

# KOINONIA: A Publication of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

## AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

by Archpriest Eric G. Tosi

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Ambassadors for Christ By Fr. Eric G. Tosi	1
An Appropriate Audience By Eugenia Constantinou	2
From the Fathers – St. John Chrysostom	3
New Mission Station in Fort Drum/Watertown, NY By Stephen Turner	4

*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."*

*2 Corinthians 5:20*

The Apostle Paul has issued a challenge to each and every one of us. He calls for us to be "ambassadors for Christ." What does that mean?

Well, how do we understand the word "ambassador"? We commonly know this as a senior representative of a government, assigned by the head to advocate for and represent the government's position. Yet the Greek word for "ambassador" means something more: it also means "an elder who brings news".

What is that news, you may ask? Clearly it is the good news of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are all called to be that senior elder bringing the Good News. With our own witness to the power of that News, we become ambassadors of Christ and His Church.



But there is a second part to what the Apostle is writing to the Church in Corinth: to be reconciled to God. Even more than being reconciled to each other, Paul is telling us that we must be reconciled to God before we do anything else, because God is working through us.

I like to look at it this way: I cannot give what I do not have. If I am not right with God, then I certainly will not be right with my brothers and sisters.

Likewise, how can I speak of the many virtues that a Christian should possess when I myself am not practicing those virtues?

Yet, somehow, I am asked to be an ambassador, because God has given me that charge.

Very often we want to be ambassadors and preach the Good News, tell others about the Orthodox Faith we so cherish, and lead them to the Church.

Yet, are we ready to do that? Are we really qualified to do that? Are we actually living like Christians? If we are not, then we cannot give what we do not have.

When we are ambassadors, we are representing Christ Himself and not ourselves. As Saint John Chrysostom so wisely instructs us, "He sent other ambassadors to beseech, and though these are sent, it is Himself that entreats."

Ultimately, this passage is about how we live in Christ before we witness about Christ. So, let us each know and imitate Christ in our own lives – and then, we can speak about Christ; because we are the elder representatives of our Lord, through our words and deeds.

## An Appropriate Audience

### By Eugenia Constantinou

Assuming the theologian is properly prepared academically and is basically healthy spiritually, then the theologian must discern whether it is appropriate to speak in light of the situation and audience. The Fathers of Church often advise that the setting be taken into serious consideration before theologizing. Saint Gregory advises:

*Discussion of theology is not for everyone, I tell you, not for everyone—it is no such inexpensive or effortless pursuit. Nor, I would add, is it for every occasion or every audience; neither are all its aspects open to inquiry. It must be reserved for certain occasions, for certain audiences, and certain limits must be observed.*

Saint John Chrysostom occasionally commented on the limitations of his audience. At times he restricted his remarks because they had grown tired, were bored, or were not paying attention. Rather than being helped by the sermon, their attitude would contribute to their condemnation. In such cases, sometimes after upbraiding the congregation, he stopped preaching.



Other factors affected his decision regarding what to say and for how long to speak, including time constraints, the weather, and the ability of the congregation to remember what he had said. Chrysostom was keenly aware of the limitations of his congregation. "Indeed, teachers do not say all things as they desire, but say many things as the dispositions of imperfect listeners demand." On another occasion, Chrysostom restrains himself by noting the inability of his listeners to comprehend his comments: "I would add our own explanation, but I fear that I shall overwhelm your minds." Moderation should be observed in all things, including discussions of theology, St. Gregory advises:

*Yet I am not maintaining that we ought not be mindful of God at all times — my adversaries, ever ready and quick to attack, need not pounce on me*

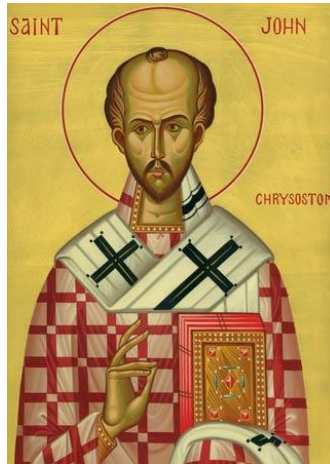
*again. It is more important that we should remember God than that we should breathe; indeed, if one may say so, we should do nothing else besides...So it is not continual remembrance of God that I seek to discourage, but continual discussion of theology. I am not opposed either to theology, as if it were a breach of piety. But only to its untimely practice, or to instruction in it, except when this goes to excess. Fullness and surfeit even of honey, for all its goodness, produces vomiting, and "to everything there is a season" (Eccl. 3:1), as Solomon and I think "and what's well is not well if the hour be ill.".... Are we then to neglect "the due season" only in the discussion of theology, where observing the proper time is of such supreme importance?"*

From *Thinking Orthodox* (Ancient Faith Publishing: Chesterton, IN, 2020), pp. 267-268.

