

# PASTORS TO PASTORS

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## CONFESS YOUR SINS...

John Tkachuk

By virtue of ordination, clergy are neither less prone to, nor more insulated from, SIN and its consequences than any other people.

This "truism" is the basis for forming the Department of Pastoral Life and Ministry [DPLM] in the Orthodox Church in America, but it needs some elucidation, since usually it is not seen as really true either by many clergy or by most laymen. [All of what is said below applies usually to all three ranks of clergy, but since the majority are parish priests, clergy/pastors will be used interchangeably as referring to all].

Although intimated from the earliest days of the Church's life -- even the great apostle, Paul, openly acknowledged his mysterious "thorn" [2 Corinthians 12:7]: interpreted by most as at best some physical ailment -- the acknowledgement of *weakness* in pastors does not come easily. In reality pastors are usually perceived by others, and not infrequently perceive and present themselves, at least as *examples* ["Be an example for the faithful..." 1 Timothy 4:12] and at most as *perfect* ["You... must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" Matthew 5:48]. Of course, both of these admonitions apply to all clergy in many ways [as the second one does, in fact, to all believers], but not in *everything*!

In effect, the common misconception about and by clergy -- as others see us, and as we see ourselves -- is that they must be *infallible* from the time of ordination. Just as barbers are expected to have neat hair; and physicians, good health -- so too the clergy are expected, and expect themselves, to be "holy" from the moment the bishop lays hands on their heads! And holy not just in the usual sense of "consecrated apart" and "walking before God" -- but in any possible distorted sense: skilled in administration, proficient in management, comfortable in public speaking, adept at running/repairing the mimeograph-machine, etc. etc. When a "fault" in any of these areas becomes apparent -- and remember that in scriptural language fault=equals=sin -- then the cleric either has no "time off" to attend to the area in question and thus to fix the fault, or else he expects/others expect that if he "prays about it hard enough" it will fix itself!

Now the above is decidedly an exaggeration to a certain extent, but only to an extent. Some of the "pressures" facing clergy really are real, some are

only imagined; some are self-inflicted; some are expectations set by others, rightly or wrongly; some indeed disappear in time all by themselves, others only "by prayer and fasting" and some never at all! But to the extent that any "pressure" is really *on the mind* of a person, it is always "real" to him.

The "sorting out" in the life of clergy of the real from the imaginary, the solveable from the irreparable, the demonic from the divine -- is the work mandated to the DPLM by both the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Metropolitan Council.

Ideally, the DPLM would consist of a staff of professionally-trained counsellors, therapists, psychologists, and, if need be, even psychiatrists or exorcists [*sic!*]. However, this will not be the case. The very name of this Newsletter suggests the only way that we can go about our work: by consciously becoming pastors to ourselves and to other pastors in need of our help.

By means of this Newsletter and other contacts, the DPLM intends to suggest ways we can help one another in the following problematic areas:

- |                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| > Decision Making         | > Motivation          |
| > Fellowship              | > Fasting             |
| > Temptation and Passions | > Transitions         |
| > Time Management         | > Authority and Power |
| > Family Life             | > Emotions            |
| > Addictions              | > Preaching           |
| > Devotional Life         | > Church Politics     |
| > Money                   | > Volunteers          |

The next issue of PASTORS TO PASTORS, scheduled for Pentecost, will contain articles about Finances, a Clergy Convocation, Prayer, and Stress. A mixed-bag, to be sure -- just like our life and work!

But perhaps, again this Lent, we too can find help, healing, and salvation in the confession of our sins to God and one another, as we are taught to do by Apostle James in the church.

By so doing, we will rekindle within ourselves a spirit of love and concern for the brotherhood given to us in the Priesthood of Christ: the bishops for the priests, the priests for one another, all of us for the Church of God! This bond will strengthen the renewal of the Church.

Write to any member of the DPLM c/o OCA CHANCERY if you are interested in joining this endeavour in any and so fulfilling your ministry "one to another".

## THE NEED FOR PERSONAL CONTACT

Theodore Bobosh

Who should be responsible for carrying out the work of the Department of Pastoral Life and Ministry?

This is a natural question to ask in the forming of a Church-wide Department. However, since the main purpose of this Department is service and ministry to clergy [and their families], let us phrase the question from the perspective of a priest who is in need of help. His question is not "Who should be appointed to this Department?" nor "What program should the Church set-up to help priests like me?". No, his question is: "To whom do I turn for help?" or "Whom can I contact and to whom can I speak?" or "How do I know where I can turn in confidence and confidentiality?".

Therefore, in establishing the membership and policy for the DPLM top priority should be given to meeting the needs of hurting clergy by providing personal and professional contacts: professional and caring people for the priests to call.

