

Pastoral Message from Fr. George for 9.29.23

OVERCOME WITH
COMPLAINING



When I was in junior high school, my Drama Teacher asked us to view and listen to the legendary comedian, George Carlin. She wanted us to review his style of communicating messages. From time to time, I encounter some of his wit and share one of his thoughts now: *“Have you ever noticed that anybody driving slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?”*

Obviously, George Carlin was making light of someone engaged in complaining. Indeed, we criticize others and may not realize it. When I was younger, I used to spend a lot of time worrying about complaints I heard from others. Lately, I’ve come to feel that many are deep-seeded expressions of fear voiced in destructive and aggressive tones. While seeds of truth may be embedded in the message of complainers, they risk becoming self-defeated by turning off and offending the very person the complainer is depending on to alleviate their worry or stress.

Not one of us can say we’ve never complained. However, when we do complain in a manner that disrespects or belittles others, we forget that everyone’s feelings matter. With God’s help we can seek to reconcile and where needed, ask forgiveness for when we insult others. That is important for a healthy friendship and relationship. Otherwise, we risk losing a friend and valuable co-worker... all for a short-lived moment of venting our out-of-control emotions.

Pastors have been given the responsibility to help their parishioners live in peace and unity by applying God’s truth and mercy. I am especially blessed because our parishioners know God and trust Him. They respect our elected and appointed ministry leaders and members. At times, we will disagree, but never with the attitude of hurting anyone. Yet sometimes, we do cause harm, and, in that spirit, I want to share a few negative things that happen when we continually criticize others because we cannot have it “our way.”

Complainers may not realize that the by-product of their repeated objections is stopping positive momentum to the task at hand. Even more, complaints breed

discontent in others and drown out thankfulness. In no time, the negative attitude from chronic complainers becomes a way of thinking for others previously supportive and cooperative. Optimism changes to pessimism and a spirit of defeatism becomes their new vision and leadership style. Peace and unity of the body is threatened and damaged and the task's failure is inevitable.

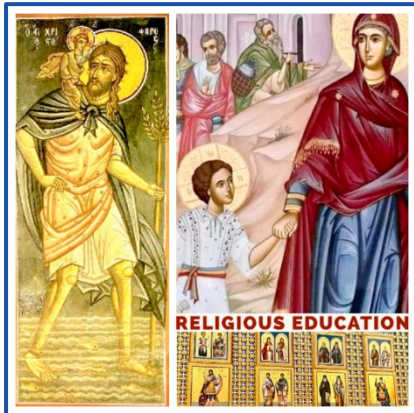
As Christians, let us focus on being “problem solvers” and not “problem proclaimers”. When we spend time complaining, we lose sight that God is our source of strength and hope. With faith in Him, we can move mountains. Our Lord depends on us to encourage, motivate, and accomplish in His Name and for His glory. We are co-workers in Christ and not freelance players. Collectively, we serve God as troubleshooters entrusted with His flock to protect from evil and its temptations. No situation that we confront is bigger than God Who promised His followers, *“For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”* (Matthew 19:26)

So, whether at home, in our workplace, or at church, let us guard our feelings and tempers against the dangers of complaining that I cited above. Yes, there are some that feel it is easier to gripe rather than problem solve. How sad to see those who are trying to solve challenges have to overhear others complain to and about them... especially when what they are complaining about has been improved and fixed, or just a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge.

Rather than resort to bitter complaining, let us give our peers a chance by stepping forward and volunteering to pitch in and be a supportive team member. Everyone's help is welcomed and needed, and the fruit that will be harvested is both plenteous and compassionate.

We Orthodox are called to be conciliar and seek harmony. If we cannot, I ask a simple question... *“What do you want?”* And if the tables are turned, and I'm the incessant complainer, please help shake me out of that mood with kindness and respect like the counsel I offer you. Thank you for this courtesy. Amen!

Religious Education Update



Our parish is committed to helping our families raise awareness of their Orthodox faith by offering religious education classes that are open to all parishioners of any age. Likewise, visitors and friends who are interested in becoming Orthodox through baptism or chrismation are encouraged to attend and learn with fellow parishioners.

When we separate ourselves from God, it's like the lower image at right... we experience detachment and emptiness. Further, God appears distant and hidden in the darkness we have created in our souls as reflected in the upper image. The remedy is as obvious as the photo caption... not pursuing it keeps us separated from authentic life with our Lord and His Body. Notice the photo framing and text outline all feature the same color...



*reminding us that we always are united with God and have the ability to seek His mercy. Our lesson for this Sunday instructs us that **"The Church is in the world so that each person, all those who've gone astray, can find their way. So that they can return to the house of their Father, can find themselves, and others, and can therefore progress towards an encounter with the Lord."** – +Fr. George Tsahakis*

Next Sunday, October 8, we will discuss Chapter 9 of our Textbook: "America's Folk Religion: Evangelicalism and the Rise of Non-Denominationalism."



