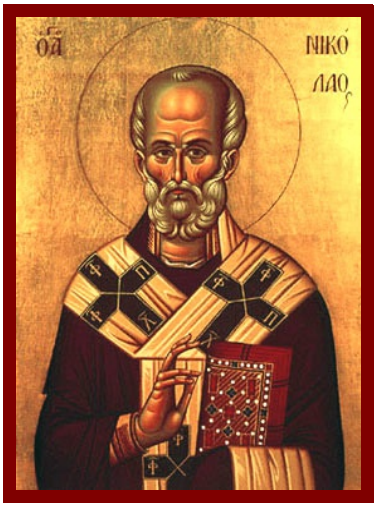

St. Nicholas, Feastday, December 6th

St. Innocent Orthodox Church

✙ Founded in 1967 ✙ Moscow Patriarchal Parishes ✙

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St. Innocent Monastic Community: 9452 Hazelton, Redford, MI 48239 ✝ 313-535-9080
PASTOR: Rt. Rev. Mitered Archpriest ROMAN STAR ✝ *Cell:* 313-319-0590
Dean, Central States Deanery, Patriarchal Parishes
ASSISTANT PRIEST: Rev. DANEIL SHIRAK ✝ 313-295-3073
DEACON: Rev. Dn. Michael Comerford
DEACON: Rev. Dn. Dr. Joshua Genig
ATTACHED: Sister Ioanna
CHOIR DIRECTOR: Elizabeth Star Hatfield
READERS: Robert Joseph Latsko & George Hanoian

DECEMBER 4, 2016

EPISTLE: Ephesians 2:14– 22 (#221)
GOSPEL: Luke 17:12 – 19 (#85)
TONE: 7

✙ 24th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST ✙

✝ 9:15AM — HOURS, AKATHIST and/or CANON & CONFESSIONS ✝
✝ 10am — DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ✝

COMMEMORATED TODAY: Glorification of Hieromartyr Protopresbyter Alexander (Hotovitzky) (1994). Greatmartyr Barbara and Martyr Juliana, at Heliopolis in Syria (ca. 306). Ven. John of Damascus (776). St. John, Bishop of Polybotum (8th c.).

FOR THE REPOSE OF: Estelle & Joseph Star; Anna & John Witkowski; Michael Sr. & Margaret Rusko; Mary, Andrew, Daniel, Michael & Lottie Yakuber; Ross & Margaret Falsetti; Helen, John & Carole Andrayko; Peter & Theresa Harvilla; Betty Martell; Frances & Todd Smoly; Peter Glover; Irene Adams; Ethel Elizabeth & Wayne Joshua deVyver, David Horka; Michael Rusko; Anna Lichagina, Yelena & Zinaïda Korniyevskaya; Joseph Nossal; Michelle Tucker; Todd Comerford, John Manier, Jr.
MEMORY ETERNAL! All departed members of the Nicholas Family, commemorated for St. Nicholas' Feast Day, December 6th

FOR THE HEALTH OF: Archimandrite Seraphim; Priest Daneil, Matushka Debra & Corrina Shirak; Deacon Michael, Matushka Mary Ellen & Julius Comerford; Deacon Joshua, Matushka Abigail, Emma, Clare, Rose & Anna Genig; Matushka Mary Donahue; Reader Robert Latsko, Reader George & Betty Hanoian, Rose Nossal, Mary Glover, Nancy Cupp, Vasiliki Stamoulis, Gerald Martell, Azbehat, Donald Yakuber, Carl deVyver, Jo Anne Nicholas, Joan Rusko, Daria, Joseph Nossal, Ed Manier, Pat Harbut *(recovering from auto accident)*.
ALSO FOR: Joseph B. Nossal, who celebrates his birthday on Wednesday, 7 December
Caitlin Minnick, who celebrates her Birthday on Friday, 9 December
Those who celebrate(d) their Name's Day this week or recently: Barbara 12/4; Nicholas12/6; Catherine11/24 & Andrew11/30
❊ MAY GOD GRANT THEM MANY YEARS! ❊

