Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

During the month of September, we celebrate so many beautiful feasts and commemorations. Since it is the beginning of the Ecclesiastical New Year, I think it is appropriate to highlight our Archdiocese’s pastoral guidelines for the sacraments and sacramental acts of our Church.

Please read this information carefully. I’m always available to discuss any questions you have—please e-mail, call, come to my office hours, or make an appointment. This information from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Yearbook is also available online at www.goarch.org/archdiocese/yearbook.

The Church doesn’t hold these positions arbitrarily, but out of love and with a theological understanding of how God works in our lives. These guidelines are not obstacles to get around, but arrows to follow for redemption. The Church is like a mother guiding her children to grow closer to God.

– Fr. Ephraim Ehrs

Pastoral Guidelines: Sacraments, Services & Orthodox Christian Living

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PHRA | The Bridge

PASTORAL GUIDLINES

CHURCH POSITIONS REGARDING THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

Rev. Dr. Stanley S. Harakas
Archbishop Iakovos Professor of Orthodox Theology, Emeritus, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

The Sanctity of Human Life
A major and overarching concern of the Church arises with its commitment to the God-given sanctity of human life. Some of the developments of the biological manipulation of human life, though promising and amazing therapeutic achievements, may also be understood as undermining respect for the integrity of human existence. Others may be seen as providing new means of healing human illness. Discerning the difference is the challenge the Church faces in developing its teaching on these newly appearing issues.

Human Life
The Church’s teaching about human life is based on Holy Tradition, including the Scriptures as a primary resource and the ongoing teaching and interpretation of the Orthodox Faith. Life is a gift of God in the formation of the created world. All life is precious, but human life is uniquely created by God in the “image and likeness of God.” Human life as such deserves deep respect and individual human beings are to be treated in accordance with their inherent human dignity.

Thus, racism, unjust prejudicial treatment of men and women, genocide, forms of sexual exploitation, domestic violence, child abuse, rape, theft or destruction of private property, deceptions and deceit, environmental plunder and other such unethical behaviors violate the human dignity of others. Human life as a gift of God should be respected. Some specific issues are the following:

Donation of Organs
Although nothing in the Orthodox tradition requires the faithful to donate their organs to others, nevertheless, this practice may be considered an act of love, and as such is encouraged. The decision to donate a duplicate organ, such as a kidney, while the donor is living, requires much consideration and should be made in consultation with medical professionals and one’s Spiritual Father. The donation of an organ from a deceased person is also an act of love that offers the recipient a longer, fuller life. Such donations are acceptable if the deceased donor had willed such action, or if surviving relatives permit it providing that it was in harmony with the desires of the deceased. Such actions can be approved as an expression of love and the self-determination of the donor. In all cases, respect for the body of the donor should be maintained.

Organ transplants should never be commercialized nor coerced nor take place without proper consent, nor place in jeopardy the identity of the donor or recipient, through, for example, the use of animal organs. The death of the donor should never be hastened in order to harvest organs for transplantation to another person.

Medical Developments and the Church
With high frequency, new developments in the area of the life sciences appear in our technologically advanced culture. The Church welcomes efforts and innovations that contribute to the healing of human diseases. Yet, many of these advances raise moral questions. Some of the Church’s responses to these developments are based on older issues for which the Church has clear and unambiguous guidelines. Other responses are not so evident. Continued...
PASTORAL GUIDLINES

Thus, many of these developments pose challenges to Orthodox Christian spiritual concerns and moral values. In numerous cases, the Church is still in the process of clarifying its response. The following serve to indicate the general positions and direction of thought in the Orthodox Church:

Sexuality
The Orthodox Church recognizes marriage as the only moral and spiritually appropriate context for sexual relations. Thus, all other forms of sexual activity such as fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, pornography, all forms of prostitution, and similar forms of behavior are sins and as such are inappropriate for the Orthodox Christian. Marriage is only conducted and recognized in the Orthodox Church as taking place between a man and a woman. Same-sex marriages are a contradiction in terms. The Orthodox Church does not allow for same-sex marriages.