While many troubled people need someone with whom they can speak as a first step in the healing process, it is especially true of the clergy and others in the human-relations fields. Priests also need a non-judgmental listener to talk with: someone they do not fear, someone who has no power over them, someone who can help them through [or to see through] their current problems. Only once the priest has a clear image of himself will he be able to decide what he needs to do -- what authority to turn to for action, be it counsellor, dean or bishop, or state agency.

Finding someone to talk with, someone who can be trusted, is a first step in a healing process. Once we can share our burden with someone, we may be able to see what needs to be done to correct the problem. Then and only then can the necessary efforts be made for correcting and healing the individual.

How then does this perspective shape the membership of the DPLM? First, we should agree that the long-range goal will be to get a full-time, paid, trained professional to direct the DPLM's ministry. We can even now put into practice some other perhaps more limited but still valuable policies.

An immediate goal of the DPLM should be to select some pastors who are sensitive to the needs, problems and pressures of the clergy today. These pastors should be selected from the clergy we now have who have been trained in and/or who are practicing in the fields of counselling. There surely are enough such professionally-trained priests who could be brought together today to map out the immediate work of the DPLM.

Let these priests and deacons [and I also think that professional laity ought to be included in this group] choose literature on a wide variety of topics [concerns and problems facing clergy] to share with priests. Each piece of literature should also offer suggestions as to where priests can turn for help in dealing with a particular topic [i.e. agencies, individuals, publications, phone numbers, etc.].

Meanwhile, the DPLM should survey all of the clergy and seminary graduates of the OCA [this could be done as a co-operative venture with any Orthodox jurisdiction] to discover what specific gifts, qualifications, training, skills and expertise these people have that they are willing to offer to fellow clergy with problems. A directory will be drawn up and distributed to all clergy giving suggestions as to whom to call for help with particular problems [again, non-clergy professionals should be included on this list also].

In this way priests will have available the names and numbers of people whom they can contact if they need special help. Callers should be allowed to contact those listed in the Directory anonymously at first, having only to identify themselves as calling in regard to the DPLM. Those listed in the Directory must understand that confidence and confidentiality are a must.

All those willing to be listed in the Directory could receive training in crisis-intervention or telephone-counselling at, say, an All-American Council. There they could be trained by professionals in referrals, resources, responsibilities, liabilities and confidentiality. No "counsellor" would be required to deal with any one call, but



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would be allowed to refer any one call to another "counsellor" or to an appropriate professional. This set-up would establish the DPLM as a personal-contact-service for clergy.

It is also possible that a toll-free telephone number could be established for the same purpose. The telephone could be manned by trained operators who would refer the call to an appropriate listing from the Directory.

The ministry of the DPLM would eventually move toward:

1. Having a professional counsellor be "on call" permanently for the DPLM, which would pay for his time regarding any calls that are transferred to him. Payment would be on a predetermined rate for the time used.

2. A full-time, paid, professional Director to whom all difficult cases can be referred.

3. A sub-division of clergy wives to deal with family problems, and perhaps the creation of family-support groups for clergy families.

4. Pushing for this ministry on both Diocesan and Deanery levels where possible.

Of course, the OCA will have to form policy regarding the authority, responsibilities and liabilities of the DPLM's counsellors. What should their advice be to clergy who "confess" adultery, alcoholism, homosexuality, child-abuse, or any other problem? In what situations must the case be turned over to the diocesan bishop? Will counsellors have any right or authority to contact clergy who are "known" or suspected of having certain problems? What if a priest's wife calls to talk about her husband?



Do we need to establish a "safe house" for clergy -- a place where they can go for a limited time with families while they work out their problems without totally losing financial support?

There are yet many issues to be dealt with in the personal ministry to the hurting clergy. Yet if the Church is to nurture and heal its clergy, there must be a system in which the hurting clergy can seek out help and in which they can in fact be ministered to.

People are the greatest resource in the healing ministry. The DPLM has the ability now to mobilize the resources we already have to minister to the wounded and hurt priests we have.

## PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES OF PASTORAL WORK:

### THE PASTOR HIMSELF

George Timko

*You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; for whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all. For the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life for the deliverance of many. [Mark 10]*

There are a great many problems and difficulties encountered in the pastoral work of a priest. But the first and greatest problem is the pastor himself. The priest's most serious obstacle, in carrying out his pastoral work, is his own state of mind and heart, his own attitude and disposition of spirit. Without some understanding of himself and without some awareness of his inner life and consciousness, the pastor's work is doomed to conflict, neurosis and failure. The pastor's perception and recognition of who he is and what his function is provides the key to maintaining a balance and harmony, a success and sanity in the life of his ministry.