SCHEDULE FOR THE COMING WEEK

(Nativity fast, 11/15 – 12/24; abstain from meat, fish, eggs & dairy, alcohol; fish & wine allowed on Sat. & Sun. & feastdays)

Tuesday	12/6	10am	DIVINE LITURGY for St. Nicholas Feast Day
Saturday	12/10	4pm	GREAT VESPERS
Sunday	12/11		***25th Sunday After Pentecost***
		9:15am	HOURS, AKATHIST &/or CANON; CONFESSIONS
		10am	DIVINE LITURGY; followed by Coffee Hour

PROSPHORA FOR TODAY IS OFFERED BY: *Nick & JoAnne Nicholas*

In Memory Eternal of: *Parents:* Nick & Mary Nicholas, William & Gwendolyn Brashaw; *siblings:* Constance & Phil Phillips, Bill Brashaw, Pete Peoponis; *aunts & uncles:* Spiro & Mary Nicholas, Pete & Andrew Kastel, Demitra Lebeau; *friends:* Frank Germany, John Wells; and **For the Health of:** *daughter:* Dawn Marie (Eric) Dalsasso; *grandchildren:* Carl (Brionne) Dalsasso, Darlene Wood; *great-grandchildren:* Lyla, Jovanni, Daniel Jr; *siblings:* Shirley Peponis, Jill & Sam Mitchell; *cousins:* Ted Nicholas, Patricia & Erne Marxen; all members of the Nicholas, Brashaw, Dalsasso, Marxen & Peponis families; parishioners & friends; St. Innocent Church, St. Innocent Monastic Community, Fr. Roman, Fr. Daneil, Fr. Dn. Michael; Fr. Dn. Joshua, Sister Ioanna.

✙ CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST! ✙ HE IS NOW & ALWAYS SHALL BE! ✙

CANDLES FOR LAST SUNDAY, 27 NOVEMBER

YEARLY CHURCH VIGIL LAMPS:

Royal Doors Lamp: In Memory of Husband, Joseph; Son, Kenneth; parents, Michael & Margaret Rusko, & John & Martha Nossal, *by Rose Nossal*
Altar Candelabra: In Memory of Parents, Nicholas and Susan Yakuber, *by son, Donald Yakuber*
Altar Candles (2): In Memory of Irene Adams, *by Goddaughter, Rose Ann Everhardt*
Iconostasis Lamps: **(AVAILABLE)**
In Memory of Parents, Ethel Elizabeth & Wayne Joshua; Robert David H; & Health of brother, Carl, *by Sister Ioanna*
Candles on the Solea: In Memory of Peter & Theresa Harvilla, Norman & Monica Holst, & Ricky Ellis, *by Jason & Debra Truskowski*
Table of Oblation Lamp: In Memory of Parents, Helen & John Andrayko, Sr. & sister, Carole Andrayko, *by John Andrayko, Jr.*
Reliquary-Icon Lamps: Sts. Innocent, Tikhon & Herman: Health of Joseph/Sue; Robert/Diane; Pat/John; Joseph B., Jared, Jay; Rachelle/Aaron, Gabriel; Tricia, Lindsey; & In Memory of sisters, Anna, Margaret, Theresa & Irene; & brothers, John, Edwin & Michael *by Rose Nossal*
Reliquary-Icon Lamps: Sts. Elizabeth & Raphael: Health of the Genig and the Just Families, *by Fr. Deacon Joshua & Abigail Genig*
Reliquary-Icon Lamps: St. Seraphim & St. Alexis: In Memory of Ross & Margaret Falsetti, *by daughters, Rose Ann Everhardt & Margie Martell*
Reliquary-Icon Lamps: St. Hilarion & Sts. Alexandra & Martha: In Memory of Parents, Ethel Elizabeth & Wayne Joshua; Robert David H; // *Reliquary-Icon Lamps:* St. Nestor & St. Gerontius **(AVAILABLE)** //& Health of brother, Carl, *by Sister Ioanna*

IN MEMORY OF (MEMORY ETERNAL!)