Abortion
The Church from the very beginning of existence has sought to protect “the life in the womb” and has considered abortion as a form of murder in its theology and canons. Orthodox Christians are admonished not to encourage women to have abortions, nor to assist in the committing of abortion. Those who perform abortions and those who seek them are committing an immoral deed, and are called to repentance.

Suicide
Suicide, the taking of one’s own life, is self-murder and as such, a sin. More importantly, it may be evidence of a lack of faith in our loving, forgiving, sustaining God. If a person has committed suicide as a result of a belief that such an action is rationally or ethically defensible, the Orthodox Church denies that person a Church funeral, because such beliefs and actions separate a person from the community of faith. The Church shows compassion, however, on those who have taken their own life as a result of mental illness or severe emotional stress, when a condition of impaired rationality can be verified by a physician.

Autopsy
When a person dies for reasons that are uncertain, a qualified medical examiner may, with the permission of the next of kin, perform an autopsy to determine the cause of death. In some states, this is required by law. In all cases, however, the Orthodox Church expects that the body of the deceased be treated with respect and dignity.

Many numbers of people, you say, are suffering every kind of adversity and from evil men...But the man who cries out against evil men, who does not pray for them, will never know the grace of God...

If you would know the Lord’s love for us, hate sin and wrong thoughts, and day and night pray fervently...

If Jesus commands us to love one another and to love our enemies, to pray for them, then we must do this. It begins by simply doing it, and trying to do it with as much love as possible, even if that is but a small amount of love.

– St. Silouan the Athonite, celebrated September 24
(From Wisdom from Mount Athos)
WEDDINGS

For the union of a man and woman to be recognized as sacramentally valid by the Orthodox Church, the following conditions must be met:

1. The Sacrament of Matrimony must be celebrated by an Orthodox Priest of a canonical Orthodox jurisdiction, according to the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, in a canonical Orthodox Church, and with the authorization of the Archbishop or Metropolitan.

2. Before requesting permission from the Archbishop or his Metropolitan to perform the marriage, a Priest must verify that: a) neither of the parties in question is already married to another person, either in this country or elsewhere; b) the parties in question are not related to each other to a degree that would constitute an impediment; c) if either or both parties are widowed, they have presented the death certificate(s) of the deceased spouse(s); d) if either or both of the parties have been previously married in the Orthodox Church, they have obtained ecclesiastical as well as civil divorce(s); e) the party or parties who are members of a parish other than the one in which the marriage is to be performed have provided a certificate declaring them to be members in good standing with that parish for the current year; and f) a civil marriage license has been obtained from civil authorities.

3. No person may marry more than three times in the Church, with permission for a third marriage granted only with extreme oikonomia.

4. In cases involving the marriage of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians, the latter must have been baptized, in water, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Church cannot bless the marriage of an Orthodox Christian to a non-Christian.

5. The Sponsor (koubaros or koumbara) must provide a current certificate of membership proving him or her to be an Orthodox Christian in good standing with the Church. A person who does not belong to a parish, or who belongs to a parish under the jurisdiction of a bishop who is not in communion with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, or who, if married, has not had his or her marriage blessed by the Orthodox Church, or, if divorced, has not received an ecclesiastical divorce, cannot be a sponsor. Non-Orthodox persons may be members of the wedding party, but may not exchange the rings or crowns.

Days When Marriage Is Not Permitted

Marriages are not performed on fast days or during fasting seasons or on the feasts of the Church, specifically: September 14 (Exaltation of the Holy Cross), December 13-25 (Nativity), January 5 and 6 (Theophany), Great Lent and Holy Week, Pascha (Easter), Pentecost, August 1-15 (Dormition Fast and Feast), and August 29 (Beheading of St. John the Baptist). Exceptions can only be made with the permission of the respective hierarch.