A SEED WORTH PLANTING



They who sow courtesy reap
friendship, and they who plant
kindness gather love. (St. Basil)

7 TEACHINGS OF ST NEAGOE BASARAB TO HIS SON THEODOSIUS

1. Be careful that no hour passes without prayer, for it brings light into the soul.
2. Love the truth, for the liar is not pleasing to God.
3. Be at peace with all, so that you may have boldness in your prayers.
4. If you have done good things, do not boast, if you have done many bad things, do not despair.
5. Give alms to all, that you may receive the mercy of God.
6. Ask God to be with you and don't be lazy when you work for Him.
7. Do not stumble upon the things of this world, that you may be saved.



Psalms recommended by
St. Arsenios of Cappadocia
to treat depression



Psalm 4

Psalm 27 (28)

Psalm 55 (56)

Psalm 56 (57)

Psalm 97 (98)

Psalm 7

Psalm 24 (25)

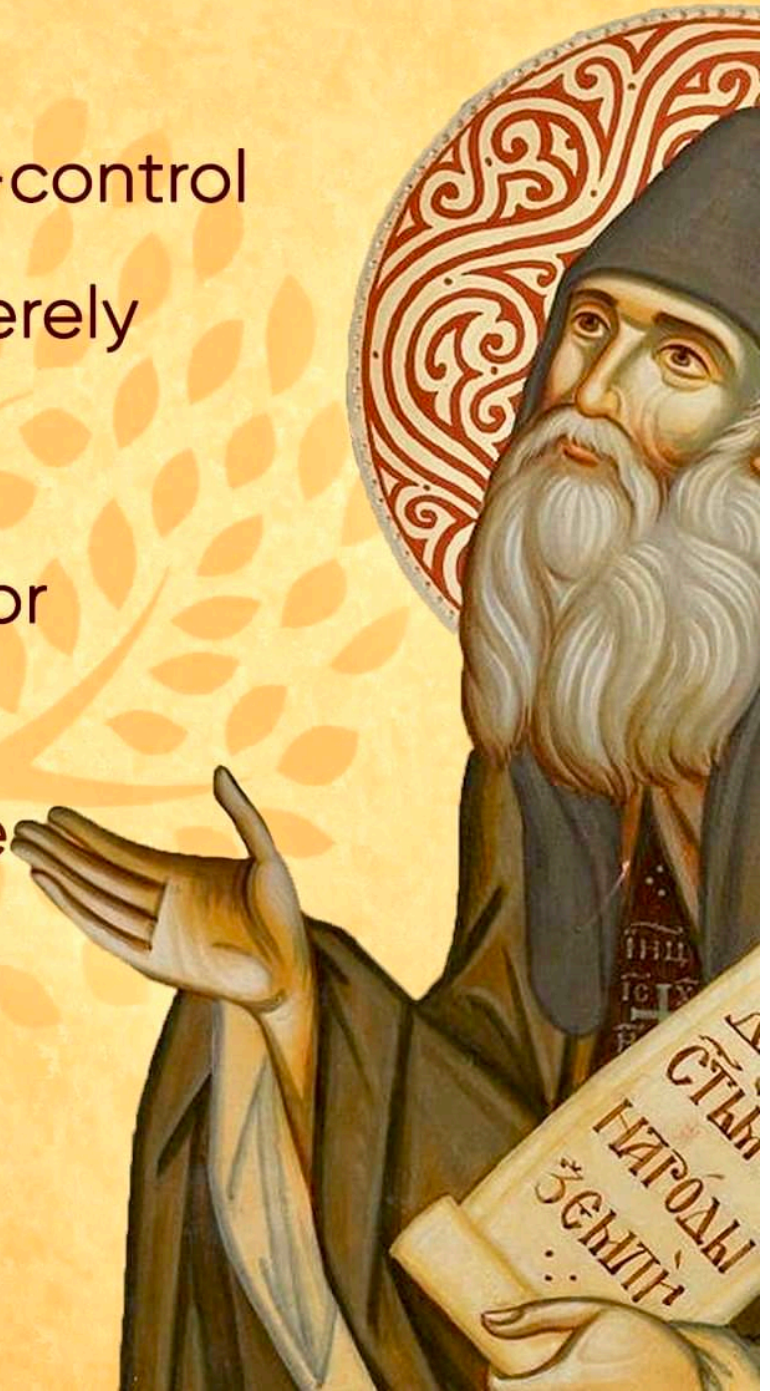
Psalm 41 (42)

Psalm 45 (46)



7 St Siluan the Athonite lessons for pure prayer

- 1 Be humble
- 2 Practice self-control
- 3 Confess sincerely
- 4 Be obedient
- 5 Be thankful for everything
- 6 Don't despise your neighbour
- 7 Love your enemies



Pray earnestly and every day for your priests, for they are Christ in your midst. Pray that they remain holy, pure, faithful, chaste, and zealous in their ministry and service. Pray that they never forget who and what they are: living icons of Christ and servants of Him and His holy Church.

Here is the life of a priest.