Joseph & Estelle Star, *by son Father Roman and family*
Paul & Alexandra Yupco, Basil & Ellen Starinshak, *by grandson, Father Roman and family*
John & Anna Witkowski, *by daughter, Matushka Rose Marie and family*
Samuel & Mary Kupec, *by granddaughter, Matushka Rose Marie and family*
Parents, Helen & John Andrayko, and sister, Carole Andrayko, *by John Andrayko* + + + My husband, Michael Rusko, *by Joan Rusko*
My husband, Joe; my sisters, Margaret & Ross Falsetti, Anna & Mike Elaschat, Theresa & Pete Harvilla, Irene, & brothers, Michael, John & Edwin Rusko; niece, Rose Mary & Dean Hough; Joe's brothers, Raymond & Walter Nossal, & sisters, Theresa, Florence & Helen Nossal, *by Rose Nossal* ++ + Pete & Theresa Harvilla, *by Mary Ann Harvilla & Kay Truskowski* + + + Jaimie Truskowski, *by daughter Kay T.*
Parents, Ethel Elizabeth & Wayne Joshua; David H; Nina I; Marion P; Fr. Photius; Mo. Benedicta; Archm. Roman; Olive, Lillian, *by Sr Ioanna*
Child Lana, Shirley, Betty, Marsha, Paul, *by Becky Jurczyszyn* + + + Monica Sanders, *by Kim Hancock*

FOR THE HEALTH OF: (MANY YEARS!)

Elizabeth & Lawrence, Caitlin & Zachary, *by parents & grandparents, Father Roman & Matushka Rose Marie*
Gregory & Tamiko Star, *by parents, Father Roman & Matushka Rose Marie*
Children, Grandchildren & Great-grandchildren; Monk Fr. Sdn. Tikhon (Dade); *by Rose Nossal*
Father Roman & Matushka & family; Sister Ioanna; John Andrayko; Nancy; Mary G; Jo Anne N; Grandson Joey *(in the Navy Reserves)* & all people in the Armed Forces; & all St. Innocent Church parishioners, *by Rose Nossal* + + + Family & Friends, *by Mary Ann Harvilla & Kay*
Brother, Greg & Donna; nephew, Gregory & Liz; & nephew, Alex, *by Mary Ann Harvilla & Kay* + + + Ed Manier, *by Mary Ann Harvilla & Kay*
Archimandrites Nafanail, Gregory & Seraphim; Fr. Roman & Mat. Rose Marie; Fr. Lawrence & fam; Fr. Laurence & fam; Fr. Daneil & fam; Fr. Dcn. Michael & fam; Fr. Dcn. Joshua, Abigail & children; Mat. Mary D; Carl; Monk Fr. Tikhon; Sdn Andrew; Rdr Robert; Robert M; David Samuel/Sky & Avi; JoAnne/Nick; Athanasius; John A; Ed/Tiffany & fam; Kim & fam; Vasiliki; Rose; Emil/Rozana; Billy/Fonda, *by Sr Ioanna*
John Andrayko (May God watch over him), *by Rose Nossal* + + + Rose Nossal, *by John Andrayko*
Leia, Mike, Reece & Wyatt; Bob & Joan; Toni & Richard Bussen; Pete, Krista, Jacob, Clair, Matt & Paul; Damon, Levi, Briana, *by Becky Jur.*
Health & Salvation: Cathi Green *(cancer)*, Staschke Family, *by Kim Hancock* + + + Shirley Peponis, by Brother, Nick & JoAnne Nicholas

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) TODAY, After Liturgy: DECORATING THE CHURCH & HALL and 50th ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE MEETING

(2) COOKIE WALK: SUNDAY, 12/18, here, after Liturgy. It is vital that volunteers sign up **ASAP** to make 5-6 dozen cookies each, for the Sunday Dec. 18th COOKIE WALK. Please sign the sign-up sheet (or call if you are not at church). This is sort of a "trial-run" as a fund-raiser for our 50th Anniversary, that we will be celebrating on **Saturday, October 28th, 2017.** Contact Elizabeth or Becky for details.

