



GROWING SPIRITUALLY TOGETHER IN THE FAMILY AND THE PARISH

by

Fr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou, M.Div., Ph.D.

GOALS & PRIORITIES FOR OUR LIFE

Individuals have priorities & goals ???

Families have priorities & goals ???

Parishes have priorities & goals ???

What are the priorities for yourself?

What are the priorities for your family?

What should be the priorities for our Parish?

How do we achieve these goals?

What about Spiritual goals?

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Terminology: Are we speaking the same language?

Spiritual vs Physical

Spiritual vs Material

Spiritual vs Secular

What is the Ultimate Purpose of God for us?

We are created "in God's Image" so that we may grow "in His Likeness". God's Ultimate Goal for us is "to become perfected in His Likeness" as members of His Kingdom (theosis (θέωσις)-deification).

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission Statement

Our Parish is the local eucharistic community of the Church in this locality;

The aims and purposes of our Parish are to keep, practice and proclaim the Orthodox Christian Faith pure and undefiled.

The diakonia (ministry) of the Parish includes proclaiming and teaching the Gospel in accordance with the Orthodox Faith; sanctifying the faithful through God's grace in worship, the Divine Liturgy and the other sacraments; enhancing its parishioners' spiritual life; and adding to the numbers of the faithful by receiving persons into the Church through instruction, Baptism and/or Chrismation. In addition, the Parish has established educational and philanthropic activities to foster the aims and mission of the Parish and to edify its parishioners in the Faith and ethos of the Church.

The ultimate goal of our Parish is to lead its members into the Kingdom of God.

See UNIFORM PARISH REGULATIONS. CHAPTER ONE, ARTICLE 15

MISSION OF OUR PARISH

THE PARISH OFFERS AND WE RECEIVE

Our Parish is the local **eucharistic community of the Church in this locality;**

The aims and purposes of our Parish are to keep, practice and proclaim the Orthodox Christian Faith pure and undefiled.

The diakonia (ministry) of the Parish includes **(1) proclaiming and teaching the Gospel in accordance with the Orthodox Faith; **(2) sanctifying the faithful** through God's grace in worship, the Divine Liturgy and the other sacraments; **(3) enhancing its parishioners' spiritual life**; and **(4) adding to the numbers of the faithful by receiving persons into the Church** through instruction, baptism and/or chrismation. In addition, the Parish has established educational and philanthropic activities to foster the aims and mission of the Parish and to **edify its parishioners in the Faith and ethos** of the Church.**

See UNIFORM PARISH REGULATIONS. CHAPTER ONE, ARTICLE 15

The ultimate goal of our Parish is to lead its members into the Kingdom of God.

THE PARISH ENVIRONMENT HELPS US GROW SPIRITUALLY AS PERSONS

The Spiritual Struggle

- It provides **Worship**: Personal prayer & participation in the **Eucharist**
- It provides **the Proclamation of the Gospel** (the Good News)
- It provides opportunities of **Practicing the Faith** - Moving from Theory to Action
- It provides **Sanctification** (through the Holy Sacraments)

All this is part of our "*Spiritual Struggle*" ("Ασκησις")

Over time, these activities will have a major effect on our souls.

WE CAN HELP OURSELVES GROW SPIRITUALLY-*The Spiritual Struggle . . . Continued*

- **Self examination**
- **Close relationship with a spiritual father**
- **Frequent confession of sins**
- **Growing in humility**
- **Spiritual reading - Scriptures - Spiritual books**
- **Participating in spiritual conversations (like tonight)**
- **Going on pilgrimages to holy places (like monasteries)**
- **Associating with people who are also engaged in their own spiritual growth effort**

All this is part of our "*Spiritual Struggle*" ("Ασκησις)

Over time, these activities will have a major effect on our souls

THE ROAD TO THE KINGDOM

Three major stages in our spiritual development

The Results of the Spiritual Struggle

a. Κάθαρσις Catharsis- Purification

We attain this by surrendering to God in obedience, humility and repentance. The Sacrament of Confession helps us reach purification of the heart and mind and perfection in humility.

b. Φωτισμός Photismos- -Illumination

As we are cleansed from sin we are illumined and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We become Temples of the Holy Spirit.

c. Θέωσις Theosis - deification - ultimate state of human perfection

We seek to experience this by joining to God spiritually (in prayer) and also physically through our participation in the Holy Eucharist, the deified Body and Blood of the Risen Christ, as we become one with Him.

In this process of ascesis we can attain **ἀπάθεια- apatheia** (passionlessness). We do not uproot the passions, but take control over them.

All of this requires effort on our part - **δώσε αίμα καί πάρε πνεύμα (give blood and receive spirit)**- as we try, we draw the grace of God to help us.

THE ROLE OF THE HOME

- ***What things to do in the home***

- 1. Prayer at home - establishing a proskynetarion**
- 2. Censing at home on a regular basis**
- 3. Making a connection with our saint - learning about his/her life, celebrating our saint's name, asking for intercessions from our saint**
- 4. Learning to make Prosforo for the Liturgy**
- 5. Learning to make kolliva & artoklasia for feast-days**
- 6. Learning to make kolliva for memorials of relatives**
- 7. Having the priest come to bless our home**

Personal effort is required - This is the "Synergia" of man with God for the salvation of man.

