.
when we are suffering from the effects of old hurts (eg because I have been put down, I have the need to put others down, to place myself above others)
when we don't want to change or to appear a fanatic (eg Nicodemus, Jn 3:1ff), especially before family.

Sometimes this life is obscured from you by us (clergy): you can't see past us and our failings. Forgive us from concealing the life. Nevertheless, even if our lives conceal the reality of theosis, our words must proclaim it: you are the temple of God, and the Spirit within you wants to make of you a new creation.

Conclusion:

Theosis is available to each of us through the power of the Holy Spirit: by sharing God’s life in the Church we can come to share in His very nature
The seed of this life has been planted is us already ("We have seen the true Light..."), but we have not fully grasped it;

Let us open ourselves to it this weekend so that the Spirit may be for us too a fount of living water, transforming us to the glory of the Father.

Invitation to Quiet Time in chapel:

"Quiet Time" means a few minutes to reflect on what you have heard in the talk, and to pray for the ability to understand it in a personal way for your life. We know that God speaks to us in Scripture, so one way to grow in this understanding is to prayerfully read the biblical and patristic texts on page x of your workbook. Or just sit quietly and ask the Lord to stir up the living water of His Holy Spirit within you for the glory of His name.

"Let's go quietly into the chapel now for a quiet time until 10:10."
C) Sample Presentation

Introduction This evening we would like to give you an awareness of where we come from as Christians in our own experience and in terms of the Tradition of the Church. A lot of times we have preconceived ideas about different things. I'm sure we've all had that experience where people have assumptions that such and such a way is the only way to do a thing, and that's it. If some of you ladies have devoted time in the church, maybe in the kitchen, preparing for a bazaar or a dinner or something like that. You know there's always somebody who comes in the kitchen and she knows the right way to make kibbeh, and nobody else knows how to do it, or whatever it may be.

We have preconceived ideas about a lot of things. At the same time, that touches the way we look at the Christian life. It touches the way we look at the Church. We have several expectations of what Christian life ought to be. We find it in people all over. The first one that comes to my mind is that a lot of people look at Christian life as doing as little as you have to; minimalism. I remember in my first assignment in a parish, we were trying to get an adult education group organized, and I went to this one woman who was very active in the church and invited her to participate. Her response was, "Well, I went eight years to Catholic school and I know everything I need to know." She had that kind of preconception that the Christian life was getting a certain amount of data down. Once you've gotten what you 'need', that's it: anything else was extra or superfluous. You didn't 'need' that.

Very often we have that kind of sense in the Church. I remember in another assignment, we would always invite people to participate in the liturgical services on the Feasts. One woman would always ask me if you 'had' to go on that day. Father Schmemann used to point to a Russian tradition or proverb, which doesn't translate very well into English, to the effect that 'If you don't have to go, you don't 'have' to go. In other words, it is an obligation of love, not of law. So you have that kind of preconception, minimalism.

You have another kind of assumption of what the normal Christian life is meant to be. For some people, the normal Christian life is church activity: they're there when the bell rings, they come for whatever's going on, and that is Christian life. We clergy are very good at that, because we have our projects, the things we would like to see happen and go on in the church; and so very often we give the impression that participating in church activities equals the Christian life. Well, that one isn't true either, at least not from the understanding of our own spiritual Tradition.

There are other people who very often see the Christian life as something beyond them, beyond their ability or power to deal with. This happens often: we read the Gospel and people will say, 'Well that was for back then. Back then they could do that sort of thing.' I don't know how they rate 'back then' or how they envision 'back then' was, but certainly in many things our life is a heck of a lot simpler than it was 'back then'. But, they have that vision. Or 'It's for the clergy, or for the nuns. That's for your level; we're laypeople and we can't achieve this kind of thing.'

Well, our aim for this weekend is basically to say that, according to our Eastern Christian Tradition, the normal Christian life is none of those things. It
is not simply fulfilling a certain minimal series of obligations. It's not being active in the parish. It's not something that was intended for monks or nuns or clergy, but its something that was meant for all those baptized into Christ. Just what this is we hope to be able to share with you this weekend.

Now, I stress again, as I stressed before, 'from our Eastern Christian Tradition'. Now a lot of times, we're not aware of that. We have not very often been exposed to it. Our Church has gone through a growing period. First, coming to this country we got settled and tried to put walls and a roof over our heads. And so very often getting down to making our spiritual Tradition available, both to ourselves in English (as the sources were not translated) and also our being psychologically ready to even be concerned about such things seems to be a phenomenon of just the last 15 or 20 years. I remember that 15 or 20 years ago people who were interested in Eastern Christian literature would hunt and hunt, and when they found a book or a pamphlet, were overjoyed that something was there. Now we have so much: in this period of time the ability of our Church to become more aware of its own Tradition has grown. And so, while we may not have been exposed to the riches of our Tradition in our own upbringing, today it is much more available than it ever was.

**Point One:** Sometimes we may not have been exposed also to the fulness of the Gospel in any Tradition. The way circumstances presented themselves in the life of the Church, Christian life was promoted in a formalistic way, but we would hope to be able to share with you in this weekend what the Eastern Christian Tradition says a normal Christian life really is. Very briefly it is this: nothing less than sharing the very life of God, sharing divine life, God's own life. It's what Jesus meant when He said, "I am the vine; you are the branches": that connectedness, that interpenetration of the divine life with our own.

Now, life is something we're all looking for, and we look for life in the strangest places. A lot of times people look for life in a lot of the new techniques, ideas and methods of self-realization that have become popular today. In other words, they're looking for something more than just going through the motions day by day: eating, sleeping, working and so on - looking for what Christ called 'life to the full', a more abundant life. People may look for life in that kind of thing: Transcendental Meditation, or whatever type of thing it is. I remember seeing an ad in California for a workshop offering 'Instant Enlightenment'. Well, I wish them well, but I didn't think they were quite going to make it. Enlightenment just doesn't come instantly. You have all of these kinds of things going on, certainly in our major cities, and every weekend there are numberless types of programs being offered - usually at a good cost - offering 'life to the full.'

But we say that the Source of that life is somewhere else: it is in sharing the life of God through Jesus Christ.

A lot of times people look to their own families to give them life to the full. So often we see a person grow up, marry, have children and then sit back and watch their children live and vicariously experience life through them. We're looking for life, life to the full.

We may look to diversions as the source of life - we run down to Atlantic City, or whatever the diversions we like happen to be. When I was in Ohio, the principal diversion for many people was the weekly card game. People were playing cards with the same people for forty or fifty years on the same night, in the same house and so on. Whatever it is, we look to diversions to give us life to the full. It
kind of reminds me of the kids you see on the streets with the 'ghetto blasters' up to their ear. They don't want to see or hear the world around them; they want to create their own world. When we do that, what are we doing: we are looking for life.

There are people who look to the Church, too, in its structures, to find life to the full. And so people are entranced by the material progress of the parish: we're going to build a new parish center, we're going to beautify the church: and so often what happens is that people work very hard and when the church is built, that's it. The interest peaks once the building is completed, because we're looking to the material accomplishment to give us life.

The social community of the Church is often where we look for life. And that's a common thing in our Eastern parishes, where people come from a common ethnic heritage. We look to the parish as a social community, but what the Lord is saying is, If you want to find life, life to the full, you must come to one place, to God through Jesus Christ. "I came that they might have life and have it to the full", that they might have life in abundance.

Point Two: That idea of Christ, life to the full, is that life is meant to be exciting! Very often, when we look for excitement, we look outside of ourselves. We go to a hafli, or we go to a concert or we go to see a movie, we watch television, we go out to a party or something like this. We go outside of ourselves to look for this excitement. Well, the second principle of life to the full from the Gospel points us in a very different direction: it is sharing the life of God, not outside, but from within, because the Spirit of God dwells within us! The Holy Spirit has been given to us, so the Source of the greatest excitement for our life ought not to be that shopping spree we're going to go on, or whatever it happens to be that's outside, but the interior situation of our hearts, because our hearts themselves are so fraught with life as the Spirit of God has been given and that Spirit dwells within us. So we share the life of God that we may live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And this is perhaps the most challenging thing that can be said in the Church today because we ordinarily look to God as outside of us. But in Jesus Christ, through His bestowal of the Holy Spirit, He dwells within us. That turns the focus of life completely around when we really appropriate it in our hearts. In St. John's Gospel we're told about the excitement of life to the full. "This," we're told, "is eternal life: to know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent", in other words an interior experience of knowing God (not an intellectual knowledge, but a total personal experiencing of Him). Life to the full, then, is something that happens within us, according to the Gospel.

The Scripture uses this term 'knowing' in a different way than we do. When we say we know something, we think of it as something that happens in the mind. That's more that we know about something: there's a difference. When the Scripture uses the term 'to know', it means a total experience, involving our whole personality. Perhaps if we compare it to how we know another person. If I know you, that is something that affects my life. I share your life and you share mine. And relationships are the most dynamic element in our natural life. Knowledge of another person is the most dynamic aspect of life on any level. When you know someone deeply, its not simply knowing facts about them, but knowing them in a distinctly personal way. And that is what the Lord has offered to us by His indwelling Spirit. The Spirit being within us, we can know God from within.

The purpose of all of this - and this is the third element in what
the normal Christian life is meant to be – is this: We say we share the life of God as the power of the Holy Spirit dwells within us, so that (and this is the purpose, as if this in itself were not enough), so that we might share in the very nature of God. We are called to be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4). Now that's something we find very, very difficult to comprehend and deal with. You may have a pet, a dog or a cat. You share your life with it in a very real way, but you would never conceive that it could share your nature; and yet this is precisely what God does with us. Imagine passing humanity on to Fido: it's beyond our experience. But the Scripture says that this is precisely the essence of Christian life: that we may share the nature of God. I didn't make that up: this is the Word of God.

Now it doesn't happen instantly. If it was supposed to, what happened to us? It takes a whole lifetime of working in cooperation with the Spirit within, plus eternity as well for that to be fully matured. It is a process, and we're just at the beginning of that process. Christian life, then, is not something that you can absorb in your eight years of Catholic education or in 20 years or 50 years or 90 years or however many years of life we may be given. It is a process that goes on. We continue to grow, to deepen ourselves in this divine life until eternity. We're just at the beginning of that process. This is at the heart of Eastern Christian spirituality. We are called to grow, to be continually growing, by sharing the divine life so that we can share the divine nature.

The only way we can claim that this is our destiny is that the Spirit of God is within us. Again, this is very difficult for us to accept totally because we are so used to the other way of thinking (that God is there and we are here). Remember the movie "King Kong"? Now King Kong, if you will recall, lived outside the African village. All the people lived inside the walls of the village. King Kong was outside, and they wanted to keep him that way. So every so often they would pick a nubile girl, throw her over the wall to King Kong as a sacrifice to keep him happy so he would stay away. And that kind of religion (because that's what it was) is the religion we have many times as Christians. God is somewhere outside and we give Him sacrifices from time to time to keep Him happy, but He's over there and we're over here. That is not our God. Our God is the God who is within those who have received His Holy Spirit.

Since Pentecost that picture of God doesn't work any more, at least not within our Church. He shall dwell in you, Christ promised: He shall be in you. That promise we believe was fulfilled. In his first epistle St John insists that Christ is in us because He has given us His Holy Spirit: not outside, not up there, not over there, but within. We constantly forget that because it is so difficult to appropriate. This is why we read over again in the epistles of St. Paul, "Don't you know that you are the temples of God with the Spirit of God dwelling in you?" "Don't you realize that? Don't you know that your bodies are the temples of the Spirit?" "You don't realize yet the Spirit of God dwells in you!" He's always hitting them on the head with this. And it has been, from the apostolic times, the most difficult thing for Christians to comprehend: that we have actually been given a sharing in the divine life through the Spirit dwelling within us.

It makes a difference to have the Spirit within us, or its supposed to. Without the experience of the Spirit, what is meant to bring life often brings death. So thought we have been given the Spirit, if we do not foster a conscious awareness of the Spirit within, then often what has been meant to bring life for us, brings death instead because we just see it as externalism. The current Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius IV, has expressed very clearly the two sides of Christian experience, with or
without awareness of the Spirit's presence. He said

"Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away,
Christ stays in the past,
the gospel is a dead letter,
the Church is simply an organization,
authority a matter of domination,
mission a matter of propaganda,
the liturgy no more than an evocation,
Christian living a slave morality.

But in the Holy Spirit, the cosmos is resurrected and groans with the birthpangs of the Kingdom,
the risen Christ is there,
the gospel is the power of life,
the Church shows forth the life of the Trinity,
authority is a liberating service,
mission is a Pentecost,
the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation,
human action is deified."

Being aware of the Spirit within us, consciously realizing His presence and living in the light of that presence makes what perhaps seems to be only the external forms of Christian life in the Church filled with life for us. That's the Living Water that Christ promised.

**Point Three**

Remember the story of the Samaritan Woman. Jesus meets her at the well. We read that every year, you will recall, as we're preparing to celebrate the feast of Pentecost, the presence of the Spirit. This gal was an average person. She was not a leader of her community; if anything, it was the other way around. She knew a little bit about her religious heritage, we know that. We also know that it didn't affect her life. Christ tells her 'You've had five husbands'. We know she was unsatisfied in life; she was seeking fulfillment no matter what the cost and it made her an outcast, because of course no one who was an accepted member of the community would have had to get water in the middle of the day, in the noonday sun, in that part of the world. She was looking for life, but she was looking in the wrong places.

In any case, Christ reached out to her and He offered her this life, this life to the full. Well, what does she do? She tries to talk religion to Him: "Well, I know the Jews worship over here and we're Samaritans, we worship over here" and He says, Never mind that; lets talk about something much more to the point, which was her own personal life. He finally reveals Himself to her as the savior, and she changes.

In our liturgy we pray this kondakion on the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman and it summarizes the sense of that whole gospel passage: "The Samaritan Woman came to the well and saw You with faith as the Master of wisdom. You satisfied the thirst of her soul and she inherited the kingdom of heaven forever." He offered her that Living Water which in the scriptures is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. She becomes for us a symbol of who we are. She accepted the Living Water, from outside, and she was transformed. Very often we say, 'Oh, if we had been there when Jesus walked the earth, we would have done this and that. We would have been touched and converted and all that sort of thing. Well, even at that time God was
outside, but since Pentecost God is within. If we have God within, how much more is there the possibility of transformation. His promise of Living Water has already been kept: the Spirit has been given to dwell with us forever — within the Church, within its Tradition, within each one of us.

Because the Spirit is within, because we believe He has been given to us in the mysteries, because we have this Gift, then real life, the only real life, is life in the Spirit of God. Anything else is death. Very often we tend to ask "Is such and such a thing a sin?" If it wasn't a sin, we would do it. If it was a sin, OK. But in our Tradition we have a different way of looking at things, not as to whether it is simply an absence of good, but is it a bearer of life? The Didache, one of the earliest Christian writings after the New Testament, picked up on something that was in the gospel and said it very clearly as the central statement of Christian behavior: "There are two ways, the way of life and the way of death." Whatever is not life is a bearer of death, whether it is formally a sin or not. It's as if you have a table set in front of you with a dish of poison (you certainly don't want that), a dish of food (a good thing) and a lot of empty dishes. You wouldn't choose the empty dishes over the one which had something good in it. In our Tradition we look at life in that way. Yes, there are things that are poison; we certainly put them aside. But the Source of goodness, the Source of life is only in one place, the life in the Spirit: everything else is an empty dish.

When, like the Samaritan woman, we try to keep our life in compartments (this is for church, this is for business, this is for whatever), the Lord doesn't work that way. If the Lord is really within us, then wherever we are, the Spirit of God is meant to be also. If the Spirit is within me, how I live is either appropriate to being a bearer of the Spirit or its sacrificial: there no in between. If I were to go into the chapel and take one of the chalices and use it for my morning orange juice, you would be suitably scandalized. There's nothing wrong with drinking orange juice, its not a sin, but we would still be offended somehow if what was holy were used for a profane purpose. We're the same way. We are the temples of the Spirit and so our way of looking at life ought to be as Spirit bearers. Whatever is not of the Spirit is somehow not life for us. This is why someone like St. Seraphim had the custom of greeting everyone as we would greet an icon, bowing before them and crossing himself, because we are all icons, images of God, as the Spirit of God dwells within us.

This is basically what we consider the normal Christian life to be: sharing in the divine life by the Spirit within us, so that ultimately we can become sharers in the divine nature. Its not for priests and nuns and monks: its for everyone, because everyone who had been baptized into Christ has received His Spirit. St. Simeon the New Theologian said that this fullness of the life of the Trinity dwells within everyone who is baptized in Christ. Every Christian man, woman and child has a share in the same Spirit. And so there are no distinctions we can make on the basis of status of life or personal talents or whatever, because the presence of the Spirit comes through baptism, not through anything else.

Point Five

Very often we may find that the Christian life that we lead is not a thing of excitement, the life to the full that the Lord wants it to be. Many times it is a poverty stricken Christian life. We do the forms (we attend, we support) but we don't experience what God has for us precisely because we are not attuned to this realization that the Spirit of God is within us. The conscious realization is not there for us. We have received that life, but we're not aware of it. We're somewhere in between a corpse over here on one end and a person who has life to the full. We know we're not dead, but there are a lot of different levels, aren't
there, between a corpse and someone who is filled with energy. Maybe a person is on a life support system—are they alive? Yes, but you wouldn't want to be that way. A person asleep is alive, but we would like to say that there is more to life than being asleep. Perhaps you've had the experience of being depressed: you go through the motions, and you're alive, yes, but... And then maybe you've been out jogging or swimming and you're filled with energy, and that's quite a difference. And that's what we are offered and what should be our state of being, this life to the full, with the energy of the Spirit within us.

There are a lot of blocks to that: some of them are outside of us and some are inside us. Each person who wants to take this seriously has to examine their own lives and say what the blocks to a fuller experience of the Spirit of God is. It could be that we have been hurt, perhaps by a spouse, by parents, or children, by a friend, by the Church—whatever it happens to be. But if we concentrate on feelings like that, we never get beyond them to the Spirit.

We may have the experience of personal sins that keep coming back, that are always there, that we never seem to get beyone, whether its something like recurring temper or pride or some sexual sin or anything like that which always seems to get in the way, some areas that we don't turn over fully to the guidance and direction of the Lord.

Sometimes it is because we, the Church, have obscured that life for you. A couple of months ago I was attending a conference in Boston, the NCEA convention, with thousands and thousands of teachers, mostly nuns and priests gathered in this huge convention hall. And the speaker was Jean Vanier, the famous philosopher at the Sorbonne in Paris who had become drawn to working with retarded adults. He gave up his academic career and founded what ultimately became a 'chain' of homes for these retarded adults. Every evening at the convention he would speak. Vanier is one of those people who are transparent, we could say transfigured by his vision of the Christian life. When you saw this man, you just knew he was living the life of the Spirit. He was there on the stage. And then there were all of us.

The convention center is on this street which is one of the yuppie centers of town, with all these shops, and everybody running around trying to find life in some of rather the strangest places. There was this one man, transparent, icon-like, there were all those people outside, and in between were all of us: a lot of us clergy, most looking well cared for and living a good life, but not manifesting the life of God transparently. I saw this as a kind of symbol of how we have often stood in the way of your experiencing the fulness of life in the Spirit. If there was a way to repent of that, to change, please God we can do that. At least we can ask for forgiveness if any of you have been hurt by the Church or held back from the life of the Spirit by seeing us who represent the Church at least in a formal way.

Conclusion We are all through baptism the temple of God and the Spirit wants to make of us a new creation, if we can get past all these other things. So the normal Christian life, then, what is it? Its sharing the divine life by the Spirit who dwells within us so that ultimately we can share in the nature of God. That seed of life is already within us, the Spirit given to us. So often we sing that hymn in the Divine Liturgy, don't we: We have seen the true Light; we have received the heavenly Spirit. We have found the true faith: words which we have perhaps not fully and consciously realized.

We hope that during this weekend we can open ourselves a little bit more
to realize that this presence of the Spirit is intended to be for us this fount of Living Water, transforming us for the glory of the Father.

We're going to move to the chapel now for a period of quiet time, a few minutes to reflect on what you have heard in this talk, and to pray for the ability to understand it in a personal way for your life. We know that God speaks to us in Scripture, and so one way to grow in understanding of tonight's message is to prayerfully read the biblical and patristic texts on page xx of your workbook. Or just sit quietly and ask the Lord to stir up the living water of His Holy Spirit within you, for the glory of His name.

Let's go quietly into the chapel now for a quiet time until 10:10. At that time we'll break for refreshments in the_____. 
EVENING PRAYER: THE "JESUS PRAYER" EXPERIENCE

Friday Evening, 10:30 PM

**Aim:** To enable participants to experience an encounter with Christ through the Jesus Prayer and a beginning familiarity with this form of prayer.

Christian prayer has its roots in the Old Testament. Jews observed several specified hours of prayer throughout the day and the early Church continued this practice. Our tradition of morning and evening prayer as well as the liturgical Hours of prayer stand in this tradition.

The Church also developed the concept of "continual prayer", in response to St. Paul's injunction, "Pray unceasingly" (1 Thess 5:17). Because the Spirit is within us, we have an ongoing, continual relationship with God. Communication with Him need not be restricted to specific times or places, but is for always and everywhere. The Jesus Prayer is the most traditional form of continual prayer in Eastern Christian practice.

Whenever the Church gathers for common prayer, we observe some liturgical service. At this weekend, however, we attempt to deal with the fact that many people are ignorant of our traditions of private, non-communal prayer. And so, while the Jesus Prayer is a private, non-communal form of prayer, we both explain it and initiate people into it in a communal setting.

This session should be conducted in the chapel or, at least, at the icon corner. The room may be in darkness with a candle lighted before the icon of Christ or on the Holy Table to focus attention on the divine presence. The speaker should be positioned at the rear of the assembly during the prayer section itself, so that the focus remains on the Lord rather than on the speaker. The atmosphere aimed at should be one of quiet and reverence in the presence of God.

While the speaker should develop a personal outline for the first two points (the explanation of the Prayer), he or she should follow more closely the text provided for the actual exercise of the prayer itself. Standing at the rear of the gathering, the speaker could read the countdown and sensetizing exercises in a way that would not distract from the atmosphere of prayer. Do not attempt to ad lib this section, as the thought and experience progression has been carefully worked out with the specific end in mind of disposing people for this kind of prayer.

For Further Reading

Bishop Kallistos (Timothy Ware), "The Power of the Name" (SLG Press, Fairacres, Oxford, 1977).

George Maloney, "Prayer of the Heart" (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame IN, 1981)

A Priest of the Byzantine Church, "Reflections on the Jesus Prayer" (Dimension Books, Denville NJ, 1978).
A) Basic Outline

Introduction: Our Christian life is often empty; In search of fulness, we often try to control life; We forget that consciousness of God's plan for us can renew our lives.

Point One: The Jesus Prayer is an important way of raising our consciousness of God's way for us.
Description of the Jesus Prayer.
The Jesus Prayer has transforming power.

Point Two: In the Jesus Prayer we typify our relationship to God:
by recognizing that we are made in God's image (Gen 1:26);
by acknowledging that the Spirit of God mystically dwells in us as Christians (1 Cor 6:19);
by accepting that therefore we can come to an inner experience of Him.

Point Three: In the Jesus Prayer we disengage our senses to listen to the Spirit within us.
Relaxation techniques help us let go.
An example of such a technique.

Point Four: In the Jesus Prayer we confess with our lips and experience in our hearts the presence of the Lord.
We pray the Jesus Prayer together for five minutes.
Subsequent silent prayer.

Conclusion: This is prayer in the Spirit, rather than verbal communication.
Further silent recitation of the Prayer (5 minutes)
Act of thanksgiving
Call to remember the Prayer in everyday life

Chant ("Blessed be the name of the Lord...")

B) Expanded Outline

Introduction: Our Christian life is often empty: we lose sight of who we are and why we are here. We have no sense of the purpose of life from a Christian perspective.

In search of fulness, we often try to control life. We achieve a sense of well-being when outcomes are predictable.
We utilize all kinds of resources (astrology, self-help, Dear Abby or other 'experts') to gain a measure of control, rather than entrust ourselves to God.

We forget that consciousness of God's plan for us can renew our lives. We can obtain help from Him in making sense out of our world. He is working in our lives to bring us to
completion. We must strive to gain greater awareness of His active presence.

**Point One:**

The Jesus Prayer is an important way of raising our consciousness of God’s way for us. This Prayer is the legacy of the early Fathers of the Eastern Church and their experiential prayer life.

Description of the Jesus Prayer: the essence of the Prayer is the invocation of the name of Jesus. The most common formula is "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."

The Jesus Prayer has transforming power, because through it the Spirit works within, in our inmost being. Our Tradition identifies this inmost place with the 'heart'. In the Jesus Prayer we reach into the heart to encounter the Spirit of God.

**Point Two:**

In the Jesus Prayer we typify our relationship to God: by recognizing that we are made in God’s image (Gen 1:26). While we know that the fall distorted our likeness to God, we still bear the seed of divinity within us.

We acknowledge that the Spirit of God mystically dwells in us as Christians (1 Cor 6:19). We are temples of God through our baptism. God is no longer 'out there': He is within.

The Spirit within us works to restore the likeness, making us Godlike. We accept, therefore, that we can come to an inner experience of Him. This happens through synergy: God and man working together.

**Point Three:**

In the Jesus Prayer we disengage our senses to listen to the Spirit within us.

We repeat the prayer over and over again to experience the divine presence in silence and attentiveness.

Relaxation techniques help us let go, to center our attention on God within us.

An example of such a technique involves a relaxed posture, diaphragmatic breathing, banishing tension from our bodies, concentration on the presence of God within, which brings us peace.

**Point Four:**

In the Jesus Prayer we confess with our lips and experience in our hearts the presence of the Lord.

We adore and praise Him and we pray the Jesus Prayer together for five minutes.

Subsequent silent prayer, utilizing the Jesus Prayer in the depths
Conclusion:

This is prayer in the Spirit, rather than verbal communication. We are no longer concentrating on our verbalizing, but move beyond that to listening to God. We make of ourselves an empty vessel for His Word.

Further silent recitation of the Prayer (5 minutes) to help us yield to the Spirit, allowing Him to pray in us.

Make an Act of thanksgiving for the blessing of this time of prayer.

Call to remember the Prayer in everyday life as we go about our daily tasks and thereby raising our consciousness of God's presence in us.

End with the Chant, "Blessed be the name of the Lord...", and the dismissal ("Through the prayers of our holy fathers,...").
C) Sample Presentation

Introduction

There are times when we all feel a sense of dryness, emptiness and helplessness. A deep sense of frustration that comes out of our feeling of powerlessness and inability to shape our own lives and have things turn out the way we would like. We feel a deep void and we don't know why, much less how to fill it. In the busyness of living and rushing around, we sometimes lose sight of who we are, of what we are and what we were made for, of what life is all about, and of what is really life in this world for believers in Jesus.

We feel defeated by life as we get pushed around by the world and the concerns of the world. At times the concerns of the world consume us entirely as we try to resolve all our problems by ourselves. We falsely tend to think that things are OK when we are in control of every situation and are able to predict the outcome of every move we make. Notice how people are preoccupied today with new types of fortunetellers, like Jeanne Dixon, with astrologists and horoscopes and 'signs'. We want to feel safe by being able to control the future. We want desperately to hang onto our turf by predicting outcomes. We place our faith in 'experts' and their gibberish because we are trying to control our lives. We want to hang on and protect ourselves, instead of letting go and putting our faith in God who loves us. As the commercial says, we want to do it ourselves.

Yes, we all too often forget our Father who loves us. We forget that as children of God we have the capacity to call upon Him for help in making sense out of this brute world and all the experiences we face in life. We just go on struggling to come out on top, forgetting that the Holy Spirit is within us and will definitely guide us, if we only become more and more conscious of the reality of our life in Jesus Christ. We want to run our lives without God's help. Really, we are closing God out of our lives. We forget that God is working in our lives to bring us to fulfillment in the 'likeness' of God which was the purpose of our creation. This is what we were meant to be: people who were created after the image of God, Jesus Christ, and who have been given His Spirit within us to fill us with His life. So, the power of God is within us, but we must become more conscious of God in our lives: the God within us. Only when we consciously experience God within us will all things be possible for us.

Point One

To help us develop this conscious experience of the presence of God, the Church has developed the Jesus Prayer, one of the oldest prayers in Eastern Christian worship. The Fathers of our Church were perhaps the first charismatics in that they lived very intimately and experientially close to Jesus in their hearts by praying the Jesus Prayer.

The Jesus Prayer is a simple prayer that acknowledges the power of God by calling forth the name of Jesus which makes His presence real in the lives of those who pray the name of Jesus in their heart. The words of the prayer are Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. This phrase is more than just an incantation or a mantra: it is a profession of faith in the power of the name of the Lord to change our lives, a faith which we hold and accept from our baptism.

The Jesus Prayer has the power to transform our lives, as it makes us more aware of the transformation which has begun in us since our baptism. The early Fathers believed that God works this transformation from within, working in our
inmost beings. They considered the heart to represent this center of man. Modern man says the same thing, but somehow it has become too commonplace for it to have much significance for us. But notice how we still speak of being "broken hearted" when deep relationships are destroyed. When we are baptized, the Spirit of God enters into our innermost being and begins to transform us. In the Jesus Prayer we learn to reach into our heart and find God and release His transforming power into other areas of our lives.

Point Two  
The basis for this prayer is found in God's plan for us. In Genesis 1: 26, 27 we read that we are created in the image of God. Deep within us is this seed of divinity which even the sin of the world could not destroy. But sin did thwart our development: we lost the likeness which only Christ's coming could restore. Risen from the dead, He sends the Holy Spirit to His people: the Spirit who enters our hearts when we are christened.

Since our baptism, we are people who have become temples of God's own Spirit. "You must know," says St. Paul, "that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is within: the Spirit you have received from God" (1 Cor 6:19). The Spirit's presence in us is God's way of bringing us to His likeness, and the more conscious we are of God within us and the more receptive we are to God's work to bring us to His likeness, the more we become transformed by God. Our energy and God's become united, and this is the goal of our life...to become like God.

We are not expected to become like God by ourselves, on our own: but rather to be receptive to what God is doing in us by His Holy Spirit. This process is called synergy, and means that God and man work together. God brings the image or the seed of deification to the likeness, by the Spirit who dwells in us. We listen to this Spirit in our hearts where we allow Him to change us.

Point Three  
One of the simplest ways for us to become like God, or grow into the likeness of God is by praying the Jesus Prayer. By the simple practice of repeating this prayer (also called the Prayer of the Heart) over and over again, we can experience the presence of God within us. The early Fathers believed that it was not religious or doctrinal formulas which would transform their lives, but only an experience of God.

To help center our attention on God within us, we need to disengage our senses so that we are not distracted, and to silence ourselves so that we can listen to the Lord in our hearts. A simple way to do this is by the constant repetition of the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."

Let's try it:

(1) Choose the most relaxed position you can: your spinal column should be straight up and down with no hunching of the shoulders.

(2) Breathing deeply is necessary if we are to move onto a more conscious level.

(3) Breathing from the diaphragm relieves tension (Note: Demonstrate this technique as you 'speak'). Place the palms of your hands on your stomach. As you inhale, feel your diaphragm swell and move outward, so that there is an S-like motion. Breathe in, and your diaphragm moves out. When you exhale, your
The diaphragm moves inward.

(4) You can tell if you are breathing from the diaphragm when you feel the diaphragm muscle in the abdominal area extend itself outwardly as you inhale. As you exhale, it should move inwardly.