(3) CHRISTMAS FLOWERS & BOWS. We need donations for 5-7 giant **poinsettias** at $25 each. Please donate $5 for each "**Christmas Bow**" decorated card on which you write the names of the Living and the Departed for whom you are praying. The cards will decorate our Christmas tree in the church, and stay there until Jan 19th, Old Calendar Theophany. As a major annual fund-raiser, our goal is 100 bows. Please be generous.

(4) CONGRATULATIONS TO JORDAN MOSES MANIER, Who Graduates from College next Saturday, Dec. 10th! Jordan is graduating from Benedict College in Columbia, SC, with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science. We are so happy for you!!! MANY YEARS!!!

(5) OUR ANNUAL FALL BLANKET DRIVE HAS ENDED. Thank you to everyone who has donated money for the blankets. As a result, we have been able to purchase 165 blankets and have given them to the Redford Interfaith Relief (RIR), to distribute to the needy.

(6) WE ARE "ADOPTING" 3 NEEDY FAMILIES TO HELP THIS CHRISTMAS. Now that we have concluded our Fall blanket drive, we are turning "adopting" 3 (of 25) needy Redford families that Redford churches are helping for the Holiday season, referred by the Redford Schools. We will provide food and Christmas gifts for each family member. Please start donating now. We are waiting to learn further details.

(7) UP-COMING SCHEDULE: (See complete December calendar schedule on our website: http://stinnocentchurch.com/calendar.html)
★NEXT SUNDAY, Dec. 11th, 6pm, Inter-Orthodox Nativity Concert, St. Lazarus Serbian Church, See flyer at http://coccdetroit.com★
Tuesday, December 13th, 10am, Divine Liturgy for Feast Day of **St. Herman of Alaska**
Tuesday, December 20th, 10am, Divine Liturgy for the Feast Day of **St. John of Kronstadt**
Saturday, December 24th, CHRISTMAS EVE, 7pm, VIGIL FOR THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST
Sunday, December 25th, CHRISTMAS DAY, 10am, DIVINE LITURGY FOR THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

HEALING OF THE TEN LEPERS

By Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

27th Sunday After Pentecost — St. Luke 17:12-19

A Sermon delivered on December 23, 1990

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel — all the Gospel — is a gift of God to us, and although we are not continuously reminded of the need to be grateful, how can we not respond with gratitude to what the Gospel brings to us? God has so loved the world that He has given His only begotten Son that the world may be saved; and the Son has given Himself freely, in the sovereign freedom of His Divinity to us; no one has taken His life from Him — these are His own words; He gave His life willingly, freely, that we may live.

And today we have in the Gospel a short example of the way in which we, most of the time, receive the gifts of God. Ten men came, covered with leprosy, condemned to a cruel death by illness, but also rejected ritually by their own people for the impurity of this infectious disease. They came to Him, stood at a distance, because they knew that according to the Jewish Law they had no right even to come near Him to touch Him. And they asked for mercy. And God send them to the priests to bring forth the sign of their gratitude for the healing which they had not received; and they believed, and they went, and they were healed before they reached their goal... We might have expected that they rushed back to fall to the feet of Christ, to touch Him in gratitude — no... Nine of them went their way; it was enough for them to have been healed: it's all they needed of God. One of them, however, turned round, and came to thank the Lord.