Inter-Christian Marriages

It is a fact that, the more a couple has in common, the more likely they are to live together in peace and concord. Shared faith and traditions spare couples and their children, as well as their extended families, many serious problems, and help to strengthen the bonds between them. Even so, the Orthodox Church will bless marriages between Orthodox and non-Orthodox partners, provided that:

1. The non-Orthodox partner is a Christian who has been baptized, in water, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and

2. The couple should be willing to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and raise and nurture them in accordance with the Orthodox Faith.

A baptized Orthodox Christian whose wedding has not been blessed by the Orthodox Church is no longer in good standing with the Church, and may not receive the Sacraments of the Church, including Holy Communion, or become a Sponsor of an Orthodox Marriage, Baptism or Chrismation.

A non-Orthodox Christian who marries an Orthodox Christian does not thereby become a member of the Orthodox Church, and may not receive the Sacraments, including Holy Com-
PASTORAL GUIDLINES

munion, or be buried by the Church, serve on the Parish Council, or vote in parish assemblies or elections. To participate in the Church’s life, one must be received into the Church by the Sacrament of Baptism or, in the case of persons baptized with water in the Holy Trinity, following a period of instruction, by Chrismation.

Inter-religious Marriages
Canonical and theological reasons preclude the Orthodox Church from performing the Sacrament of Marriage for couples where one partner is Orthodox and the other partner is a non-Christian. As such, Orthodox Christians choosing to enter such marriages fall out of good standing with their Church and are unable to actively participate in the life of the Church. While this stance may seem confusing and rigid, it is guided by the Orthodox Church’s love and concern for its member’s religious and spiritual well-being.

Prohibited Marriages
The following types of relationships constitute impediments to marriage:
1. Parents with their own children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren.
3. Uncles and aunts with nieces and nephews.
4. First cousins with each other.
5. Foster parents with foster children or foster children with the children of foster parents.
6. Godparents with godchildren or godparents with the parents of their godchildren.

DIVORCE
The parish priest must exert every effort to reconcile the couple and avert a divorce. However, should he fail to bring about a reconciliation, after a civil divorce has been obtained, he will transmit the petition of the party seeking the ecclesiastical divorce, together with the decree of the civil divorce, to the Spiritual Court of the Archdiocesan District or Metropolis. The petition must include the names and surnames of the husband and wife, the wife’s surname prior to marriage, their addresses, the name of the priest who performed the wedding, and the date and place of the wedding. The petitioner must be a member of the parish through which he or she is petitioning for divorce. Orthodox Christians of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese who have obtained a civil divorce but not an ecclesiastical divorce may not participate in any sacraments of the Church or serve on the Parish Council, Archdiocesan District Council, Metropolis Council or Archdiocesan Council until they have been granted a divorce by the Church.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

After Holy Communion, children ages five and up—including altar servers!—are dismissed for Sunday Church school in the back of the hall. Class lasts until 11:45. This year, Georgia Maheras is joining Pres. Aimee in teaching. We’re asking parents with children ages 5–7 to sign up to assist with the class once a month.

If younger children wish to participate or sit in, one parent should remain with the child. We are also re-stocking the “wiggle break” shelf with books, toys and crayons for preschoolers.

We sometimes work as together as one group, but usually split into two smaller groups. Students have a quick snack, put their offerings in the safe, and track their attendance with stickers. We’ll continue to memorize hymns, prayers, and Bible verses. Even the youngest students can do it! This fall, we’re starting with a unit on the Old Testament, meeting Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, and Elijah. Before Christmas, we’ll focus on several saints’ lives, and then prepare for our pageant.