(5) Now close your eyes and continue to breathe deeply with great relaxation. Concentrate on each part of the body, starting with the top of the head. the forehead. the cheeks. the chin. the shoulders. let everything relax. It is important that we should start integrating ourselves: body, soul, spirit. We begin to do this with the physical states of our bodies.

(6) Let everything relax. command tension to disappear...

(7) Think of your chest area. heart. lungs. abdomen. Breathing deeply, let everything relax. 

(8) Let go of tightness in your arms. elbows. wrists. hands. fingers. hips. thighs. knees. calves. ankles. and toes. 

(9) You can risk letting go. Your faith tells you that the Spirit of God is within you, sustaining you and protecting you at all times. Your body is His temple, and His Spirit lives within you.

(10) Breathe deeply, filling your lungs with God's breath.

(11) Feel His uncreated, loving Energies filling your whole being.

(12) Feel yourself stretch upward in transcendence, in loving adoration and surrender to the loving Father.

Continue to breathe deeply. breathe in God's goodness. Exhale your selfishness. let God transform you. allow God's energy to unite with your own and transform you. allow God's breath to fill you and change you. make you according to His likeness.

As you feel yourself going deeper and deeper into your true self, talk to God within your heart. Lord, Lord, come into my life. fill me. I am going deeper and deeper into my innermost self. the self made in your image, O Lord. bring me to Your likeness. I surrender to You, O God within me. Take everything, O Lord. I am getting closer to God. I feel weightless. no worries. I am getting deeper into myself. God, it is good to be alive. I see Christ as a candle, burning in the deep cave without any flickering, perfect tranquility. This is truly the peace only you can give, Lord. God opens His arms and embraces me with His beautiful, soothing light and makes me light.

Point Four Make an act of faith in God's presence before you, and within you. Adore Him. Praise Him. Put all your hope in Him. Love Him and receive His outpouring love. Now you are ready to pray the Jesus Prayer.

Synchronize your breathing with the Prayer. "Lord Jesus Christ" as you breathe in. "Son of God" as you breathe out. "Have mercy on me" as you breathe in. "a sinner" as you breathe out. (Note: Repeat the prayer over and over again for 5 minutes, lengthening the breathing bit by bit. After 3 minutes,
As you feel the presence of the Lord Jesus taking over your consciousness, let go of the words... Pray by letting the Spirit pray in you without words, but with acts of deep adoration and loving submission... Ask, "What do you want of me, Lord?... I am Yours. Without You, nothing is possible. With You, all things are possible. Tell me what You want of me, Lord. Show me the way... I wish to empty myself so that I can be filled with Your Spirit... I am an empty receptacle, waiting on you, Lord."

As you feel the presence of the Lord Jesus taking over your consciousness, let go of the words. (Note:— Pray in silence for a few minutes.)

Conclusion
Repeating this Prayer time and again allows the Spirit to take over our prayer. We are no longer concerned with what we should say, but rather, by fixing our concentration on the Prayer, we move beyond our own controlled, rational communication to a state of deep, receptive listening to God. This is to pray in the heart and in the Spirit. It is to push our consciousness as if it were an empty receptacle to be filled with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, with deeper faith, hope and love in order to pray with His understanding. It is to pray in the Spirit through the utterance that He gives. He will overcome all dangers that may come from our own selfish projections, if we seek always to be ever more baptized in the Spirit of Jesus.

If you feel your consciousness surfacing, push yourself down again into the heart... Continue to pray in silence for about five minutes...

Allow yourself to surface... open your eyes... feel yourself refreshed... renewed... Make an act of thanksgiving... St. Paul tells us that prayer which we control is not the highest form of adoration; but when we yield to the Spirit of Jesus and allow Him to pray in us, we pray in our heart, in the deepest levels of our consciousness, and we touch the very heart of God Himself.

As you go through this weekend, and after: in your daily lives, while riding in the car or washing dishes or whatever: remember the power in the name of Jesus. Calling out His name makes His presence real for us... Be conscious of your breathing: remember that you are breathing in God's goodness, His life... as He breathed life into the dry bones in the Book of Ezechiel... Be conscious of your desire to exhale your selfcenteredness, to rid yourself of that selfcenteredness which is the cause of sin, and which gets in the way of the Lord's transforming us.

(After a pause, conclude by singing "Blessed be the name of the Lord, now and forever". Then:

Leader: By the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.
All: Amen.)

(Quietly ask those you have chosen to be table group leaders to gather with you in____, if you have not already done so.)
DISCUSSION LEADERS' ORIENTATION

Friday Evening, 11:00 PM

Aim: To help familiarize designated discussion leaders with their role and responsibilities.

Beginning with the talk "We Are God's Icon" on Saturday morning, participants will be seated in groups of 7 or 8 at tables to facilitate the discussions which will follow each talk. Each group should be mixed, including members of each participating parish. Effort should be made to see that each group contains both people who would be compatible as well as be a mixture of levels of articulateness.

The director and assistant director are responsible for setting up these groups based on those who have registered.

One leader should be chosen for each table. The leader may be a repeater, one you are grooming for further involvement. The leader may also be a first timer, one who may be envisioned as a future parish group leader. The choice of leaders is made by the director and assistant.

The prospective leaders are asked to gather at the end of the Jesus Prayer experience to become familiarized with their task. The director explains the leader's role as follows.

Presentation

Most of the talks given tomorrow and Sunday will be followed by discussion periods at the individual tables. The purpose of discussion groups in this weekend experience is to assist participants in obtaining clearer understandings of the content of the talks. The subject for the table discussions, then, is the people's perception of the contents.

To determine their perception, the following procedure is suggested:

1. Ask: What is this talk was new for you?
   What was the opposite of what you believe(d)?
   What was hard to understand?

2. Make this a go-round (each person answering in turn) to insure that each gets a chance to speak.

3. To further the perception, build on their responses to these questions with new questions. Go through your own notes of the talk and ask about major themes you perceived.

Two of the sessions ask that consensus statements be developed by the group: one a group definition of theosis, the other a group poster. 'Consensus' means everyone's ideas should be polled and included if possible. Stay in the background in terms of contributing ideas to these 'statements', as people will tend to consider you as the resident expert.
If an idea is 'not of the Tradition', use precisely that phrase to describe it (not 'wrong', 'Latin', or anything else) and, if necessary, refer the question to the speaker on reporting the discussion to the whole group, as others probably have the same opinion.

At the end of each discussion period each group will be asked to report on their experience to the whole body. You should ask others to do the reporting, designating that person at the beginning of the session so that they can be forewarned. Simply designate the person on your right as secretary/reporter for the first discussion, the person on your left or opposite you for the next session, etc.

(Note: If your leaders have already participated on a Weekend, invite them to use some of their free time to make more in-depth acquaintance with the other members of their table group. Spending time with each in turn in a one to one situation better establishes communication and enables relationship. The leaders can thus help to discern the other's perception of the weekend, of difficulties, etc. for clarification and/or feedback to the team. Encourage them to spend time with their table group, rather than with fellow parishioners or one another.)

Discuss any questions the prospective leaders may have and then conclude the session.

**Final Tasks**

Before retiring, the director and assistant should place on each table a sheet of paper with the names of all the members of that table group along with copies of the "Come Receive the Light" New Testament.

The director should arrange for someone to begin the grace for the morning's breakfast. The assistant director should set placecards at the table to designate seating for breakfast.
MORNING PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Saturday Morning, 8:00 AM

**Aim:** To enable participants to experience the standard Morning Prayers, the Jesus Prayer and the daily Scripture readings as a kind of rule for morning prayer.

This morning's prayer, like last night's, is not a liturgical service, but a common recitation of what it traditionally intended as a private experience. While, as Christ said, private prayer should be done behind one's closed door (cf. Mt 6:6), many people are not familiar with this type of prayer in our Tradition. So we take the opportunity of our time together to introduce them to it.

The morning's "Rule of Prayer" includes formal prayers from the prayerbook, the Jesus Prayer and the reading of and reflection on a Scripture passage. This combination of elements makes a manageable rule for anyone and should be encouraged when people are back home.

This morning's gathering should be held in the chapel or, at least, at the icon corner. An icon of the Apostle Paul with a lighted candle should be placed on an analogion at the head of the assembly. The prayer leaders should stand at the rear of the gathering, as this is not a service, but a group recitation of a private prayer.

**A) Basic Outline**

**Introduction:** The Christian is called to daily private prayer. We have the Tradition of a 'rule of prayer'. "A Book for Prayer" contains the skeleton of such a basic rule.

**Morning Prayers:** Group reading of the Morning Prayers (pp. 15 through 19).
Reading of Phil 3: 4-8

**Reflection:**
Point One: Paul was a Jew with a 'traditionalist' value system.

Point Two: The risen Christ's appearance brought him to change his values (Acts 9:1-9).

Point Three: Paul is baptized and his later life reflects a deep awareness of the indwelling of the Spirit.

**Prayers (cont.)** Completion of the morning prayers (pp 19 through 26).

**Conclusion:** Invitation for people to keep the books and consider incorporating its contents into their own daily rule of prayer.

Adjournment for breakfast.
Introduction:
The Christian is called to daily private prayer.
  Tradition of unceasing prayer (Jesus Prayer)
  Also tradition of formal prayer several times a day
  Especially morning and evening

We have the Tradition of a 'rule of prayer'.
  Certain set prayers to which we commit ourselves, with help
  from our spiritual guide.
"A Book for Prayer" contains the skeleton of such a basic rule.

Morning Prayers:
Group reading of the Morning Prayers (pp. 15 through 19).
(Include time for the Jesus Prayer, as indicated on page 15)
Reading of Phil 3: 4-8

Reflection:
Point One: Paul was a Jew with a 'traditionalist' value system.
The opposite of "You can't teach an old dog new tricks"
Paul was upper crust (a Roman citizen), well-schooled (the
Jewish ivy league), well placed member of the Jewish
establishment, deeply convinced, set and secure as the right
believer par excellence, a hater of innovators.

Point Two: The risen Christ's appearance brought him to change
his values.
Paul was never the same again: "Those things I used to
consider gain I have now reappraised as loss in the light of
the surpassing knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ."
For Paul, as was said last night, the only real life was the
Christian life. Anything else was a waste.
Paul met a Christ who proclaimed His real presence in the
Church: "You are persecuting me".

Point Three: Paul is baptized and his later life reflects a deep
awareness of the indwelling of the Spirit.
He enters Damascus, is baptized and the Spirit comes upon
him. He experiences the indwelling, promised Spirit
firsthand.
He associates with the Antiochian Church ('becomes
Melkite').
He evangelizes throughout the then-known world
He becomes the first great teacher of theosis, because he
had experienced the presence of the Lord in the Church.

Conclusion: For the rest of his life Paul witnessed to the reality
of the Spirit within, and the possibility of knowing His presence in
our experience.

His witness is a continual invitation to us to see life with
his eyes: realizing that nothing else compares with knowing
God, ie with real life. Anything else pales by comparison.
Prayers (cont.) Completion of the morning prayers ("A Book for Prayer", pp 19 through 26).

Continue the prayers, beginning with Psalm 50.
Direct each person to say silently the prayer to their patron (page 25) and their private intercessions.

Conclusion: Invitation for people to keep the prayerbooks and also to consider incorporating its contents into their own daily rule of prayer.

Adjournment for breakfast.

C) Sample Presentation

(After passing out copies of "A Book for Prayer" to each participant, begin as follows:)

Introduction: Good morning. We hope everyone's rest was satisfactory and you're ready to begin the day. As you know, its customary to begin the day with prayer. In our Tradition personal prayer is of two kinds. We strive for unceasing prayer, as in the Jesus Prayer we experienced last night. We also have times of formal, personal prayer, a very ancient custom in the Church, one we took from our Jewish roots.

In the Eastern Christian tradition, each person is helped to form a 'rule of prayer' by his or her spiritual guide: the kind, the degree, the amount of prayer right for them at their stage of growth.

The prayerbook you just received contains the skeleton of such a basic rule, with the most elementary prayers from our tradition which laypeople make use of in their private prayers. This morning we will be reciting the Morning Prayers, beginning on page 15. These prayers are not a church service. They are meant for each person to use privately at home in their icon corner; but today we'll be saying them together, to help you get familiar with them.

Let's stand and begin, with everyone reciting all the prayers aloud together.

Morning Prayers: (Begin reading the Morning Prayers, beginning with the sign of the cross on page 15. Immediately pause, as directed in the prayerbook for a few minutes of silent recitation of the Jesus Prayer. Then slowly continue reading, ending with the Prayer of St. Basil the Great, on page 18-19.)

(The priest giving the reflection or a designated reader then reads Phil 3: 4-8, without ceremony.)

Reflection: (Without introduction, the designated priest gives the reflection on the reading.)
Introduction

A lot of times people use the old saying "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" to justify their reluctance to change. People who claim that as an excuse will have to deal with Saint Paul.

Point One

Paul was certainly an 'old dog' if there ever was one. In the reading you just heard he described himself as the most righteous of Jews. He was blameless according to the Law of Moses. He is saying that he had adhered perfectly to the laws of his 'church'. If he were alive today, he would be a regular churchgoer. He would be very, very religious. He would have the respect of his coreligionists.

Paul, or Saul, to use his Jewish name, was also completely intolerant of anything he perceived as not strictly in line with what he understood to be of God. He was very well schooled in his faith. Before he met Christ he had studied Judaism at the feet of the greatest religious teacher of his time, Gamaliel. On top of this, he had earlier been schooled in Greek culture in Tarsus. He was a Roman citizen, something uncommon among Jews of his time. In short, he was on top of the world. He combined the best Roman upbringing with an outstanding education in his own religious tradition. He had a great deal to be proud of: he had the best his world could offer.

Point Two

But something happened to him that changed his attitude toward God and life. He met Jesus Christ. Once Christ revealed himself to Saul, Saul was never the same again. His actions were no longer guided by his great education. He gave up his position in the world and didn't think he was missing a thing. "Those things I used to consider gain," he said, "I have now reappraised as loss in the light of Christ. I have come to rate all as loss in the light of the surpassing knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ."

What was his experience? We read it in Acts 9: 1-9 (read the pericope).

Once Saul met Christ, his whole life was turned upside down. He became Paul, the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles. What had happened?

The Lord said to him, "Saul, Saul - why do you persecute me?" Jesus didn't ask him why he was persecuting the Church, why he was persecuting "the ones I love" or the like. "Why do you persecute me?" From the outset Jesus identifies Himself to Saul as intimately united to His Church. You are hurting me, Saul.

"Who are you?" Saul asks. "I am Jesus, whom you persecute". Again, Jesus identifies Himself with the Church: "But rise and enter the city, and there you will be told what you are to do".

Point Three

At once Paul goes into Damascus, to the very people he was intending to harm. He becomes obedient immediately. The Lord called, and as soon as Paul heard that voice, he obeyed. At the hands of one of these despised Christians, a man named Ananias, the very Spirit of Jesus Himself - the Holy Spirit - came upon Paul. He was baptized and gave himself completely to Christ.

Paul no longer did what he had thought God wanted. He did as Jesus told him. He started doing what God wanted, not what he thought God wanted. We know that he stayed in Damascus for some time and then joined the Church at Antioch where he began his missionary activity. During those years he sat at Jesus' feet, so to speak, instead of at the feet of Gamaliel. Finally he became the greatest evangelist of New Testament times and was responsible for the spread of the gospel
throughout Asia Minor.

What had happened to change him? - He now knew Jesus. He no longer just knew religious teachings. He knew, on a very personal and intimate level, the One in whom his former religion culminates. He now knew by experience Jesus Christ.

This new relationship changed everything about his life. From experiencing Christ, he came to know the Holy Spirit as dwelling in the Church. He saw that we were a new creation, remade as the temples of God, the place where God's Spirit dwelled. He proclaimed what we call theosis because he was living it. Conscious of the Spirit of God within him, within the Church, he saw Him transforming us, taking us "from glory to glory" on our endless journey to God.

Conclusion Later Paul would write to the Corinthians, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the good of all" (1 Cor 12:7). Paul saw that this experience of Christ and everything that came from it had been given him, not for himself alone, but for the entire Church. All that he did from that time on he did for the good of Christ and His Church. His whole life was dedicated to that task. He still worked at his trade. He supported himself as a tentmaker as he worked for Christ. Often his occupation was a means he used to spread the gospel.

We can do the same thing where we are. We can grow in the Christian life as Paul did, so that literally everything we do - in our work, in our relationships, anywhere - we do for Christ and His Church. The manifestation of the Spirit we receive is certainly not Paul's, but whatever it is, it can be brought to bear for the glory of the Lord who calls us to follow Him as Paul did.

Prayers (cont.) Let's continue with Psalm 50 on page 19, praying it in repentance for the times we have not seen the life in Christ as the highpoint of our existence.

(Read the remainder of the prayers up to and including the Prayer to the Mother of God on page 24. Then,)

Each of us can privately read the prayer to our patron saint on page 25, then take a few moments for any personal devotions or intercessions we may with to make.

(After a few moments of silence:) Let's conclude with the prayers on page 26.

Conclusion: Keep these books with you this weekend and at home and explore the different sections for inclusion in your personal daily prayers. Besides the morning prayers we just offered, there are evening prayers, prayers in preparation for confession and for communion as well as an explanation on our tradition of private devotion and a dictionary of terms.

Let's go to breakfast now and bring the prayerbooks with you so that we can pray the meal prayers together.
BREAKFAST PROCEDURES

Saturday Morning, 8:30 AM

Seating at the dining tables should not be haphazard. We attempt to seat people in a different place at each of the meals so that they can have the chance to get acquainted with a number of their fellows. Before the first meal, the assistant director should make up place cards for each participant and set one at each place. Be sure that, as much as possible, people are not sitting next to fellow parishioners. The assistant director should rearrange the placecards after each meal to insure a variety of dinner partners.

The prayer before eating may incorporate both personal and communal levels. The director should arrange with a different person to begin the grace at each meal. Persons should be chosen who can be expected to pray in a manner consonant with the Tradition of our Church. The substance of their prayer should be thanksgiving for blessings received, leading into the communal response found in the prayerbook which culminates with the blessing of the priest.

Sample Procedure

1. The cantor calls the group to order by singing the 'Theme Song' of the weekend.

2. The director invites people to open their prayerbooks to page 27. The First Set of meal prayers will be recited after the personal thanksgiving by NN.

3. The director introduces the person who will give thanks.

4. That person makes the sign of the cross and offers his or her prayer.

5. The director immediately announces "Page 27" and begins the prayer:

   "The eyes of all look hopefully to you, O Lord, and You give them food in due season. You open Your merciful hand and fill every living thing with blessing.
   Glory... Now...
   Lord, have mercy (3 times).
   Father, give the blessing."

6. One of the priests present gives the blessing, "Christ God, bless...".

7. At the end of the meal the director asks everyone to be in the principal meeting room at 9:30 AM for the first talk of the day, then concludes with the prayers after meals on page 28 of the prayerbook.
PRELIMINARY PROCEDURES

Saturday Morning, 9:30 AM

1. The cantor calls the group to order by singing the 'Theme Song' of the weekend.

2. The director explains the following:

   a) You will notice that each table has a sheet of paper on it with a list of names. Please sit at the table where your name appears. You will be sitting with this group of people for most of the talks for the rest of the weekend.

      Let's take five minutes so that everyone gets to know a bit about who is at their table. Introduce yourselves by telling your name, your family and work situations and the most interesting thing you can think about yourself.

   b) I know you all had something interesting to say, because this is an interesting group! The second thing you noticed was that each table has a pile of books on it, called "Come Receive the Light". This is a copy of the "Good News" or "Today's English Version" translation of the New Testament, for you to keep.

      Last night we experienced one element in the Eastern tradition of private prayer, the Jesus Prayer. This morning we took part in a second of these elements, the prayers of the prayerbook. In these it chiefly we who are doing the talking. In the Scriptures, it is God who is talking to us. This is why reading the Scriptures has always been an important part of prayer life in our Tradition: it's one way we know we are hearing the voice of the Lord.

      The first 660 pages of this edition contains the New Testament itself. After that you find a number of other features. Beginning on page 663 you'll find a word list explaining a number of the less familiar terms used in this translation, like 'Areopagus', 'Pharisee' or 'Zion'. Beginning on page 692 there is a topical guide to bible themes, like "How to have assurance" or "How to know and use your gifts".

      Perhaps the most unique feature of this edition is the section beginning on page 728. This is a selection from the Fathers of the Church on topics such as abortion, Christian charity, death and dying, war and peace. It's an ideal way to get acquainted with the thinking of the Fathers on these subjects. We hope you use both the New Testament itself and this anthology of the Fathers as part of your regular rule of prayer.

      One more thing to note on the scriptures. We're so used to books, especially paperbacks, that we stuff them anywhere, they're so replacable. But if we see the scriptures as the Word of God, no matter how cheap an edition, we will treat it with reverence. You know that in church the gospel is kept with the Eucharist on the holy table. That's not out of reverence for its gold cover! Let the way we treat the book proclaim what we think of its contents.

   c) There is another important aspect of our prayer tradition here that we should mention. You notice that we have a prayer corner or icon corner at the left/right side
of the room. This is a slightly larger than life version, because we are so many, but the idea of a prayer corner is something every Eastern Christian home should be expected to have as the focal point for their prayers. Some people have an icon in every room in their home, but even then there's one special area used for family prayer.

Your icon corner, which is usually at the Eastern end of the house, may have only one icon or several, if possible the patron saints of the family members. People place the scriptures there, on a shelf or a small table, with holy water, holy oil and any of the blessed objects we receive in church, like the palm from Palm Sunday, the basil from the Feast of the Holy Cross or the flowers from the tomb of Christ on Great Friday. Some people, if they were married with floral wedding crowns, dry them and keep them in the icon corner. Usually there's a candle or hanging lamp burning, sometimes all the time. Its a place that signifies that our homes are what the Fathers call a domestic Church and connects our daily life with the life of the wider household of faith.

Whenever we pray here in this room, we will pray in the icon corner. So lets gather there for a moment of prayer now before Father NN begins the first presentation of the day for us.

3. When everyone is gathered in the icon corner, the cantor lead them in the singing of the hymn to the Holy Spirit from their workbooks.
TALK 2 — WE ARE GOD’S ICON

Saturday Morning, 9:45 AM

Aim: To help participants see theosis as God’s goal for our lives.

This is one of the principal teaching talks in the weekend. For many people it will be their first introduction to the concept of theosis, and so attempts to expose the whole of God's plan expressed in this doctrine. Its principal elements are creation in the image and likeness of God (point one), the loss of the likeness in the fall (point two), the restoration of the likeness in Christ (point three) and the indwelling Holy Spirit (point four) who enables us to share in the divine nature.

People may be uncomfortable with these teachings and want to lessen the forcefulness of the terminology, preferring expressions like "becoming Christlike" to "becoming God" or "sharing the divine life" to "sharing in the divine nature". It should be noted whenever such tendencies are evidenced that theosis includes these ideas, but is much more. We are organically united to God through the indwelling Spirit and so God works within us, not merely from outside. As is mentioned in the sample talk, we can share our life with a pet dog; we can't share our nature. That, however, is exactly what God is doing in theosis.

Another seldom heard point which should be stressed here is that the coming of the Spirit is the climax of the divine plan for us. It is easier to focus on Christ because of His very tangible incarnation. The Spirit is more 'elusive', but the Spirit's presence in the Church and in each of us is precisely what makes theosis a reality. We need to help people rediscover the role of the Spirit in Christian life. We live in the 'era of the Holy Spirit', that time between Pentecost and the Second Coming of Christ and it is only in the Holy Spirit that the life of the Church takes on its meaning.

For Further Reading

In addition to the resources suggested in connection with Talk 1, you are advised to consult the following:

Panagiotes Chrestou, "Partakers of God" (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline MA, 1984)

George Maloney, "Man, the Divine Icon" (Dove Publications, Pecos NM, 1973).

A) Basic Outline

Introduction: While we try to model ourselves on the images of society's pop stars, the Fathers direct us to take God's viewpoint as expressed in Scripture to model our lives.

Point One: We are created after the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26–28).

* We do not try to understand the incomprehensible God, but to understand the human condition from God's perspective.

* Mankind is the only element in creation patterned after God.
* The image indicates that we resemble and reflect God in various ways; the likeness indicates that we have an identity with Him.
* We are fully human only when we are living according to this model.

Point Two:

The 'Fall of mankind' is the loss of the likeness to God:

* Humanity was called by God to live in relationship to Him as the stewards, priests and prophets of creation;
* Instead, Adam and Eve did what they wanted with it, failing in these tasks and bringing sin into the world;
* The brokenness in our nature is not 'natural', but the result of sin (trying to live independently of God);
* This fallen condition, the result of original sin, touches us all;
* One example of our brokenness is the desire to define ourselves as individuals rather than in relationships
* The result of this brokenness is that God's order of relationship (His Spirit/our spirit/our soul/our body) is distorted and we live in delusion (prelest).

Point Three:

In the incarnation God restores the likeness to mankind in Christ:

* The incarnation is God's merciful and loving pursuit of His erring creation;
* In the incarnation the Word of God takes on and heals our broken human nature;
* Christ is the ultimate image of the Father, who perfectly reflects the Divine glory in His humanity;
* The purpose of the incarnation is to restore the likeness to humanity that we might become partakers of the divine nature (theosis).

Point Four:

The indwelling Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to share in this likeness:

* It is through the Church that we can personally enter the divine life;
* This happens when our human spirit is penetrated and directed by the Spirit of God;
* The entire Christian life follows on the fact that the Spirit is dwelling in us.

Point Five:

As we work together with the Spirit in us (synergy), the process of theosis takes place in us:

* Synergy is our saying 'yes' to God;
* The Jesus Prayer is our traditional means of uniting our spirits to God's in prayer.

Conclusion:

The process of theosis concludes only in the world to come:

* The exodus is the model of theosis as a journey;
* The transfiguration is the model of theosis as the conclusion of
the journey;

* We are invited to consciously travel this journey so that God may complete the work He has begun in us.

### B) Expanded Outline

**Introduction:**

While we try to model ourselves on the images of society's pop stars, the Fathers direct us to take God's viewpoint as expressed in Scripture to model our lives.

Some people always seem to be wearing a mask.

When they look to see what life is for, they look to TV, singles' magazines, astrology, etc.

We look to God's vision for us as our model.

**Point One:**

We are created after the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-28).

* We do not try to understand the incomprehensible God, but to understand the human condition from God's perspective. God is the reality: we are like His shadow.

* Mankind is the only element in creation patterned after God. We are different from anything else that exists.

* The image indicates that we resemble and reflect God in various ways; the likeness indicates that we have an identity with Him.
  
Our natural capabilities are the 'image': we can know, etc. We are also meant to be like Him.

* We are fully human only when we are living according to this model.
  
This is a process: we are created unfinished. We are still being created.

Therefore we are called to grow into the likeness.

**Point Two:**

The 'Fall of mankind' is the loss of the likeness to God:

* Humanity was called by God to live in relationship to Him as the stewards, priests and prophets of creation;
  
As stewards we were meant to take care of the universe.
As prophets we were meant to see Him in His works.
As priests we were meant to use all things sacramentally.

* Instead, Adam and Eve did what they wanted with it, failing in these tasks and bringing sin into the world;
  
They did what they wanted with creation, making sacrilege rather than sacrament (the fall).

* The brokenness in our nature is not 'natural', but the result of sin (trying to live independently of God);
Thus life as we know it is 'unnatural', not what we were meant to be.
We still resemble the Father (image), but no longer act like Him (likeness).

* This fallen condition, the result of original sin, touches us all;
  Only restoring the likeness can truly fulfill us.

* One example of our brokenness is the desire to define ourselves as individuals rather than in relationships.

* The result of this brokenness is that God's order of relationship (His Spirit/our spirit/our soul/our body) is distorted and we live in delusion (prelest).
The body is meant to be directed by the soul and the soul by the spirit, which takes life from God's Spirit.
Now the body rules the mind (passion) or the mind rules the spirit (pride).
This is prelest (delusion), a deception as to what life is all about.

Point Three:

In the incarnation God restores the likeness to mankind in Christ:

* The incarnation is God's merciful and loving pursuit of His erring creation;
  God's way to right our wrong is compassionate (Cabasilas).
The incarnation is the highpoint of God's plan for us.

* In the incarnation the Word of God takes on and heals our broken human nature;
  He fulfills the task Adam failed at (the new Adam).

* Christ is the ultimate image of the Father (Jn 14:9), who perfectly reflects the Divine glory in His humanity;
  In Christ the original plan is restored.
  In Christ the plunge toward disintegration is reversed.

* The purpose of the incarnation is to restore the likeness to humanity that we might become partakers of the divine nature (theosis).
  He took on our humanity so that we might bear God within us.

Point Four:

The indwelling Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to share in this likeness:

* The coming of the Spirit is the climax of God's plan.
  It is His presence in us that restores the original creation.

* It is through the Church that we can personally enter the divine life;
  This happens when our human spirit is penetrated and directed by the Spirit of God;

* The entire Christian life follows on the fact that the Spirit is
Point Five: As we work together with the Spirit in us (synergy), the process of theosis takes place in us:

* Synergy is our saying 'yes' to God;
  The potential for holiness (the image) and the possibility (the indwelling Spirit) must be completed by our cooperation.

* The Jesus Prayer is a traditional expression of synergy in prayer.
  We unite our spirit with the indwelling Spirit of God.

Conclusion:

The process of theosis concludes only in the world to come:

* The exodus is the model of theosis as a journey (St. Gregory of Nyssa);
  We cross the Red Sea (baptism), wander for '40 years' (life's struggles) and reach the promised land.
  Like the Burning Bush we will be transformed, but still be what we are.

* The transfiguration is the model of theosis as the conclusion of the journey;
  The blessed grapes point to the process of theosis: a natural process of growth which can lead to divinization.

* We are invited to consciously travel this journey so that God may complete the work He has begun in us.
C) Sample Presentation

Introduction Have you ever gone to a photographer for a family portrait or for pictures of the children? Everything's got to be just right: we have to look our 'best', which usually means not the way we really look. Photographers will tell you that people will arrange sitting after sitting and reject one proof after another, because they're not flattering. The camera is very impartial: it doesn't flatter; it tells the truth and so we tell the photographer, "I don't want a lifelike photo, just an attractive one. Touch up those wrinkles and blemishes. I don't want to see me as I am, but as a model in some TV commercial". Sometimes we want the photographer to be more of a plastic surgeon than a cameraman!

This almost funny kind of example points to something deeper: our idea of who and what we are. Many times we don't accept ourselves for what we are; or we're not really sure who we are or what we're supposed to be. Some people always seem to be wearing a mask; and most of us put one on from time to time. We look to movie stars and TV personalities to tell us how to dress and what we should look like; and to a basically non-Christian society to tell us what to think and feel. When people ask themselves questions like, "What's life for? What's it all about?" they look to TV, singles' magazines, fashion designers for the answers, or worse: astrologers, cults or the like.

Point One: But according to the Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church, there's another place to look. If we want to understand ourselves, we must find God and His way for our lives. If we don't know God, we'll never understand who we are and who we're meant to be, because it is He who made us in what the Bible calls the image and likeness of God:

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.'"

"God created man in His image; in the divine image He created him; male and female He created them.

"God blessed them, saying 'Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth.'"

(Gen 1:26-28 NAB)

God is the reality; we are like His shadow. We can only understand what we are meant to be by knowing Him and His way. This doesn't mean that to make sense of the world we need to understand God. If it did, we'd never get anywhere. The Fathers of the Church knew that God was incomprehensible and they accepted that. Instead they tried to understand the human condition in God's terms. And the Fathers, as well as our entire Eastern Church Tradition, sees God's understanding of our place in creation from these verses of Genesis we read a moment ago.