Isn't it an image of the way in which so often we also behave? We pray; we ask the Lord for something that matters to us: it may not be live and death, it may just be that we need so much, one thing or another; or that we don't even need it so much, but that we long so much for it. And then it is given us; and we receive the gift, and we rush into life with this gift in our hearts, this gift in our hands, we rush to life because it is enough for us that our prayer was fulfilled. How seldom it is that we come back, leaving our gift to be used later, but first of all turning to God and saying: What wonder! What is Your love! How great, how compassionate, how humble — that You have responded to my prayer... One out of ten came back to the Lord Jesus Christ: how many of us have ever come immediately, before they took advantage of the gift, to turn to God with a smile, like a child turns and say 'Thank you!', even with a smile, without words, before taking advantage of what is given. And we loose so much at not being grateful; because if we learned to be grateful for the obvious gifts of God, we would gradually discover that we can be grateful for a great deal more, for everything that Providence puts in our way: not only things we rejoice in, not only the wonders of life, but even the challenges of life, the things that claims from us courage, greatness, nobility, the things which we are afraid of. And how often we could overcome vanity by gratitude! Because vanity consists in looking at ourselves, and thinking: how wonderful we are, forgetting that all that we are, all that we have is a gift from God. If we only, every time we have said the right thing, done the right thing, been worthy of our human quality, human greatness and nobility, and also of the name of the disciples of Christ — if every time we turned to God and said, 'Yes! How wonderful are the words I have spoken, how good is the action I have performed — and everything was of You: the occasion was given by You, O Lord! I was able to perceive the need because You whispered in my heart: Look!... I could understand because I had my mind enlightened by the Gospel! My heart responded because You touched it, and from the heart of stone which I carry in my bosom most of the time it became a heart of flesh full of compassion and of understanding! And You gave me the means of meeting the need, and the joy of meeting this need!..

If we could respond to everything this way, we would discover that life is made into an act of worship and of gratitude.

Let us reflect on this because we are coming in a few weeks now, to a day when our heart should be aflame with gratitude: God has loved us so much as to become one of us; while we were strangers, alien to Him, often inimical to Him, He came, and He gave His life for us that we may live!.. We must prepare for it: joy, gratitude, faith, openness to God does not happen all of a sudden; we must prepare for it. Let us reflect on what is going to happen; the thing that happened over 2000 years ago that we shall remember as an actual event now, in a few weeks; and be ready, with a heart tilled, deeply furrowed by faith, by reflection, having thought out all our life, ready to receive the Lord like a shepherd, in the simplicity and purity of our hearts, or like the Wise Men in the deep understanding of wisdom. Amen!

NOTE: This is also the Gospel for the Moleben for Thanksgiving, read on Thanksgiving Eve and at the Thanksgiving Liturgy.

CHRIST IS BORN, GLORIFY HIM!

By Archpriest Victor Potapov

Christ Is Born, Glorify Him! These festive words first sound out on the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple (November 21/ December 4), i.e. 37 days before the actual Feast of the Nativity of Christ (December 25/January 7), and soon after the beginning of the Nativity Fast. This demonstrates that in its wisdom, the Holy Church gradually prepares us for the day we meet the salvific event of Divine Incarnation. It incorporates other Nativity-related expressions in the hymnody of the Divine Services. Among these we hear more than once the sticheron: "O cave gloriously decorate/embellish yourself." Those words are of profound significance. On the one hand, they have a historical meaning, reminding us of the cave in which 2,000 years ago, our Lord Jesus Christ was born. Moreover, they also have a spiritual meaning: each Christian's heart should become a cave. Thus, on the one hand the cave is the cavern in which Christ the Savior was born, and on the other, it is each person's heart. That is the cave in which Jesus Christ is to be born. In their spiritual sense, those words refer to each Christian heart: "Prepare yourself, gloriously embellish yourself, that Jesus Christ might enter. "

It is not only these sticherae that tell us that the heart is a special repository, a special dwelling place. That is mentioned several times in Sacred Scripture: "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23).

In the final book of the New Testament, the book of the Apocalypse (Revelation), the Lord says: "Behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20). You see, here it again says that the heart can and must become a dwelling place for the Lord.