Over time, these activities will have a major effect on our souls

FROM THE HOME TO THE PARISH

- **Liturgical Participation brings about spiritual growth (*practical approach*)**
 - 1. Learning of Hymns and singing along**
 - 2. Proper preparation and frequent participation in the Eucharist (receiving Holy Communion)**
 - 3. Being in tune with the Worship Cycle of the Church - *Keeping up with the Feasts and attending services***
 - 4. Participating in the Holy Week Services**
 - 5. Dedicating an Icon, a Censor, a Chalice or other Liturgical vessel through a donation**
 - 6. Offering Time, Talent & Treasure for God's work**
 - 7. Taking care of the poor, the sick and those in need**
 - 8. Bringing the Gospel to those who have not heard it**

Over time, these activities will have a major effect on our souls

SPIRITUALITY OF THE PARISH

- ***Our Personal growth affects the parish growth!***

- 1. As we grow spiritually as persons our parish grows spiritually as well, as a community and as a family.**
- 2. More people become examples of faith and dedication to God for others.**
- 3. More children receive a deeper faith from the adults who now teach them by the word and by their life.**

**Personal effort brings the presence of the Holy Spirit -
The "Synergia" of man brings about the Grace of God
to the whole community.**

*The Parish is the Sum of the total of each
one of us. We shape the Life of the Parish as
we shape ourselves, one at a time!*

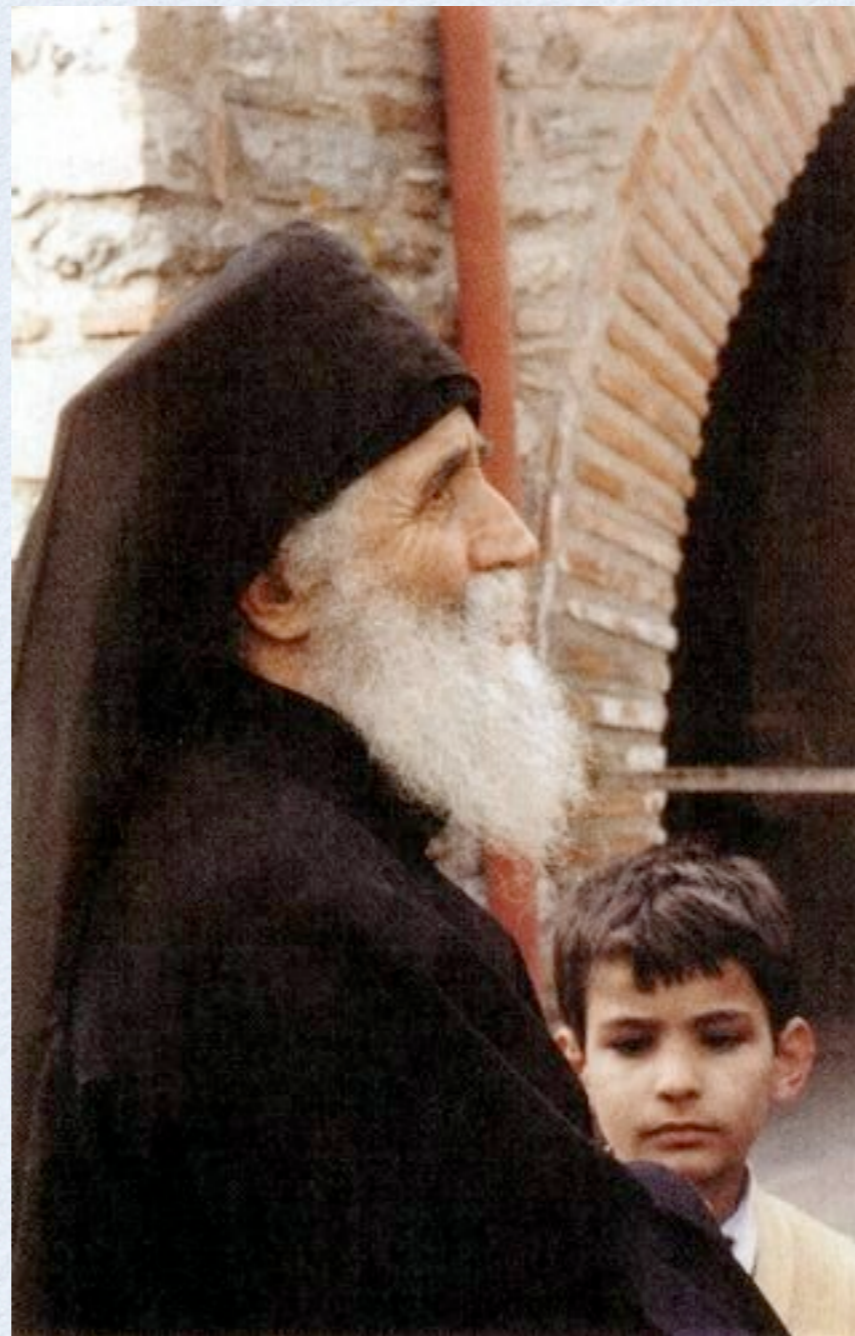
The Parish - The Center of our Life

- Parish Provides ideal environment for growth but also testing (δοκιμασία) for all of us throughout the year.
- Holiness is not far off if we remain steadfast in the spiritual struggle!



Contemporary Examples of Holiness

- The modern holy men and women - Fr. Paisios, Fr. Porphyrios, Mother Gavriilia - They provide proof of God's work in the world today



The Heroes of the Faith

They were tested and they passed the test

- The Saints - old and new - are prime examples of people who struggled, who fought the good fight and won the crown of victory.



- Saints represent restored humanity in its ultimate perfection

And the "Struggle" continues
... until the Kingdom of
God is revealed in its
fullness!