If you remember the rest of the creation story, you'll recall that
the Bible expresses it this way: God says 'Let there be light' or plants or animals, and they begin to exist. But for us there's a difference. He says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". We're different from anything else that exists, because of the One after whom we have been patterned.

Now these two words, image and likeness, have a technical meaning in our Eastern Christian understanding. When we say that someone is the image of his father, for example, we mean he looks like his father or that so and so has features like her mother. This is the image: we resemble our parents or brothers or sisters; we have the same build or eyes or mouth or the like. But then we'll also say that so and so is just like his father: they think the same way, they act the same way. He's a chip off the old block. This is what the Fathers call the likeness. They're not the same thing. You can look like your father, but while he's a saint, you're a conniver. It happens.

According to the Scriptures, we are meant to both resemble God (to have something in our makeup that is in His image) and to be like Him too. And so we have in us natural capabilities, the image: we can know and communicate, we can be creative and dynamic, we can relate to others. These abilities are in us always. They are ways in which we resemble God. And so we have natural dignity, value and beauty because we are in His image. But we're also meant to be like Him: to use these natural capabilities to be loving, to be compassionate, to be selfless. And that means we are meant to grow and become ever more conformed to His likeness.

And so, as God conceived us, we are truly human only when we are living according to this model after which we've been created. We can only be ourselves after that is fulfilled, when we understand what God means us to be. Only then will we know how to relate to our inner feelings, to each other, to all creation and to God.

Now when you think about it, being 'like God' isn't something that could just be in us full blown. If it were, we'd be God! It is something we have to grow in. And so the Fathers always stressed that God didn't create humanity as He did other things, already completely and perfectly what they're supposed to be. Only the human race is created unfinished, with something to do, something to become. Only we can grow and become more and more like God.

A rock is a rock, a horse is a horse - but we are beings on the road, on a journey to becoming more of what we were meant to be. As St. Basil said, "Man is a creature which has received the command to become God". We are still being created: we're not finished products. You may have seen this saying on a card or poster sometimes: "Please be patient with me; God isn't finished with me yet". That's true of every one of us and of the human race as a whole. We won't be finished until we're as like Him as we can be. We are meant to naturally turn toward Him, like a sunflower naturally turns towards the sun. That basic drive toward union with Him is there in us and we're not complete, not whole unless that movement is working in us.

So to summarize what's been said so far, we really only fulfill ourselves as God has created us: in His image (resembling Him) and in His likeness (being like Him). This means we're called to grow, to take part in a lifelong process of becoming more and more like Him.

Point Two: Because He's created us in His own image and likeness, God gave mankind three jobs or tasks. First of all He made us the stewards
of creation, to take care of the rest of the universe. Now a steward isn't the owner: he can't do whatever he wants with his charge. He's only the manager. His job is to take care of things, to manage them well. God also made humanity His prophets. Only they would recognize Him as He manifests Himself in creation. Only mankind could see Him in His works, discern what He is doing in the world and be able to say what His will for us was to be. Finally God made mankind His priests: people who use everything in a sacramental way, offering them to God and finding God in them. Living in this way, mankind would grow more and more like God Himself.

Well, as we all know, it didn't work out that way! We messed up. We read in Genesis that Adam and Eve didn't act like God's managers of creation: they did what they wanted with it. They failed as prophets because they didn't discern what God wanted. Instead they followed the first voice they heard and we know whose that was! They missed the boat as priests too, using the holy things of creation for their own ends, not God's. And that doesn't make sacrament, it makes sacrilege. Well, the results were disharmony instead of harmony. They began blaming each other, for the mess they'd gotten into. Shame and lust followed and all the other inhuman qualities we've come to think of as natural. Sin had entered the world, and the potential to become like God was put on hold. This is what we call 'the Fall'.

So sin and weaknesses aren't 'natural' to human nature; they are the brokenness of a distorted and scarred humanity, a distortion that comes from abusing our real nature. If you ladies were to wash your panty hose in the blender, you'd have a disaster. If you men use the washer to mix concrete, or if the kids try to dry off the dog in the microwave, you know what will happen. When we misuse anything, we ruin it. Sin is us misusing ourselves. It's just as ludicrous, because it's not in harmony with a nature that's made after the image and likeness of God. Sin isn't the breaking of rules, but the doing of the impossible: trying to live independently of God.

God is the giver of life. He is the model of our nature and the One toward whom we're going. Cut off from Him, we have no life... not the kind of life we're meant to have. It's like a person kept alive on a respirator. He's breathing, yes, but there's more to life than that! Adam tried to build his own world, to become for himself the standard of what ought to be. He was frustrated, because it's impossible. He's out of step with creation: disjointed, out of focus.

A natural born poet or musician does his thing with ease. But we don't do our thing (reflecting God) easily any more. Something is very wrong. What we are as made in God's image remains, and that's why there's such importance to each human life; but the process of becoming like God, of growing in His likeness, is put on hold. We still resemble our Father, but we sure don't act like Him! As we say in our funeral service,

"You who with Your own hand have fashioned me from nothingness and adorned me with Your divine image, and who, when I transgressed your commandment, did cast me down into the dust whereof I had been made: deign, O Lord, to restore me to Your likeness, that my original beauty may be renewed in me."

We carry on this movement to this very day. We inherit this situation from Adam. Born into a world that's out of focus, not relating to God, we confirm Adam's deed with our own sins, each in our own time, and we carry the
universe further away from what it should be.

This is what we mean by original sin. It's not an inherited guilt for someone else's sin, but it's that atmosphere of brokenness that's all around us and touches us from our mother's womb. It affects everything: nothing escapes. That's why St. Paul says, "All creation groans and is in agony even until now" (Rom 8:22). The universe is waiting for us to become what we're supposed to be! Until that happens, everything is out of kilter. And it will stay that way until we're back where we belong. Like the Prodigal Son in Christ's parable, we belong with our Father.

So we're in a fallen condition, all of us. And it is not so much that God is punishing us, or even telling us "I told you so!" It just doesn't work any other way. People today are looking everywhere for the key to a fulfilling life: to analysts, encounter groups, sensitivity sessions, you name it - drugs, the occult, anything; but none of it works, and off they go to the next one which promises satisfaction. The only thing that fulfills us is restoring the likeness we're meant to have with God.

Let's just look at one example of our brokenness. One of the characteristics which marks our culture is individualism. People want to be themselves: how often have you heard that? We define ourselves by what separates us from others: more money, more power, more popularity than the next guy. Or we're smarter or dress better or dance better... whatever: all individual traits which separate us from others. But none of this tells me who I am because I'm not first and foremost an individual. That was the serpent's temptation, wasn't it? "Be an individual, have it your way!" The world promotes it: that's what sells cars and stereos and everything else.

But the gospel is different: "You are not your own" (1 Cor 6:19). We are not individuals before everything else; we are persons and there's a difference. Individuality separates. We define ourselves in terms of what makes us different from others, and that makes for disharmony. Persons are known because of their relationship to each other and that's all the difference in the world.

In the Middle East and probably in other historic cultures too, people put aside their individuality and express themselves in terms of relationships. People call themselves by their children's names: 'Abu George' (George's Father) or 'Im Yusuf' (Joseph's Mother). Even the great king who unified the Arab tribes in the 1930's and was the founder of the state of Saudi Arabia never used his own name: he was always 'ibn Saud' (Saud's son). Relationship, not individuality, is the image of God who is three persons in relationship to each other, not three individuals. So when we want to know who we are, we don't look to what separates us from others, but what brings us together, because we are in the image of the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But here we are: scattered, disoriented, fragmented from each other. And as in everything, once innocence is lost, it's never the same again. Mankind has tried to live its own way, diverging from the master plan of the Creator, and the result is disorder between individuals, but more basically within each one of us.

Try plugging your toaster into a grapefruit: you won't get toast. Left to our own devices, we've tried to look for life where it can't be found. Adam tried to plug into his own mind: I'll do it my way, rather than God's way, but nothing came right.
The Fathers teach that we live in three dimensions, the body, the soul and the spirit. Perhaps we've heard it in terms of body and soul, but that's more the pre-Christian philosophical idea. The body is meant to be directed by the soul or mind. The mind is meant to take its life from the spirit or innermost being, and this spirit is meant to take its life from God's Spirit. We're fully human only when life is filling us in this way: from God to our inmost being and then from inside us outward.

Well, with the fall, the body went its own way. We find the body dictating to the mind. It craves something and has to have it now: we call that gluttony or lust. We try to find life in the body. Or we seek life in the mind, but intelligence doesn't make everything ok. How many highly educated people commit suicide every year? Focusing on our mind only brings us to pride: how great we are! And the result is that our spirit shrivels when it's forced to center on the body or the soul.

Things seem pretty bad, don't they? And the worst thing about it is that people think that this abnormal way of the world is normal. We live in a world of delusion, false ideas, what Eastern writers call 'prelest'. It's like wearing rose colored glasses. We see everything in a kind of fantasyland glow, a kind of disneyland in reverse. We think that the disorder in which we live is normal, even desirable.

Point Three But God can always bring good out of evil, light out of darkness. So He takes the initiative: He works to restore us to the likeness, to help us get back in line with the way things are meant to be, so that we can really find life.

Thank God He did it His way and not ours! We would probably have done it like an irate schoolmaster or a football coach. He does it a different way: a way that Nicholas Cabasilas, a spiritual writer of the 14th century expressed so beautifully:

"God is not content to remain where He is and to summon like a slave the one He loves so dearly. He comes down and seeks for him Himself. The Almighty stoops to the lowliness of our poor nature. He comes Himself, declares His love for us, and it seems almost that He is asking a favor of us. When we refuse, He does not withdraw. He is not wounded by our rejection. Rebuffed, He waits at the door, all to show His abiding love. He takes on Himself all these humiliations, and He dies."

(The Life in Christ VI, 3)

This is what we call the incarnation, the highpoint of God's plan for us. In Jesus Christ, the Word of God becomes one of us. He takes on our whole fallen nature... and heals it. The Word of God becomes for us the perfect likeness of the Father. He fulfills what Adam was supposed to: He becomes a new Adam, a new creation, bringing us back in line with the original plan which was destroyed by Adam.

And is that not what we're celebrating at Christmas when we surround ourselves with those fabulous trees aglow with their exotic 'fruit'? We're back in the Garden again, with a new Adam. We repeat this idea in our Christmas services again and again, as in this troparion from the forefeast:

"Bethlehem, make ready, for Eden has been opened for all."
Ephrata, be alert, for the Tree of life has blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb has become a spiritual paradise wherein the divine fruit was planted; and if we eat of it we shall live and not die like Adam. Christ is coming forth to bring back to life the likeness that had been lost in the beginning."

Christ is the perfect likeness of God: not only does He resemble Him in His human nature as do we all; Christ is also like Him in all things. "He who sees me," He tells Philip, "sees the Father" (Jn 14:9). In Christ we see perfectly who and what God is and who and what a human being is supposed to be. What He is is what human nature was meant to be from the beginning.

Christ comes to bring everything back to the original plan which was put on hold with Adam's sin. Before Christ, everything was getting more and more separated. Now there's another force at work. Things are coming together again, being brought together in Christ. The Fathers called this the recapitulation of all things: everything is finding its place again with Christ at the head:

"He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creatures. ... In Him everything continues in being... It pleased God to make absolute fulness reside in Him and, by means of Him, to reconcile everything in His person, both on earth and in the heavens..."

(Col 1:15-20)

Christ is the center of all reality. Everything has been made through Him. Everything has been revealed through Him, and everything will find its fulfillment in Him.

While He was walking around the roads of Galilee, people couldn't see that very clearly. He didn't carry a sign on His back, but they knew He was different. They knew that much. It was only after the resurrection that we begin to see how Christ is the perfect man and to see that His very coming was so that we might have new life, that we might have the likeness restored in us. "He, the true and natural Son of God," says St. Athanasius, "bears us all in Himself, so that we might all bear in ourselves the only God".

And there's the key to our understanding of the normal Christian life: Christ is not simply the perfect man to show us that, yes, it could be done. He became one of us so that we could bear God within us, so that the likeness could be restored in us as well as in Himself. Christ is the firstfruits of those who are asleep, the firstborn from among the dead: we're meant to be the rest of the crop.

This is why St. Peter the Apostle could write that we might become sharers of the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4). This is what the Eastern Churches call 'theosis', that we become deified or divinized by having the life of God live in us. St. Irenaeus and most of the Fathers after him expressed it in this way, "God became man so that we might become God", so that we could have the life of God within us, restoring the likeness.

Point Four: Christ's followers only began to realize all this at the climax of God's plan for us, the coming of the Holy Spirit. St. Athanasius says that the whole purpose of Christ's coming was that we might receive the Holy Spirit, because it is only due to the Spirit dwelling in the Church that we have the
personal possibility to recover the likeness ourselves. We see this in the icon of Pentecost. The Spirit comes down on the Church, represented by the apostles. Below them is a figure with its hands outstretched, waiting for the life of the Spirit to be passed on to it. That's us: the figure represents mankind, which isn't really alive until the Spirit gives it life.

Remember how we understand the makeup of man: we are body, soul and spirit, meant to share God's life in our spirit, and we're not fully human until we do. Unless our spirit is plugged into God's Holy Spirit, we're like a light bulb that's not turned on. It really only has meaning when it's connected to the source of electricity. If you've ever looked out through a stained glass window at night, you know it only seems alive when there's a light going through it. We're the same: unless our spirit is united with the Spirit of God, we're not able to have that life in us that makes it possible for us to recover the likeness. But when it is, through baptism, we're back on the track. We're born again as adopted children of the Father and, as St. Paul says, "The proof that you are sons is the fact that God has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of His Son" (Gal 4:6).

Everything we do as Christians depends on this fact: that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, beginning the process of restoring the divine likeness in us, making us sharers in the divine nature. This is why we live a moral life, for example: not because there are laws that say 'Do this' or 'Don't do that', but because we are the temples of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. We have been set apart, made holy by His presence in us, and we don't use holy things for junk! If your kids used your best china to make mudpies, you'd let them know about it. It's the same with us: we're meant to be set apart because we are being transformed after the likeness of God.

So again, to sum up so far: (1) We're really only fulfilled when we are becoming what God has created us to be: people in His image, after His likeness; (2) because of the fall, we couldn't do that on our own. Everything was out of focus; So (3) the Word of God comes among us in the flesh, and in Him the likeness is restored because He's like us in everything except sin; (4) He does this so that we can be divinized, can share in the divine nature by union with Him; (5) that begins for each of us when we become temples of the Holy Spirit at our christening and our spirits begin to take life from the Spirit of God.

Point Five: So God gives us His Spirit, but His Spirit doesn't take over our spirit. We don't say, 'The Spirit made me do it!' Rather the Holy Spirit calls us onward and moves us and gently invites us to cooperate with Him. This is what we call synergy or cooperation: a kind of dialog between God and man. Because we are the image of God, we have the capacity to progress in holiness, the potential for theosis. And because the Holy Spirit is within us, we have the immediate possibility of being refashioned into the likeness of God. But we still must say 'Yes' to what God is doing in us, what He seeks to accomplish. That is synergy. It's like a person who has a natural talent for teaching (the image). Because he's been licensed by the state, he has the immediate possibility of getting a teaching job (the indwelling Spirit). But he still must get out there and do the work required. It's something like physical life as well. We contribute nothing to our being born. But later, when we're alive, we have to take some responsibility for staying alive. It's the same in the normal Christian life. We can't generate it ourselves, but once we've got it, we can't expect to be carried or pushed along. We have to do our part like athletes in a team effort.

We'll talk this afternoon about what seems to happen in people who do cooperate with the Spirit and allow themselves to experience theosis. But now
let's just look at one point that shows us something of what synergy might mean in our lives. Last night we experienced the Jesus Prayer for a few minutes. This prayer was developed in response to St. Paul's injunction, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17). The Spirit is always present in us; but we couldn't imagine always consciously recognizing that presence in prayer. It would be impossible to go about the necessary daily routines of living and still actively pray. So the Fathers developed a way for prayer to enter our spirits by constant repetition, so that in the deepest level of our being we should be in touch with God, even if we're involved with something else on the conscious level. In that way we would respond to Paul's call and always be in touch with the Spirit of God who is always present within us. God's Spirit and our spirit work together to divinize us.

Conclusion: Where does it all lead? We said theosis is a process of growth as we are made like God. It's a lifelong journey which begins at our baptism and does not finish until the end of our life and beyond. St. Gregory of Nyssa used the events of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt to describe it. He said that our baptism was the beginning of our journey, like the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. They were entering a new way of life, with only a vague idea of where it would take them. They wandered for 40 years in the desert, and our lives are like that. We go on and on, struggling, sometimes making progress, sometimes falling back: but always God makes His presence evident to us. We have the holy mysteries and the Tradition of the Church as our companions, just as the Israelites had the pillar of fire and the cloud. Finally we'll reach the promised land as they did, but only after we've crossed the Jordan, entering the age to come.

Then will come the final transfiguration when in body, soul and spirit we will be transformed after the likeness of God. Like the burning bush in Exodus, we will be totally permeated by God's life. We will still be who we are, as the bush was still a weed; it didn't turn into a rosebush, but it became transfigured and beautiful because it was filled with God. The end of theosis is to be transfigured, to radiate the divine nature in which God has chosen to give us a share.

There's one festival we celebrate in the Church which gives us a glimpse of what this transformation might mean. The feast of the Transfiguration which we keep on August 6 sums up what the Church believes about the life in Christ. The icon of the feast expresses graphically the gospel story. We see Christ transfigured, His very body transparent with the grace of the Spirit. We see Him surrounded by some of the most important persons of the Old Testament (Moses and Elias) and of the New Testament (Peter, James and John), because He is the center of God's dealings with us. But we also see His transfiguration as a preview of our own, a foretaste of what theosis will ultimately mean for us.

On this feast every year we bless grapes, a very tangible and earthly sign of theosis. The grapes are the result of a long journey from seed to vine to fruit, and they can go still further. The grape can become wine; the wine can become transfigured with divinity as the blood of Christ. We're much the same. We've come a ways physically, emotionally and into the new life. We can continue and mature in this life, be transformed in union with Christ. With that kind of future, why be satisfied with anything less? When you can be transfigured into Christ in the new wine of the Spirit, why be content to end up as a raisin?

And so we're on the path, by the grace of God, the journey of theosis. And God will give us more and more of Himself if we keep to the path. He is faithful, says St. Paul, and keeps His promise: He will complete the work He has begun
in us. Praise Him forever and ever.

Let's take a 15 minute break and come back at 11 o'clock for questions.

D) Discussion Period

1. After the break the cantor can call the group to order by singing the Theme Song of the weekend.

2. The speaker then entertains questions from the floor for 15 minutes.

3. At the end of this time he directs each table group to write a common definition of theosis as they understand it. Members of each table are to work together and arrive at a consensus.

4. Ten minutes before the end of the session the speaker calls time and invites a representative from each table to share their definition with the entire group.

5. After the summaries are completed, the assistant director invites the participants to visit the book and icon table which he or she has set up during the morning, directing their attention in particular to items connected with the talks heard so far, such as:

"While some of the ideas you've heard so far may be new to you, there is a lot of material available to help you become more familiar with them. We have set up a book table in (______) where you can purchase some books or pamphlets dealing with the topics discussed on the weekend. There are also some icons available for purchase.

"If you are interested in the Jesus Prayer, for example, you might want to look at "Reflections on the Jesus Prayer" by a priest of the Byzantine Church, a series of short meditations on each word of the prayer. If you would like to read a non-technical explanation of theosis, look for Brother Daniel Stramara's leaflet, "Man, the Living Ikon" and so on.

"The price of each item is marked on the list on the table and there is an envelope on the table where you can place your payments. Please make checks payable to the 'Office of Educational Services'. Items will be available through tomorrow."

6. The assistant director then directs the participants to the chapel for the midday prayer.
MIDDAY PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Saturday Morning, 11:45 AM

Aim: To help participants see theosis taking place in the lives of Christians, especially in the wealth of witness in the Byzantine Churches.

One of the most ancient teachings in Christian Tradition is the doctrine of the communion of saints: that all believers, both living and dead, are united in a fellowship of love in Christ. This teaching is intimately connected with the doctrine of theosis as both concepts are grounded in the reality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Because the Spirit dwells in us we are being divinized; because it is the same Spirit dwelling in all of us, we are one.

In presenting the lives of the saints who have gone before us we hope to show this unity, not only ontologically (because of the indwelling Spirit), but also experientially. These saints of long ago and far away faced similar situations to ours, and they faced them with the same resources: the life and strength of the Holy Spirit within them. Each mini-presentation, then, brings out three elements concerning each saint: a central experience in their life, the reason for the actions, the connection with a contemporary situation. These three facets should form a part of each vignette.

This gathering should be held in the chapel. The entire team participates as presenters should stand together, on or near the solea. This will enable them to speak in turn without disturbing the attention of the participants. Sufficient analogia should be placed around the chapel for the icons of the saints, which one of the priests will bring out during the presentation on the saint in question. These should be deployed in such a way that the participants be surrounded at the end of the prayer by a cloud of witnesses. Candles should be placed by each one. If there are not sufficient analogia, the icons should be placed on any appropriate surface (shrines, windowsills, ledges, etc.). Participants should be given copies of the canon to the saints.

The several parts of this presentation are delivered by the various team members in turn. The first segment, the introduction, is followed by several segments recalling the lives of various saints. As each saint is described, one of the priests (who is not delivering a reflection) brings the saint's icon out before the assembly. Vested in rason and epitrachelion, he comes out of the north door and stands in the middle of the solea holding the icon. When the presentation on that saint is finished, he places the icon on an analogion, lights the candle before it and goes to bring out the next icon and repeat the procedure. At the end of the reflections, he leads the canon to the saints.

A) Basic Outline

Introduction: We have a cloud of witnesses, the saints, whose lives testify to the reality of the Holy Spirit dwelling within.

This union with God is beyond the entire Old Testament experience (Heb 11, 12:1-2).

This 'cloud' includes the saints of the Church and our brothers and sisters in the community today.
Point One: Some saints have born witness in the way they lived their family life:
   St. Eustathius and his family;
   St. Martha, a widow, devoting her retirement to service;
   St. Barbara, a single young adult.

Point Two: Some are known for glorifying God in or despite their profession:
   St. Simeon, a young professional living a Christian life in the
   world, later a monk;
   Ss. Cosmas and Damian, professionals exercising their abilities in a
   Christian manner;
   St. George, a career soldier whose faith brought him in conflict
   with his culture and profession.

Point Three: Others are famed for the way they remained faithful to God in difficult
   circumstances of life:
   St. Philaret, hospitable in the midst of abundance and want;
   St. Sophia, giving in the midst of deep personal loss;
   St. Polycarp, faithful in the midst of imminent death.

Point Four: Still others are recognized for the way they lived in the Church:
   St. Irenaeus, a model of fidelity in the face of cults;
   St. James the Persian, fallen away but returned to faith.

Conclusion: Invitation to pray the canon to all saints.

B) Expanded Outline

Introduction: We have a cloud of witnesses, the saints, whose lives testify to the
   reality of the Holy Spirit dwelling within.

   * This union with God is beyond the entire Old Testament experience
     (Heb 11, 12:1-2).
     In theosis we are no longer separate from God.
     This, the promise made to Abraham, was not given to any of the Old
     Testament giants of faith.
     It came about only through Christ.

   * This 'cloud' includes the saints of the Church and our brothers and
     sisters in the community today.
     The saints whose icons surround us are alive in Christ, because they
     recognized the presence of God within them.
     Our brothers and sisters in the faith are also on the path to theosis, but
     like us have yet to finish the race.
     Today we look at some of the saints and how they were captivated by
     God.

Point One: Some saints have born witness in the way they lived their family life:

   * St. Eustathius and his family:
     The Christian faith initially brought peace to this military
     family;
     The family had to decide between loyalty to Christ or the
Our families should be ready to make unpopular decisions for Christ.

* St. Martha, a widow, devoting her retirement to service;
  Martha was a well-to-do widow in Antioch;
  Her fund-raising efforts for the poor became well known;
  Retired people today can well use their time and talents for service to the community.

* St. Barbara, a single young adult.
  She was the shielded daughter of a well-to-do pagan.
  Disowned by her father, she was denounced as a Christian;
  Like Barbara, Christian women today need to find their true freedom in Christ.

Point Two: Some are known for glorifying God in or despite their profession:

* St. Simeon, a young professional living a Christian life in the world, later a monk;
  Trying to determine God's will for him, he relied on his spiritual father.
  His experience of God's presence in his life earned him the title "New Theologian".

* Ss. Cosmas and Damian, professionals exercising their abilities in a Christian manner;
  These brothers became Christians while in medical school;
  They decided to glorify God by using the talents He had given them;
  The committed Christian today also uses his/her workplace as the place where he glorifies God.

* St. George, a career soldier whose faith brought him in conflict with his culture and profession.
  St. George resigned his military commission rather than join in pagan rites;
  The Church saw George's refusal as a challenge to Satan;
  We can expect the need to take public stands for the gospel in our increasingly secular society.

Point Three: Others are famed for the way they remained faithful to God in difficult circumstances of life:

* St. Philaret, hospitable in the midst of abundance and want;
  The poor turned to the rich such as Philaret for help in need;
  He maintained his charitable spirit even when his own fortunes were reversed;
  We too are called to put God first, not give Him our leftovers.

* St. Sophia, giving in the midst of deep personal loss;
  She was deprived of husband and children in a plague;
She redirected her energies and resources to help children orphaned by the same plague.
We are called to recognize God working for good in all things for those who love Him (Rom 8:28).

* St. Polycarp, faithful in the midst of imminent death.
   A disciple of John the Theologian, he was one of the first Christian leaders;
   When arrested, he refused special treatment because of his age;
   We should know that the Lord is always with us and that we can rest secure in Him in any circumstance.

Point Four: Still others are recognized for the way they lived in the Church:

* St. Irenaeus, a model of fidelity in the face of cults;
  He was the first Christian theologian to stand against the Gnostics
  He wrote to establish the credentials of the Orthodox Church
  The same Tradition he upheld keeps us free in Christ from the enslavement of modern Gnostics

* St. James the Persian, fallen away but returned to faith.
  When James denied his faith, his career prospered.
  He was killed when he reaffirmed faith in Christ.
  We too need to see the choice required between society's norms and allegiance to Christ.

Conclusion: Invitation to pray the canon to all saints.
We are really surrounded by this cloud;
Let us honor them and God through them;
We do this through the canon for the feast of all saints.

C) Sample Presentation

Introduction: As we said earlier today, we call what God has done in Jesus Christ theosis, our way to divinization. As the Fathers constantly repeated, "God became man so that we might become God." By virtue of our baptism into Christ, we have the Holy Spirit Himself dwelling within us. We are no longer separate from God. We are united to Him in so profound a way that we go to Him as to our Father, as Jesus Himself did. And when the world persecutes us for His sake, it persecutes Jesus Christ Himself.

It is only in Christ that this became possible, because it is only by Christ's coming that God has made it possible for us to share in His divine nature. In Hebrews 11 we read of the entire history of the Hebrew nation. The faith of such people as Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, David and the prophets of the Old Testament is praised. Then in 11:39-40 we're told that all these great personages of the Old Testament did not receive the fulness of the promise made to Abraham:

"Yet, despite the fact that all of these were approved because of their faith, they did not obtain what had been
promised. God had made a better plan, a plan which included us. Without us they were not to be made perfect."

We have received that promise through Jesus Christ. God has literally made us greater than all these righteous people by one act, the incarnation. God Himself became man in Jesus Christ.

Looking to those Old Testament figures, the Scriptures tell us:

"Therefore, since we, for our part, are surrounded by this cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance of sin which clings to us and persevere in running the race which lies ahead."

(Heb 12: 1,2)

We are surrounded by an even bigger cloud of witnesses: by the saints whose icons we have in our homes and in our churches, and by the people with whom we may worship each week (the icons around us) or who are part of the larger family of God throughout the world.

Those witnesses who have gone before us are "spirits of the just made perfect" (Heb 12:23). They became transformed as they matured in their faith, because they knew God's divine nature was in them. They are alive in Christ. Today, as we take a closer look at some of them, we pray to be captivated as they were, and are, by the mystery of God within them.

First Witness St. Eustathius and Family:

From the second century comes a family: Eustathius, his wife and two teenaged children. This was a military family, whose lives involved the hardship of frequent transfers of location and occasional separations from the father on hardship tours. They had become converts to Christianity, a move which brought great peace and unity among them, as well as solving some problems they had been having in their relationships.

They tried hard to do their duty to both Christ and the state. When Eustathius had been instrumental in winning a major victory in a military campaign, he was caught in an embarrassing predicament. Custom dictated that he take part in the pagan sacrifices at the victory celebration. When he tactfully declined, it was discovered that he was a Christian. The family had to decide between their career and security on the one hand, and their faith on the other.

The family unanimously opted for loyalty to Christ and one another, and they were burned alive in 118 AD under the Emperor Trajan. Their feast is kept by the Church on September 20 each year. Often in our lives, we find situations in which our life in Christ may make us adopt an unpopular stand with regard to morals or ethics in business life and society. This will be increasingly true the more we strive to live authentic Christian lives as society becomes more and more secular. It may even be that we will be persecuted for our positions, but Christ tells us that this is to be expected. Let us strive to seek unity as a family, with a life of prayer together as well as closeness to one another in Christ, so that we may preserve the strength we will need to witness to the Lord daily.

Second Witness: St. Martha -
One famous woman in our Church was St. Martha. She was widowed early in life and, after her son became a monk, she was alone. She had time on her hands and some money. You could say she was a retiree with her family living away from her (a modern situation, but Martha lived in fifth century Antioch). What should she do with her life?

She could have been free to follow the round of koffee klatches or bingo games of her day, but she didn't. She spent the time on her hands badgering the rich of Antioch for donations which she would use to help the poor. She was so devoted to her work that she was nicknamed "the Mother of the Christians of Antioch". Whatever donations she could elicit or handiwork she could make benefitted the poor. She was an inspiration to all who knew her. It was surely through her influence that her son became the giant of the faith that he was to be: St. Simeon the Stylite, one of the greatest ascetics and preachers of the day.

Retired people today could while away their time, or use it for the service of the Lord. Since most younger or middle aged people — men and women — work today, retired people are in great demand in parishes with tasks that need to be done: secretarial work, keeping the books, helping with all sorts of projects. Like Martha, today's retirees could become the mothers and fathers of their parishes.

Third Witness: St. Barbara —

Barbara was born in the early third century. She was shielded from the world by her father, Dioscoros, who prized his lovely daughter and carefully screened those he permitted to see her. He was an avowed pagan who practiced idolatry with a fanaticism which had him convinced that Christianity was his worst enemy. He was determined that his daughter never be infected with this new 'poison'. He considered conversion an act worse than death.

Despite her insular early life, Barbara managed to find the truth of Jesus Christ. After being baptized surreptitiously by a local monk, she took to her restricted quarters to meditate and pray in spiritual happiness. When Barbara told her father that her rapture came from her acceptance of the Messiah, his love for her turned to rage. Dioscoros screamed for the blood of his own daughter. Some accounts indicate that he beheaded her himself. In any case he was responsible for her death.

When we consider the witness of Barbara for the twentieth century, the true and timeless lesson she gives is that she was a totally free liberated woman. She did not succumb to the pressure of her father and the world about her. She was not her father's Barbara, not the world's Barbara, but Barbara made in the image of God and most like God when free to choose the Lord. Out of her relationship with God she found total freedom. She was her own person — she took cues only from the Lord. She was aware of who she was and grew in the likeness of God, not in the likeness of her father and friends.