In the Epistles, there are frequent reminders that the heart is intended to become God's abode. The Apostle Paul wants Christ to make his home in Christians' hearts. The heart is the cave, where Christ is to be born.

That is a Gospel, Apostolic, and Church Truth.

But why should the heart become a dwelling-place? Why should Christ enter into it? Is it not enough for us to be kind and spiritually beautiful?

Why should we enter into fellowship with God?

The Holy Gospel reveals a Truth of which many are not aware. In order to be good, one must be with the Source of Good. In order to be strong, one must be with the Source of Strength. In order to be spiritually powerful, one must be with the Source of Spiritual Power. In order to be spiritually beautiful, one must be with the source of Beauty. For it is only in union with Him, the Source of Good, Strength, Spiritual Power, and Beauty, can a person be morally transfigured.

Just as an electric light bulb with no tie to an electrical power plant will not light up, a person needs to be connected to Power and Beauty in order to become powerful and beautiful.

Let us make efforts to gloriously decorate our hearts, so as to meet the Nativity of Christ with joy and be made worthy in eternal life to glorify Him with the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit.

Parish Life, December 2016; 28 / 11 / 2016. Source: www.pravoslavie.ru

THE DIVINE COMPASS

By Fr. Stephen Freeman

I was in a small shop yesterday in a coastal town. Among its many knick-knacks were a large variety of compasses. We have become a compass-driven culture today, after a lull in which they were largely passé. Of course, the compass is now a very passive thing, hidden within the workings of the resident GPS system in our phones. There has long been a debate about the presence of an "inner compass" in the human brain. Some people seem to have a strong sense of direction, while others do not. Many animals clearly have a means of finding their way about, so that it would come as no surprise if some humans were similarly equipped. But to be equipped and to be aware of it, much less, able to use it, are very different things.

God seems to me to be a compass-related question. The traditional compass points towards the magnetic North because the needle is magnetized and allowed to float freely. It is drawn to the right position by the magnetic field of the earth. A Christian must say that there is a natural spiritual compass within every human being, inasmuch as we are created in the image of God. Some would say that the spiritual compass is distorted by the world and its many noises. I think this is mistaken. What is missing in any human life is not the compass itself, but the willingness of drawing near to read it.

Do we actually want to know God? And what does it mean when we ask that question?

The "God question" is often so encrusted that it is hard to actually engage it. This "encrustation" occurs in a number of forms. First, there is no way to strip the reality of God from particularities. There is no "generalized" God. If there is a God, then He is not only particular, He is *transcendently particular*. He is not one out of a set of multiples, nor is there even a set. He is without category.

Second, we can never ourselves be without particularities. We are not generalized beings: we are always somewhere, somehow, somewhat. We have a history and are positioned in place and time. Every thought we have is couched in a language and must be experienced just so. There are, however, some practices that make the compass more available to us (or ourselves more available to the compass).

Many, if not most, of the particularities of our lives are deeply enmeshed in matters of identity. We do not necessarily think of them in such a way, but everything that we care most deeply about (and how we care about it) carries with it some piece of our identity, something that forms and shapes *who* we think ourselves to be. I think it is safe to say that those things about which we are truly indifferent are simply those things in which we have no stake. If they did not exist, we would feel no loss. They are not *me*.

Strangely, the question of knowing God is perhaps the greatest question of identity. To know God is also to know my *self*. All things take on their proper meaning in their proper light in the presence of the knowledge of God. If the knowledge of God does not have this effect, then it surely is knowledge of something else. For in the presence of God, everything else must become relative, and relative only to Him. Everything takes its true form and shape in the light of the Light.

And this most especially concerns ourselves. It was what makes the knowledge of God and finding God so terribly problematic.

