

1st Sunday in Raleigh, NC
Holy Trinity
Sunday, June 5, 2011

1. Good Morning Everyone...

Let me begin by telling you how glad and how honored I am to be with you...I really mean it...

My family, Presbyteria Mary, Daniella, William and Gabriella, all of us look forward to meeting you and really getting to know you. So that we can all be a family...

μια μεγάλη οικογενια... and share in the joys and sorrows of this life together.

2. Now, speaking of joys and sorrows, I've been thinking about you... and what you've been going through these past several months. These days must be almost surreal for you. I think you have probably set the Archdiocesan record for saying hello and goodbye to members of your clergy. You have had Fathers & Deacons & Archimandrites coming and going and returning and leaving again at a seemingly fast and furious pace.
3. Last week a number of you met Dn. Michael Marcantoni...my associate, who will soon be Fr. Michael... All kinds of twists and turns and transitions. I'll tell you this business of saying goodbye... it's difficult, because let's face it, we are people, we become emotionally attached to one another. When people who are dear to us leave, it's like saying goodbye to a part of yourself...I know it is not easy.
4. But you know despite all this drama and adjustment, I get the sense that you have pretty much, for the most part, taken things in good stride. You have been mature about things (real troopers) without wallowing in self-pity and bitterness (at least it appears that way).
5. Now there's me...now I know it is your way and your custom and tradition to worship the Lord our God every Sunday...as all pious & Orthodox Christians do. It is our reasonable response to his love and glory. But somehow I have the suspicion you also came out to see who is this guy from Memphis? Who is the new Fr. Paul?
6. Well today, as I said, I'd like to use this time as a sort of introduction of my self and also to talk about expectations. What are your expectations of me? I remember in my younger days when I was still single, I was eating in a Chinese restaurant. At the end of the meal I was intrigued by the message of my fortune cookie...it read:

Great Expectation: Great Disappointment

Few Expectation: Few Disappointment

No Expectation: No Disappointment

Living life with no expectations....

7. Don't laugh... that's how I manipulated Presbytera into marrying me!
8. You know our Lord Jesus Christ seemed to be talking about expectations when He spoke to the multitudes concerning St. John the Baptist. Three times He asked them "What did you come out to see?" And then He gave them three options:
 1. A reed shaken by the wind
 2. A man dressed in soft apparel
 3. A prophet
9. I am going to look at these three options and use them as a way of telling you a little about myself and what you can reasonably expect of me.

Option 1: (What did you come out to see,) A reed shaken by the wind?

In other words: Am I a wimp or a pushover? Well to tell you the truth, the answer to that is probably 'yes and no'. Taking the bull by the horns, is not exactly my style. In matters of administration I am not seeking to dominate or micro manage. I very much seek to cooperate with the wisdom, intelligence and experience of others.

10. When it comes to matters of the heart, I'm afraid I can be a softy. I can be influenced or swayed a bit by sentimentality, not false sentiment mind you. I don't like to be manipulated, but authentic and deep feeling, yes I have been known to relate and empathize.
11. When it comes to matters that affect the harmony of the community I can hold my own. In fact I consider it my duty to hold my own because if I faint-heartedly or good-naturedly endure disorder...I'm not really doing my job. I must stand up to anyone with ill-will.
12. But above all, I have to tell you, when it comes to matters of the Faith, that's a completely different story. I am not only 'not swayed' and not only just 'hold my own' but I become a ...**μεγαθυριο**...a monster. I am very protective and passionate about our Orthodoxy – the ancient Apostolic Faith.
13. **Option 2:** What did you come out to see, a man dressed in luxurious apparel or soft raiment?

In other words: Am I an elitist? Do I expect a soft luxurious life, appreciating only the finer things or life? Do I look down upon the common things? The answer to that is no. I like to think of myself as a down to earth sort of fellow. Like most people I like nice things but I also am attracted to simple things as well. Many times I prefer them...especially children and animals.
14. **Options 3:** What did you come out to see, a Prophet?

Keep in mind a Prophet is not only one who predicts the future, but more importantly one who reveals the will of God. I don't claim to be a Prophet but I can tell you with assurance that the will of God for us as a community is to grow, develop and build.

15. Not just with bricks and mortar. I've seen your web-site...I know you (or I guess now we!) are in the midst of an ambitious capital campaign and have plans to build on the strong foundation that our ...γιαγιαδες and παπουδες...built for us. We must do that, it would be not only lazy of us to sit or rest on what we have, but I dare say also wicked and even sinful to do nothing.
16. But nevertheless the kind of developing, growing and building I'm speaking of is again not only bricks and mortar but the building up of virtue especially the high virtue of humility, which I will refer to often throughout my ministry, because **without humility there is no virtue.**

Let me conclude with a prayer for you and our community...

17. ...Του Κυριου Δεηθωμεν...

O Lord our God... the Church's great founder, likewise establish us o Lord.
Help us to have a beautiful, harmonious community.
Remember the people here present and those who are absent with good cause

Fill their treasures with every good thing
Preserve their marriages in peace
Nurture the infants
Instruct the youth
Strengthen the aged
Give courage to the faint hearted
Re-unite those separated
Free those of us held captive by unclean spirits
Defend the widows
Heal the sick
Remember Lord our God all your people and pour out your rich mercy
For you are holy and to you we ascribe glory.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.