She was the glory of God: woman fully alive. She is a witness for all of us, especially women who continue to be what others expect them to be and never become what God wants them to be. Like the Old Testament image of the potter's wheel, she allowed the Lord to form the clay which we all are. She did not have hangups about what people thought of her, because she allowed God to shape her above and beyond any human expectations.
Fourth Witness: St. Simeon the New Theologian –

Simeon was the closest thing to today's 'young professional' in tenth century Byzantium. Born into a well to do family, he pursued a successful career as the manager of a large estate. But Simeon wanted more than that. While working on the estate, Simeon had several powerful experiences of God's active presence in his life: experiences of theosis. He sought guidance from his Spiritual Father who was a monk at a local monastery.

Simeon was torn between his career and a desire to devote all his time to prayer. He asked his Spiritual Father to allow him to enter the monastery. But Simeon needed to learn that there is more to theosis than the 'spiritual highs' he had experienced. His Spiritual Father told him to remain in the world. Years later Simeon finally entered the monastery, and in time became its superior. He taught his monks to do everything they could to deepen their awareness of God's presence. His exhortations were not always well received, but the Church eventually recognized Simeon as a master of spiritual teaching, calling him the "New Theologian", not only because of his piety and brilliance, but because he defended the reality of theosis for all of us who have been baptized into Christ.

From St. Simeon we can learn the importance of having a Spiritual Father to guide us in our life of theosis. We can also see the possibility of a fervent life of prayer even in the midst of a busy career. For St. Simeon, his prayer life led to a 'career change'. However, for all of us, theosis can be a reality here and now in our hectic lives.

Fifth Witness: Ss. Cosmas and Damian –

Not all young professionals are called to a career change like Simeon was. Many saints are people who served the Lord by the unique way in which they practiced their profession or used their skills and talents in the world. Cosmas and Damian were brothers who had almost completed their medical studies when they accepted baptism in Syria in the second century. Should they continue in their profession or leave it for a monastery as many were doing?

These saints decided to serve as doctors, but as Christian physicians, bringing their faith to bear on their profession. They used prayer along with their skills to serve the sick. And since they were well off as it was, they resolved never to accept payment for their services. Well doctors who treat for free and who rely on prayer for help and strength are never very common, so their fame spread. They became known as the "Unmercenaries" because they believed that their talents were from God, and as His servants their place was to give them back to Him.

Each of us has talents which we use to earn our livlihoods. But, while most people may see their abilities as passports to prosperity, Christians like Cosmas and Damian see them as ways of serving the Lord as well as supporting themselves. Any workplace can be a place of service where believers follow the leading of the Spirit in their work relationships, their moral and ethical decisions, their generous use of their resources. There are even organized groups of Christian professionals and business people who are vocal about following the gospel in their business life. They see their talents as from God and ultimately still belonging to Him. It is for this same reason that the Church applies to the Unmercenaries the words of Christ, "Freely you have received: now freely give".
Sixth Witness: St. George the Great Martyr -

For some Christians their service means choosing between the ways of their society and the ways of Christ. St. George, who lived at the beginning of the fourth century, made that kind of choice. He was a soldier in the Roman army at a time when being in the military meant glory and opportunity. You could win rank and honor, and you could prosper. In a society that did not have many advantages, that was something! But as servants of the state, soldiers were often expected to worship the pagan gods in the official state religion. St. George resigned his commission rather than participate in these rites.

St. George lived at a time when persecution of Christians was still a possibility. A local official or a particular emperor might decide to enforce the anti-Christian laws that had been on the books for hundreds of years. George challenged the power of state and emperor, earning for himself the hatred of Emperor Diocletian and death as a martyr. Iconographers would later depict his struggle against Rome on behalf of the Church as a battle against the dragon.

It would have been easy for St. George to have avoided these conflicts. He could have chosen to stay in the army, to make his religion a 'private affair', to keep quiet and not draw attention to himself. He chose another way. We may more and more find ourselves up against social forces as our society becomes less and less respectful of Christianity: shopkeepers forced by their franchiser to sell pornography, medical workers expected to take part in abortions, and the like. The examples may be modern, but the dynamic is the same: the believer serves his Lord, not the culture or society.

Seventh Witness: St. Philaret the Almsgiver -

Some saints speak to us by the way they react to the ups and downs of daily living. St. Philaret was someone whose generous spirit guided his life through good times and bad. In the Middle East in the eighth century there was no social security, no medicare or workmen's compensation. The poor could only hope that the rich would feel generous from time to time.

A wealthy landowner, Philaret never turned anyone away from his door. Then his own fortunes were reversed. Bad weather destroyed the crops, causing famine and depression, and Philaret was almost ruined. But he still gave, turning no one away, so that people called him Philaret the Almsgiver. It drove his family crazy. They felt they could not afford it, but Philaret would only say, "Don't worry: God will take care of us. Wealthy people can afford to be generous!" It was as if he could not see his own needs as long as he had the Lord's love. He was nuts - a fool for Christ's sake. Eventually, when a niece married money, he was to flourish again, but his greatness comes from his faithfulness in giving, no matter what his bank account read.

Often people say they'll give to the church or to charity 'when their ship comes in'. Philaret put God's portion first; it didn't guarantee he wouldn't ever experience hardship. He did, but he still put God's portion first. He didn't let the circumstances of life's fortunes deter him from what he saw was God's will for Him. He stands as an example of those believers throughout the ages who have taken seriously Christ's invitation, "Seek first the kingdom of God, His way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides" (Mt 6:33).

Eighth Witness: St. Sophia:
Philaret lost his assets, but St. Sophia lost more than that. She was a well to do woman in Asia Minor. She had a good marriage and six children to be proud of. She had every advantage and was probably envied by her less fortunate neighbors. Then, when she was 34, a plague hit the land. Before it was over, Sophia's husband and all of her children were dead. What would we do in her shoes? Possibly turn away from life in hurt and bitterness against God, possibly curse those who still had their families - God knows.

Sophia came through the tragedy in faith. She chose to use her resources, her energy, her spirit - not in self pity - but in serving the Lord. The plague that left her childless had left others as orphans. She began taking them in, and gave them her own children's rooms and clothes and love. In the next 20 years she adopted 100 children, not counting the many of all ages who came for a helping hand from day to day. They called her the "Mother of Orphans" and revered her as a saint almost immediately after her death, because the tragedies of her life cold not turn her from the Lord.

The way we deal with tragedy in life is often a sign of how deeply conscious we are that the Lord is dwelling within us, that His presence in every circumstance of life is promised and sure, that He "works in all things for good for those who love Him" (Rom 8:28). Sophia's witness is that she focused, not on the tragic events she had suffered, but on the Lord who opened a new door for her to serve Him, so that even from her loss He could work for good.

Ninth Witness - St. Polycarp:

Christians have lost money, lost loved ones, lost their lives and done it all in Christ. St. Polycarp lived at the end of the second century. His family had been converted by the apostles and he was a disciple of St. John the Theologian. No wonder that, later in life, the Church at Smyrna chose him to be its bishop, a ministry he had for 40 years.

When he was 86, an especially serious persecution of Christians happened at Smyrna and Polycarp was arrested. The officials tried to save him out of pity for his old age. They wanted to make it easier for him. All he had to do was worship Caesar. Polycarp's reply is recorded: "For 86 years I have served Jesus Christ and He has never done me wrong. How can you expect me to betray and blaspheme my King who has saved me?" The conclusion was inevitable: Polycarp was burned at the stake.

Polycarp lived in an insecure age, when Christians could be arrested at any time. We live in a secure society, but perhaps we are too secure. Anything can happen to us at any time: sickness, injury, even persecution, if in a more subtle sense. Can we be as faithful to the Lord when our life is in jeopardy as Polycarp's was? Like him we can say that the Lord has saved us and been with us throughout our lives. God willing we will remember that when each of us receives our own 'death sentence'.

Tenth Witness - St. Irenaeus:

Irenaeus is called the first Christian theologian. He was the first Christian writer to use the analogy of image and likeness around which he expressed teachings on grace, creation, the destiny of man and the psychology of the entire spiritual life. He was born in Asia Minor near Smyrna between the years 140 and 160. As a boy he heard the Christian faith explained by St. Polycarp, the disciple of St.
John the Evangelist.

Like every Christian, Irenaeus lived and moved and had his being in the Church, which — for him and for those who have the Faith — means "in Christ", since the Church is His Body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. Without the Church, Irenaeus would have been deprived of his whole frame of reference, almost of his Christian raison d'etre.

The purpose of Irenaeus' writing was to expound and defend the faith against all heretics. He wished to prove that what the apostles preached was true. He aims for the positive establishment of the credentials of the Orthodox Church. His works were written to meet certain crises in the Church of his day and to answer certain problems that were evidently widespread. He was in a true sense a cosmopolitan person who had exposure to the latest ideas and thoughts generated in the cultural centers of his world. In his goings and comings he no doubt came across the written expositions of the Gnostic systems. Gnosticism, which comes from the word 'knowledge', is a basic perversion of Christianity, because it does not accept faith or mystery. Christians believe in faith and accept mystery without having to know how the mystery works. After all, if we could do that, it would no longer be a mystery. Today the word cult may be substituted for gnostic. Some of the cults we are familiar with pseudo-Christian groups which have perverted true Christianity, such as the Christian Scientists, the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses or the 'Moonies'. Like the early gnostics, these groups sprang from the Church, but claim to be the only true Christians who have the true knowledge.

The significance of Irenaeus' witness to us in the 20th century is that today the media make us all cosmopolitans, exposed to a variety of religious fads and mind trips. We are bombarded on all sides, and we need to sift and discriminate the information we take in. Speculative theologians as well as demagogues outlandishly try to maintain that what they have to say is the divinely inspired truth. But Irenaeus lets us know that, no matter what we are exposed to, we are safeguarded in the Church by the Tradition of the Apostles.

The works of Irenaeus represent the earliest summary of Christian teaching. Irenaeus wrote out of his personal relationship with God through His Church to safeguard that Church from those who would attempt to subvert it. The writings of this bishop, separated by only one intervening generation from the apostles themselves, gives us today one very significant witness. The Apostolic Tradition upheld by Irenaeus safeguards us from those who seek to control and exploit us, rather than free us, which is what the coming of Christ achieved for all mankind. Jesus Christ comes to liberate and free us, not to control us, whereas perverted religions seek to inhibit and control. This, according to Irenaeus, is witchcraft.

Eleventh Witness — St. James the Persian:

There are many temptations which may lead us to fall away from our faith. Such temptations got the best of a soldier who lived during the fourth century in present day Iran. His name was James. James had been raised a Christian and had become close friends with the royal family. It was made clear to him that more 'career advancement opportunities' would be open to him if only he were to deny Christ and honor his king's gods.

James did deny Christ, and his career skyrocketed. His family, still loyal to Christ, pleaded with him to return to what he had received in baptism. James finally
realized that his new found popularity and prosperity were poor substitutes for life in Christ. At long last, he approached the king and, telling him he would no longer honor false gods, proclaimed his allegiance to Christ alone. Filled with rage, the king ordered St. James to be put to death for his Christian faith.

It is all too easy for us today to accept the values of contemporary society instead of those of Christ and His Church. The Christian life, the life of theosis, does not promise social or financial rewards. But we see from the life of St. James the Persian, that faithfulness to Christ outweighs all else. St. James' pagan king is no more; the truth of Christ continues to endure and to give life its fulness.

Conclusion - Can anyone live this life of theosis? In any circumstance? The witness of these saints leaves no doubt we can: by seeing the events of our lives, our gifts, the situations we find ourselves in as God's place for us to be His servants. Like them, we can work in harmony with the Spirit who is within us to bear witness that His life is at work in us and that this is the true life.

This is one reason why we commemorate the saints every day in our Church's cycle of worship. In addition, every Saturday remembers all the saints as well as the dead in a kind of prayer-fellowship for the entire Church. Let's pray on this Saturday two odes from the Canon of All Saints, which you'll find in your workbook, in tribute to their witness and with the prayer that they intercede that we may live as they did the life of God within us.

(The priest who has been presenting the icons comes before the solea and leads the chanting of the canon. At its conclusion, the people are invited to come forward and venerate the icon(s) before going on to lunch. The priest should remind them to bring their copy of "A Book for Prayer" to the dining room.)
DINNER PROCEDURES

Saturday afternoon, 12:30 PM

Sometime before this meal the assistant director should have rearranged the place cards so that the seating arrangements are different from those at breakfast, enabling people to spend at least some time with other participants.

A) Before the Meal

Grace should be said as at breakfast: the director may choose someone (in advance) to begin the grace with their own thanksgiving for blessings received. All continue with the Second Set of meal prayers ("A Book for Prayer", page 29), and the priest's blessing, as follows:

1. The cantor calls the group to order by singing the 'Theme Song' of the weekend.

2. The director invites people to open their prayerbooks to page 29. The Second Set of meal prayers will be recited after the personal thanksgiving of NN.

3. The director introduces the person who will give thanks.

4. That person makes the sign of the cross and offers his or her prayer.

5. The director immediately announces "Page 29" and begins the prayer:

   "The poor shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek the Lord shall praise Him and their hearts shall live forever. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, Now and always and forever and ever. Amen. Lord, have mercy (three times). Father, give the blessing."

6. One of the priests present gives the blessing, "Christ God, bless...".

B) After the Meal

When everyone is started on coffee and dessert, the director calls for the attention of the group and makes the following introduction:

"It is always a special joy when people who were with us on previous weekends and who have taken part in parish Theosis groups return to share the experience with others. We have (one/two/three) people here today who have been participants on previous weekends and I've asked (him/her/them) to briefly tell us about their experience in this program."

(The director then introduces each person speaking.)

Those sharing their experience should reflect on the following points:
a) What their experiences were like (factual information): their eagerness or reticence to go on their first weekend; things that helped or hindered their participation; what happened to them during the weekend.

b) Their reflection on these experiences: what they meant for their spiritual life.

At the end of these witnessings, the director thanks those who spoke and closes with the Second Set of prayers after meals on page 30 of "A Book for Prayer".

After the prayer, the director reminds the participants that they are free until the next talk at 2 PM.
TALK 3 — YOU HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED

Saturday Afternoon, 2:00 PM

Aim: To present the mysteries of Christian initiation and how they have touched our lives.

When we are born, all of the elements of our makeup are present in miniature, or in potential, from our tiny body parts to our psychological capabilities to our spirit. In the Christian life this is also true. The fullness of Christian life is made ours in the mysteries of Christian Initiation as a seed. There's nothing to be added that isn't there: only potential to be realized.

This talk stresses how these mysteries personalize God's saving action for us, making individual for us a share in all the aspects of His economy. In doing this we 'walk through' all the elements of the christening rite (points two through five). This can be made more graphic by using photos (on an overhead projector), slides or a video of an actual christening. Alternatively you can have participants 'act out' a christening as you describe it. The aim is to make the rite come alive for the participants, as the rite meant to be a visualization of what God is doing mystically in it.

The appreciation of any mystery depends on our perception that Christ is living and working today, not simply a personage of the past. Too many believers see Christ and the Holy Spirit as having worked in bible days, but not at work today. Thus the treatment on Christ's priesthood (point one) should not be bypassed. Seeing Christ as truly alive is essential for any realistic doctrine of the sacraments.

For Further Reading


Alexander Schmemann, "For the Life of the World" (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood NY, 1973 - also published as "Sacraments and Orthodoxy")

"Of Water and the Spirit" (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood NY, 1974)

A) Basic Outline

Introduction: Jesus is not simply a figure from the past: He lives now as our High Priest (Heb 7:23-24)

Point One: Christ acts among us mystically through the Holy Mysteries.

* Christ's priesthood is 'mystical' (ie, unseen);
* His aim in working through these mysteries is to transform us;
* Each mystery is a prayer for transformation which is realized by...
Baptism is our rebirth in water and the Spirit:

* The mysteries of initiation bring about the most radical transformation we experience, being born anew unto divine life (Jn 3:3-5);
* This birth is absolutely necessary to the life in Christ;
* The baptismal rite 'visualizes' this new birth;
* The water of baptism represents the Giver of Life who works in it (Jn 7:37-39).

Baptism is an image of the death and resurrection of Christ:

* Christ's gift of Himself restored our relationship to God;
* In baptism we unite ourselves with Christ's self-offering (Rom 6:3-5);
* God confirms that union by making it organically happen (Eph 2:1-7);
* Baptism makes personal for each believer what Christ did for all by His death and resurrection.

The seal of the gift of the Spirit is our 'pledge' or downpayment of eternal life:

* Baptism is only a birth, an openness to a mature life ahead;
* As the 'pledge of our inheritance', the Spirit is our foretaste of this life to come (Eph 1:13-14);
* The mystery of Chrismation is our personal sealing with the Holy Spirit;
* In this mystery a relationship with the Holy Spirit is begun.

The Lord's Table is our constant renewal of this new life:

* The need for new life to be nourished is the basis for the mystery of the Eucharist (Jn 6:53-58);
* We are nourished by the very Body and Blood of Christ;
* In this way our bodies are penetrated by the transforming presence of Christ's Body.

We are called to live this life:

* While an infant's response to this gift can be symbolized by the tonsure, the adult must respond by full commitment (Rom 8:5-11);
* Concluding prayer and hymn;
* Poster making.
B) Expanded Outline

Introduction: Jesus is not simply a figure from the past: He lives now as our High Priest (Heb 7:23-24)

Form a picture of Jesus in your mind: is the result a historical figure (robes, sandals, dusty roads, stone pavements of bible movies)?

We often keep Christ back in the first century: another age, another lifestyle - not 100% for today, ie not alive meaningfully. The heart of the Christian faith is that He is alive and works today.

His earthly life was brief by any standard (30 years or so); His saving work was shorter (3 days); What has He been doing since?

According to the Creed, He is sitting at the Father's right, exercising an unending priesthood (Heb 7:23-24);

A figure of the past (eg George Washington) is noone to build a life around; Christ is more - He lives now, serves as priest now, and cares for us until the end of time.

Point One: Christ acts among us mystically through the Holy Mysteries.

* Christ's priesthood is 'mystical' (ie, unseen);
  This priest and His service are unseen: are they real, or only poetry? We can't appreciate the Christian life if only what we see in the flesh in real. What about feelings, memories, pain, happiness? Sometimes more real than the physical.
  Same is true for Christ's mystical service.

* His aim in working through these mysteries is to transform us;
  He exercises this priesthood through a visible, tangible community, the Church, and its mysteries;
  They are not just ceremonies, but visible ways of experiencing the transfiguring presence of Christ;
  We lose this sense when we see them as rituals ("the 9:30"), and not as Christ transforming us.

* Each mystery is a prayer for transformation which is realized by the power of the Holy Spirit
  This transformation is unseen, too, but just as real as the Priest Himself;
  Each mystery is a prayer for (1) something to be transformed; (2) so we can experience His presence and (3) be transformed ourselves;

Point Two: Baptism is our rebirth in water and the Spirit:

* The mysteries of initiation bring about the most radical transformation we experience, being born anew unto divine life (Jn 3:3-5);
  These are the most important mysteries, in that they effect the most basic transformation;
Point Three: An image of the death and resurrection of Christ:

* Christ's gift of Himself restored our relationship to God;
  Recap story of fall/recreation (talk 2): we have access to God only in Christ, the New Adam;
  To share in His new recreation, we need to be associated with His self-offering (immersion as burial/resurrection).

* In baptism we unite ourselves with Christ's self-offering (Rom 6:3-5);
  We see the participant's acts (profession of faith, immersion, etc.);
  We don't see God organically joining the person to Christ (a transformation beyond our expectation);

* God confirms that union by making it organically happen (Eph 2:1-7);
  God invests our desire with reality: "I would like to be united with Christ" becomes "You are united..."
  This union is inescapable (kool-aid, cf 1 Cor 13);
  Points to indispensible quality of the mysteries: it is God actually working!

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  This union is inescapable (kool-aid, cf 1 Cor 13);
  Points to indispensible quality of the mysteries: it is God actually working!
* Baptism makes personal for each believer what Christ did for all by His death and resurrection.

Recall fall: we couldn't grow in the likeness, it had been lost;
Now different: likeness restored; we're alive again, can grow;
We are personally on the path of theosis, having been reborn.

Robe: sign of intimate union ('skin tight' garment) - cf stikharion;

Point Four:

The seal of the gift of the Spirit is our 'pledge' or downpayment of eternal life:

* Baptism is only a birth, an openness to a mature life ahead;
  It is not full maturity (hence residue of the 'old man');
  But full potential (the newborn has all faculties), though it takes years for them to be realized;
  Our life in Christ won't be fully matured until life of the world to come.

* As the 'pledge of our inheritance', the Spirit is our foretaste of this life to come (Eph 1:13-14);
  Coming attractions: a taste of what's to come;
  Given at chrismation (describe);
  Despite differences between East & West, same core: the gift of the Spirit, sealing the bargain.

* The mystery of Chrismation is our personal sealing with the Holy Spirit;
  We see the anointing with a physical ointment; we don't see the more real – God anointing us with His Spirit;

* In this mystery a relationship with the Holy Spirit is begun.
  Hence parallel to baptism's relationship with Christ;
  If we live in the relationship, gifts may come (Spirit doesn't overpower us, but our lives will show effect of His presence if we are continually aware of it).
  Otherwise, it is as if we got the downpayment, but never opened the envelope.
  Now our life radically different: we are going on pilgrimage to the Father with Christ in the Spirit (Sign: procession with candles).

Point Five:

The Lord's Table is our constant renewal of this new life:

* The need for new life to be nourished is the basis for the mystery of the Eucharist (Jn 6:53-58);
  Each feeding a renewal of life (you ate yesterday), because life must be continually renewed;
  This is why Christ used the image of food to stress the ongoing need to be in touch with Him;

* We are nourished by the very Body and Blood of Christ;
  Again, transformation: we offer, we remember, but the Holy Spirit transforms our remembrance into the tangible presence of
Christ;
Again, mystery: can't see the difference, but nonetheless real (greatest distinction with Reformation churches);
This transformation of gifts not for itself, but to transform us (hence no elevation in Liturgy);

* In this way our bodies are penetrated by the transforming presence of Christ's Body.
Like interpenetration of any food and ourselves;
This a foretaste of eternal life when our resurrected bodies will be filled with His presence.

Conclusion:

We are called to live this life:

* While an infant's response to this gift can be symbolized by the tonsure, the adult must respond by full commitment (Rom 8:5-11);
As in physical life, there comes a time when we can't be just carried along like infants: we must cooperate, take responsibility for our life and growth.
Must give ourselves and whole life to Christ
As rest of physical life is living out consequences of birth, rest of spiritual life is living out initiation;
As we live all the time, not waiting till next week, may we live life in Christ the same way.

* Concluding prayer and hymn;
* Poster making.

C) Sample Presentation

Introduction
If I were to ask you to form a picture of Jesus Christ in your mind, most of us would see Him in the setting of first century Palestine: the robe and sandals, the dusty roads and stone pavements of the Bible movies. The trouble with that is that we often keep Jesus back in the first century, making Him just a historical figure, a person out of history, who lived in an age, with a lifestyle, with a message not 100% for today...and not alive in any meaningful way, either.

The heart of our Christian faith, though, is the belief that Jesus is risen. He lives now and is active today. Christ's human life on earth was very brief: 30 years or so in Galilee. That's little by our standards of life, but it's even less by God's! Before His birth of the Virgin Mary He was existing in His divinity from all eternity. And since His resurrection He continues to live, both as God and as resurrected man, in the heavens. As we say in the creed, "He sits at the right han of the Father". But that doesn't mean He's just sitting around: He is working for us. He is in glory where, as the scripture says, "He intercedes for us as our High Priest" (Heb 7:23-24). He has an unchanging priesthood: one that lasts forever.

If Jesus were just a historical figure, even as the Son of God, I don't think He'd interest me very much: maybe just as a teacher or philosopher. But He's more. He lives now. He is priest now. He is our priest: one who has something to do with our lives because He is a priest for today and always. Sometimes people think their priest isn't interested in them; others are happy because they feel their priest
does care about them. Well, all of us do have a priest who is concerned about us and wants to be involved with Him and with one another: Christ, our High Priest.

Point One

This priest is unseen. His service is unseen. We don't physically deal with Him in the flesh. In His priesthood, in our relationship with Him real or just poetry, memory, imagery? We can never come to appreciate Christ's priesthood among us if we only accept as real what we see in the flesh. Christ's presence to us, His service, His priesthood are mystical, a word that means 'hidden,' 'unseen' - but none the less real for that! We don't see feelings or memories or pain or happiness walking down the street: they're unseen, but they're certainly real - perhaps more real to us at different times in our lives than things we can hear and touch and feel. Christ's present life, His priestly service are in a sense like that: they're unseen, but certainly not unreal. If we can accept that the mystical is just as real as - even more real than - the physical, then we can see Christ's ministry among us for what it is: a constant, ever-present priestly service before the Father on our behalf.

But because human beings don't usually rely on what they can't see or touch or feel or taste, Christ exercises His priesthood through a visible, tangible community, His Body, the Church; and He does it in visible, tangible experiences: what we call the Holy Mysteries or Sacraments. These Mysteries are the Church's way of experiencing the transfiguring presence of its High Priest which is why we say that it is Christ working in these Mysteries. He is the one who is acting in them through the means of His Body, the Church. And He does this so that we could be transformed by His priestly service.

Like Christ Himself, this transformation is unseen, but just as real. In each mystery or sacrament, the Church prays that something be transformed by the Spirit of Christ and become a vehicle for His presence to be experienced. We bring something: a commitment of faith, water and chrism in baptism; bread and wine in the Eucharist; our own repentance in confession; a commitment to love and service in marriage or holy orders - whatever it is - and we ask the Lord to send His Spirit to transform it into a vehicle of His presence, and He does. He makes what we bring into something much more: He makes Himself manifest in it in a unique and mystical way. We don't see His presence physically, but if we have the eyes of faith, we know He has ministered to us, faithful to His priestly service which has no end.

Point Two

In one sense we can say that the most important of the mysteries are the first we receive, the "Mysteries of Initiation" as they are called, because they bring about the most radical transformation we could imagine. They actually recreate us, as sharers of the life of God.

When a person is christened, many things happen. Many elements make up the service. And each one of them says something to us about what the Christian life is all about. You may have seen them before, but not realized they were speaking about your life right now. The first thing that happens is that the priest lays his hand on the person's head and claims him or her for Christ, making a large sign of the cross over him. You see, a Christian is a person who belongs to the Lord: we are the "servants of God" as we say in the prayers. We are not our own, as St. Paul says: we have been bought with a price (the blood of Christ). And so when the priest claims the candidate for Christ he is saying, "Your life is not that of a free agent; you are Christ's."

A Christian is also a person who is at war with satan. St. Peter
says that the devil keeps going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. So the believer is always in a state of war with this enemy. So the next thing that happens to the candidate is that he is brought into the middle of this war. The priest 'exorcises' him (prays that Satan's power be nullified) and then the person or the sponsors deliberately renounce Satan: they spit on him as a sign of contempt of his "powerless might", as the liturgy says. After all, Christ came to rescue us from this present evil age, as St. Paul says, and in this part of the rite we become part of that process of salvation.

A Christian is one who is Christ's, one who is at war with Satan and who is also a person of faith. We believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (not an abstract God). And so, after renouncing Satan, the candidate or the sponsor must profess faith in Christ and say the creed. Let's just not think faith is subscribing to this or that idea about God. St. James says the demons believe that God is one... and they tremble! Our faith is meant to be acted on: we show that we believe that God is Father be trusting Him, etc. And that's work, especially when the going gets rough. That's why, before the person's commitment of faith is ratified in holy baptism, the priest anoints him all over with oil. An athlete before the contest use to be rubbed down with ointment - sometimes still is today. It's the same with us: before we enter the struggle of the Christian life we are anointed. Only this struggle is a joyful one, and so the oil is the "oil of gladness".

A person who belongs to Christ, who is at war with Satan, who lives a life of faith, who works at this faith life: a Christian is this and more. A Christian is one who is born again by sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Last night we heard about Nicodemus and the conversation he had with Christ. Jesus dropped one of His usual bombshells: "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3). Nicodemus didn't understand: he couldn't see how that was possible. He thought on the level of the visible, not the mystical, so he thought Jesus was talking about physical birth and asked Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (v.4) Jesus brought him right back to the unseen reality that is baptism: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (v.5).

Nobody can wish themselves into life or buy themselves into life: you have to be born. It hasn't worked any other way. And the same thing is true in the life from on high: the only way we can come into God's life is to be born into it, and to be born in the way that Jesus outlines - "of water and the Spirit".

Most of us don't remember our baptism. None of us remembers our physical birth, but we all know that birth comes at the start of our life. And the new birth is at the start of our mystical life with God. No birth - no mature life ahead. No baptismal rebirth, no fulness of life in the Holy Spirit. So baptism is the start of the whole new form of existence we call the life in Christ. Because our life in God is a continuing journey, baptism is only the start. But without this beginning of birth, no life.

The Fathers saw Christ's image of baptism as a new birth visualized in the rite of baptism. The ceremony actually suggests that the person is being reborn. When we are baptized, the priest immerses us into the font. He puts us into the water and takes us out again. The Fathers saw the baptismal font as it were "God's womb" in which we are reborn. "As the womb is to the embryo," says St. John Chrysostom, "the water is to the believer". We are reborn in the womb of the Holy
Spirit and we emerge from it alive in Christ, in the same way that we come from our mother's womb alive in the flesh.

The water of the womb gives life. Water and life go hand in hand. Every living thing, whether it's a plant or an animal or a person, takes life from water and is also kept alive by it. And so Christ chooses water to be the vehicle through which life would be given to us: a vehicle we can understand because it is so natural to see the connection of water and life. And because the One who makes this new life come about is the Holy Spirit, the One we call the Giver of life, Jesus also used the image of water when He spoke about the Holy Spirit. "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and let him who believes in Me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'. " Now this He said about the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive" (Jn 7:37-39).

Water... rebirth... life... the Spirit: the connection that Jesus is making is clear. We are reborn into the life of God by the power of the Holy Spirit when we are baptized in water.

Point Three There's another whole level of meaning to baptism which tells us about how we come to this new life in Christ. This level doesn't speak about birth, but death! St. Paul described it clearly in the section we read at every baptism from the epistle to the Romans: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His" (Rom 6:3-5).

It's only by Christ's perfect gift of Himself that we have access to God again. Remember what was said earlier: Jesus is the New Adam who brings us back to the Garden, who puts us right with God, who restores the likeness that was lost in the beginning. To become sharers in that new life, in that new creation, we need to be associated with God's self-offering. We go down into the water to show that we identify with Christ's death and burial; and we come out of the water to represent the fact that we too have risen with Him in His new and glorious life.

When we're baptized, what we see is our part of what's happening: not the whole thing. We hear the person or the sponsor professing faith; we see the priest immersing the person or putting the baptismal garment on them. But more important by far is what we don't see: God is really working in this mystery to join us to Christ. He transforms us and our actions. What happens is this: when we renact Christ's death and burial by going down into the water, God considers that we have truly died with Christ; and when we are lifted out of the water, He considers that we too have risen with Christ to a new life. He takes the outward sign that we do and fills it with a deeper reality so that it's no longer just us saying "I would like to be united with Christ in His death and resurrection"; its God saying, "You are united with Him and share His life".