Last year, about 30 children came to class on at least one Sunday, and we averaged 8 children per week. Work, weather, and distance understandably make it hard to get to church every Sunday, but as you plan your schedule for sports and other activities, please make the same level of commitment to your family’s spiritual development and religious education!
PASTORAL GUIDLINES

BAPTISMS
A person who wishes to sponsor a candidate for Baptism or Chrismation must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing and a supporting member of an Orthodox parish. A person may not serve as a godparent if the Church has not blessed his or her marriage or, if civilly divorced, he or she has not been granted an ecclesiastical divorce, or for any other reason he or she is not in communion with the Orthodox Church.
Baptisms may not be performed during Holy Week or on any of the Great Feastdays of the Lord.

FUNERALS
Funeral services are permitted on any day of the year, except for Sundays and Holy Friday, unless permission is granted by the Archbishop or Metropolitan.

MEMORIALS
Memorial services may not be chanted from the Saturday of Lazarus through the Sunday of Thomas, on any Feastday of the Lord or any Feastday of the Theotokos.

FASTING
Just as there are times for feasting, there are also times set aside for fasting. During these periods, certain foods are prohibited. These are, in order of frequency of prohibition, meat (including poultry), dairy products, fish, olive oil and wine. Fruits, vegetables, grains and shellfish are permitted throughout the year. Of course, the Orthodox Church never reduces the practice of fasting to a legalistic observance of dietary rules. Fasting, that is not accompanied by intensified prayer and acts of charity, inevitably becomes a source of pride. The Church also recognizes that not everyone can fast to the same degree, and assumes that individual Christians will observe the fast prescribed for them by their Spiritual Fathers.
The following are fasting days and seasons:
1. All Wednesdays and Fridays, except for those noted below;
2. The day before the Feast of Theophany (January 5);
3. Cheesefare Week (the last week before the Great Lent, during which meat and fish are prohibited, but dairy products are permitted even on Wednesday and Friday);
4. Great Lent (from Clean Monday through the Friday before Lazarus Saturday, olive oil and wine are permitted on weekends);
5. Great and Holy Week (note that Great and Holy Saturday is a day of strict fasting, during which the faithful abstain from olive oil and wine),
6. Holy Apostles' Fast (from the Monday after All Saints' Day through June 28, inclusive);
7. Fast for the Dormition of the Mother of God (August 1-14, excluding August 6, on which fish, wine and olive oil are permitted);
8. Beheading of St. John the Baptist (August 29),
9. Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14); and
10. Nativity Lent (November 15-December 24, although fish, wine and olive oil are permitted, except on Wednesdays and Fridays, until December 17).
The following are fasting days on which fish, wine and olive oil are permitted:
1. The Feast of the Annunciation (March 25, unless it falls outside the Great Lent, in which case all foods are permitted);
2. Palm Sunday;
3. The Feast of the Transfiguration (August 6); and
4. The Feast of the Entry into the Temple of the Mother of God (November 21).
On the following days, all foods are permitted:
1. The first week of the Triodion, from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee through the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, including Wednesday and Friday;
2. Diakainisimos (or Bright) Week, following the Sunday of Pascha,
3. The week following Pentecost; and
4. From the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord (December 25) through January 4.
Parish Ministry Directory

Clergy

Rev. Fr. Ephraim Ehrs, Presbyter
FrEphraimEhrs@mail.goarch.org
Mobile (217) 621-8260
Home (802) 899-0629

Rev. Protopresbyter Robert Athas,
Retired

Parish Council
Officers & Members

President
John Tampas (864-6645)

Vice President
Nicholas Pitt (434-2493)

Secretary
Paul Henninge (660-8332)

Treasurer
David Hunt (619-565-5293)

Eleni Churchill (660-0453)
Angelike Contis (899-2893)
George Hatgen (864-9839)
(Honorary member)
Eric Jasinski (829-5496)
Greg Lambesis (524-3840)
Jacqueline Maria (862-7372)
Sotos Papaseraphim (878-1163)
Nectar Rorris (863-4375)

Education & Youth

Sunday Church School Director
Presvytera Aimee Ehrs
aimee.ehrs@gmail.com
(217) 621-8260