Every identity that is mine, every detail that forms and shapes the "me" that I value, is inevitably judged when brought into the Light. And this inevitably means that, like Adam and Eve in the Garden, we encounter shame when we find God.***

When we approach God, the true and living God, all of the identities that wrap our inmost self, begin to crumble and disappear. People frequently "have a relationship" with "God," in which their identities are up-front and foremost, but this is far short and possibly unrelated to true knowledge of God. Such "relationships" differ very little from the relationships through the ages with gods of many names. It is an approach to a powerful helper but not an approach to communion with the very Ground of all being.

That event of communion is the end (and beginning) of a journey. It is not insignificant that in Scripture, such an encounter with God results in the change of a name. Abram become Abraham; Jacob becomes Israel; Simon bar Jonah becomes Peter. As the disciples said to Christ, "Lo, we have left everything!" The imagery in St. John's Revelation suggests that we will

all receive a "new name" in the Kingdom. That fact is reflected in the naming of a child on the eighth day in preparation for their Baptism, and that it is traditionally the name of a saint. We are not known by our own name, but by a name that has been fulfilled in heaven itself, our own final name waiting to be revealed.

St. John says this:

> *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (1John 3:2)*

When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, Moses asked for His name. God answered: "I am who I am." It is also interesting that the encounter produced another question from Moses: "*Who am I* that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11) Moses understands and knows himself in a new way, even as he is initiated into the knowledge of God. These are not separate events: they belong together. The revelation of God is also the revelation of Moses.

The truth of our own existence is like the truth of Moses. Who-I-am has its meaning as it is related to God. God alone is the truly existing one and the only ground of true existence. Who-I-am only has true existence if and as it is grounded and related to the truly existing God. There is nothing that exists apart from God. As a side note, there is and can be no such thing as a "secular" existence. *"In Him, we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28)*

In the classical teaching of the Christian faith, Christ is unfailingly identified with the One who says, "I Am that I Am." The icons of Christ are always inscribed with ὁ ὤν ("He who is"), the phrasing from Exodus 3 in the Greek text.

I noted at the beginning of the article the problem with generalities. God does not exist in *general* but is transcendently *particular*. This is made abundantly clear in the Incarnation. The Fathers, for example, wrote that Christ may be depicted in an icon, not because He became man, but because He became "a" man. It is in His *particularity*, manifest as the person of Jesus Christ, that He is made known. It is in our response to God, as Particular, that we, at last, can come to know our true selves.

Many people say they believe in God, and may even be able to describe some of the things they attribute to Him. But so long as the belief rests in generalized terms, there is no true knowledge, only the projection of our wishes, desires, even delusions (no matter how good or noble). The journey towards knowing God requires unknowing what we think to be ourselves that we might see Him for who He is. Our own name and true existence is then revealed only by Him and in Him. And this is eternal life. (John 17:3).

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*** *The experience of shame, according to psychologists, is bound up with the question of "who I am." It is about identity. Anytime we experience a wound, an embarrassment, or even too great a sense of vulnerability, there is a natural experience of shame. This is, in its most common form, quite harmless, producing little more than a flush to the cheeks and averting of our eyes. There, are, of course, much more serious forms of* toxic *shame, genuine attacks on the very core of our identity that can leave crippling wounds that last for years. But all forms of shame are things that people avoid. According to psychologists, it is our most painful emotion.*

God Himself is not the source of our shame. He does not seek to bring us into shame, indeed, Christ "bears our shame." However, it is the nature of the Light that it reveals things to be what they truly are. If the identities we wear are made of the flimsy stuff of delusion and imagination, then the presence of God will show them for that very unreality. It leaves us feeling stripped bare. "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Gen 3:10) There was no sin in Adam's nakedness, nor was there any judgment from God regarding it. Indeed God gave coverings for Adam and Eve. But Adam experienced his nakedness as fear/shame.

About the Author, Fr. Stephen Freeman

Fr. Stephen is a priest of the Orthodox Church in America, serving as Rector of St. Anne Orthodox Church in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. He is also author of Everywhere Present and the Glory to God podcast series. *Source: www.oca .org*

Painting on previous page by William Blake, "God using a compass to create the world."