This new life is real: it actually happens. This is why St. Paul speaks so realistically when he talks about our share in Christ's risen life. He talks as if it is real, because it is! Let's read what he says to the Ephesians:

"You were dead because of your sins and offences as you gave allegiance to the present age and to the prince of the
air, that spirit who is even now at work among the rebellious. All of us were once of their company; we lived at the level of the flesh, following every whim and fancy, and so by nature deserved God’s wrath like the rest. But God is rich in mercy; because of His great love for us He brought us to life with Christ when we were dead in sin (by this favor you were saved). Both with and in Christ Jesus He raised us up and gave us a place in the heavens that in the ages to come He might display the great wealth of His favor manifested by His kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

(Eph 2:1-7)

God makes happen what our sign of water baptism signifies: that we have in us the new life of the risen Christ. This is what makes the sacraments of the historic Churches, Catholic and Orthodox, so indispensible to a full Christian life: God has chosen to work in them to renew us in the life of His Son.

And this is the way God has used to get around the problem of the fall we heard about earlier today. The original relationship humanity had with God was broken: and so we couldn’t grow in the likeness to God. But in Christ that relationship was restored and in baptism we have the way to personally receive the new life of the risen Christ. Once that happens, we’re back on the path to theosis. The road is open again and the journey can be resumed.

So we see baptism in terms of our call to share in the divine nature. It didn’t work out in the first creation, so Christ makes for us a New Creation; and when we’re baptized, we personally become part of that New Creation and can grow in the likeness. We can be divinized.

So a Christian is a person who belongs to the Lord, who is at war with the Enemy, who is a person of faith, who works at the Christian life, who lives the life of the risen Christ in whom he has been baptized. That’s not just a one time event. Our whole lives are joined to him. As St. Paul says, we can’t separate ourselves from His Body. If we have been baptized into Christ, we’ve put Him on. And so the next thing that happens is that the newly baptized is clothed with a new, white robe to say that he has truly ‘put on’ Christ. God is no longer outside: He’s skin tight! Now we don’t always walk around in this robe (unless we’re serving in the altar), but our putting on Christ is something which stays with us for eternity.

**Point Four**

Well, if I have the risen life of Christ, how come I still have to get up in the mornings, to eat, sleep, work, put up with limitations, inconveniences, suffering and death? Where’s this new life?

Remember, baptism is the new birth: it is not the full maturity of life. In one sense, a newborn infant has all the life he’s ever going to have: all his faculties, his individuality, his brain, even his appearance. It’s all there, but it will be years before he can realize his full potential. It’s the same with the resurrection life: we have it all when we’re baptized, but as infants in Christ. This life is not going to be fully realized until the life of the world to come.

Until then, to keep us aware of what’s waiting for us, we have what St. Paul calls the ‘pledge’ or ‘downpayment’ of our inheritance: the Holy Spirit. You know what Coming Attractions are: next week on The X Show you’ll see such and
such. They give you a taste of what's to come. The same thing happens in the Christian life. God lets us have a taste of what's to come in the resurrection by giving us the Holy Spirit: "You were sealed with the Holy Spirit who had been promised. He is the pledge of our inheritance, the first payment against the full redemption of a people God has made His own, to praise His glory" (Eph 1:13-14).

When were you sealed with the Holy Spirit? Right after baptism, when you were chrismated. The priest anointed you with sweet smelling chrism, giving you "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit". This is the second mystery of Christian initiation, which we call Chrismation and which the Western Church calls Confirmation. There are a lot of differences between the way in which we as Eastern Christians understand that sacrament and the way the West does that we're not going to go into now, but at the heart of this mystery is the fact that God works in it to 'seal the bargain' made at baptism by giving us His Holy Spirit.

As in baptism and in all the mysteries, we see the sign, but God brings about the reality in an unseen way. The priest anoints with chrism: he pours and rubs the newly baptized with a tangible, physical ointment. God transforms that action: He anoints with the Holy Spirit. And as baptism is only the start of the life in Christ, chrismation is only the start of our relationship with the Spirit. A lot of people today seem to think that having the Holy Spirit means all kinds of charismatic gifts, automatically. In our Tradition we understand that each of us enters into a relationship with the Spirit when we are chrismated. If we let this relationship grow and deepen, He may give us various gifts throughout our lives and make us deeply aware of His presence within us. But chrismation is only where it starts. He's not going to possess us or overpower us. Still, if we live with a continual awareness that He is within us, our lives will show the effects of His presence. Otherwise, it is as if we got the downpayment, but never used it.

United to Christ, gifted with His Holy Spirit, the believer must now live his life in a new way. He is on a journey, the journey of theosis. And so the next thing he does is walk. He is led in procession around the font and through the church up to the gates of the altar: a mini-journey that reminds us of the pilgrimage that is the Christian life. We are travelling to God: not alone, always with Christ. And so in this procession we walk carrying lighted candles, surrounding the newly illumined with the light of Christ.

Point Five  
Journeying to the Father, united to the Son, with the Spirit dwelling within us, we are now a people who can call God our Father in confidence. And so the next thing that happens is that we take part in the worship of the Christian Community: the Divine Liturgy, or at least a mini-version of it. The epistle, the gospel, the litany are read over the newly baptized, who then joins the believers for the first time in praying the Lord's Prayer. But the climax of this sharing in worship is yet to come.

There are three mysteries of initiation to Christian life and we're not living the full Christian life until we've experienced all three. Once a person comes to life in Christ and the Spirit through baptism and chrismation, he needs to be nourished and sustained in that life. A newborn child that's not fed won't live very long; but each time it is fed it's as if that life is renewed. Feeding nourishes, strengthens and extends life. It is also something we do often. We're born only once, but we eat and drink again and again, day after day.

That's why Christ used the image of eating and drinking to let us
know how much we need to be in touch with Him throughout our life. We have to feed on Him if we want the new life of baptism to thrive. He shocked the Jews of His day when He used this kind of language about Himself:

"Let me solemnly assure you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal and I will raise Him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood real drink. The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the Father who has life sent me and I have life because of the Father, so the man who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and died nonetheless, the man who feeds on this bread will live forever."

(Jn 6:53-58)

Here's another example of God's way of working in the mysteries. He takes what we do and transforms it. We offer bread and wine as Christ told us to do in remembrance of Him. We remember Christ in this way, but the Holy Spirit comes upon the gifts and transforms our remembrance into the mystical body and blood of Christ Himself. We don't know how. We can't see or taste anything but bread and wine, but the faith of the historic Churches (Catholic and Orthodox) from the first has been that in the Eucharist we receive the actual body and blood of Christ. This is one of the greatest differences we have with the non-historic Christian groups like the Protestants, who came into being over 1500 years after our Church began developing. For them the Eucharist is not the body and blood of Christ in any real sense: it is just a sign or symbol. For Catholics and Orthodox that symbol is a reality: the mystical presence of Christ giving life to His body, the Church.

Another point about the Eucharist: when we eat and drink, we physically incorporate what we take in. It becomes part of us and we are formed by it. If we eat properly, we thrive. If we eat poorly, we weaken. With the Eucharist we become united to what we eat. We're physically united to the transforming presence of Christ. Our bodies are penetrated by Christ's body, if only in a passing way. This is a kind of foretaste of the world to come when our resurrected bodies will be forever filled with His life and presence. When we receive the Eucharist, the life in Christ begun at baptism deepens and we see the process of our bodily transfiguration furthered. His body and blood enter ours and transform it.

Conclusion

In our christening service, after a child has been baptized and chrismated and has received the Eucharist, he is tonsured. A few locks of hair are cut from his head. This is to remind us all that it is our turn to give ourselves back to God. We've received so many gifts from Him: the rebirth to new life in Christ, the seal of the Spirit as our guarantee of the life to come, the Eucharist as our mystical nourishment. We have nothing to give back to Him except ourselves. And so a few locks of the child's hair are taken to symbolize this self-giving.

When an adult is baptized, he is not tonsured. Why? Because with an adult a token isn't enough. We can freely give our whole being to the Lord, so we can't get by with just a token gift. The new life has to be lived and that means entrusting "ourselves, one another and our whole lives to Christ God", as we say in many of the litanies used in our services. It means being more and more aware of the
gift of new life we've received in these holy mysteries. It means taking up that life and living it to the full, and it means putting aside what in the ordinary life of this world doesn't measure up to the resurrection life we're called to lead.

It's good for us to stop now and think about these mysteries, and about St. Paul's call to this kind of life. Let's go to the icon corner and listen to where the scripture says this new life should be leading us:

(In the icon corner, read Rom 8:5-11.)

"Those who live according to the flesh are intent on the things of the flesh; those who live according to the Spirit, on the things of the spirit. The tendency of the flesh is toward death, but that of the spirit toward life and peace. The flesh in its tendency is at enmity with God: it is not subject to God's law. Indeed it cannot be; those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you."

It will take us the rest of our lives and then some to grasp the meaning of what the priest said at the end of our christening: "You have been baptized and enlightened, confirmed, sanctified and cleansed..." and to see our lives in light of that, but this is surely a great time to start. Let's do it with the words of St. Paul which we sing at every christening and which you'll find in your workbook.

**D) Discussion Period**

1. After the prayer, the director calls for a 2 minute stretch break, being sure to urge that people not leave the room.

2. After the break, the director explains the **poster exercise** while the assistant passes out posterboard and markers to each table:

   "We heard a lot about the Christian life in this discription of the mysteries of initiation. Each of the rites is an image of what is meant to happen in life. What we'd like you to do now is for each table to prepare a poster together using some of the images of these mysteries to tell us something about the life of theosis: what do these mysteries say to us in imagery about the life in Christ.

   "You have 20 minutes to work on the posters. Then we will ask each group to explain what it has done, so be sure you have someone designated to do that for your group."

3. After 15 minutes, remind the groups there are only 5 minutes remaining for them to finish their project.

4. After five more minutes, the director calls time and invites a representative from each table to **bring up their poster and explain it** to the gathering. When each person has finished, the assistant director mounts the poster on the wall of the room.

5. After the summaries are completed, the director calls a break until the next talk at 4:15.
TALK 4 — GROWING IN THE LIKENESS

Saturday Afternoon, 4:15 PM

Aim: To give participants an overview of our potential for growth in the life of theosis.

This is one of the most difficult talks in the weekend. It is also invariably the one which people point to as the most illuminating. For, while we have for some time stressed that theosis is a process, or at least that the medieval Western approach is static, we have not presented people with a sense of just what this process of theosis might entail.

Spiritual writers from the New Testament on have stressed different stages in Christian life. In the Scriptures they were expressed in evangical categories (cf. 2 Pt 1: 4-7). The Fathers took a more systematic approach. There are many different systems (eg those of St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Isaac the Syrian and St. Maximos the Confessor in the East, to name just a few), they all seem to agree in the main on three major stages. The breakdown used in this outline is that of Maximos the Confessor.

The main value in this talk is not the conveying of precise data so much as the communicating of a sense that all this talk of 'growth' and 'process' has a solid basis. The talk should also strongly promote the need of a spiritual guide to help serious Christians on this journey. If we communicate here a real possibility for progress and movement on the spiritual level, this talk will have accomplished a great deal.

For Further Reading

Much has been written on this subject, but almost all of it in scholarly or academic treatments, in commentaries on patristic texts and the like (cf. the volumes on Gregory of Nyssa and Maximos the Confessor in the "Classics of Western Spirituality" series, Paulist Press, New York). Very little exists attempting to bring this to a level of popular use. None of the following works follows Maximos' precise construct, but all are useful for conveying the sense of progress through specific stages.

Benedict Groeschel, "Understanding Spiritual Development" (6 audio cassettes, Credence Cassettes, Kansas City MO, 1979)

Thomas Legere, "Your Spiritual Journey" (Liguori Publications, Liguori MO, 1985) - Chapter 3, "Steps Along the Way" provides a handy and highly popular summary of the stages of spiritual development.

Monk of the Eastern Church, "Orthodox Spirituality" (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood NY, 1984) - Chapters 3, 4, and 5 present the stages in a sacramental framework.

A) Basic Outline

Introduction: As life is a case of simultaneously being alive, having one's potential in full and yet always growing, the same is true of the life in Christ, which is a constant call to grow.
Point One: There are a number of stages or phases to the spiritual life as witnessed by the Tradition of the Church:

* The scripture distinguishes between feeding on milk vs. solid food;
* St. Paul equates infancy in Christ with being "carnal" (still allowing the body to direct our lives);
* the major stages of Christian growth are body-oriented childhood, mind-centered adolescence and spirit-centered maturity.

Point Two: The first stage after spiritual infancy is praxis, the active life:

* in this stage we concentrate on the physical dimensions of Christian life;
* this stage begins with repentance, the awareness of how far we are from realizing our potential;
* repentance has meaning in the context of God's love, the more we see our imperfections;
* in this stage we concentrate on keeping the commandments, receiving the sacraments, reading the Scriptures, vocalizing the Jesus Prayer.

Point Three: The disciplines of this stage can produce growth in us:

* we can develop a sense of compunction (penthos), the gift of tears;
* we can develop an attitude of sobriety (nepsis), the realization of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged;
* we can develop a disposition of discernment (diacrisis), of what God is asking us in particular;
* we can develop a measure of freedom from the cares of this life (apatheia).

Point Four: The stage after "childhood" is called theoria physica or religious thinking:

* we move beyond ourselves to an interest in God's activity around us, taking an interest in the movements of the liturgical life and the activities of the Church, to praying the Jesus Prayer in the mind;
* we can become deeply aware that God is visible in everything around us: we acquire "new eyes".

Point Five: The stage of adult spiritual maturity is theologia or intimacy with God:

* we become deeply conscious of God's personal presence to us;
* to achieve this, we generally pass through a period of dryness in order to teach us to move from head-knowledge of God to heart-knowledge;
* our sense of intimacy with God is on the level of the heart;
* we develop a sense of peaceful harmony with God in our lives
Conclusion: This is where our theosis journey is leading us:

* we live out what we have celebrated in the mysteries of initiation: childhood (baptism), adolescence (chrismation), and maturity (Eucharist);
* we live out this process each at our own pace;
* not to grow is to refuse to become what God wants us to be.

B) Expanded Outline

Introduction: As life is a case of simultaneously being alive, having one's potential in full and yet always growing, the same is true of the life in Christ, which is a constant call to grow.

* Recapitulate concept of the normal Christian life;
* Life requires growth and nurture;
* Life in Christ also requires growth and nurture;

Point One: There are a number of stages or phases to the spiritual life as witnessed by the Tradition of the Church:

* The Scripture distinguishes between spiritual childhood and maturity, between feeding on milk vs. solid food; Basic Christian beliefs and practices (faith, sacraments, etc) are proper to spiritual infancy;
* St. Paul equates infancy in Christ with being "carnal" (still allowing the body to direct our lives);
* the major stages of Christian growth are body-oriented childhood, mind-centered adolescence and spirit-centered maturity. We mature as the focus of our spiritual efforts progresses to the soulish or spiritual level. The first stage begins when we accept to deal with the body and train it. In the second stage we deal more in ideas, use our mind more. In adulthood we move beyond the mind to the level of the spirit.

Point Two: The first stage after spiritual infancy is praxis, the active life (St. Maximos the Confessor):

* in this stage we concentrate on the physical dimensions of Christian life; We start taking our relationship to God seriously and start doing something about our spiritual growth
* this stage begins with repentance, the awareness of how far we are from realizing our potential; Repentance is not so much looking at our past sins, but realizing that something can be done about our situation before God.
* Repentance has meaning in the context of God's love, the more we see our imperfections; The more of God's love we see, the more we realize our own potential can be.
* In this stage we concentrate on keeping the commandments, receiving the sacraments, reading the Scriptures, vocalizing the Jesus Prayer. We cannot separate the life of prayer from the moral life; The New Testament gives us the handiest understanding of the Lord's way of living. Liturgical life takes on more meaning. We realize that God is speaking to us personally in the Scriptures.

Point Three:
The disciplines of this stage can produce growth in us:

* we can develop a sense of compunction (penthos), the gift of tears; Tears signify joy and sorrow mixed together (St. John Climacus);

* we can develop an attitude of sobriety (nepsis), the realization of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged; We sense the need to be alert, we look at life critically. We realize the grass isn't ever greener somewhere else; we are always in combat;

* we can develop a disposition of discernment (diacrisis), of what God is asking us in particular; We grow to develop a feel for what may or may not be of God. We are discerning first of all where we may be going.

* we can develop a measure of freedom from the cares of this life (apatheia). We realize we are no longer dependent on what we used to need. We aquire peace (Rom 8:35-39).

Point Four: The stage after "childhood" is called theoria physica or religious thinking:

* we move beyond ourselves to an interest in God's activity around us, taking an interest in the movements of the liturgical life and the activities of the Church, to praying the Jesus Prayer in the mind; We are like teens who begin to develop outside activities. We especially need a Spiritual Guide at this time.

* we can become deeply aware that God is visible in everything around us; we aquire "new eyes". We begin to see everything is sacred and a subject for prayer. We begin to be called a 'fanatic', because we not longer compartmentalize religion. Believing moves from the head to the heart;

Point Five: The stage of adult spiritual maturity is theologia or intimacy with God:

* we become deeply conscious of God's personal presence to us; we develop a sense of awe of God as well as intimacy;
to achieve this, we generally pass through a period of dryness in order to teach us to move from head-knowledge of God to heart-knowledge; God lets our faith fall apart as nothing seems to make sense any more; Faith becomes much more than head knowledge; This never happens to people who have not already experienced the friendship of God.

* Our sense of intimacy with God is on the level of the heart; We realize He is very much beyond our intelligence; His Spirit is working in our spirit.

* we develop a sense of peaceful harmony with God in our lives (eleutheria).

**Conclusion:**

This is where our theosis journey is leading us:

* we live out what we have celebrated in the mysteries of initiation: childhood (baptism), adolescence (chrismation), and maturity (Eucharist);
* we live out this process each at our own pace; we cannot force or even analyze this growth, but we need to recognize it;

* not to grow is to refuse to become what God wants us to be.

C) Sample Presentation

**Introduction**

By now you should be either thoroughly confused, or in ecstasy - we won't ask which! We've talked about a number of things: how the normal Christian life is rooted in Christ, in knowing him and being in relationship with him; how this normal Christian life is nothing less than theosis, coming to share in the divine nature; and finally how this life starts for each of us in the mysteries of Christian initiation (baptism, chrismation and the Eucharist).

Now we'd like to go one step further. We've talked about the new life and the new birth. Now let's continue in the same imagery. We know very well that physical life is a two-sided coin: it's a question of growing and nurturing, of becoming, and yet at the same time we are alive from the time of our conception. Life is both: we're always alive, we're always the same person and we're also growing, from immaturity to maturity. Or at least we should be. We're the same person at 40 that we were at 10, but our life has a different focus, different priorities, different perspectives. Some things we leave behind; others we take on.

The same thing takes place in the divine life, in theosis. We have said it's a process. This means that it's meant to be a progression, a growth, as in our physical life. The difference is that, since it's not physical, we can't measure it as easily. Still, the Fathers of the Church do show us several phases of growing in theosis which happen when people are serious about this life they have received. That's what this talk is about.

**Point One**

In our physical life there are a number of stages we can point to
with more or less accuracy: infancy, childhood, pre-adolescence on up to mid-life and so on. In the spiritual life there are also stages of maturity which spiritual writers of East and West have noted.

The New Testament, for example, talks repeatedly about stages of spiritual maturity. Hebrews 5:11 - 6:2 mentions that there are basics - spiritual milk - for babies in Christ and that there's meat for those who are more mature. There is a distinction between infancy and a more mature stage. If we look at this reading we see that the Scripture sees repentance, basic faith, awareness of the sacraments and the life of the world to come as belonging to infancy! They're the pap of Christian life. But isn't that where so very many of us are content to stay? We feel pity if we see a mentally retarded adult, and yet we think it's normal if we stay spiritually retarded. The lack of desire to grow in spiritual maturity is choking Christian communities and turning churches into giant playpens.

St. Paul writes elsewhere about this need to grow in Christ. And in 1 Cor. 3:1-3 he uses that same image of milk and solid food. But here he adds a new note. People who are infants in Christ are still living on the level of the body. Remember the Scriptures three-fold division of the person which we talked about earlier: we are body/soul/spirit. Here St. Paul is saying that the infant still lives on the carnal or bodily level: he hasn't grown to the level even of being centered on the mind. And when you consider that communities made up of infants are nursery schools... you immediately explain the lifestyle of many - too many - parishes!

So there are stages in the spiritual life as well as the physical life. And following St. Paul's example we can draw a rough parallel between the stages of physical life and the dimensions of spiritual maturity.

All the historic Christian traditions basically distinguish three dimensions or stages of spiritual growth. We are born to God in baptism and in infancy we learn the basics of Christian teaching and practice. We mature as the focus of our spiritual efforts progresses from being centered on the body to the soul to the spirit. Children for example, are body-centered: learning to do things with their bodies do what they want them to do. They're still physically oriented, not too able to deal with concepts yet. It's the time for them to be trained and disciplined, so that they develop good physical habits (cleanliness, eating right, caring for their bodies, and the like). And so the first stage of the spiritual life is when we accept to deal with the body and train it so that it can be subject to the Lord and not that it's drives control us.

As we become teens, we begin to use our minds more: we become able to deal in ideas. Everything seemed to be written in black and white: things were absolute - all right or all wrong with little leeway. Youth is mind-centered and so it's idealistic: not always 100 percent realistic, but we didn't worry about that. We knew all the answers - or, if not all, at least a lot more than our parents!

Adulthood is when we move beyond the mind to the level of the heart. We become more spirit-centered, more integrated. We live at a deeper level and come to discern not only right from wrong, but also the appropriate from the inappropriate, the timely from the untimely. We're at a different stage of development.

Now, even at the physical level, we don't just move automatically from childhood to an adult level. Sometimes we find ourselves as adults acting childishly, being immature. sometimes that's O.K. - for example, when we're recreating; Other times it isn't.
Spiritual maturity doesn't just come along with physical maturity, but growth in the Spirit isn't always parallel to our chronological growth. Sometimes, and this may be true for most of us, we stay children (or even infants) for most of our lives. To give ourselves an idea of what the Tradition of the Church says is our potential for growing, we're going to go through the various stages briefly now. You may find others an infant. That's O.K. - we're all alive and always changing. The basic question is, are we committed to our growth in the Lord? And that's really what we mean by morality, isn't it? - using our freedom to become that which God wants us to be.

**Point Two**  
Is there life after infancy? What seems to happen to people who are serious about Christian life? St. Maximos the Confessor, one of the great Byzantine authorities on spiritual growth, summarizes the stages of Christian maturity. We'll use his breakdown today.

The first stage marks the turning point from infancy to childhood, when we start taking our relationship to God seriously. It's the time when we start doing something about our spiritual growth. In fact, it's probably the only stage in which what we do is at the center of what's happening within us. That's why the Fathers called it Praxis, the active life. It's the time when we try to gain control of ourself, to master our physical dimension. Like physical childhood, it's centered on our bodily side.

This stage in the spiritual journey starts with repentance, a word we hear a lot about in our services and which a lot of people don't understand. Repentance is not downing ourselves for being human or having a body. It's not a negative thing at all. Repentance is when we recognize the distance between where we are and where we can be...and start doing something about it! We may have had earlier experiences in the Church of strictness, rigidity in which people were taught to condemn themselves for not living up to a certain standard. The Lord's way is a bit different. We're all familiar with the parable of the Prodigal Son. He comes to his senses in the pig sty, realizes where he's at, and knows deeply "I could be so much more - I will arise and go to my father." He wasn't punishing himself - his sins had already punished him. He was realizing his potential. That's what repentance is: realizing we could be so much more. Every year this gospel parable is the focus of one of the Sundays of the Great Fast to lead us to true repentance, to remind us that we all could be so much more and that the Fast is given to us as an opportunity to make it happen.

Repentance is not looking at our sins, at our own sinfulness. That would lead us to despair, and that's destructive. Instead, God loves us so much and wants to share his life with us so much that at the right time he shows us what we can be - his likeness. Then I look at myself and where I am... and see how far off I am from where he is offering to take me. Repentance means that something can be done about the matter. It's not remorse, where there's no hope. People lose a loved one and they punish themselves because they can't do the things for them they should have - that's remorse. Repentance is filled with hope: something can be done!

This doesn't happen until we begin to see how great God's love for us really is. Then we want to repent. It's like being in a dusty room. You don't realize how dusty it is until the light streams in. The closer we come to the light, the more imperfections we see. That's why we can talk, as we do in our services, about spending the rest of our lives "in peace and repentance". There's no peace in remorse; but when
we realize that we’re seeing more and more of God’s love, we see how much more we can be! The closer we come to the light, the more imperfections we see in ourselves.

Once this has started to happen in a person, they find themselves wanting to concentrate on several things:

1. **On fulfilling the commandments**, the ground rules of the Christian life; a lot of times people say they want religious experience, but they also want to live with their girlfriend! It doesn't work: that's fantasy, what the fathers called prelest or delusion. There is no possibility of separating the life of prayer from the moral life, for living in accordance with the way the Lord has revealed as the way for his sons and daughters to live. Otherwise, it's like a wife saying, "I love you, darling, but don't expect me to keep the house clean for you".

The New Testament, especially the gospels and the epistles, gives us the handiest and clearest understanding of what the Lord's way of life is like, what "keeping the commandments" is supposed to mean for the Christian.

2. **Receiving the sacraments** - We find ourselves getting more and more serious about receiving the holy mysteries, and that we're getting more out of them. We begin to realize more deeply how the Eucharist, for example, makes the Church one body in Christ, and that we want to be part of what he's doing in it. Participating in the Liturgy takes on more and more meaning for us because we see it as still another of God's gifts to us.

3. **Reading the Scriptures** - When we come to see what God has for us, the Bible begins to mean more to us. We become more personally involved with the Scriptures, whether it's a question of listening to the readings in church or reading privately on our own. We begin to see that God is saying something to me here, to us, to our community. We want to know what he has to say to us where we are, to order our lives according to his way.

4. In terms of the Jesus Prayer, we would usually be saying it vocally at this stage: using our lips to say the words, using the prayer to help recollect ourselves, to fight temptations, to keep God in mind.

So again, repentance is not a negative thing. When we realize how wide a gap separates us from God and the life he has waiting for us, the result isn't fear, but a kind of childlike confidence. We know that he will meet us more than halfway. We will see us, like the father is Jesus' parable, a long way off and come to meet us.

**Point Three**

Finally, we find that, if we're doing these things seriously, God opens up to us a new world of awareness of him. First of all, when I realize where I can be vs. where I am, it produces in me what the fathers called penthos or compunction. I see how much God loves me and how little I care, like a teen who figures out that his parents love him... the result is tears of joy-and-sorrow mixed together which cleanse us and move us to do something about getting even closer to God. Face to face with him, our self-reliance goes out the window and we weep. This is why St. John Climacus would say "Repentance is greater even than baptism, for it becomes, after baptism, a fountain of tears".

Another quality people find themselves acquiring, if they're walking the road of continuing repentance, is what the fathers called nepsis or sobriety. We
come to realize what's going on in our lives, that we're engaged in what the fathers called the Unseen Warfare, a struggle that takes place within our hearts. We realize that we're not living in Disneyland, that everything isn't the way it's meant to be, that we need to be alert, to be wakeful to ward off the attacks of the Enemy meant to distract us from our journey. This is the spirit of Christ's parable of the Ten Virgins and of the famous troparion of the Bridegroom which is based on it and which we sing during Holy Week:

"Behold, the Bridegroom is coming in the middle of the night: blessed is the servant he shall find awake! But the one he shall find neglectful will not be worthy of him. Beware, therefore, O my soul, do not fall into a deep slumber, lest you be delivered to death and the door of the kingdom be closed on you. Watch instead and out: Holy, holy, holy are you, O our God! By the power of your cross, have mercy on us!!"

We look at life critically - in the good sense of that word: more and more aware of what will help us toward our goal and of what will do the opposite.

Sometimes people will say, Oh if I were single (or married, or had no children, or didn't have to work, etc.), then I could follow God better. If we develop this quality of nepsis, we come to realize that there is no place, no lifestyle, no external circumstances which are "perfect". Wherever we are we'll have the unseen warfare to contend with...and we'll have God working in the circumstances of life to help us overcome.

Something else that happens the more people dedicate themselves to repentance is that they develop discernment or diacrisis, as the fathers called it. We grow to develop a feel for what may or may not be of God in the circumstances of life. In Acts 16:6-7 we read that Paul and Timothy were planning to go to Asia and Bithinia but were "prevented by the Holy Spirit". Instead, they were led to Macedonia. This doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit set up an invisible shield around them to block their way, but that they discerned in the spirit that it wasn't God's will for them to go there at that time.

We often hear of spiritual fathers who have discernment as a full-blown gift of the Spirit, helping them to guide others in their spiritual journey, but first and more commonly comes the help of the Spirit to discern something about our own journey.

The more this kind of awareness develops in us, the commandments and Church precepts have done their work. It may seem so far from us now, but it is still a factor of childhood. Even a sixth or seventh grader can "discern" that commercials are phoney or know to be wary of certain people if they have learned what to look for, so all this is still not maturity! But if we travel this road, we can get to what the fathers call apatheia. That's not apathy, or not caring about anything, but a sense of spiritual freedom from being dependent on certain circumstances of life. It's not that we lack emotions or cravings, but that we can control them - what young people might call spiritually "being cool", and what the Liturgy calls laying aside all earthly cares. My energies aren't tied up coping with my emotions or impulses: love has replaced lust, and I don't need what I used to. This is the spirit of Romans 8:35-39. Anything else is small time; we have the priceless tranquility that comes from knowing that God is leading us to himself.
Point Four  

Well, after childhood comes adolescence. But more usually they're jumbled together and we can't tell where one starts and the other leaves off. Again, it's similar in the spiritual life. The second stage on the road to theosis is what the Fathers called theoría or theoría physica. We've been moved to deal with our personal lives a bit, to recognize the unseen warfare we're in and to start handling it. Now we come to be interested more in what's going on outside of us, what's happening in God's world. We begin to move out of our own concerns and look at the world around us with new eyes. We often become interested in the things of the Church: its history, the format and structures of the divine services or we want to help in their celebration. At this stage, we're somewhat like teens who begin to have outward activities. But we still haven't fully matured so we have to keep that earlier discipline going. That's why it's so hard when teens lose their parents: they're not mature enough to do without the discipline.

Sometimes, like some teens too, we're not too practical or realistic at this stage. We tend to be idealistic, to think we can do all kinds of neat things for God. That's why we really need a Spiritual Guide at this stage of the journey, so that our faith-life doesn't just become a head trip.

If we're using the Jesus Prayer, it's more a mental prayer at this stage than a vocal prayer. We're dealing primarily at the level of the soul, the mind.

The most important thing that happens at this stage is that people start knowing deeply — not just in the mind — that everything is touched by God, everything relates to Him. We begin to see everything as sacred because God is filling all things. Every day becomes an invitation to discern what God is doing around us, so prayer isn't just morning devotions any more. We see the whole world as God's temple and everything as a subject for prayer.

Here's where they start calling you a fanatic for sure! Everybody knows God-talk is for Sundays, Thanksgiving Day and wakes. Anybody who wants to bring God into everything — as if he weren't already there — is a religious maniac. We've all done the same thing at times: it's O.K. to recognize God in some things, but in everything?? For example, how many of you have icons or religious images in your home? How many have them in the bathroom?? Gotcha! — we compartmentalize, don't we?

Well, at this stage we begin to see God manifesting himself to me in my work, in my relationships, in the circumstances of life, and in everything around me. Nature and life become revealers of God — rather than something to use or get through.