Georgia Maheras, Sunday Church
School Teacher
Theodora Contis, Greek Language
Tammy Valadakis, Greek Dance

Philoptochos Officers
& Members

President
Presvytera Anthe Athas (865-4416)

Vice President
Maria Michaelides (878-3933)

Treasurer
Theodora Contis (899-2893)

Secretary
Tammy Valadakis (583-3880)

Helen Costopoulos (864-5661)
Aleka Michaelides (862-3803)
Maria Papaseraphim (878-1163)
Constance Thomas (864-9512)
Voula Zontanos (878-5475)

Mailings Volunteer
Pat Oleszkiewicz

Music Ministry

Choir Director
Presvytera Anthe Athas

Cantor
Vasilios Contis

George Bennis
Alina Colondres
Theodora Contis
Zoe Griffing
Paul Henninge
Aleka Michaelides
Maria Michaelides
Mariana Moscin
Adriana Putregai
Constance Thomas

Order of AHEPA

President
Gregory Lambesis

Altar Servers
Thomas Dede
Justin Griffing
Nicholas Rorris

Sponsor of this issue of
The Bridge • Η ΓΕΦΥΡΑ

SPONSORS NEEDED! This newsletter is our main outreach ministry, sending the message of faith & community to all the members of our parish & others. As a sponsor, you become an important partner in this ministry. Donation: $50 or more. Please send the following information to Fr. Ephraim:

☐ Yes! I will sponsor an issue of THE BRIDGE • Η ΓΕΦΥΡΑ.

Name ____________________________________________________________

In honor or memory of / To celebrate ____________________________________

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Legacy & Sponsorship Opportunities

Our parish is growing and becoming more active—and we’re realizing that we are in need of several substantial new and replacement items.

We thank Philoptochos for actively and generously looking to many of our church’s needs, such as restoring and repairing iconography, providing new altar cloths for Pascha, and for countless other material contributions and monetary donations over the years.

Yet we also have many opportunities for individuals and families to designate gifts in honor of loved ones, or even to give anonymously. Fr. Ephraim and the Parish Council have identified the following needs, among others:

- A new gilded Gospel (Evangelion) cover and book from Holy Cross Orthodox Press (has English/Greek with Sundays, major feast days and weekday readings) ($1,000–$3,000)
- Two gilded Epistle (Apostolos) covers and books, one in English, one in Greek ($500–$900 per book)
- New baptismal font, or sponsorship for refinishing our current font ($3,000–$8,000)
- Two matching icon stands ($500–$1,000 each)
- Two new censers, one with and one without bells ($200–$500 per censer)
- Twelve Great Feast icons set and/or Holy Week set ($900–$1,500 per set)
- Large feast day icons of major saints, for processions and veneration, e.g., St. Demetrios, St. George, St. Nectarios, the Evangelists, the Holy Apostles, Church Fathers and Mothers, Great Martyrs ($50–$100 per icon)

Please contact Fr. Ephraim to discuss ways you can make a lasting contribution to the beauty of worship in our church!

Parish Council News

The Parish Council met on August 11, 2014.

The Treasurer’s report revealed a balance of $22,582 in the operating account and $76,248 in the money market (camp) account. No updates were available for the Cunavells, Sentinel and community center accounts.

Final plans were arranged for the Council retreat in September. Four breakout sessions were scheduled for the following topics: environmental, capital projects, stewardship and holistic fellowship. Chairs for each of these discussions were appointed.

In view of the past year’s Council resignations, a review of members’ terms revealed that six positions will be up for election at the end of 2014.

The Council approved a proposal from Advanced System Design for $3,031 for a church audio system.

The building committee reported that the slate roof repairs of the church had been completed. The committee is awaiting bids for repairs to the parish house roof and for insulation of the parish house.