*"The Fathers of the Church often advise that the setting be taken into serious consideration before theologizing."*

## From the Fathers: Homily 11 on 2 Corinthians by St. John Chrysostom

Do you see how [the Apostle Paul] has extolled the thing by introducing Christ thus in the form of a suppliant; yea rather not Christ only, but even the Father? For what he says is this: 'The Father sent the Son to beseech, and to be His Ambassador unto mankind. When then He was slain and gone, we succeeded to the embassy; and in His stead and the Father's we beseech you. So greatly does He prize mankind that He gave up even the Son, and that knowing He would be slain, and made us Apostles for your sakes; so that he said with reason, *"All things are for your sakes."* (2 Corinthians 4:15) We are therefore ambassadors on behalf of Christ, that is,



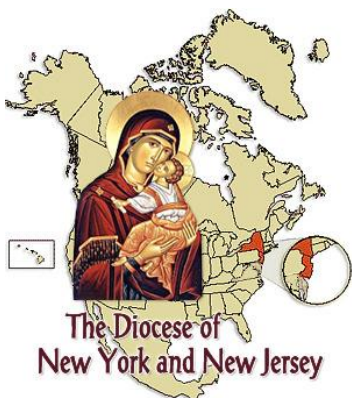
instead of Christ; for we have succeeded to His functions.' But if this appears to you a great thing, hear also what follows wherein he shows that they do this not in His stead only, but also in stead of the Father. For therefore he also added, As though God were entreating by us. For not by the Son Himself only does He beseech, but also by us who have succeeded to the office of the Son. Think not therefore, he says, that by us you are entreated;

Christ Himself, the Father Himself of Christ, beseeches you by us. What can come up to this excess [of goodness]? He was outraged who had conferred innumerable benefits; having been outraged, He not only exacted not justice, but even gave His son that we might be reconciled. They that received Him were not reconciled, but even slew Him. Again, He sent other ambassadors to beseech, and though these are sent, it is Himself that entreats.

And what does He entreat? Be reconciled unto God. And he said not, 'Reconcile God to yourselves'; for it is not He that bears enmity, but you; for God never bears enmity.

*"We are therefore ambassadors on behalf of Christ, that is, instead of Christ; for we have succeeded to His functions."*





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## New Mission Station in Watertown, NY

By Stephen Turner

The rooftop of New York has a third mission! Joining Saint Olympia Mission in Norwood, NY, and the Plattsburgh Mission Station, is the Fort Drum/Watertown, NY, Mission Station. It is located east of Lake Ontario and south of the Saint Lawrence River, not far from the Canadian Border.

The mission station grew out of a desire for an English-language Orthodox Church to serve the military community at Fort Drum and the people living in the Jefferson County and Northern Lewis County areas of Northern New York. Our current members are primarily junior enlisted soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division.

Currently, the nearest parishes are all an hour and twenty minutes away or more. Winter weather



makes traveling to them difficult at the best of times; and our military service members may be required to obtain permission to travel that far from their place of duty.

At the direction of Archbishop Michael, the Fort Drum/Watertown Mission Station formally began on October 8, 2022 with Vespers at a member's home. A newly created Facebook page helped promote the mission. Since then, we have met weekly for Saturday evening Reader Vespers, and our members typically attend Sunday Liturgies at Saints Peter and Paul in Syracuse or St. Olympia in Norwood.

On September 23, 2023, the Mission Station began holding services in the church building of the Anglican Church of Christ the King in Watertown, NY. Our liturgical cycle has expanded to include the Hours and Typica, and the worship space is

being adapted to an Orthodox setting.

We hold a "Welcome to Orthodoxy" class Saturdays before Vespers. We serve a meal after our weekly Vespers service. At that time, we plan transportation to the nearest parishes for Sunday liturgy. We are gathering everything required to make the Mission Station fully operational, and we plan to launch a website very soon. One member is on a special course of study at Saint Tikhon's Seminary, to be completed this May.

By Fall 2024, we plan to convert our current space into an Orthodox church building, celebrate the Divine Services during the week and on Sundays, and be continually promoting our mission, so that many people in this remote corner of New York may "come and see!"



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<https://www.nynjoca.org>