Nature hasn't changed; life hasn't changed, but I have! I've acquired "new eyes", the eyes of the Spirit, as the Fathers said, so that everything is different because I see it in relationship to God. George Fox, the English mystic, said that when he had come to this experience, even spinach tasted better (and if you know how the English butcher veggies, you know that's really something!). What happens, as St. Simeon the New Theologian says, is that we now see things as they really are!

This is so unusual in our throwaway society — but it shouldn't be for people who realize their relationship to God, who really believe that he is all in all. This is the time in our progress to theosis that believing begins to move from the head (just agreeing that God is and that he's done this or that) to the heart: seeing his
works with the eyes of faith. We begin to live very much for every moment, because we know God's as much here as in the great memories we might have or somewhere off in the future. We begin to see the uniqueness of everything around us. When we're in communion with him we realize that he's manifesting himself in everything—to those with the eyes to see. And so everything becomes sacramental: not an object to use or manipulate but to rejoice in because it is the work of God.

Point Five Finally, according to St. Maximos, we get to what should be the normal Christian life for adults. We come to see everything in terms of God. We can't forget his presence, because the awareness of it is in our heart, our spirit, at the core of our being. We find ourselves having a great sense of awe at the greatness and wonder of God. Icons usually speak to us very strongly at this stage, because they come from people who were at the same level of experience. At the same time we have a great sense of intimacy with God: He is Abba, Father. We're more and more aware of God as personally with us. That phrase from "O heavenly King"—He is present in all places and filling all things—takes on a deeper meaning. It's not just talking about God sustaining creation, but actually being personally present. And, perhaps more importantly, it isn't just somebody else's insight any more; we know it from the heart! We know God as totally other yet very near. It's almost as if our relationship with God has become like that of the man and his wife who are fully in tune with each other's habits and reactions. We find ourselves in harmony with the mind of God.

Now to get us here, God has to do something to snap us out of our heady, mind-centered appreciation of him. Normally He lets our faith fall apart! We think everything makes sense and all of a sudden things don't make sense any more. We try to pray, and all the ideas don't work. We feel an emptiness, a dryness. God seems far away.

What God is doing is telling us to stop using our heads and start using our hearts, our spirits to draw closer to him. He's showing us that all the ideas we have about faith, about God, even about the Church are useless because we need a personal relationship, not a second hand experience, a head-trip.

This can be very shattering, like the teen who begins to realize he doesn't know all about everything, who doesn't understand his parents and girls least of all! It's the realization that faith is much more than head knowledge, it's heart knowledge. This doesn't do violence to our intelligence, but it does do a job on our self-reliance. We seem to be standing before an impenetrable wall, crying out to God in the darkness to show himself. This is a real trial because God has come to mean so much to a person at this stage and now he has to start over again, or so it seems.

But just as a person is never really an adult until he's been a teenager, in the same way only the person who has already experienced the friendship of God, has had some intimacy with Him, knows what this absence means. A person who's never been on the theosis journey wouldn't experience this, because he's never known even the teenaged intimacy with God and doesn't miss what he's never known.

When we come through this time of dryness we realize that God is very much around, but that He's also very much beyond our intelligence. Without effort we find ourselves realizing we're in God's presence. If we're praying the Jesus Prayer, it's in the heart; we've so made it a part of us that is in our sub-conscious. His Spirit is working in the depths of our spirits. In a much deeper and longer lasting way, it's like when a tune goes round and round in our heads and we find ourselves humming it
without intending to or consciously realizing it. His Spirit is directing ours.

We still haven't realized theosis fully: that only comes at the resurrection and the transfiguration of our bodies, so we continue to grow. We can become more and more perfect - but never complete. Now our actions are in harmony with God's will: we remain on course. This is what the Fathers called eleutheria, what St. Paul describes as the peace which surpasses all understanding.

Conclusion

This is what is meant to be the normal progress of Christian life. Now a lot of people, a lot of practicing Christians, don't get there, but that doesn't mean it's not normal. Many people don't reach adulthood mentally or emotionally either!

But, for those who are - and want to be - in Christ, the journey of theosis is supposed to lead us to spiritual adulthood and beyond. This is what our journey is meant to bring us to and what our beginning on that journey, our christening, was pointing to all along. Our baptism indicates the first stage, praxis, when we try to die to the old man in us and to the ways of the flesh. Our chrismation pointed to the second stage. We received the spirit who makes clear the plan of God for us, who helps us make sense of things, who teaches us and guides us. And finally the Eucharist points to adulthood: intimate communion, relationship.

This is the journey on which we've begun. We can't force our growth or even clearly analyze where we're at (our Spiritual Father is for that). Parts of us are at all the stages at different moments. But know that it is a process, that there is meant to be growth and that we are certainly called to grow to maturity on this path.

This is the basis of mortality for the personal journey of theosis: we must grow, reach out to God, move into what he is doing in our lives. Too often we forget that we have the Spirit of God within us and that he wants us to experience his energy. It's so sad to see people satisfied at being infants in Christ throughout their lives, quite content at not realizing their potential. The best gift any of us can give the Lord and the Church is to become what he wants us to be: mature adults in the life of the spirit. Praise God!

Let's take a 15 minute break and come back at 5:15 for questions.

D) Discussion Period

1. After the break, the cantor can call the group to order by singing the Theme Song of the weekend.

2. The speaker then entertains questions from the floor for 15 minutes.

3. At the end of this time the speaker directs each table group to discuss the two questions in their workbook, namely:

   * Can you identify with any of the experiences mentioned in the talk?
   * Is there anything you feel you can/should do to progress in the spiritual life? (Be specific).

4. Ten minutes before the end of the session the speaker calls time and invites a representative from each table to report on their group discussion to the larger
gathering.

5. After these summaries are completed, the speaker invites the group to move to the icon corner for the final prayer, including:

   Reading:

   "Let us offer ourselves, the possession most precious to God and most fitting; let us give back to the Image what is made according to the Image. Let us recognize our dignity; let us honor our Archetype; let us know the power of the mystery and for what Christ died. Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become gods for His sake, since He became man for ours."

   St. Gregory the Theologian
   Oration 1:4,5

   Chant:

   Psalm 22, in the workbooks ("Your mercy, O Lord, follows me...")

6. After the prayer, the director indicates when it is time for supper and reminds everyone to bring their copy of "A Book for Prayer" to the dining room.
SUPPER PROCEDURES

Saturday Evening, 6:00 PM

Sometime before this meal the assistant director should have rearranged the place cards so that the seating arrangements are different from those at the previous meals, enabling people to spend at least some time with other participants.

A) Before the Meal

Grace should be said as at the previous meals: the director may choose someone (in advance) to begin the grace with their own thanksgiving for blessings received. All continue with the First Set of meal prayers ("A Book for Prayer", page 27), and the priest’s blessing, as follows:

1. The cantor calls the group to order by singing the 'Theme Song' of the weekend.

2. The director invites people to open their prayerbooks to page 27. The First Set of meal prayers will be recited after the personal thanksgiving of NN.

3. The director introduces the person who will give thanks.

4. That person makes the sign of the cross and offers his or her own prayer.

5. The director immediately announces "Page 27" and begins the prayer:

"The eyes of all look hopefully to You, O Lord, and You give them food in due season. You open Your merciful hand and fill every living thing with blessing. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, Now and always and forever and ever. Amen. Lord, have mercy (three times). Father, give the blessing."

6. One of the priests present gives the blessing, "Christ God, bless..."

B) After the Meal

When everyone is started on coffee and dessert, the director calls for the attention of the group and makes the following introduction:

"We were very happy to have NN. tell us a bit about their experiences in the Theosis Program over lunch. Now we have another (one/two) of our brothers and sisters who will tell us about their experiences in the program when they got home to their local communities."

(The director then introduces each person speaking.)
Those sharing their experience should reflect on the following points:

a) What their group determined at the close of the weekend and what the structure of their group actually is (factual information).

b) Some of the experiences of the group during its life together.

c) A personal witness to its significance in your life.

At the end of these witnessings, the director thanks those who spoke and closes with the First Set of prayers after meals on page 28 of "A Book for Prayer".

After the prayer, the director reminds the participants that they are free until 8 PM when we will meet in the chapel for the Mystery of Repentance.
THE MYSTERY OF REPENTANCE

Saturday Evening, 8:00 PM

Aim: To enable the participants to encounter Christ in the mystery of repentance.

Frequently in our divine services people are urged to pray that the rest of our lives be spent in peace and repentance (aitisis). Dutifully, all respond, "Grant this, O Lord", but few have any idea how or why this should happen. Because we have not stressed the call to growth inherent in theosis or made people aware that such growth is an expected part of Christian life (see Talk 4 - Growing in the Likeness), most believers are content with "not sinning" and, conversely, with not growing.

When seen in the context of theosis, repentance becomes something to be done for the rest of our life. We are constantly being called to more sharply focus on the divine life given us so that we can become more and more effectively sharers in the divine nature.

While this session focuses on the mysteries of repentance and unction, we try to stress repentance and healing as ongoing elements of the process of theosis rather than occasional acts. Hence we need to stress the daily awareness of our sins, reception of the Eucharist ("for the forgiveness of sins...") and the commitment to growth through reliance on a spiritual guide as the even more ordinary expressions of repentance and healing.

This mystery is celebrated in the chapel at an analogion or tetrapod set up on the solea. As many additional stations for confession are set up as needed. Each should contain a draped analogion on which rests an icon of Christ, the scriptures and a hand cross.

We begin with the homily according to the outline given below. This is followed by the service of the mystery led by the liturgist. At the appropriate spot, the priest invites the participants to make their confession at the indicated stations. While this is happening, the readers chant from the psalter for as long as needed. After all have confessed, the priests continue with the office of holy unction, if it has been requested, or give the dismissal and conclude the service. Refreshments follow.

For Further Reading


Seraphim Papacostas, "Repentance" (A)

A) Basic Outline

Introduction: Reflecting on the power of the mysteries of initiation, we may be wishing for a second baptism. We have it in the mystery of repentance.

Point One: Repentance is the way we are called to deal with our spiritual failings:
* repentance is a necessary part of the process of theosis;
* repentance is not "worldly grief" (2 Cor 7:10), but transfiguring;

**Point Two:** The committed believer is called to repent of sins, transgressions and infirmities:
* Sins are our conscious and deliberate turnings from God and His way;
* Transgressions are our inadvertent wanderings from the path He has set out for us;
* Infirmities are those areas of spiritual weakness which inhibit our progress toward theosis and for which we need healing.

**Point Three:** Forgiveness and healing is the way God deals with our failings:
* God's unconditional love overlooks our sins when we return to Him in repentance (Lk 15:11-32);
* And when we forgive one another (Mt 6:14; 18:21-22).

**Conclusion:** God wants to work in us by dealing with our failings in order to further our path of theosis. Ask the priest for help and God, who works in these mysteries, will not fail you.

**B) Extended Outline**

**Introduction:** Reflecting on the power of the mysteries of initiation, we may be wishing for a second baptism. We have it in the mystery of repentance.

In confession we recall our baptismal commitment;
We acknowledge our hesitancy and failure to live this life which has been given us.
We acknowledge that we have a new relationship to God who is within us due to our incorporation into Christ.

**Point One:** Repentance is the way we are called to deal with our spiritual failings:
* repentance is a necessary part of the process of theosis;
  It is indispensible to growth (aitisis petition)
  Instead of denying failings, we admit them, confess them, right them (1 Jn 1:8-10, Jas 5:16)
* repentance is not "worldly grief" (2 Cor 7:10), but transfiguring;
  It is doing something about our inner life (vs. an unexamined life)
 Importance of a Spiritual Father and a support group

**Point Two:** The committed believer is called to repent of sins, transgressions and infirmities:
* Sins are our conscious and deliberate turnings from God and His way;
  We decide knowingly to go against the Way
* Transgressions are our inadvertent wanderings from the path He has set out for us;
  We do harm unintentionally, but the harm is still done;
* Infirmities are those areas of spiritual weakness which inhibit our progress toward theosis and for which we need healing.
Sometimes physical and spiritual infirmities are interrelated, not as a punishment but because of the unity of our nature, whether whole or broken.

God heals our infirmities in holy unction.

**Point Three:** Forgiveness and healing is the way God deals with our failings:

* God's unconditional love overlooks our sins when we return to Him in repentance (Lk 15:11-32);
  
  He is welcoming, loving, not waiting for recriminations;
  
  Because of our adoption in baptism, we can approach as His children;
  
  We have a right to the inheritance (the generous forgiveness of the Father).

* And when we forgive one another (Mt 6:14; 18:21-22).
  
  Often resentment and bitterness choke out God's life, even humanly speaking;
  
  Forgiveness is not a question of who's right;
  
  Reconciliation with the other must precede encounter with God (confession, communion, Great Fast)

**Conclusion:** God wants to work in us by dealing with our failings in order to further our path of theosis. Ask the priest for help and God, who works in these mysteries, will not fail you.

* The "greater things" we will do (Jn 14:12) include forgiveness and healing;

* The logistics of the service are described;

* It is Christ working in the mysteries.

**C) Sample Presentation**

**Introduction:** There's a saying, "Youth is wasted on the young". Perhaps as we've reflected on the meaning of the mysteries of initiation for our Christian life, we're thinking that baptism is wasted on the young. Often people who rediscover the meaning of these mysteries find themselves wishing they could be baptized over again. Well, there is an aspect of our Church life which the Fathers called the 'second baptism'. We call it the mystery of repentance or confession.

When we come to this mystery, it's like returning to the baptismal font. We remember our baptismal calling to die to the old man and let the life of God take over our lives. We remember too that we fail in keeping that commitment and call on the Lord for help. The mystery of repentance takes place within the context of the mystery of the Church, as do all the mysteries of the Christian faith. God, in His infinite wisdom and understanding of our weakened moral condition, has enabled us to return to Him time and again in faith. It is because God made a fundamental change deep within our being on the day of our baptism, that we have the privilege of approaching Him with love and confidence in our sinful state.

**Point One:** Most people are aware they have failings, that they aren't all they might be. And people handle it in different ways. One way is to deny it: "It's OK, you're only human". Another way is to become obsessed by it, to dwell on guilt
and inadequacy, and sometimes that's worse. But the Lord has a way of dealing with sin: admit it (1 Jn 1:8-10); confess it and right it (Jas 5:16). This is the process we call 'repentance'. In it we admit we have done wrong, we confess it to God and to the person we've wronged, and we make it right again as much as possible. It's a very straightforward kind of process. And only by following it can we put our wrongdoing behind us with honesty and get back on the path of theosis. That's why we so often pray in our services that we may spend the rest of our lives in peace and repentance.

Now let's examine what repentance really is and what it is not. St. Paul writes in 2 Cor 7:10, "Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death". There we have the difference between repentance that leads on to God out of love as opposed to some kind of guilt ridden life that leads to despair. Our natural tendency is to either not examine our spiritual growth properly, "because nobody's perfect", we say to ourselves, "least of all me, so why try?" Thus we excuse ourselves, for we are deceived into thinking that this is a normal Christian life.

Or else we examine ourselves ruthlessly and accuse ourselves of all sorts of terrible things and never really turn to God, because we really believe we are beyond help. This too is a deception. Godly grief leads to salvation and brings no regret. Repentance unto the Lord means godly grief. We need to know that God accepts us just the way we are here and now, and that He will give us the power to grow to real holiness if we will only turn to Him and deal with our spiritual problems as the Tradition of the Church has indicated. We must realize that this path to holiness is a real struggle at times. The more we struggle, the more God's life pours into our hearts and becomes the spring of living water that Jesus told the Samaritan woman about, because this kind of suffering is what Christ meant when He spoke of denying ourselves daily, taking up our cross and following Him (Mt 16:24).

When we decide to deal with our inner life, our first real obstacle is the feeling that we can handle it alone. We live as part of the Body of Christ. We grow in that Body, and apart from it we shrivel. This is why the Tradition of the Church insists that we grow most effectively when we grow in relationship in the Body. This traditionally has meant that we share our inner life with a Spiritual Guide, someone who knows both who we are deeply and what the inner life is all about. In addition today many people feel helped by sharing their inner life in some kind of support group, where people sense that the Body is uplifting them as they strive to serve the Lord. In either case, it is the Church that speaks through these members to keep our attempts at growth within the stream of the Church's spiritual Tradition.

Point Two In the Trisagion Prayers we used this morning and which are found so often in our divine services, we say the following: "Lord, forgive us our sins; Master, pardon our transgressions; Holy One, look upon us and heal our infirmities for Your name's sake". Thus there are three aspects of spiritual brokenness which our Tradition recognizes and which we are called to deal with in our path to theosis. We have sins to be forgiven, transgressions to be pardoned and infirmities to be healed.

But what's the difference between sins and transgressions? Just before receiving the Eucharist at the Divine Liturgy, we pray for God to pardon our offences, both the deliberate and the indeliberate. Sometimes we blatantly and deliberately and knowingly go against what we know God expects of us. This is sin and, as we were all taught, for something to be a sin, we must be aware of it being a sin. There is guilt incurred when we sin, because we are consciously going against what we know to be God's way.
Sometimes we can stray from His path either unawares or at least unintentionally. Later we realize we did something wrong or should have done so much more in raising our children, say, or in caring for the parent we'll not see again. We didn't mean harm at the time, but now the effects of our course of action are clearer. These are what we call transgressions: wrongdoing that was not intended or recognized at the time, but which was wrong nonetheless.

Now perhaps someone will say, "But how can God condemn me for something inadvertent?" We're not speaking here of condemnation. "There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus," St. Paul writes in Rom 8:1. He doesn't condemn us because we are in Christ, in the Church, but we are expected to be on an ongoing journey of spiritual growth. Perhaps it is time we became more mature in Christ and accept responsibility for dealing with our transgressions as well as our sins. When we continue to fall short of God's glory, even if unintentionally, we remain weak and unproductive for our God. This tendency needs to be repented of just as surely as intentional offences do.

Now we come to the healing side of repentance: "Holy One, heal our infirmities for Your name's sake". Let's examine what an infirmity is. We usually think of this as a physical weakness: a heart condition, for example, or hardening of the arteries. But not all infirmities are physical. The spirit can be infirm as well.

'Infirmities' means just that: sickness in the spiritual and emotional realm and often in the physical order as well. Maybe you've known a person so bitter about past failures or heartaches that they are emotionally scarred. Or people whose spiritual weaknesses affect their physical health, giving them ulcers or colitis.

Often there is a connection between a spiritual weakness and a physical disorder as well. This is not to say that if someone contracts cancer, for example, that this person has committed a serious sin! But sometimes our spiritual problems are so deep that our bodies are affected by them. Or our physical handicaps are so hard to bear that our spirits are all but broken by them.

We have been baptized into Christ and therefore have the right to claim healing as part of the heritage of our Father's house. We are sharers in the victory of Christ over sin and death and so we can claim a share in that victory. We can claim the strength of the Lord as our strength to enable us to overcome the mortal power of our weaknesses of the flesh. For this we turn to the Lord in the mystery of holy unction, as we are told in Jas 5:13-15.

For many years in the West this was thought of as the 'last rites', preparing someone for death. But recently they have come back to the earlier practice (which the Eastern tradition never lost), namely that this mystery was for the healing of body and soul. If you would like to bring a spiritual infirmity to the Lord for healing in this mystery later on, mention it to your confessor and we will pray with you after the confessions.

Point Three: How does God deal with our sins and transgressions and weaknesses? In Luke 15 Jesus tells the story of a man who had two sons. This story is popularly called "The Prodigal Son", but would better be called the story of the Forgiving Father. The father in the story obviously loves both his sons very tenderly. The younger one hurt his father by turning his back on him and using his inheritance to fulfill all kinds of immature needs and desires. This turning away from his father was
his real sin, not the misuse of his inheritance. The misuse of his father's wealth was rather the direct result of the boy's turning from his father. The older boy hurt his father by becoming jealous of his brother's return to the family. "You have never so much as given me a goat to have a feast with my friends," he accuses his father.

The main point of the whole story is in the father's obviously unconditional love for both his children. Both had fallen short of the glory of their father's estate, but never once did the father reject either of them. To one he opens his arms wide and hugs and kisses him, not even hearing the boy's self recrimination, "I have sinned". He throws a feast in his honor. Get that: to honor the son who had turned away from him and has now returned. With the older son, his disarms his jealousy by making clear that which the boy should have already known: as an adult in his father's house he has full use of his father's resources. In both cases the father's love completely overlooks their sin and reconciles them with himself, and attempts to reconcile the two of them with each other.

We have perhaps become more aware of our weakened condition this weekend. I hope this is the case, because then we will begin to seek answers to this dilemma. God became a man like us in order to overcome our sick and weakened condition, to extend the Father's unconditional love to us. He offers forgiveness and healing if we will receive them. But there is one big condition. Very often unforgiveness on our part is the biggest obstacle to our own restoration.

In Mt 18:21 Jesus tells Peter that he must forgive his brother seventy times seven, if necessary. And in Mt 6:14 He makes it clear that this forgiveness is necessary if we are to receive God's forgiveness.

Resentment and bitterness will rise up and not only choke God's life out of us, but the very breath of human life itself, if we will let it. Psalm 50 has the penitent David asking God to create a clean heart within him, to renew his spirit. The prophet Ezechiel in 36:26 tells us that God will take our heart of stone and turn it into a heart of flesh, a heart of forgiveness. God wants to forgive us and indeed already has. He has already healed us, but when we refuse to allow Him to create this new heart within us we rob ourselves of His love. He doesn't withhold it. We block it and He will never violate our free will and force it on us. But we have to desire it.

If I have allowed anger to degenerate into resentment and bitterness, I have already allowed my heart to become hardened. "But wait," someone says, "What that person did to me was terrible. Why should I forgive him? He was wrong and I was right!" Well, Jesus Himself gives us the example of forgiveness. When the soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross, He prayed that His Father forgive them. Now let's not be so naive as to believe that Jesus felt any heartfelt emotion of brotherly love for those who were killing Him. However Jesus had made a hard decision in the garden the night before. He told His Father that He did not want to go through with this crucifixion, but that He would submit to His Father's will, no matter what the cost. What Jesus experienced on the cross was the fruit of the decision He made the previous night.

Here is the key for us. Once we recognize the need we have to forgive our brother, if only because the bitterness is driving us insane, we have made the biggest step toward receiving God's healing power. In short, if we are willing to forgive our brother and stop accusing him, even though emotionally we don't have the power (the anger is too strong), God will then and there begin to change our heart. He will deal with our emotions if only we will submit our will to Him and do as He asks of us. This, my friends, is repentance at work in its fullest sense.
Conclusion  Just as Jesus healed and forgave sins in Galilee, so also does the Church carry on His works. "Greater things than this will you do," He tells the disciples (Jn 14:12) when they marvel at His miracles. This is for us in the Church. We can actually perform greater 'miracles' and 'works' than Jesus Himself did. That is an awesome promise and it's right from Jesus Himself.

This must begin with us. We are called to allow God to minister His life and power to us in the Church, and especially tonight in the great mysteries of repentance and anointing. These are the ways that God offers us to experience a new birth here and now. This can be a new baptism, so to speak, if only we will allow God to do it for us.

When an athlete struggles to improve his skill, the first thing any good coach tells him is not to become angry with himself so as to want to quit the race. He tells the athlete to take those feelings of frustration and sometimes anger and channel them into positive, productive energy to try harder next time. In the spiritual life we seldom have this gift of channeling our energy into productive growth on our own. God is our coach and He will minister to our needs and weaknesses in a far greater way than any coach can in athletics. If we give God access to our inner life through these mysteries, His life becomes even stronger in us and our growth becomes obvious to us and to the Church around us.

God wants us to place our entire will in communion with His divine will, just as Jesus did. The greatest commandment is to love Him with our whole mind, heart and strength. That means our entire will. Remember, theosis is a process, and healing is a part of that process. God can heal our loneliness, our bitterness, our feelings of resentment, our feelings of lust (not to be confused with God's gift of sexual desire), our feelings of hurt, our feelings of insecurity (out of which avarice arises) and our feelings of helplessness (out of which comes our need to control the lives of others), and our feelings of self hatred and bad self image (out of which pride comes). He can heal all this and more as well as forgive the sins that our yielding to these feelings have produced. God will begin a profound work in you today, if you are willing. Ask the priest for help and God will minister to you through the priest, through the Church, who has called the priest to this ministry.

We will begin with the public part of the mystery of repentance, conducted according to the service books provided. After the scripture reading, we will point out the several stations where priests will be hearing confessions. Remember, that whatever the external circumstances - the priest, the location, even your own conscious attention - it is Christ who works in this mystery. Everything else is secondary. This is why in our Tradition confession is always made before an icon of Christ. In many places the priest invites the penitent to begin confessing with the following words. They say what every priest knows is really happening here. It is our invitation to you:

"Behold, Christ is standing here invisibly to receive your confession. Don't be ashamed or afraid, for you shall have pardon from our Lord Jesus Christ. ...His holy icon is before us: I am only a witness, bearing testimony before Him of everything you may say to me."

D) Celebration of the Mystery
The service proceeds according to the form in the book provided. After the reading the priest serving introduces the confessors and tells where each will be stationed. He invites the people to go to confession to any of the priests they wish. He should encourage them to stay in the chapel and listen to the psalms as they prepare for this mystery and to return to the chapel for as long as they wish afterwards. He should stress the need for silence near the confession areas and indicate a place where people can go for relaxation where they will not disturb those who remain. A distant area should be designated for socializing until the service is over.

Several readers should be prepared to begin chanting from the psalter once the confessions proper have begun. They read the psalter according to kathismas for as long as may be necessary to cover the confessions. The priest will indicate when to terminate the psalmody so that he can proceed with the dismissal or the mystery of unction.

People should be helped to let the psalms be read over them, to allow phrases to catch their attention and become subjects for reflection, rather than feel that they should be saying or even hearing every word of them. The priest may encourage them to feel free to say the Jesus Prayer during the psalmody, especially when their consciousness wanders.

E) Holy Unction

If anyone desires to receive holy unction, they should mention it to any of the confessors, then return to the chapel and wait for all to finish confessing. All the priests will then participate in the mystery of unction according to the order in the book provided.

F) Announcements

Before confessions, everyone should be advised that refreshments would be served at 10:30 and that anyone planning to assist at tomorrow morning's orthros and Divine Liturgy (clergy, cantors, servers) should meet at 11 PM at a designated place to review the order of service.

The priest should also indicate that on Sunday morning no breakfast will be served before the Divine Liturgy. It should be pointed out that, while coffee and pastry will be available for those whose health requires them, everyone is encouraged to keep the ascetical fast before the Eucharist as a sign of our eager anticipation of the Lord's coming to us in this mystery.

The assistant director should see that the evening's refreshments are ready to be served by 10:30 PM in the designated refreshment area.
PRACTICE FOR SUNDAY AM SERVICES

Saturday Evening, 11 PM

**Aim**

To insure the most orderly and prayerful celebration of orthros and the Divine Liturgy for Sunday morning by the preparation of all ministers.

At this session we look to prepare for the Sunday services by 'walking through' them step by step with all those who will be involved in directing them (clergy, cantors, servers). We expect to 'rehearase' the order of the services, the music of certain pieces (especially the changable parts) and the movements of the servers. Anyone who is to participate in these services, whether at the clerics or in the altar, is to take part in the rehearsal. There should be no exceptions to this rule. Clergy who do not wish to rehearse should be asked to be part of the congregation.

It is too often assumed that all of us, clergy included, know automatically what is to happen in a liturgical service. This is not always (often?) the case. Laypeople may have familiarity with the services, but if they are not regularly responsible for conducting them, their familiarity is on a different level. It's like traveling: if you don't drive, you may have a general idea of the way, but will probably get lost somewhere when you try to go there alone. Other people may be very familiar with the way services are conducted in their own parish, but do not have sufficient 'theoretical' knowledge to handle variations. Therefore nothing is to be assumed.

The same is true for the clergy. There are different traditions for serving within our Church depending on various local or monastic customs. Some clergy know only the way of serving which they were first taught. Again, the rule is the same: insist on participation and assume nothing.

**A) Earlier in the Evening**

During the dinner break the liturgist should invite people to participate in the team for the morning's services and inform them about the practice session. Try to involve as many people as possible, making sure that the different parishes at the weekend are all represented on your team. The number of servers would depend on the number of vestments available. Any number of people may participate as chanters but **no more than two** should be designated as leaders to avoid confusion.

**B) The Practice Session**

The rehearsal should proceed in the following fashion:

1 - Assign roles for all participants: clergy in order of seniority, cantors and servers according to what their particular function is to be.

2 - Go through the orthros service using the books provided and indicating the abridged order being followed and the specific duties of each participant. Be explicit: cantor x intones the melodies, cantors y and z chant the verses for "The Lord is God", etc. Indicate all movements to the servers (eg the veneration of the gospel book). Practice singing the pieces of orthros, especially the troparia of the day which may not be widely known or may be known in different versions in the various parishes.
3 - Go through the Divine Liturgy in the same way, including the specific duties of the concelebrating clergy. In particular sing the troparia and kondakia of the day and determine music to be used during Communion and the distribution of antidoron. Insure that the cantor is able to lead the prokimenon in melody (this should have been the theme song of the weekend).
SUNDAY MORNING PROCEDURES

Sunday Morning, 8:30 AM

A) Orthros

Before this service, which is conducted in the chapel in the usual way, the liturgist should explain that the Church has forms of divine service for common prayer for stated times during the day. Connection should be made with the private morning and evening prayers in the prayer book. We are called to pray often through the day. When we are alone, we use the prayerbook prayers or the Jesus Prayer. When we are in a Church gathering we pray in the form of our liturgical services.

Note that orthros is the morning service of our Church and that in many parishes (an abridged form of) it is served before the Sunday Divine Liturgy. If you are eliminating any prayers from the version in the book provided or adding any special rites, indicate it to the people at this time.

Procede with the celebration using the order in the book provided.

B) Announcements

After the service, the director should announce that the next talk will take place at 9:45 AM in the usual meeting area. Repeat the reminder that, while refreshments are available now for those who need them, everyone is invited to enter into the spirit of the traditional fast in preparation for receiving the Eucharistic mystery.

The assistant director should insure that coffee-and is available in the refreshment area.

C) Introduction to Talk 5

At 9:45 AM the cantor convenes the group in the meeting room with the singing of the theme song of the weekend.
TALK 5 — HEAVEN ON EARTH

Sunday Morning, 9:45 AM

Aim: To help the participants experience the Liturgy in terms of theosis.

This talk on the Divine Liturgy should accomplish three things. First of all it should prepare people for the celebration of the Liturgy which will follow. It does this by offering them an explanation of the meaning the various elements of the Liturgy should have for them. The outline highlights the main elements (assembly, catechetical synaxis, Eucharist) and stresses the principal purpose of each.

The second aspect to this aim is that the talk aims to relate the Liturgy to the priesthood of the faithful which will be discussed in the sixth talk, after lunch. The Liturgy is not offered 'for' the people or 'in the presence of' the people (as the West used to speak of it, but by the priesthood which is the people.

This idea in turn is connected with the concept of theosis. We are sharers in the priesthood because we have the deifying Spirit dwelling among us. This is why we are a priesthood, why we share in Christ's ministry. And so it is impossible to conceive of the Liturgy in a true sacramental sense without considering the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church, making it the Kingdom of God.

For Further Reading


A) Basic Outline

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**Point Four:**
The movements of the Divine Liturgy show us the areas in which God is working to transform us:

* In the enarxis we see God bringing us together, transforming us into a people;
* In the proclamation of the Word we see Him transforming our lives in accordance with His way;
* In the Eucharist we see Him transforming us totally by the participation in the Gifts in a threefold way: unto the forgiveness of sins, the communion in the Holy Spirit and intimate confidence in Him (anaphora).