The education committee revealed plans for a celebration by the Sunday school program prior to Sunday school starting in mid-September.
Philoptochohs News & Announcements

The Philoptochohs Society is the official philanthropic organization of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Thanks to all the women who supported our FESTIVAL PASTRY SALE by baking their pastries, coming to the Community Hall numerous times to help with the preparation and being there for the sale at the Festival. Thank you also to all of you who, though you couldn't bake, gave cash donations and purchased pastry. God bless you all.

♥♥♥

Mark your calendars:

Sunday, September 8 – Philoptochohs meeting

Sunday, September 14 – Philoptochohs Coffee Hour and tray for Hellenic College – Holy Cross School of Theology

Sunday, October 5 – Next regular meeting

Saturday, November 8 – Next BAKE SALE

PSALM 3

From the Six Psalms of Orthros/Matins

O Lord, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
2 many are saying of me,
there is no help for him in God. Selah

3 But thou, O Lord, art a shield about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.
4 I cry aloud to the Lord,
and he answers me from his holy hill. Selah

5 I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, for the Lord sustains me.
6 I am not afraid of ten thousands of people
who have set themselves against me round about.

7 Arise, O Lord!
Deliver me, O my God!
For thou dost smite all my enemies on the cheek,
thou dost break the teeth of the wicked.

8 Deliverance belongs to the Lord;
thy blessing be upon thy people! Selah

CHOIR REHEARSALS

Saturday, September 6
9:30–11:30 am

Saturday, October 25
9:30–11:30 am

Saturday, December 6
11:30 am for Christmas & Epiphany
(after liturgy for St. Nicholas & coffee)
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<td>5:30 pm – Vespers followed by Bible Study</td>
<td>2:00–5:00 pm – Fr. Ephraim’s office hours</td>
<td>6:00 pm – Small Paraklesis (Moleben)</td>
<td>9:30–11:30 – Choir rehearsal 12:00 pm – Orthodoxy 101 5:00 pm – Vespers</td>
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<td><strong>Winter Hours Begin</strong> 9:00 am – Orthros 10:00 am – Liturgy 40-day memorial for Cheryl Hanna Philoptochos meeting Coffee hour: Dominic, Jurie &amp; Adriana 7:00 pm – Great Vespers</td>
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<td>Nativity of the Theotokos 9:00 am – Orthros 10:00 am – Liturgy</td>
<td>STS. Joachim &amp; Anna 9:00 am – Liturgy</td>
<td>5:30 pm – Vespers followed by Bible Study</td>
<td>2:00–5:00 pm – Fr. Ephraim’s office hours</td>
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<td><strong>Holy Cross</strong> 9:00 am – Orthros 10:00 am – Liturgy Tray for HCHC Sunday School parent mtg. Coffee hour: Philoptochos</td>
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<td>6:00 pm – Parish Council meeting</td>
<td>ST. Sophia &amp; Her Daughters: Faith, Hope, and Agape 9:00 am – Liturgy 5:30 pm – Vespers followed by Bible Study</td>
<td>2:00–5:00 pm – Fr. Ephraim’s office hours</td>
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<td>9:00 am – Orthros 10:00 am – Liturgy Coffee hour: Marinela Misho &amp; Irini Dede</td>
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<td>St. John the Theologian 9:00 am – Liturgy 6:00 pm – Small Paraklesis (Moleben)</td>
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Orthodoxy 101 Reading Group

This fall, we will learn more about the mind and heart of the Orthodox Faith by reading *Beginning to Pray* by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom. This *brief* book is a modern classic for people at all levels of spiritual development. Contact Fr. Ephraim to reserve a copy of the book.

Metropolitan Anthony writes that prayer comes easily when we are aware of God’s presence, but that the real work of prayer begins when He seems absent—although of course He never is: “We stand before God and we shout into an empty sky, out of which there is no reply. We turn in all directions and He is not to be found. What ought we to think of this situation?” Join us Saturday mornings to explore this question! We’ll discuss Chapter 1 on Oct. 4.