

How can you not be persuaded by such love? Now I didn't adopt any of their doctrinal systems, but I had to abandon mine, because it didn't have a place for them. Sabots in the gears.

It was a series of people and situations that didn't fit my theology that liberated me from a flawed system. And it was people who love God who drew me into Orthodoxy. I will just mention one couple to demonstrate the point.

St. Philip's provided a scholarship for me to go to the Conference on Missions and Evangelism in 1997 for five days at Antiochian Village. I knew no one at this event. We had services morning and evening. There was bowing, kneeling, making the sign of the Cross, incense, lots of men in black. By this time, I had been in a number of very strange places. I know that there are a number of people out there who sincerely love God, but are doctrinally off. I can deal with differences and be safe if the love of God is there. I wanted to explore Orthodoxy, but I didn't dare let my guard down unless I knew there were people here who truly loved God.

I asked God to let me know. The first night at vespers, I had my answer. I was standing in the chapel, and the service had just started. Someone had entered and was standing about six feet behind me. I could feel their presence; and it was a sense of the peace and love of God. I turned around to see who this was, to find Father Gordon Walker and his lovely Khouriye. At that moment I knew this was a safe place, because people who truly loved God were here.

I observed them all during the conference. It was obvious that they

loved God and they loved each other. At the end of the conference, I introduced myself to them and thanked them for their example.

I came home and asked to become a catechumen.

A scholar attracts by his knowledge, a wealthy man by riches, a handsome man by beauty, and an artist by his skill. Only love attracts all human beings. The attraction of love is unlimited. And educated or uneducated, rich or poor, skilled or unskilled, beautiful or ugly, healthy or sick, and young or old, all want to be loved. Christ spread His love on everyone, and lovingly drew all to Himself. With His great love, He encompassed even the dead, long decomposed and forgotten by men.
- Archimandrite Callistratus to Kassiana:
Lessons in Divine and Christian Love

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Thank you. May the Lord bless you
as you bless the poor in Jesus' Name.
Peace,

Cranford Joseph Coulter

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donations via MasterCard, Visa,
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website: www.shoutforjoy.net*



SUMMER
2007

REPORT

It is Our Busy Season!

Warm weather means more people eating in the park. We can use more sandwiches, fruit, cold water and volunteers. We leave St. Philip's parking lot as the bell chimes seven on Thursday evening. We start serving at 18th & Vine at eight.

Come join us. It's great fun!

A Good Habit is Hard to Break

With the law of entropy and our fallen nature, I don't know if I can say that it is just as hard to break a good habit as it is to break a bad habit, but I think a habit is a habit. It's a good thing to habitually do good things. Many things we do should not be open to discussion and redirection.

Before we eat food, we should bless it and give thanks. When we wake up, we should thank God for the new day. It is a good thing to have habits of bathing, washing hands and brushing teeth.

What does it take to establish a habit? You decide to do something once, and do it. Then you decide to do it again, and do it. Then you decide to do it again, and do it. Before long you have a routine and it would seem strange not to do what you have made it a habit to do.

I got to thinking about this because in the last few weeks a number of the guys whom we serve in Phila. have noted to me how long I have been serving food on the streets.

Some have expressed amazement at my dedication, since I have been doing it for twenty years, give or take. I responded that it's something I started to do and have so much fun that it didn't seem right to stop. Dedication has very little to do with it. I think they think I am being a wiseguy at that moment, but I am dead level serious!

If for any reason I cannot go to the city to serve on any given week, there is a great big hole in my week. I have to keep consulting the calendar to reorient to what day it is. It's my habit (maybe addiction isn't too strong a word).

Since my habit involves cooking soup and hauling food and supplies for 100 plus people each week to center city Philadelphia; it can be an expensive habit. That's where you come in. I need you to support my habit. Yes. I'm asking you to be an enabler.

It's even worse than that. I really enjoy the fact that some have gotten into the habit of making sandwiches on a regular basis. I would like to see more of that. I would even like to see a few more people get in the habit of helping to serve. If you don't enjoy it, don't come back. We don't need any grumpy, stubborn, dedicated people.

If this is right for you like it's right for me, no one will be able to keep you away, not even with a stick. Addiction; it ain't pretty.

Meal on the Street Coffee Hour

On Pentecost, The King's Jubilee sponsored coffee hour at St. Philip Antiochian Orthodox Church, Souderton, PA. I want to thank everyone who pitched in to make this happen. Just like on any given Thursday evening, I do not have a real good handle on who did what, but there was plenty of good food to go around. I guess the soup I made was good, because we only went through about a quarter of the bottle of hot sauce.