**Conclusion:**
Invitation to see the Liturgy as our work and God's, proclaiming the kingdom and making it come about as well.

**B) Expanded Outline**

**Introduction:**

The Liturgy is an experience of heaven, the kingdom of God.

"Russian Chronicles" story cited testifying to the impression of Byzantine Liturgy as 'heaven on earth'

**Point One:**
This Kingdom is where God is present and active:

* All creation is God's Kingdom, in that it is sustained by Him; thus the Great Litany recognizes that all creation needs His mercy

* All creation glorifies its King by being 'natural'. By 'doing its thing, it fulfills God's plan for it and thus praises Him (cf Psalm 150)

**Point Two:**
The Church is the 'capital' of the Kingdom, for here God's presence is recognized:

* The Church consciously acknowledges and praises the reign of God; This conscious glorification of God is the 'rational sacrifice'

* This praising of God for His saving love is the very purpose of the Church (1 Pt 2:9); In this we are the opposite of irrational creation: we fulfill our nature only by consciously praising God

* The divine services are the excercise par excellence of this royal priesthood We are the actors in the divine services

**Point Three:**
In the Divine Liturgy we not only recognize, but experience the
presence of God among us in a unique way:

* God is mystically at work in the Liturgy for our transformation;
  God is not just the audience, but mystically interacts with us;
  When we invoke the Spirit's presence, we believe He does come and abide in us as we worship.

* Thus the Church is not so much an inspirational setting for prayer as the place of our transformation.

**Conclusion:**

The movements of the Divine Liturgy show us the areas in which God is working to transform us:

* In the enarxis we see God bringing us together, transforming us into a people:
  This is so important to Christ (Jn 17:11).
  Thus we 'begin' only when we have come together (Little Entrance)

* In the proclamation of the Word we see Him transforming our lives in accordance with His way;
  This is not bible story time (past), but the Lord teaching us now, for today.
  The homily is to show us how this applies to us as individuals and as a community.

* In the Eucharist we see Him transforming us totally by the participation in the Gifts in a threefold way:
  While the highpoint of the Liturgy is the transformation of the Gifts, its climax is the purpose of this transformation: to transform us.
  We pray for and should expect (a) the forgiveness of sins (an inner transformation, in terms of our personal relationship with God), (b) the communion in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 10:17, illustrated on the diskos) and (c) intimate confidence in Him (a transformation of the way we look at Him in terms of our rightful place as co-heirs – anaphora).

**Conclusion:**

Invitation to see the Liturgy as our work and God's, proclaiming the kingdom and making it come about as well.

We are called to work with Him in the Liturgy for our transformation.

The Liturgy is the climax, not the sum total of this transforming work; thus our life must prepare for the liturgical experience.

**C) Sample Presentation**

**Introduction**

It is recorded that in the tenth century the Prince of Kiev, in what is the Soviet Ukraine today, wanted to unify his people under one religion. He sent emissaries to the Jews, to the Muslims, to the Latins, but they
found none of these really satisfying. Then they went to Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, and the center of the Byzantine Church. They were taken to the Divine Liturgy at the Great Church, Aya Sophia (the Holy Wisdom), and as their chronicle says,

"We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere upon earth. We cannot describe it to you: only this we know, that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. For we cannot forget that beauty."

Attending the Byzantine Liturgy at the Great Church in Constantinople, Vladimir's envoys experienced heaven on earth. Perhaps it was the splendid ceremony that impressed them: the patriarch and bishops, the clergy and choirs filling the enormous temple. But they expressed something very real, even in the humblest circumstances of liturgical celebration, probably without knowing why. And that is this: our Byzantine experience of divine worship is not simply a prayer service, a group of people gathering to express their sentiments to God. It is nothing less that an experience of the Kingdom of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: heaven on earth.

Point One: The Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: we say these words at the beginning of each Divine Liturgy and repeat them time and again in our worship. What is this kingdom of God and what does it mean? First we can say that the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is where the Trinity is present and active. It's almost like when we were teenagers. Our room was our kingdom: where we could put our stamp on a small corner of creation. The kingdom of God is 'God's room', if you will. And in that sense, all creation is God's kingdom. That's why, after the priest proclaims "Blessed is the kingdom ...", the deacon begins the Great Litany, praying for all creation, because it's all God's kingdom.

The saints and Fathers of the Church have always seen that this creation is praising its Maker in its way. Remember the 148th psalm which we sang at orthros:

Give praise to Him, sun and moon;  
give praise to Him, all you stars and light.  
Give praise to Him, you heavens of heavens  
and you water that is above the heavens ...  
May everything that breathes praise the Lord.

How does a tree praise the Lord? By being what it's supposed to be: firm, beautiful, graceful ... And when people of faith see this creature of God, they praise its Maker too. By fulfilling its place in God's plan creation is offering its praise to the One whose plan it is, and it is a reminder to us who live in faith that we can offer praise as well.

Point Two: And that brings us to the second way of understanding what 'Kingdom of God' means: it is the place where God is not only present, but that presence is recognized and glorified ... and not just as Creator, but as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And that is the Church. We know that He is present everywhere and fills all things, but not everyone realizes that. Some people have never heard of God's kingdom, or perhaps deny that it (and He) exists. But the Church is the community of believers who not only see and believe that He lives and reigns, but tell
"We praise You, we bless You, we give thanks to You, O Lord, and we pray to You, O our God."

Creation praises God 'unconsciously'; believers offer what the Scripture calls our rational or conscious sacrifice, one made with a knowing and free gift of ourselves. And so the Church is the Kingdom of God in a special way: we can say that it's the 'capital' of the Kingdom, because it is here that God's power is not only present, but known and praised.

Praising God – that's what we're doing right now in the Liturgy. We realize that, but we may not realize that praising God is the whole reason we exist as Church at all. The purpose of the Church is to glorify its God and Savior. St. Peter says that in his epistle:

"You, however, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people He claims for His own to proclaim the glorious works of the One who called you from darkness into His marvelous light". (1 Pt 2:9).

Why are we this people? to proclaim His glorious works. Our reason for being is to be the visible Kingdom of God on earth, the place where His wonders are proclaimed. And just as with trees and flowers, being what we're meant to be and praising God go hand in hand, but with a twist. While the rest of creation is naturally praising God by being tree or chicken or stone, we are fully ourselves only when we're praising Him!

The services of the Church certainly aren't the only times in which we're called to proclaim God's wonders, but they certainly are the most obvious. For many Christians, however, the divine service isn't their act of glorifying God. It's something other people do (clergy, choir, servers) and they watch, because 'you're supposed to'. That's not what we're meant to be: that's not the Kingdom of God. That's a show of some kind, a ritual that really doesn't touch me.

In the nineteenth century a Danish Philosopher named Soren Kierkegaard saw the samething happening in his Lutheran Church. Kierkegaard said that, if you compare the church service to a theater, many people feel that they are the audience, the clergy and choir are the actors putting on this show to inspire or instruct them, and God is somewhere in the background, giving the lines like a prompter. But, Kierkegaard said, – and here he was thinking very much along the lines of our Tradition – that's not what worship is at all. Really God is the 'audience', because the prayer is addressed to Him, and the whole congregation are the actors. It is the people who do the action at worship (or who are supposed to) with the clergy being the prompters ('let us pray to the Lord!'). It's the role of the whole Church to proclaim God's wonders, not just the 'professionals': you are the royal priesthood.

Point Three: But Kierkegaard, coming from a Protestant tradition with little sense of the sacramental, was wrong about one thing. In the kingdom of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit God isn't just the audience. He is active in the Church and especially in its Liturgy in a way He isn't in the wider creation. In the Liturgy God works in a mystical way (and remember what mystical means: unseen, but no less real for that). He works to transform and transfigure us into
being His Kingdom. Before the priest opens his mouth to proclaim the Kingdom of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, he has quietly invoked the Holy Spirit: "Come, O good One, and dwell in us". Make Your presence felt in this celebration to further our deification.

And He comes, and He does, in the community of faith.

So when the Church is together before the Lord, its more than just the sum total of individuals who are there. The Church is the People of God, the very Body of Christ: the arena in which He has chosen to communicate His divine life to us, the place where our theosis comes about.

Sometimes we hear people say they feel more like praying at home or in the countryside than in church. It's as if they see the church as basically intended to give them good feelings about God. The Church does not gather simply so that we can inspire or even encourage one another, much less that we can fulfill a 'legal obligation' to worship God. Even - and this may surprise you - we can say that we don't gather primarily to pray: we can do that at home. We come together chiefly so that we can experience the saving presence of God. And while, depending on the depth of our faith, we may well be inspired and encouraged or uplifted in prayer ... that's still not the main reason for our assembly. We're here because we believe that He works here to strengthen His resurrection life in us.

Point Four

The very structure of our Liturgy suggests how God works to divinize us. The first part of the Divine Liturgy (from Blessed is the kingdom ..." until the Little Entrance) is called the enarxis or assembly rite. Its the time people are gathering. And you know that our Liturgy was compiled from a Middle Eastern perspective because it takes so long to gather: we sing a couple of litanies and antiphons and maybe a couple more if they're slow in coming!

But what is happening? The people are coming together, the Church is taking shape: God is bringing us together as His people. "Once you were no people, but now you are God's people," says St. Peter (1 Pt 2:10). Before the Liturgy we were part of the Church, but weren't really showing it. Now as we gather, God is working to make His people into what the Liturgy calls the "communion of the Holy Spirit". And that's so very important in God's eyes: that we be one in Him. In His great prayer at the supper just before His suffering began, Christ prayed, "O most holy, protect them with Your name which You have given Me: that they may be one even as We are one" (Jn 17:11).

And so the Liturgy brings us together that we can be one Body, praising Him as the kingdom. When we've finally all come together, the deacon raises the Holy Gospel before us and calls out, "Come, let us worship!" We're all together now, so let's do what we're meant to do, what fulfills us as Church: to worship Him who forms us as His people.

He's brought us together and now He teaches us. So the second part of the Liturgy is taken up with the Word. We hear it proclaimed in the epistle and gospel readings and we hear it explained in the homily. This isn't just bible story time: tales of what God did in the past. It's the Lord teaching us now and showing us that in the past He did bring about salvation for all time. He showed Himself, worked signs, filled people with His love. And He does it now: He did it then and He does it again. This is the spirit in which we read Scripture and preach at the Liturgy. He is forming us into a people who know He is with us and who can expect His presence to
transfigure them. Too often we don't expect His presence to 'work', to mean something for our life. The proclamation of the Word is meant to help us see that He does transfigure us in His love.

This is why the preaching is supposed to help us see how God's Word applies both to our personal lives and also to the community's life together. Sometimes the Lord asks His whole Body to go in a certain direction in a given time and place. The homily helps us to uncover and discern our place in God's plan for today. And so this section closes with a litany praying, not for the whole world as before, but for this local unit of His Body. May God's Word touch it and transform it into what He wants it to be.

Finally the climax, the Eucharist which sums up and completes and goes beyond all our expectations in faith. By the power of the Holy Spirit the holy Gifts which have been offered are transformed, so that we could be transformed by sharing in them.

At the highpoint of the Anaphora, or Great Eucharistic Prayer, the priest, who has remembered all that was done for us in Christ and who has offered the Gifts to the Father, calls on the Spirit to transform them. Why?

"... so that, to those who partake of them, they may be for the cleansing of the soul and the remission of sins, for the communion of the Holy Spirit, the fulness of the kingdom of heaven, and for intimate confidence in You: not for judgement or condemnation."

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

This is what we pray for in the Liturgy. This is the transformation we can and should expect to receive in this experience of the kingdom:

1) **Cleansing and remission** - This is the first transformation. It's unseen, and maybe that doesn't seem like much until our eyes of faith are opened and we see how destructive sin is in our relationship to God. We pray that the Eucharist bring us forgiveness, transforming us from people marred by even our daily sins into sharers of His glory.

2) **Communion of Your Holy Spirit** - Fellowship communion, unity, oneness in God by the power of the Spirit, transforming us into a fellowship, not just of mortals, but with God! This is the heart of our understanding of the Eucharist as communion. It fosters a unity of all who share in the one loaf: "Because the loaf of bread is one, we - many though we are - are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor 10:17).

This is depicted in a graphic way when the priest prepares the bread. He places many particles on the diskos representing the Theotokos, the saints and the persons whom we want to remember: all surrounding the Lamb, the center piece which represents Christ and which will be sanctified, actually becoming His Body. It's also why our parishes are traditionally supposed to serve only one Liturgy on any given day: to stress the idea that each community is really one Body in the Lord, one fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

3) **Intimate confidence in You** - When we talked about baptism we said that it makes us members of God's family, the Body of Christ. So often we don't live
that way, as His sons and daughters. We live in fear of God, without the assurance that His presence really does save us and that we really are in His love. More often than not our faith is not confidence, but wishful thinking: maybe God will be with me if I do such and such. And so the third thing we ask for in the Eucharist is to be transformed into a people aware that we are God's sons and daughters. We have been united to God in Christ, but we have to learn to live it. We pray that in the Eucharist our way of looking at God be transformed so that we can rightly take our place as His chosen race. We are sharers in His divine nature through baptism and this is deepened and intensified in the Eucharist which we pray will make us more aware of our real place in His eyes. We can call on God as Father, and we do - knowing that He recognizes us as His own.

Conclusion So let us know in the depths of our hearts that we are heaven on earth when we are Church as we are in the Divine Liturgy: that God is present and active among us as He is in all creation, but also in a special way, to transform us and deify us; that we are called as His people to proclaim His wonders. That's why we are Church, and the Liturgy is the most solemn time when we do this. Let us see the Liturgy, not as a performance put on for our inspiration, but as our common action: us and God working together for the praise of His name and the deification of His believers, the Church. This is what happens in the Liturgy and why it is really 'heaven on earth', our first glimpse of His kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever.

D) Discussion Period

1. At this point the director calls for a 2 minute stretch break, being sure to urge that people not leave the room.

2. After the break, the speaker may answer questions from the floor until the time for the Divine Liturgy. He then invites people to go to the chapel for the experience of 'heaven on earth'.

E) At the Divine Liturgy

The homily at the Liturgy should be very brief, but include the points mentioned in the previous talk. It should apply the Scriptural message to our individual lives and our life as a community, the Melkite Church.
BRUNCH PROCEDURES
Sunday Afternoon, 12:15 PM

A) Before the Meal

Sometime before this meal the assistant director should have rearranged the place cards so that the seating arrangements are different from those at the previous meals, enabling people to spend at least some time with other participants.

Grace should be said as at the previous meals: the director may choose someone (in advance) to begin the grace with their own thanksgiving for blessings received. All continue with the second set of Meal Prayers ("A Book for Prayer", page 29) and the priest's blessing as follows:

1. The cantor calls the group to order by singing the 'Theme Song' of the weekend.

2. The director invites people to open their prayerbooks to page 29. The second set of Meal Prayers will be recited after the personal thanksgiving of NN.

3. The director introduces the person who will give thanks.

4. That person makes the sign of the cross and offers his or her own prayer.

5. The director immediately announces "Page 29" and begins the prayer:

   "The poor shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek the Lord shall praise Him and their hearts shall live forever.
   Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
   Now and always and forever and ever. Amen
   Lord, have mercy (three times).
   Father, give the blessing."

6. One of the priests present gives the blessing, "Christ God, bless ..."

B - After the Meal

When everyone is started on coffee and dessert, the director calls for the attention of the group and makes the following introduction:

"We were very happy to have several people tell us a bit about their experiences in the Theosis Program at yesterday's meals. This is our last sit-down meal together and that makes it the last chance you will have to share some of your own impressions of the weekend.

"We're going to go have a chance to speak according to the parishes represented. Anyone who would like to tell us your impressions of the weekend is welcome to speak. You might want to share what you liked best about the experience, or what you disliked the most. And if there was some idea that was new for you or that especially hit home or that you really disagreed with, tell us that too. The floor is yours."
(The director calls on each parish group in alphabetical order, asking people for their impressions. No one should feel obliged to say something, but they should sense that their contribution is welcome. If people bring forth points which they disagree with, do not enter into a debate with them here. Clarifications can be made at the beginning of the next talk. Try to have representatives from each parish speak, with perhaps five minutes allotted to each parish. Team members should be prepared to note significant contributions for discussion at their meeting after the final service.

At the end of these witnessings, the director thanks those who spoke and then explains the policy for donations, as follows:

"Now it is time for everyone to express in some very tangible ways their evaluation of this weekend experience. First, we are passing out evaluation forms which I would ask you to look over and complete before you leave today. The forms suggest certain areas for you to consider and express yourself. Feel free to add any other comments you might have.

Secondly, as many of you know, the costs for this weekend include a number of things. There is the food and lodging charges made by the retreat house as well as the cost of the materials used in the program. Each of you has already received two books and will receive two more this afternoon. Then there are the promotional and transportation charges associated with bringing you the program as well.

"Some of these expenses are underwritten by the St. Nicholas Guild, but everyone has an opportunity to contribute also. We estimate the per person cost of this weekend to be $_____. If you can afford that, your contribution is most welcome. If you can't, feel free to give whatever you can afford; God provides for His work to be done and we know we can trust Him to accomplish His purposes. And if you can contribute something more than the $_____, that would be most welcome, too. You would be helping your brothers and sisters in a very tangible way.

"You can enclose any donations you wish to make in these envelopes which are being passed out now. If you are writing a check, please make it payable to the 'Office of Educational Services'.

"Anytime this afternoon you can place both your evaluation forms and your offering on the booktable. Thanks again for your participation. Let's close with the second set of prayers after meals on page 30 of 'A Book for Prayer' .

After the prayer, the director reminds the participants that the next talk will begin at 1:15 in the meeting area.
TALK 6 — A CHRISTIAN'S VITAL SIGNS

Sunday Afternoon, 1:00 PM

**Aim:** To enable participants to see the Christian life in terms of communal and personal spirituality.

In our culture, influenced as it has been by the Western thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, religion is seen as a 'private affair', something between me and God. Our perception is very different: Christianity is only complete (catholic) in the Church, the Body of Christ. This talk presents the Church as the locus or surroundings where theosis takes place. The Lord transforms us into and because we are part of His Body.

The talk focuses on three distinct aspects of Church: as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (and hence the Holy Place), as regularly experienced in the domestic Church, the home, and as an active rather than a passive experience (the royal priesthood). The focus in point two, on the home, is expressed in terms of family living and should be seen as primarily a personal witness rather than a conveying of information. As such, it should be given by a lay member of the team who lives this in daily life. By the same token, since point three on the priesthood needs to be proclaimed as the actual Tradition of the Church, it would best be done by a priest. And so this talk may be split between two or three team members, with a lay person giving point two, a priest giving point three, and point one being given by either or by a third team member.

For Further Reading

- ECDD, "With Eyes of Faith" (God With Us Publications, McKees Rocks PA, 1985) – chapter 5, "The Temple of the Living God".

A) Basic Outline

**Introduction:** Signs of a Christian's well being are if he knows who he is, where he lives and what he does for a living.

**Point One:** The Church is where the divine likeness is restored to us:

- The Church can communicate the holiness of God to us because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:13-17);
- We are made holy in the Church through the liturgy, through fellowship and through service;
Point Two: The home is the 'little' or 'domestic' Church:

* Our Christian practice permeates the home as symbolized by the icon corner;

* In the domestic 'liturgy', every aspect of life is sanctified;

* The heart of the domestic church is the commitment to prayer;

* This commitment is bolstered by a lifestyle of sharing what has been given.

Point Three: We do all this because we share in the status of a Royal Priesthood:

* We are full members of the Church, not its 'customers';

* We exercise our priesthood primarily in divine worship;

* We share in this priesthood through chrismation;

* This priesthood is a corporate, not an individual ministry;

* It is in the context of this common priesthood that we understand our particular gifts.

Conclusion: Our call to grow in theosis is to be lived out in the Church, without which Christian life is never complete.
B) Expanded Outline

Introduction: Signs of a Christian's well being are if he knows who he is, where he lives and what he does for a living.

Awareness of these points determines whether a traumatized person is in touch with reality.

We know 'who we are' spiritually when we see ourselves as on the journey of theosis.

Point One: The Church is where the divine likeness is restored to us:

* The Church can communicate the holiness of God to us because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:13-17);

  The Church is neither institution nor social club, but ekklesia (gathering) in the Lord

  It furthers us on the journey by communicating the holiness of God (vine and branches);

  This is possible because the Holy Spirit dwells and works in it.

* We are made holy in the Church through the liturgy, through fellowship and through service;

  All these forms are really the Spirit working.

  He works in worship (Sunday, Pascha, the Great Feasts, the Fasts);

  He binds us together as the Community in the Holy Spirit, the Body of Christ.

  He draws us to be a more faithful image of the Lover of mankind through service.

Point Two: The home is the 'little' or 'domestic' Church:

* Our Christian practice permeates the home;

  We do not compartmentalize our lives; our Christian life is just that: a way of living;

  The icon corner is the 'visualization' of our domestic church;

* In the domestic 'liturgy', every aspect of life is sanctified;

  We participate in liturgical prayer, the celebration of the Church's festal cycle as well as family namedays;

* The heart of the domestic church is the commitment to prayer;

  We pray together as a family, and as parents we pray for our
children:

We cultivate the practice of the Jesus Prayer throughout the day.

* This commitment is bolstered by a lifestyle of sharing what has been given.

We use the money saved by fasting to share with others;

We teach the children to share rather than to hoard;

Point Three: We do all this because we share in the status of a Royal Priesthood:

* We are full members of the Church, not its 'customers';

Baptism has made us one in Christ, fully initiated into His life;

* We exercise our priesthood primarily in divine worship;

Divine worship is a proclamation of God's wonders to which we are all called;

* We share in this priesthood through chrismation;

We are 'other christs' (anointed ones) through chrismation;

* This priesthood is a corporate, not an individual ministry;

It is distinguished from the particular gift of the ministerial priesthood;

* It is in the context of this common priesthood that we understand our particular gifts.

These are always in and for the Body;

These are always individualized and complementary;

Discernment of what our gifts are comes through relationship in the Church, especially with a Spiritual Father;

Conclusion: Our call to grow in theosis is to be lived out in the Church, without which Christian life is never complete.

God wants that we grow together as a united people and that each of us discover and use our particular gifts;

We will shortly discuss one way of furthering our growth: a commitment to continued growth through a parish group.

C) Sample Presentation

Introduction: When a person suffers serious injury of some sort, one of the first things physicians will do is to ask the person questions about his identity, where
he lives or what he does for a living. The doctor knows that if the person knows the answers to these questions, he is in touch with reality; he is oriented in the right direction.

We spoke earlier this weekend about our identity: how we are created in God's image and likeness and how the mysteries of the Church restore in us this likeness that was lost because of sin. Now we want to look at where we live in this likeness, and that is the Church. It is through the Church and only through the Church that we regain this heritage that is rightfully ours. We don't have access to these mysteries outside the Church. That is why St. Augustine would say, "Outside the Church there is no salvation".

Point One: The main question is, at this point, "Who or what is the Church?" The Greek word 'Ekklesia' means a gathering of people. We, who are restored to our heritage of being in the image and likeness of God through the regeneration of baptism are all the Church. We who gather in the Lord's name are the Church, and whether we gather together to celebrate God's love for us by offering joyful praise and thanksgiving, the mysteries of the Church have power in our lives to transform us. For it is precisely in the coming together of God's people, the Church, that His Holy Spirit comes upon us.

Our liturgical services throughout most of the year begin with an invocation of the Holy Spirit:

"O heavenly King, Consoler, Spirit of truth, present in all places and filling all things, the Treasury of blessings and the Giver of life: come, O good One, and dwell in us: cleanse us from all stain and save our souls."

It is precisely because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the faithful that we are the Church and that we continue to be transformed through its mysteries. St. Paul makes it very clear in 1 Cor 3:16-17 that the Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit and that no one is to do anything to harm that temple.

Consider for a moment the power of the Holy Spirit in the believer and in the Church. It is the very power that raised Jesus from the dead! This is why, during the Easter season, we don't invoke (call on) the Holy Spirit to come among us: we are celebrating His presence in the resurrection of Christ! And where the Spirit is, there is the Father and the Son; therefore it is the Trinity we have dwelling in us! This is why Jesus could tell the disciples that the Church would do even greater things than He did, and that is why He could tell us to be holy, even as God the Father is holy. Paul puts it very clearly in Ephesians 3:20-21:

"Now to Him who, by the power at work within us, is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think: to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever!"

Everyone in this room has the very power of God dwelling in us right this minute. We are in the presence of the Holy Spirit who will make us holy, if we deepen our life in Him through the Church in which He dwells.

Now the whole reason for the mysteries, for everything that goes on in the Church, is to make God's people holy. Holiness is the one single goal of the Church
on earth. The sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit has passed down from generation to
generation the fulness of the Gospel in Christ through a number of ways. We have a
vast number of forms of liturgical celebration, for example: a rather intricate system
of fasts, feasts, seasons and times as reflected in our liturgical calendar. We cannot
begin to explain this cycle now, but simply to hint at it. Feel free at this time to
interrupt as we mention these individual commemorations to ask any questions about
them you might have:

1) The original Christian feast, the Lord’s Day: we celebrate it as the eighth
day, the climax of time, through the liturgical cycle of vespers, orthros and the Divine
Liturgy;

2) Pascha, the Feast of Feasts: the ultimate Sunday, which we call the New
Passover and celebrate as a week-long reenactment of the teaching, suffering, death
and resurrection of the Savior;

3) The Twelve Great Feasts which remember the highlights in the life of the
Lord. You find them listed in your prayerbook.

4) The weekly and seasonal fasts. These too are listed in your prayerbook and
suggestions are given as how to keep them.

Again, remember the purpose of this cycle which takes us year in and year out into the
divine plan of redemption: it is to make us holy.

The divine services, especially the Divine Liturgy, are, in the thinking of
our Church, meant to be the climax of a personal Christian life. Without other
elements in that life which draw us to God, the liturgical services become only a show.
The Lord has no use for that kind of worship, as He told the Jews through the prophets
time after time. The service we render in Church must cap a life of service which goes
on all week long.

One of the aspects of the Church and its worship is the fact that the
Church is a Body: one with Christ as the Head (1 Cor 12:12-16) and the bishop as His
visible representative to the faithful. "Where the bishop is, there is the Church," says
St. Ignatius of Antioch. The body is held together by the power of the Holy Spirit. And
the Church continually prays that this unity be deepened and upheld. Every Divine
Liturgy is offered, for example, to bring about the "communion in the Holy Spirit". This
aspect of communion or fellowship is essential to what it means to be Church and to
share in the Spirit’s presence in the Church.

Through the communion or fellowship within the Church – the
relationships in the local community and in the diocese around the bishop – we
experience something of the Spirit’s workings. This is what we pray for at the Liturgy
and that prayer must be backed up by a commitment to the Body, otherwise it really
has no meaning. Being involved in the life of the Church as parish and the Church as
diocese is what makes that prayer real. The more we are involved with one another in
the Church, the more do we experience the working of the Spirit touching us through
the Church. And the more intensely we commit ourselves to the Body, the more
significant do our experiences in it become. Until we open ourselves fully to the life
there, we will not experience much in return. When we do, we will find ourselves in
the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

There is another major dimension of the Christian life which makes our
prayer believable when it is present or incredible when it is absent: and that is our
openness to serve God through works of mercy or service. Christ came to serve, He
said, and we most imitate Him when we are serving others, especially the ungrateful or
unresponding, as He does with us. The commitment of the Church to service makes its liturgical life acceptable to God. It is a sign of the maturity in Christ of the local community when it devotes some attention to serving Christ in the poor.

These three ways, then, are one: the Church expresses its unity in fellowship and its commitment to Christ through service. Then it comes together for the divine service already one in love and ministry to be transformed still further through its liturgical worship.

**Point Two:** In our Tradition there is no separation of Church, home, family, work. We live our life "in the Church" and our home is a "little Church", the domestic Church. Our Church is basically biblical. God revealed Himself in mystery, that is, hidden yet revealed. The mystery revealed is theology, the mystery lived is spirituality, the mystery celebrated is liturgy (the Eucharist, the offices, the sacraments), the prayer of the Church.

As Christ is the image of the Father and reveals the Father to us, so too we are made in His image and must reveal Him to all around us. As we grow and develop in His likeness and we acquire more and more of Him, He will radiate from us and we will naturally do His will. We will share Him with those around us in whatever way His will directs us. When we learn to surrender our will and say, "Thy will be done" and really meant it, we will then live and really live. We will show something of the eternal light in us.

In our homes we have what is known as an Icon Corner. It is a special place set aside where we have an icon or icons, a burning candle or light, the censer, the Bible, holy water and holy oil. It is a special place where we can gather as a family before God to pray and share in His presence. It is the outward sign of our domestic Church. Since Jesus is the light of the world, it is the custom in many of our homes to have a hanging lamp in the icon corner which never goes out, as a sign of His constant presence.

We begin all that we do with the sign of our salvation, the sign of the cross. We sign ourselves and our work with it. Even as I stir the soup or a pudding, I trace the sign of the cross in it. The bread dough is always imprinted with a cross before being left to rise.

The celebration of our patron saints' Namedays or the anniversaries of our christenings are much more important to us than the celebration of our birthday and we celebrate them with prayer and festivity.

Parents bless their children with the sign of the cross in their comings and goings, before bed, before school, etc. We pray for our children, for as it says in the marriage ceremony, the prayers of parents make firm the foundations of marriages.

In our homes we bake the holy bread to be used in the Divine Liturgy for the Eucharist and we offer it for the health and salvation of our loved ones. Bread is used as an offering because it represents life: it is the staff of life. Once consumed, it becomes part of us, our flesh and bones. Thus in presenting our loaf of bread to God, we are in effect offering our life to Him. It is the gift of our love. This bread which we mix and knead and bake ourselves as we pray for our loved ones, is offered at the Liturgy and we receive it back in the Eucharist, now the body and blood of our Savior.

We prepare for the Sunday Liturgy the evening before by reading the
Scripture passages assigned for the day and by beginning a 'quieting down' time to get into the proper frame of mind. The mother usually lights incense and goes through the house censing the holy icons, the holy Bible, the rooms and the people. As in church, so also at home, persons are censed with the fragrant incense because we are temples of the Holy Spirit. We are god-bearers, we are holy.

We also observe a daily cycle of prayer, the same one on which the Church's office is based. Like the Jews before them, the first Christians would pray at specified hours of the day at home or at work. Later on, monks in the monasteries devised formal orders for these prayer times at the First, Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours. Sometimes we simply pause briefly and thankfully at these times. At other times we pray the same prayers as they do in monasteries and convents. And so even time - which, after all, is also a creature of God - is sanctified.

In addition to the daily prayer cycle, there is also the yearly cycle of the Church. As a family we live our lives in the Church, going from feast to feast by way of the days and periods of fasting, always praying with and in the Church. On September 14, for example, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, we bring basil, which we have grown at home, to church to be blessed (legend has it that basil grew at the spot where the holy cross was buried).

We celebrate St. Nicholas' Day on December 6 as a time for gift-giving and storytelling of the tales concerning St. Nicholas. We observe the period before Christmas as a time of fasting, praying and almsgiving as we prepare ourselves for the gift of our Savior.

On the Feast of the Theophany, January 6, we take blessed water from the church to bless ourselves and our homes. It is our custom to drink a drop each day before we set out on our way to work or to school to ask God's blessings on us. We sprinkle it in our homes in times of danger, spiritual or physical.

We fast on Wednesdays throughout the year to remind ourselves that this was the day when the decision was made to arrest Jesus. We fast on Fridays because this is the day on which He was crucified, and, of course, during the Church's other fasting seasons as well: the Great Fast before Pascha, the pre-Christmas period and two shorter periods during the summer.