Traditionally, we are taught that the pastor is a Father, a Priest [some even High Priests], a Leader, a Teacher, a Judge, a Representative of Christ and God. All these sublime images of authority fill our minds with self-importance and pride, and we assume roles and positions of honour, prestige and power. Our own mental vision of the pastor tends to swell our heads with superiority, self-esteem and arrogance. Little wonder, then, that in many instances we develop a "messiah complex" and assume the "role of God".

The teaching of Christ and the Scriptures present a somewhat different idea of the pastor. According to our Lord, the priesthood is not a power trip of rank and rule. Neither is it a superior function of status and authority. Rather it is a position of slavery and a function of serving. The pastor is a slave and is expected to act as a servant. This notion is clearly expressed in the above-quoted words of Christ, which you should now re-read, as well as in many other passages [such as Matthew 23:1-12].

Christ's point is very simple and easy to understand, but very difficult to embody. He comes to mankind as a servant who serves in the same manner as a waiter who serves and waits on people at tables [Luke 22]. He subjects Himself as a menial, lowly slave who washes and dries the feet of his fellow men [John 13]. He chooses to sacrifice Himself and His life in complete servitude for the redemption of all human beings [Mark 10]. He then appoints His disciples and sends them out in the pattern of His own Ministry and Priesthood -- as slaves and servants. And as He was sent, so He sends us out into the world as Pastors in the likeness of His own image.

When we hear the word servant or slave, we tend to cringe. For the slave is one who is in complete servitude to another; he exists in an involuntary

bondage to another; he lives in complete subjection to another as a possession; his life is determined and controlled by another and not by himself. The slave lives only in complete service to others and for others. How can such a concept and lifestyle be the pattern for our Christian Ministry?

Being a slave appears demeaning to the worldly mind. It is repugnant, and rightly so, because of the coercion and violence and cruelty and evil associated with the involuntary slavery perpetrated upon human beings during the history of mankind. But our new life and ordination in Christ requires a different kind of slavery. It calls us to a voluntary slavery, a free denial of the self, a willing submission of our life and a voluntary servitude to God and all men. To the Christ-like mind, being a slave means being the highest among the greatest.

The clergyman as priest must be a slave of God, and as a pastor he must be a slave to the people. He must totally surrender himself and his life in complete subjection to God and to serving human beings. Does history ever record a slave who was wealthy and not exploited? So as a slave the pastor must expect "to be dumped on" and "to be abused", "to be poor" and "to be taken advantage of". All this comes with the territory and the job, with giving one's self and one's life to serving as a slave. To function with this frame of mind and spirit solves a multitude of personal problems and enables the priest to fulfill his pastoral ministry with humility, peace and love.

St. Paul serves as the pastoral example for all of us: "We are", he said, "slaves of God...We make ourselves slaves to all men so that some may be saved...We are slaves to men for the sake of Jesus Christ...We are slaves through love...We are slaves in the new life of the Spirit."

#### OPERATIONS OF THE DPLM

Steven Belonick

St. James wrote these words of truth: "Faith apart from works is dead" [2:26]. All of us recognize

the importance of these words in our Christian life. Likewise, any department of the Church, no matter how good its intent, no matter how wonderful its ideas and concerns might be, will also be dead and its ideas lifeless without a plan of operations, without a method of implementing and concretizing those ideas. Simply, a great idea -- if not realized -- is dead!

We know how broad and necessary is the ministry of the DPLM. I would like to share with you just some of the ways we see it as possibly implemented:

1. This newsletter will be a major tool of the DPLM. Hopefully, it will be published twice per year. It can become a way of sharing our insights, concerns, and problems.

2. The DPLM intends to develop a "Yellow Pages" with names and numbers of resource and support people and groups throughout North America.

3. A toll-free "800" number should be explored to provide referral information. Helping a pastor find the right "someone to talk to" in time of need would be the goal of such an operation.

4. Self-evaluation tools will be reviewed and distributed, as a "non-threatening" way of evaluating character-traits, life-situations, etc.

5. A "Bibliography for Pastors" on important and timely topics will be developed so as to provide a way of reading-into-recovery.

6. Deanery meetings, clergy associations, and other established forums of fellowship provide opportunities for the DPLM to focus on the ministry of pastors to pastors.

Finally, I believe that the timely input and suggestions of all pastors should be the "rationale" of the DPLM's ministry. The present constitutive membership of the DPLM does not consider itself "expert" on any of the specific problems besetting the clergy. Rather, we are convinced that together we must search out the ways of ministering one to another, and so strengthening the ministry we all have towards the entire Church of God.



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