It wasn't advertised as a donation luncheon, but a plate was out and \$222 was donated. Thank you.

I made a flyer that was handed out to explain the concept of this coffee hour and to compare and contrast it with what happens on Thursdays. I mentioned the rowdiness and disorder that we have been experiencing lately. Thank you for those who took notice and decided to pray.

An Orderly Line

We had an orderly line for the first time in years on June 7th. A couple of the guys were so embarrassed by the behavior of the crowd recently that they proposed a different way to handle the line. They organized the guys in a line on the sidewalk ten feet away from where we serve, before we got there.

We set up and when we were ready, one of our people let five at a time approach the "buffet" line. It worked! Everyone got something. Things were distributed much more equitably. There wasn't the shouting, jostling and grabbing that we have seen recently. Praise God!

Hard Drive Crash

When I say my hard drive crashed, I mean it literally. My foot caught the cord and the external drive slammed on the floor. I tried to save a file on it and it went "ding ding ding". You never want to hear that sound from a hard drive.

This was the drive with all of the edited photos of the icons that I print for "Come and See" Icons, Books & Art. Well the 700 or so that I had stored digitally, that is. Don't ask me if I had a backup of this drive. This isn't a happy tale. I cried.

I sent the drive to a data recovery service. They could recover nothing. I was very blue the day they told me that. Lydia & Vincent decided to give me my Father's Day gift early: a scotch broom plant. They also gave me a yellow daylily just to cheer me up. I planted them both that evening.

The next day I was finishing icons upstairs in the barn, still feeling pretty bad. Then my eye caught a glimpse of the yellow daylily bloom by the driveway. I started to laugh. O, me of little faith! "If God so clothes the lily of the field"

It's still a setback. I have to re-edit and re-photograph a lot of icons, but we'll get through it.

So if you have visited comeandseeicons.com lately, now you know why there are lilies all over the site.



Underwear Sunday

A couple of Temple University grads in the OCF came up with the idea of Underwear Sunday. They sent out emails to all of the members of the OCF and of the Philadelphia Clergy Brotherhood to solicit new men's underwear for us to give out in July. I think the goal is to have them all brought to churches by July 15, then gathered together for us to start distributing on July 19.

We need a variety of sizes, boxers & briefs, T-shirts and tube socks. If 100 people just buy a pack, no one will be overburdened and we will have plenty to share.

Don't look for "Underwear Sunday" to be added to the liturgical calendar any time soon, but we will give everything away in Jesus' Name.

Orthodox Evangelism

Last Thursday there was a group from a protestant church in Michigan, who were working with a Philadelphia ministry, hanging out where we serve. I introduced myself and talked with them for a bit, answering their questions about homeless ministries in Philadelphia. After they left, Alexei and Larry asked me if I ever broached the subject of Orthodoxy with groups like this.

I basically told them that I answer questions as honestly and directly as I can. They asked me if I thought any of them were at all persuaded by what I had to say. I said that I was happy if I managed to throw some sabots into the gears of their reasoning, so they might have to stop and consider another way.

I then listed a few of the people who had done this for me along the way. In high school, college and

seminary, I was a militant, fundamentalist Baptist who thought Jerry Falwell was too liberal.

I was a slow learner, but God was gracious with me. I became good friends with Grama Ethel and Grampa Emil. They're adoptive grandparents. Ethel went to a "liberal" Baptist church downtown. Emil didn't have time for church at all. I would chide Ethel for going to such a church and she would say: "Well, Bughouse (an affectionate name for me), if I were to find the perfect church, they would ruin their perfect record by letting me in, now wouldn't they?" How can you argue with that?

Emil was a pro-union Democrat. I was an anti-union Republican. He was 71. I was 17. We'd argue history, politics and religion; and shake our heads and laugh. We had a great time. We loved and respected each other, as wrong-headed as we were!

I dare say I learned more about God's love and grace in that chocolate brown house on 25-1/2th Ave. than I did at Fourth Baptist Church, four blocks south.

Then there's Curt Olson and Jonathan Alden Hogetvedt. Curt was in our daily morning prayer meeting in our public high school library. He put up with our pharisaical snobbery, which was not at all subtle, in order to maintain a friendship and pray for our school and town. He is the only childhood friend that still talks to me. With how obnoxious I have been, that is a lesson in grace.

Jonathan's theology didn't jive with mine, but his person radiated the peace of Christ. When we moved from Minneapolis to PA, he was the one who helped me re-roof the garage in 90 degree heat and load the van. And by the one, I mean just that.