We teach our children to fast from an early age because, while it is the Church which established the specific times for fasting, it is Jesus Himself who both fasted and expects us to fast. He tells us in the Gospel, "When you fast..." do it this way. He does not say, "If you fast..." The Church sets an ideal for us in terms of fasting and we do our best to achieve it.

Besides the liturgical prayer in the life of our domestic Church, there is also the practice of personal prayer. It is important as we grow in our interior lives, as we become more constantly aware of God's presence within us, that we remember the discipline of regular prayer and the daily reading of Scripture. Prayer as we begin and end each day, prayer as we begin our work, prayer always.

Husbands and wives should pray together daily. Parents should pray with and for their children. Our children should see and hear us pray. They should grow up hearing us thanking and praising God in all things.

We learned Friday night about the Jesus Prayer, practiced until it
becomes part of one's very being, until with each breath one takes, the blessed name of Jesus is constantly invoked.

One way to begin the practice of the Jesus Prayer (actually the constant awareness of the presence of God) is to set aside five minutes three or four times a day to concentrate on God's presence and to repeat over and over again, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner". As we do this daily, it truly becomes an integral part of our lives. We find ourselves waking in the night with the blessed name of Jesus on our lips - at odd times of the day as we drive here and there, as we wait for an appointment or a customer, as we sit in a class: Lord, have mercy ... Jesus ... always there, in our minds, in our hearts and on our lips. Husbands and wives become truly one as they each become one with the Lord and with each other.

Prayer and fasting go together in the Christian life and there is a third important side to our activity, almsgiving. When we fast we identify with those who hunger and use the money which we save on food to provide food for them. At the fasting seasons and sometimes all through the year the Church helps us distribute our alms by collecting food and money for distribution. In this way we live out what the marriage service prayed for us: that we would have a surplus of material goods to share with those in need.

As with fasting, we teach our children that they serve the Lord when they care for those in need. We try to remain available to people who look to us for attention, caring and material help whenever we can, with the prayer that our children learn that all these riches are ours to share, not to hoard for ourselves.

Every person is different, every family is different. And while the Church sets up certain practices as norms or ideals for the domestic Church, we know it does not impose them as obligations in any kind of legal way. But at the same time it knows human nature and how easy it is for us to excuse ourselves from following God's will for us at any given time. And so it recognizes that we need guidance and direction in this effort of growing in theosis. It is most important to seek out someone known to be holy and close to God, someone who has walked this way before you and who can help you and guide you. Your pastor may be that person for you, or he may direct you to someone else. Ask God to lead you to the proper Spiritual Father for you.

Our vocation is to be holy because God is holy. To be holy we must always be aware of the presence of God within us and in the Church. The practices of the home Church, united to those of the whole Body, are meant to make us constantly aware that God is present to us wherever we are, in our families and in the depths of our being.

**Point Three:** We have come to know who we are - people made in the image of God and who are in the process of being deified, restored to the likeness of Christ by grace. We know where we live: in the Church, the fellowship in the Holy Spirit, the Body of Christ; and in the icon corner, the place of private prayer, of Scripture reading, of fasting, of almsgiving, of growing through spiritual direction. Now we have to check on the third of our questions: do we know what we do for a living?

We heard it in this morning's talk: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people He claims for His own to proclaim the glorious works of the One who called you from darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pt 2:9). What is our job, our role in the Body? We are that royal priesthood that God has given the task of proclaiming His wonders. "A kingdom of priests to serve our God" is how
the Book of Revelation puts it (Rev 5:10). That's who we are and why we come together as Church, according to the New Testament.

Many Christians see the Church in a different way. The Church is somehow outside them. They go to it when they want something - a baptism, a wedding, a funeral, or to be saved, to have assurance of heaven. That's not Church, not in the New Testament or in our Tradition, anyway. That's a store: a place where I'm served, what I get what I need then go away to return only when I need a refill on another item. People don't 'belong' to their neighborhood carryout; they're not expected to have a commitment to the local supermarket. Would you die for the A & P? And so when people look at the Church as if it were a store for holiness, they're just not living in the Church as the Lord wants.

The Lord's way is very different: YOU are the chosen race, YOU are the royal priesthood, YOU are the Church and you have the Church's job to fulfill: to proclaim the wonders of God. If you want to be served, go to a store or a restaurant; but if you want to be in the Church, prepare to take up your priestly ministry, your conscious offering.

Now in our society we've come to associate 'proclaiming God' or witnessing with one of two particular types: the Mormon or Jehovah's Witness who knocks on your door promoting his religion or the TV superpreacher like Billy Graham and Pat Robertson or Oral Roberts who approach communicating the Gospel with a little bit of modern showmanship. God bless them all for their zeal, but that's not exactly what we mean by our priestly service of witnessing God.

The first and greatest place where we proclaim God's wonders is at the liturgical services of the Church. What do we do: we sing hymns that speak of God's marvels; the feasts we celebrate make Christ's life present to us again for today; in the mysteries and blessings God works in our proclaiming to make present again for us what we proclaim. We are proclaiming the wonders of Him who called us when we are celebrating in Church. We are acting as the royal priesthood.

But who are we talking to? To whom are we proclaiming these marvels? - First of all, to God. Remember what was said this morning. He's our audience in worship. We are letting Him know how great we think He is (that's praise) and how much we feel He's done for us (that's thanksgiving). We're also talking to ourselves, to one another. Building up each other's faith as we relive the saving acts of Christ among us. We're bearing witness to one another, strengthening our personal commitment and understanding. This is our most important exercise of the royal priesthood.

That sounds fine, but where does it all come from? How did we get this priestly job? We got it, we got to be priests when we were chrismated, when we received the mystery of the Holy Spirit, because it was then that we got to be other Christs, people anointed with the Spirit of God.

The word 'Christ' means 'one anointed' with the Holy Spirit. Christ the Lord was filled with the Spirit in a unique way, by nature in His divinity. We are anointed with His Spirit when we are anointed with chrism in the second mystery of our initiation into Christ which we call chrismation and the West calls confirmation. Notice how all these words come from the same origin: chrismation ... chrism ... Christ. When we are anointed with Christ's Holy Spirit, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, we are made partners with Him in His priesthood. This is why, when our bishops bless the chrism that will be used in this mystery, they pray:
"By the coming of Your holy and adorable Spirit, Lord, make of it a garment of incorruptibility, a perfect seal that imprints on those who receive Your divine bath the right to bear Your godly name and that on Your only begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit so as to be known by You as members of Your family, ... becoming Your own people, Your royal priesthood, Your holy nation stamped with the seal of Your spotless chrism."

Christ's priesthood functions in a special way in those individuals who have received the sacrament of Priesthood; but the whole Church, the entire Body, shares in it too because it is one with Christ who is our Great High Priest.

One big difference between the priesthood of the faithful in which we all share and the ordained priesthood is this: our priesthood is collective. It is the WHOLE BODY which is the priest, not each believer on his own. This is where many Protestant groups have departed from the Tradition of the Church. They say that each believer is a priest, so why have any ordained priests? The historic Churches say that our priesthood is not individual. It is exercised as a body, as a race, as a people according to the Scriptures. St. Peter doesn't say "You are priests", but "You are a priesthood".

And that's why, when we come together for divine worship is when this priesthood is exercised. We gather as a body before the altar of God to tell His wonders. This is our priestly service. Part of our preparing for this ministry or the overflow after it may well be the sharing of our faith with outsiders, but our priesthood as Church is exercised before the altar as we gather in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

We all have a share in the priesthood of Christ as a Body. But as individuals, we have special gifts that the next guy may not have. But even here, these gifts are not just for ourselves. They are given by the Spirit for the good of all, so that the whole Body might be strengthened. Some of us have the gift of the ordained priesthood and they serve as the leaders of the community. And a very important part of their job is to help the rest of us discover what our gifts are and how we can serve God best in the Church. This is what St. Paul means when he says:

"It is he who gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to prepare all God's people for the work of service, to build up the Body of Christ. And so we shall all come together to that oneness of our faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. We shall become mature men, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature."

Eph 4:11-13

Their job is to help us mature as Christians by uncovering and discerning our special gifts. We'll never be mature Christians, as St. Paul says, until we realize our priesthood.

If we don't yet have a sense of what our individual gift for the Body is, that should be one of the things we pray for as we continue to grow together. That's one reason why the ongoing formation we'll talk about in a few minutes is even more
important than what's happened here. It also an important area in which a Spiritual Father is so important. He can help us discern the gifts the Spirit is giving us so that we can grow to maturity in Christ by using them in His Body.

Conclusion: We've been together for a weekend - and that's been good. But our oneness is much deeper than these three days have given us. We're one in Christ, united in His Body, fellow sharers in His priesthood. And He wants us to grow together and develop as a deeply united people, maturely exercising our common priesthood and our individual gifts for the glory of God.

But remember, once we find our special gifts in God's kingdom, then we're bound to use them for the Body. The Spirit's gifts aren't tokens or mementos meant for us to cherish in a kind of spiritual scrapbook, but to be used. That what St. Paul is getting at when he tells the Romans:

"We have gifts that differ according to the grace bestowed on each of us. One's gift may be prophecy; its use should be in proportion to his faith. It may be the gift of ministry; it should be used for service. One who is a teacher should use his gift for teaching; one with the power of exhortation should exhort. He who gives alms should do so generously; he who rules should exercise his authority with care; he who performs works of mercy should do so cheerfully."

Rom 12:6-8

We know who we are - sharers in the divine nature; we know where we belong - in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; we know what we do there - function as sharers in Christ's priesthood. Now let's live it by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

D) Discussion Period

1. The director calls a five minute stretch break.

2. After the break, the cantor can call the group to order by singing the Theme Song of the weekend.

3. The speaker then entertains questions from the floor.

4. At the end of this time the speaker directs each table group to discuss the questions in their workbook, namely:

   * What aspect of the Church's life has been most personally meaningful to you in the past and why?
   * What aspect of the Church's life as presented in the talk is most personally challenging to you and why?
   * What gifts do you feel the Spirit has given you for the building up of the body and how can you use them to serve the Body?

5. Ten minutes before the end of the session the speaker calls time and invites a representative from each table to report on their group discussion to the larger gathering.
6. After these summaries are completed, the speaker invites the group to move to the icon corner for a final prayer, including the reading of Hebrews 10: 21–25 from their workbook.

7. The director notes that everyone is free until 2:45 PM when they are asked to return to the same meeting area.
INVITATION TO COMMITMENT

Sunday Afternoon, 2:45 PM

Aim: To enable parish groups to discuss the desirability of continuing to meet in their parish as a support group, to make a commitment to do so, and to choose a group leader.

The stress throughout this weekend has been that the call to theosis determines the normal Christian life. We see this life as a process, a continuing growth in the Holy Spirit as we become sharers in the divine nature. If this vision is indeed the normal Christian life, the Church's structures should reflect this direction and point to ongoing growth as expected for the believer.

In the Theosis Program, the stress on the ongoing parish groups and periodic days of prayer relates to this vision. The purpose of this talk is to see that participants see the Program more in terms of this ongoing experiences than on the weekend they are completing. We then attempt to facilitate the establishment of a parish group structure in which this ongoing experience can take place.

During the break tables are rearranged by team members according to the number and size of the parish groups on the weekend. Each parish group should be seated at one table. You may need to bring together several tables to accommodate the number, but there should be no more than one grouping for each parish taking part.

On each table place enough copies of "Partakers of Divine Nature" and the accompanying Study Guide for each participant. Have available two copies per parish of the Leader's Guide, the Akathist Hymn and the Jesus Prayer tape for distribution to the leaders selected (one copy being for the parish priest).

A) Basic Outline

Introduction: The Lord is calling us to participate in a process called theosis.

* One weekend can't exhaust the discussion of this life.
* The normal Christian life is an ongoing process.

Point One: The Theosis Program continues in the parish:

* The initial weekend is just a kickoff.
* The parish framework is that of a support-study group.
* The first mini-series for this group is based on the theme of the weekend.
* Everyone receives a text and a study guide to help in reading the assignment.

Point Two: Procedures for meetings:

* The group decides its own meeting schedule.
* People are asked to make a commitment to the entire mini-series.
* Each series ends with evaluation and an invitation to further commitment.
* The Leader's Guide provides the format for meetings.

Point Three: Choosing a leader:

* The group is to choose its own discussion leader;
* The parish clergy are to be resource people;
* In this way particular gifts are recognized and fostered.
* Qualities to discern in choosing a leader.

Point Four: Maintaining the integrity of the group:

* Be comfortable with your format and content before inviting others.
* Remember you may have more motivation than a non-participant.

Conclusion: Directions for the discussion period:

* Three points to be determined.
* Appointment of facilitators.
* Final instructions.

B) Expanded Outline

Introduction: The Lord is calling us to participate in a process called theosis.

* One weekend can't exhaust the discussion of this life.
  The normal Christian life is immeasurably rich.

* Christian life is an ongoing process:
  Process is distinguished from isolated acts.
  This process includes study.

Point One: The Theosis Program continues in the parish:

* This initial weekend is just a kickoff.
  Otherwise it would be counterproductive.

* The parish framework is that of a support-study group.
  Meetings include prayer, discussion of content materials and the experiences of our Christian lives.

* The first mini-series for this group is based on the theme of the weekend.
  This is meant to help us retain what has been said here.

* Everyone receives a text and a study guide to help in reading the assignment.
  The material used is "Partakers of Divine Nature".

Point Two: Procedures for meetings:

* The group decides its own meeting schedule.
  A weekly or biweekly time frame are suggested;
  Sunday morning is discouraged.
  Some follow the six-session format literally; others do not.
* People are asked to make a commitment to the entire mini-series. This affects continuity and fraternal commitment.

* Each series ends with evaluation and an invitation to further commitment. Following courses include a study of Ephesians and the consequences of theosis for personal daily life.

* The Leader's Guide provides the format for meetings. This includes a meeting format as well as prayer forms.

Point Three: Choosing a leader:

* The group is to choose its own discussion leader; The Education Office works with this person in preparing meetings.

* The parish clergy are to be resource people; They help prepare the leader and summarize the meeting content.

* In this way particular gifts are recognized and fostered.

* Qualities to discern in choosing a leader.
  Familiarity with Church Tradition.
  The ability to enable group sharing.

Point Four: Maintaining the integrity of the group:

* Be comfortable with your format and content before inviting others. You need time to develop a definite style before expanding.

* Remember you may have more motivation than a non-participant.

Conclusion: Directions for the discussion period:

* Three points to be determined.
  Whether you wish to form an ongoing group;
  Who will be your leader;
  Your meeting schedule.

* Appointment of facilitators.

* Final instructions.

C) Sample Presentation

Introduction: There are such a breadth to the Christian life, you certainly can't exhaust the discussion of it in a weekend, or in a lifetime for that matter. If this weekend, these couple of days together, is the end of our investigation of what the normal Christian life should be for us, then it was a cheap vacation – a weekend away from home without paying Hilton prices. But that's all it would be.

What we intended to do here was to show that the Christian life was a
process, something that is ongoing, that it doesn't stop. Theosis is a journey, unending until the resurrection of the flesh. Now if we are convinced of that, if we are convinced that this life is a journey, then we have to know that the Lord is calling us to participate in a process. Just as the Christian life is not a question of isolated actions, such as Liturgy from time to time, so too our growth is not a question of an isolated event such as this weekend or any weekend like it. The Lord is calling us to a process which involves our whole life: regular prayer, almsgiving, fasting, working with a spiritual guide to find out where we are and how we can better discern what the Lord may be calling us to, and to study; to deepening our awareness - both in the mind and in the heart - of the richness of this life in Christ which is ours.

**Point One:** To that end this Program was designed not to stop at the end of this weekend, but to continue. In fact this weekend is a sort of kickoff - something to get us interested - certainly not the climax of our work together and our life together. If this, our Church's program of spiritual growth, were just a one shot weekend, it would be making a statement that is opposed to spiritual growth, counterproductive to what we say Christian life is, an ongoing process.

We designed the program to continue in this fashion. You are going home, back to the community in which you live day in and day out, week in and week out. Hopefully we will have opportunities to come back together from time to time, but a gathering like this is not where we normally live. So the program moves now from the weekend into the parish back home.

We have a series of mini-programs prepared for use in the local parishes designed for use by groups which have participated in the weekend. The meetings in these mini-series combine prayer, study and sharing of where we happen to be and where we feel we are going in our personal Christian lives. So the group of fellow parishioners with whom you are now sitting can become a parish study and support group: for prayer, intercession and reflection.

At the moment we have three such mini-series which have already been put together and which are being used in those parishes which previously began the Theosis Program. The first one is based on the content of this weekend. Many people say that they come to a weekend and try to pay attention or take notes, but a lot of things go by or we forget. So we designed the first course to be a kind of review of the theme of the weekend. It's based on this book, "Partakers of Divine Nature", with which some of you may be familiar. There are copies of it for everyone to take home to help review some of the themes we've discussed so far on the weekend.

We have grouped the material in the book into six divisions, which are meant to provide the content for your group meetings. To give some structure to these meetings, we have prepared questions based on the reading material and contained in this Study Guide, which is the second item on your tables. You should expect to read the assigned pages at home and prepare the questions in the Study Guide so that when you come to the meeting you will have something concrete to discuss. Some of the questions are 'content questions' which test how well you understood what the author was saying. Other questions are called 'personal reflection questions' which are concerned with applying this content to our personal lives. Everyone should take a copy of the Study Guide home as well.

**Point Two:** How often do you meet? This is up to each parish group to decide. Of the parishes that are doing this, some choose to meet weekly, other meet every other week. One parish group is meeting every three weeks, but we don't
encourage any longer time span between meetings. You lose continuity because you don't remember what happened last month. Nor would you have the same sense of support and closeness which you would develop with more frequent meetings.

Any time and place is acceptable. However don't plan on meeting before the Sunday Liturgy or any other time frame which demands that you must finish at a certain time. We don't have too good of a reputation for starting things on time, so don't push your luck by assuming you will be able to start and end on the dot. Most parishes have their meeting on a weeknight, generally following the celebration of vespers. It may be a regularly scheduled celebration, or specially offered for the group.

How many meetings are there? Each mini-series is designed to contain six or eight sessions. At the end of a mini-series you are asked to decide if and when you want to continue with the next series. So the scheduling depends on you. Some parishes have kept to the number of sessions indicated. Others, who welcome a more open ended framework, set no limits on their discussion. They prefer to discuss one or two points thoroughly each meeting and so may take twelve to twenty sessions to complete each mini-series. It's up to you. When you have finished the first mini-series, we will evaluate the sessions with you and then invite you to make a commitment to the next one.

We do ask that you make a commitment to participate in the entire mini-series, not just to come to one or two meetings if you have time. We discourage going one week, then coming back three weeks later, skipping two more and then dropping in again. You will never develop the sense of commitment to either your own spiritual growth or the developments of your brothers and sisters in the group if your attendance is going to be erratic like that. Make your initial commitment realistically, then stick to it.

The second mini-course is a study of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Ephesians, like all the epistles, starts with a doctrinal presentation. In it St. Paul talks about theosis, although he uses a different image. Then in the second half of the epistle he tries to show the consequences for personal daily life (relationship, family life, and the struggle with the Enemy). When that is concluded, you will be asked to evaluate the experience and to make another commitment to a mini-series which expands on these same aspects of daily living (our personal inner conflicts, our relationships with others, and our struggle against Satan).

Although, as I say, we have three of these mini-series available, we're only asking you to make a commitment to one of them now. Later on, if you find that this program is good and valuable to your spiritual life, you will have the chance to continue.

To help you conduct the actual session we have prepared this "Leader's Guide" which gives an outline of the structure for each meeting to take. This guide offers a format for the meetings, suggestions for initiating the discussion, points in the book that are particularly important and should be raised in the meeting as well as options for your prayer together. We suggest two forms of prayer in the meeting. One is the Jesus Prayer, which you've already been introduced to. The other is the Akathist to the Name of Jesus.

Point Three: This guide is meant to be used by the leader of the group to organize the meetings. What leader? Each group that decides to continue with this program is asked to choose someone as your discussion leader. To help you get started,
the Office of Educational Services works with the leader, helping him or her to get familiar with the material and the style of the meetings. Generally we do this by telephone. Before each session we would speak with the leader and make sure that they clearly understood the material before meeting with the group. From time to time, whenever possible, we will also visit with your groups, participate in your meetings and contribute in person.

We ask the local clergy to be resource people: to be in the group, but not to be the leaders of the group because, as you know, we can easily monoplasize things, especially when we get going on some of our pet topics. The priest or deacon is asked to participate in several ways: first to work with the leader in mastering the content and preparing the session; second, to attend each meeting where he is to summarize the content of the study section, and give input and cohesion to the study, but we want to see laypeople move into ministry as the leaders of the groups.

You may feel a little shaky about conducting your own group in this way. And the first time or two you will be. The leader will wonder if this is what's supposed to be happening and if they 'got everything in'. But growth comes. Going from group to group we have seen how, by the third or fourth session, they have more confidence. The Lord, who calls us to this process of growth, is with us and helps deepen us if we are faithful to our commitment to Him.

So, if you make a commitment to go with this program, you will be asked to choose a discussion leader. At the end of the last talk we discussed particular gifts which you may have been given by the Spirit to build up the Body. Often we recognize gifts in others before we see them in ourselves. In discerning who may be best suited to serve as a group leader, you should keep the following points in mind:

1) Look for someone who has more familiarity with the Tradition of the Church than others in the group, both in awareness and experience;
2) Look for someone who is able to draw out ideas from others as well as express his or her own: someone who welcomes the contributions of others.

Point Four: One further point: we don't encourage you to invite people to drop in to the meetings, in any casual way. If there are people you would like to involve in this program, wait until the end of the first mini-series, then ask them to observe (not participate in) the last or next to the last session with a view to joining the group for the next mini-series. Casual attendance generally only disrupts the discussions and inhibits the freedom of people to share significantly about their personal lives.

Our need to become comfortable as a group functioning in this way is another reason we don't encourage you to invite outsiders in from the start. If you're anxious to bring others into your group, we suggest that you go through the first course yourselves. Then assess and see what you want to do. In one parish, at the end of this first mini-course, they wanted to bring more people in on it, but they realized that it had taken them all six sessions to get into this. So they decided that they would invite others to join them, and repeat the first course with them. They went back and started over again to be able to bring other people into it.

Another reason we don't encourage asking others at this point is that, going home from this weekend, you have the past two days' experience in the back of your mind supporting your commitment. The folks at home don't; so, unless they're
strongly motivated, their commitment will not likely be as strong as the commitment of those who feel they have experienced something here and want it to continue.

**Conclusion**

What we're asking you to do right now is the following:

1) **Discuss whether or not you want to continue** with this program.

2) If you decide you want to move on in this way, the next step is to choose a **regular leader** with whom our Office of Educational Services will then work.

3) **Decide when and how often you will meet** back home.

You have from now until the closing service at 4 o'clock to discuss these points. To help you with your discussion, I would like to ask NN, NN, NN and NN to serve as facilitators for each group right now. These people are not the permanent discussion leaders. Their function is just to help you discuss the three points I just presented and then to report your decisions to me before the start of the service.

If you decide you wish to form a parish group, but don't have time to answer all the rest of these questions before the service, then your **next step should be to meet at home** and settle these matters before you set a regular study and sharing meeting.

If the majority of the group wants to make this commitment and one or two feel they can't, they shouldn't feel pressured to agree to something unwillingly. It's better to have realistic expectations from the beginning than to make a commitment you can't keep.

As you get into your discussion, if you have any questions needing answers from us, please feel free to call any of the team members over to your table. We will be happy to share the experience of the other parishes who have been using the program to date.

Again, those people I asked to facilitate this discussion, please **report the results to me** before the start of the service. You should tell me:

1) whether or not the group is planning to continue;
2) if it is, who is the chosen leader and when will the group be meeting;
3) if any of these decisions have not been reached, when will the group meet to complete its discussion of these points.

So I'm going to ask you now to take the rest of this time to discuss among yourselves whether you would want to make a commitment to this first course, "Partakers of Divine Nature". When you have completed your discussion, feel free to leave. We will be gathering in the chapel at 4:30 for the final service. You're on your own: we'll see you in the chapel at 4:30.
ARTOKLASIA SERVICE

Sunday Afternoon, 4:30 PM

Aim: To enable participants to celebrate their commitment to the Lord and to one another in a rite of dedication and the sharing of blessed food.

Procedure: Before the service begins, the facilitators of the last table discussion are to have notified the director whether their groups are making commitments to the ongoing program. The director and assistant arrange that all those with this intention sit together, according to their parish groups, and provide each person with a service book and a candle.

When all are seated, before the service begins, the celebrant explains it as follows:

Presentation: In your last session (some of) you expressed the desire to commit yourself to take part in the first mini-series, "Partakers of Divine Nature". In this service you will have the opportunity to express that commitment to the Lord and to one another by establishing a spiritual fraternity among yourselves.

After the initial prayers, NN and NN (the director and assistant) will lead each parish group forward to the table. We will ask you to place your hand on the holy gospel and, in your own words, express quietly your commitment to follow wherever the Lord may be leading you in this program. When everyone in the group has done this, you will return to your seats and the next group will come up, until each group has made its commitment.

After the litany and blessing, we will express our commitment by exchanging the holy kiss as we do on pascha or at forgiveness vespers at the start of the Great Fast. The first person comes up and exchanges the kiss with me, then stand on my left. The second person kisses me, then kisses the first person and stands at his left. In this way we will make a circle around the walls of the chapel giving everyone a chance to greet everyone else. Finally we will bless and partake of the artoklasia bread.

Know that what we do in these rites is our Church's way of sealing the commitment you have chosen to take. If you observe it faithfully, it will be an occasion of spiritual growth for you, leading you along the path of theosis to the One who is calling you to Himself.

(We then begin the service according to the booklets provided. During the singing of the troparia the director and assistant begin leading the parish group to the table, one group at a time and invites them to place their hand on the holy gospel and speak their commitment. When the entire group has done this, they are led beck to their places and the next group brought up until all have finished.

When it is time to exchange the holy kiss, the team members should begin the greeting, so that the rest will see what is to be done.)
When the service is over, the director thanks everyone for their participation, explains the house policy concerning stripping or changing of beds, and wishes everyone a safe trip home.)

Debriefing

After the service, the team members and group leaders should meet for a few minutes to evaluate the weekend, looking at the procedure, the logistics and the way the talks were presented. The director should record these observations and see that team members and the Office get copies.

If anyone feels that there are particular issues concerning any of the participants which should be discussed, this may be done and that information be communicated to the participant's pastor and/or group leader.

The director thanks everyone for their participation and closes with a prayer.
THEOSIS PROGRAM REGISTRATION

"He has bestowed on us the great and precious things He promised, so that through these you who have fled a world corrupted by lust might become sharers of the divine nature."

(2 Peter 1:4)

To register for the next THEOSIS weekend, please indicate your:

Name -

Address - Street # City, State & Zip

Telephone - ( )

Family Status - Married? Children?

Parish -

Occupation -

Please indicate the kind of activities you are currently involved with:

a) in your parish:

b) in the wider community

Please indicate any special dietary needs or other needs you have which we should know to make your weekend a comfortable one:

Arrangements must be finalized by then to your Parish Priest.

. Please return this registration form by
Duplicate this sheet on brightly colored stock and cut up for name tags. Using a marker of a sharply contrasting color, write the participants' names in large letters and their parish in smaller letters on these tags. Insert in plastic sleeve-type badges with pins attached.
WELCOME TO THE THEOSIS COMMUNITY . . .

Once you have gotten settled in your room, please come downstairs and join us for refreshments and for this little game.

The object of this game is to complete a bingo. Each of the squares contains a clue to the personality of one of the participants. Identify the person indicated in the square by asking people about themselves. Don't gossip (ask or offer information about anyone but yourself and the person you're talking to). You will meet some beautiful brothers and sisters in the Lord.

(Use the samples on the following two pages to help design the bingo card based on your weekend's participants.)
WELCOME TO THE THEOSIS COMMUNITY . . .

Once you have gotten settled in your room, please come downstairs and join us for refreshments, and for this little game.

The object of the game is to complete a bingo. Identify the person indicated in the square by asking people about themselves. DON'T GOSSIP (ask or offer information about anyone but yourself and the person you're talking to). You will meet some beautiful brothers and sisters in the Lord.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A brassy lady??</th>
<th>Buys &amp; sells in the temple.</th>
<th>Has time to read ???</th>
<th>Miss Effervescence</th>
<th>Wisdom!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you see her in M<em>A</em>S*H?</td>
<td>&quot;I'm just an ordinary housewife.&quot;</td>
<td>Which is the Pilgrim?</td>
<td>Came to us via Jordan</td>
<td>Our first Father's niece.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl behind the (TV) scenes.</td>
<td>And which is the Stone?</td>
<td>&quot;Would you like to dance?&quot;</td>
<td>Can upholster your tax shelter</td>
<td>Our Dante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computerized Sitto.</td>
<td>His Beatrice</td>
<td>New Eve at Eden Hill.</td>
<td>special gal with special kids.</td>
<td>Lost on the Dolly Madison Highway?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All day &quot;Good Morning&quot; girl.</td>
<td>Triumph!</td>
<td>The Happy Hoopie</td>
<td>Born in Lebanon</td>
<td>My &quot;It isn't fair&quot; Lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was born in October?</td>
<td>Listens to WPST?</td>
<td>Wears glasses?</td>
<td>Can’t swim?</td>
<td>Watches <em>Saturday Night Live</em>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detective story fan?</td>
<td>Eats natural foods?</td>
<td>Plays JV or varsity sports this year?</td>
<td>Weighs under 200 kg?</td>
<td>Believes in women’s lib?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens to The Knack?</td>
<td>Goes camping?</td>
<td>Has 3-inch scar?</td>
<td>Lived in another country?</td>
<td>Won first place in a contest?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Ice-Breaker Squares**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>SAND</th>
<th>HURRY</th>
<th>ME</th>
<th>QUIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EZZZIII</td>
<td>TOUCH</td>
<td>MOTH CRY CRY CRY</td>
<td>BLACK COAT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>KNEE LIGHT</td>
<td>MAN BOARD</td>
<td>HE'S H I M S E L F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>READING</td>
<td>GROUND FEET FEET FEET FEET FEET FEET</td>
<td>ROAD A D</td>
<td>ZERO M.D. Ph.D. LL.D.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEAR LONG</td>
<td>DICE DICE</td>
<td>ECNALG</td>
<td>CYCLE CYCLE CYCLE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLIAN OTIC</td>
<td>TOWN</td>
<td>II O II</td>
<td>STAND I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Example:* 

**TAKE TAKE**

[Double-take]
Duplicate this sheet on brightly colored stock and trim for use as placecards in the dining room.
THEOSIS EVALUATION

GENERAL COMMENTS:

1. What was the personally most rewarding aspect of the weekend? Why?

2. What was the personally least rewarding aspect of the weekend? Why?

3. Other general observations:

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS:

I found the content of the talks new to me in the following area(s):

contrary to what I believed in the following area(s):

too difficult in the following areas:

I felt the following elements were: just right other (specify)

a) schedule as a whole
b) get acquainted time
c) discussion periods
d) meals
e) prayer forms: Jesus Pr.
   psalms
f) services: Confession
   Orthros
   Liturgy
   Commitment Ser.

FOR THE FUTURE: (please check)

___ I would be willing to promote this program in my parish.
___ I would be willing to promote this program in another parish.
___ I would be interested in participating in future weekends as a discussion leader.
___ as a helper (cook, etc.)
___ as a speaker.

Signed: