Dear CrossRoad Alumni,

This past Sunday after Liturgy, I watched a CrossRoad alum greet a CrossRoad alum from out of town with a warm hug. There is really nothing better than seeing you welcome one another. I made a mental note of it because this year, through our new Telos Project, we are researching if and how our Orthodox parishes welcome twenty-somethings when they come to church. Our Telos work is discovering and sharing how parishes truly fulfill their vocation when they create a welcoming home to our young people.

Your twenties can just feel like an extended period of your teenage years; #adulting can feel hard and worth avoiding. But talk to older people whom you respect about this decade of their lives. They will likely tell you that decisions you make now actually do matter—including how you learn from mistakes and hardship. You are setting yourselves on a life trajectory. Our culture wants to convince you that 30 is the new 20, but it is not (see the Ted talk by that name if you haven’t). Big and little decisions actually have a huge significance.

Sound stressful? It is totally stressful if you think of this all in worldly terms. Setting yourself up perfectly for the rest of life? That’s a recipe for paralyzing stress. But here’s the thing: to invite Christ into daily life and decisions, big and little, is to feel the weight of the future lifted. He is the author of Life, and He wants us to humbly invite His will to be done in our lives. Simply to pray “Lord, I am going to move forward in this direction; show me if it is right,” is all He asks. This is vocation. We can never ‘miss’ our vocation. Vocation is always now. It isn’t career, although it can include what we choose for work. It’s our whole way of being in the world, lived in response to Him—His call and His love. It is our faithfulness over the time He gives us, one foot in front of the other.

It is important, of course, to be striving simultaneously to know who He is through our Scriptures so that our image of Him isn’t a figment of our imagination or a construction by today’s media. We strive to know His Word, as Chrysostom advises, so that we can rejoice when we hear the words in our liturgical services and come to know Him truly as the source of life. We go to church to be fed by Him in community. In this nourishment, we turn and hug others with His joy.

May this issue of Down the Road be a warm hug of your peers and staff. May you be encouraged and challenged to live in faithfulness to Christ, making the most of the time He has given you, the fruit of which is an incredible life-giving joy and freedom, a wellspring of love for God and neighbor. We love you all so very much. Remember us in your prayers; you are always in ours.

In Christ,

Dr. Ann Mitsakos Bezzerides
Office of Vocation & Ministry, Director
ABOUT

DOWN THE ROAD

Down the Road is the magazine for the alumni of the CrossRoad Summer Institute, published annually by the Office of Vocation & Ministry at Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

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Simone Weil talks about attention and learning in terms of waiting—waiting for the Beloved to appear. [1] Who or what is the Beloved? The Beloved is the Presence of the (quite often) invisible (Luke 24:32), yet deeply essential and real Stranger, for whom we have been created and called to show hospitality (John 1:11-13; Matt 25:35). Our task is not to scurry around like little ants-doing, doing, doing. But to wait, like expectant fans, for the appearance on stage of our favorite band, who will come, through music, to liberate us from our everyday worries, anxieties, and cares. We are like hopeful prisoners, waiting to be liberated from the constraints of emptiness, fear, and anxieties.

While music can often powerfully point us in this direction, true liberation is much more quiet and seemingly unassuming. The Israelites were expecting a “loud liberation”; they were expecting a Savior who would come in with trumpets blaring, followed by a powerful army, announcing the defeat of the Romans and the reinstatement of the Chosen People to their rightful place here on earth. Because many of them expected this “loud liberation” they (like us) missed the quiet, gentle, and unassuming presence of the real Savior, in the “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12), the one who would free us from our greatest Enemy: sin and death.

Thus it is that by surrendering our expectations of a “loud liberator” and gently turning our hearts and minds towards the possibility of something or, rather, Someone much more subtle and delicate, we begin to cultivate a sensitivity towards the true nature of Life, towards the possibility of the appearance of our Beloved, who comes “like a thief in the night” (1 Thess 5:2).

And when our Beloved comes, and when we sense this visitation quietly in our very depths, all of life “makes sense,” we have finally found “what we’re looking for” (U2), and we breathe in a deep breath of contentment and joy.

But until this time we wait, not in agony, not with fists clenched, making demands and flailing our hands in the air, but with a courageous expectancy which sees beyond the seemingly endless wasteland of barrenness, futility, and hopelessness, to the ‘what if’ of the potential for a Visitation any moment now, just beyond the horizon.

And then, it’s here. Before we can even see it coming, quietly, stealthily, and unexpectedly, we are paid a visit by the sweetest, most peaceful, and simultaneously most exhilarating and Breath of Life, which nourishes and satisfies us down to our very core.

This is the journey of life, education, faith, the taste of and yearning for True Beauty and True Wisdom which, like our shy and elusive, yet charming and enchanting Beloved, appear only long enough to give us a drop of their intoxicating elixir, and then vanish over the hill, beckoning us to yearn, letting us feel the absence so deeply that we are compelled to search, to scour, but most of all to wait, not listlessly or apathetically, but with openness, leaning in, with gentle expectancy, for even the smallest drop, the faintest vision, or the quietest sound of its intoxicating Presence.

Come, Life, come –
Reveal Yourself to me.
For by waiting I am ready,
Though forgetful, unworthy.

Come, Light, come –
Illuminate my being.
So that filled with all Your rays
I may see transparently.

Come, Hope, come –
Abide before my eyes.
So that guiding me through barrenness
I may feel the sun arise.

Enter into Light –
The Light of Truth and Life.
Become that which you were meant to be,
And all will be made right.

As I begin my 5th week of college experience my first year of college and look back on the lessons I learned from CrossRoad, the answer to the complicated question “Who is God?” becomes even clearer to me than it was during those 10 amazing days. It seems peculiar that this question would become clearer while I am immersed in the world of a secular, state university instead of in the the peaceful, Orthodox community that exists at CrossRoad.

Over the past few weeks, I have been surrounded by people and ideas that test my faith and show me very un-Orthodox viewpoints. But among all of the trials and tribulations and new things that come with being a freshman in a secular college, I am beginning to understand that Christ is the core of our life and the only thing that stays steady while the world around us spins. No matter if we are sitting under a shady tree on HCHC’s campus or sitting in a

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**Who Am I?**

Dimitrios Rentel, June 2017

I think everyone who has gone to CrossRoad came upon the same conclusion: life at CrossRoad is phenomenal. You go to church twice a day, delve deeper into your faith, meet wonderful friends, and go and have Liturgy on the Streets. Everyone loves CrossRoad!

Fast forward three months. I am now in my senior year of high school. School is less great—people are much less supportive, I am constantly working on something that I don’t want to work on, and I have to get up at ungodly hours (actually, that was there at CrossRoad as well).

Returning to daily routine proved difficult for me. Dr. Rossi had said: “If you’re too busy to have be-still time, you’re too busy.” And I, unfortunately, was too busy, and I knew it. People were often short with me, and I found myself being short with them, too. My short temper was not helped at all by the fact that I stay up late texting CrossRoad friends when I’m supposed to be doing my Greek homework. How much easier would it be if I were back in CrossRoad!

I do not know the statistics on how often that phrase is said by CrossRoad alumni, but I would imagine it is said many times.

If only life were like CrossRoad – easy for our spiritual life, easy for our social life, easy for our mental life. But, that was not the point. Going out to visit homeless people is hard. Saying no to a party in order to go to church is hard. Being loving and compassionate all the time is hard. But despite these struggles, that is what I have to do, what we have to do. And, looking back at what I did at CrossRoad,

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**Who Is God?**

Anna Ilyasova, July 2017

As I begin my 5th week of college experience my first year of college and look back on the lessons I learned from CrossRoad, the answer to the complicated question “Who is God?” becomes even clearer to me than it was during those 10 amazing days. It seems peculiar that this question would become clearer while I am immersed in the world of a secular, state university instead of in the the peaceful, Orthodox community that exists at CrossRoad. Over the past few weeks, I have been surrounded by people and ideas that test my faith and show me very un-Orthodox viewpoints. But among all of the trials and tribulations and new things that come with being a freshman in a secular college, I am beginning to understand that Christ is the core of our life and the only thing that stays steady while the world around us spins. No matter if we are sitting under a shady tree on HCHC’s campus or sitting in a
Since Crossroad 2017 ended, so much has happened in America with regard to the question we were posed in stage three: “Who is my neighbor?” I find myself constantly reflecting back on this challenge to love thy neighbor every time I see something disheartening or upsetting in the media.

How can I be neighborly to someone who spews hateful messages? How can I love someone who won’t listen? How can I love a person that religiously, politically, and perhaps ethically believes the opposite of what I believe?

Then I remembered something I learned at CrossRoad: simply look in your neighbor’s eyes. Really look. Note the colors that radiate from their dark pupils, the depth coming from their soul. Those eyes and that soul are your neighbor.

Living in Manhattan, I’ve noticed that people intentionally avoid looking people in the eye, otherwise they’ll think you’re a weirdo. Because think about it, it is intimidating when a stranger looks in your eyes; it feels like an invasion of your personal space. However, in recalling the CrossRoad method of engaging my neighbor from Liturgy on the Streets, I decided to look into the eyes of New Yorkers.

I was working at a NY fashion show recently at which the viewers were allowed to walk up to the models at the end of the show and look closely at their avant garde ensembles. Each of the models faces rested as still as stone as they stood (literally) on pedestals like statues.

Rather than looking at the clothing alone, I looked each model in the eye and smiled. Each time I did this, their faces would break and offer a warm smile back. However, as soon as they realized they had broken protocol, they immediately went back to stone.

Looking at these beautiful models, I remembered the warmth I felt meeting the elderly with our CrossRoad participants. While their age and day-to-day schedules were vastly different from the NY models, I experienced similar warmth when looking them in their eyes, seeing each of them as a person.

This juxtaposition of the elderly and the models reminded me of the Orthodox teaching that “we are all icons of Christ.” Regardless of our looks, past experiences, class identification, or lack thereof, at our core, we are all living icons made in the image and likeness of Christ. We all desire to be seen, heard, and loved.

Who is my neighbor? Humanity. We must continue to engage one another with bold faith and love, knowing that we are united in being made in the image of the self-sacrificing, redeeming Judge, Jesus Christ.
Warmest greetings from the Holy Hill!

One of the highlights of the year for me is the start of each CrossRoad session. It’s a joy to see so many young people excitedly anticipating an experience that will enrich their lives spiritually, academically, and socially. As President of Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, I am proud that we can offer this wonderful program through the Office of Vocation & Ministry. As a father of six children, I know how critically important it is for teenagers in our secular society to forge friendships with peers who share their values and beliefs, so that they can grow into adulthood strong in their faith and eager to serve Christ and society.

Some of you early CrossRoaders are now parents yourselves. Some are out of school and building careers. Many of you are pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees. The most recent CrossRoad alums are still in high school. Wherever you are and whatever you’re doing, know that HCHC is and always will be your home. We want you to stay in touch with us and with each other. And we hope that you will consider continuing your education at HCHC or encourage others to do so. As you already know, this is a school and a faith community like no other.

May God bless you always!

With love in Christ,

Fr. Christopher

Rev. Fr. Christopher T. Metropulos, DMin
President
The Semester of Faith program offers students from other colleges and universities an opportunity to study at Hellenic College. Students continue earning credit toward their bachelor’s degrees while exploring their faith more deeply through theological study and daily worship in an Orthodox Christian community.

**SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE!**
Learn more at www.hchc.edu/admissions/semester_of_faith

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On Friday, March 31, fifty-five CrossRoad alumni gathered at Hellenic College Holy Cross for the annual Alumni Retreat. Young adults from across the country traveled to Brookline to reconnect with their CrossRoad peers, meet alums from other years, deepen their relationship with their faith, and hear from some inspiring speakers. With the vast age-range of our alumni population (17-31), the CrossRoad office has continued the tradition of holding separate tracks on Saturday every other year of the retreat: one for our high school/college-age alums, and one for our post-college alums.

This year, they were blessed to have Dr. George Stavros speak to the younger alumni on the topic of leisure and entertainment, and Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou address the older alumni on the idea of being the “spiritual but not religious” trend and how/why we can choose to be Orthodox Christian. Both speakers did a tremendous job of engaging the alumni on topics that were relevant to their stage of life!

The weekend began and ended with worship as a whole community in the Holy Cross Chapel, with an Akathist service on Friday evening and Divine Liturgy on Sunday where we celebrated the feast of St. Mary of Egypt. For both the older and younger groups, the rest of the weekend included quiet time for personal prayer and reflection, fellowship with their peers, and lively conversation/dialogue.

Upon reflecting on the weekend, one alumna from the younger track mentioned reflected, “My life at this point has been very stressful for me and the timing of this retreat was impeccable. It took me back to what I had learned at CR and what I learned about leisure—to do what I’m passionate about for passion and not to cross it off a list; to do things to feed my soul.” Panos Coufos, from the older retreat, reflected on Dr. Papanikolaou’s question “Why be Orthodox?” in saying, “Orthodoxy has the potential to make God’s love tangible to those struggling. While we often have long debates about different hypotheticals, the reality is that Orthodoxy is about one’s own relationship with God and others. It offers us a framework to bring a revolutionary type of love to the world.”

The retreat was a joyful and rejuvenating experience for all, participants and staff/guest speakers included! The CrossRoad office was so grateful to have so many alums return to campus and we hope to see more again next year!
Out on the Road

Five of our CrossRoad Alumni served as staff at Ionian Village this summer. Pictured here are two of them, Isabella Calpakis (June 2013) and Despina Diveris (June 2011).

Twelve CrossRoad Alumni represent at the 2017 Orthodox Christian Youth Workers Conference in Austin, TX.

CrossRoad Alumni represent at Camp Saint Mary of Egypt in Portland, OR.

CrossRoad Alumni with Associate Director, Kyra Limberakis, on the OCF Real Break Thessaloniki trip, March 2017.

CR Alumni after Liturgy at the HCHC, November 2017.

The June 2016 crew at the CrossRoad Alumni Retreat in April 2017.
CrossRoaders at the Young Adult Connect Conference in October 2017.

CrossRoad Alums, Demetri Constantine and John Tsikalas (June 2010) at John and Kahlee’s wedding in January 2017. Demetri and his wife, Maria, became the Koumbari of John and Kahlee.

CrossRoad Alumni at session two of Ionian Village, summer 2017.

Former staff member, John Tsikalas, ran into his CrossRoader of June 2016 at the St. Nektarios Monastery in Aegina in July 2017.

CrossRoaders at the Young Adult Connect Conference in October 2017.
A NOTE FROM YOUR BOARD CHAIR

The CrossRoad Alumni Advisory Board is pleased to share the wonderful things that have taken place this year for our alumni community. The board, composed of your fellow alumni, is always open to your feedback and ideas for new projects to better serve all of you on your vocational journeys. Please take some time to update yourself by reading blurbs from our project leaders below!

REGIONAL MEET-UPS

This spring brought the organization of the first few CrossRoad regional meet-ups. The first took place in the greater Washington, D.C. metro area, coordinated by Tim Markatos (June 2010) and Michelle Torski (2005). The second brought together CrossRoaders of the Midwest to Ann Arbor, MI, and was coordinated by Lily Talmers (July 2015). The events featured an afternoon of prayer, food, and conversation about the various needs and hopes of young Orthodox Christians. In DC, the same group met up again later in the spring for Palm Sunday luncheon and attended Holy Week services at several different Orthodox parishes in the area. The third and most recent meet-up happened in the heart of Boston where nine alums gathered for Liturgy and Brunch. This meet-up was hosted by board chair, Panos Coufos (July 2011), and board member, Susan Kourtis (June 2014). The board hopes to gather these groups again in the fall/winter, and welcome any new CrossRoaders who wish to join! Should you want to get a regional meet-up going in your area, reach out to crossroad@hchc.edu and we can connect you with your local alums!

SPEAKER SERIES UPDATE

With the relevant topic Everyday Evangelism: Spreading the Word as a Young Adult, the Speaker Series kicked off their first event this spring with Fr. Andrew Pavlakos (2005) as our guest speaker via Zoom videoconference, allowing alums to join from wherever they are! Fr. Andrew discussed how to share Christ’s love with everybody around us as we “Go forth and make disciples of all nations” as young adults. We plan on holding more speaker series; we’d love your ideas for topics and guest speakers.
RE-ENTRY UPDATE
This summer, the Alumni Advisory Board hosted once again the "Re-entry" session at CrossRoad. Eight alums returned to speak on the closing night of the first session and ten returned for the second session. The alumni shared their experiences, led fruitful discussions, and responded to the questions of their newest CrossRoad brothers and sisters. The alumni were energized and strengthened by being back at and giving back to CrossRoad. The newest CrossRoaders, in return, soaked up their guidance, made connections with their greater alumni family, and left feeling more confident and equipped to go back into their communities. We are thankful to all of the alumni who took time out of their schedules to give back to CrossRoad in this way. It was very exciting to meet and welcome the newest crew of alumni into our CrossRoad family!

SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE
We feel blessed this year to have received many generous donations to the Sophia Bambalis Scholarship Fund. In total, we received donations of $17,739.41. Following financial aid requests for CrossRoad 2017, $12,970 was distributed as scholarships, with the remaining $4,769.41 put towards the endowment, which will continue to grow for future generations of CrossRoaders. We thank everyone for their generous gifts! It is through your support that accepted applicants are able to attend CrossRoad free of financial constraint. If you would like to support the Sophia Bambalis Scholarship Fund, please visit http://www.hchc.edu/studentlife/vocation/give. As we add a third session, our scholarship needs will grow and every gift makes a huge difference!
Every day in first grade, my mother would tell me right before she dropped me off at school, “Remember, Kyra, if you listen, you will learn.” For anyone who knows me, it is probably no surprise that she said this because I talked too much in school. Time and time again, my mom would have to remind me of the importance of listening and thinking before I speak.

As I’ve gotten older, I’ve realized how deeply important her advice has been in my life, particularly this past year. Amidst all the divisiveness, turmoil, suffering, and hurtful language that has risen to the surface this year in our society, her words ring heavily in my ear when I acknowledge how quick I have been to speak before I think, react before I listen, and assume before seeking to understand.

This notion of thinking and listening before we speak has emerged in other areas of my life, specifically in my work with CrossRoad. During staff training, we read Oration 27 of St. Gregory of Nazianzus’ On God and Christ. In this particular Oration, St. Gregory addresses the Eunomians (a heretical group in the fourth century) who have been filling the streets with their heated theological arguments at every opportunity. In addressing these arguments and the turmoil in the community, he reminds them that “discussion of theology is not for everyone...it is not for every occasion or audience” (3). He stresses the importance of preparing for these types of conversations, approaching them in a particular posture, “free from the mire and noise,” (3) and in stillness. Taking it a step further, he says:

Once we have removed from our discussions all alien elements...the next step is to look at ourselves and to smooth the theologian in us, like a statue, into beauty...But first we must consider: what is this disorder of the tongue that leads us to compete in garrulity?...Why do do we keep our hands bound and our tongues armed? Do we commend hospitality?...Do we admire brotherly love?...Feeding the poor, singing psalms...?...Do we tame our swollen and inflated tempers? (7)

In reading this, I was struck by these words written thousands of years ago and how relevant they felt to our society today; it’s as though St. Gregory were speaking directly to us. While he deeply disagreed with the Eunomians both theologically and practically, he still addressed them as “friends and brethren”(5). He recognized that the discussions of “holy things must be held in a holy manner” (5). He encouraged everyone to empty themselves of pride and pettiness so they might focus on what matters most—hospitality, brotherly love, feeding the poor, etc. And above all else, he reminded them to have “ears to hear” (Matt 11:15) ...he encouraged them to listen.

What if we were to take those lessons on how we speak and listen to other people and apply them to current disagreements we have with others? To prepare for conversations with stillness and selflessness. To sit with a thought before immediately responding. To empathetically listen even when we disagree. To empty ourselves first so that we can fully take in another’s perspective, rather than only thinking of our way to combat. And to remember that the person we may disagree with is still our neighbor whom we are called to love. How much more would we learn? How much more compassion would we have for our neighbor? And ultimately, how much more would we love?
This ink and watercolor painting depicts the symbolism that is packed into the gestures we make as Orthodox Christians. There are three hands representing the Holy Trinity. The hand in the middle is gesturing "IC XC" and the hands on either side are gesturing the sign of the cross. The flowery circles around each hand are 'halos' that stand for the holiness of these symbols.

Nick Makiej is a CR Alumnus from July 2016 and is a freshman at Massachusetts College of Art and Design studying fine arts.
I am a nature-lover, people-lover, and agriculturalist. Over the past three years, I have worked as an assistant vineyard manager and have undergone training programs in community development and international sustainable agriculture. Over this period, my fascination for nature and the animal kingdom has come to have more meaning in my spiritual life and faith than I could have anticipated. I recognize that a person’s ‘exterior landscape’ in some ways reflects their ‘interior landscape.’ One’s ‘interior landscape’ is their inner garden. It is helped or hindered by the virtues or vices one chooses to cultivate in their spiritual ‘soil,’ or soul.

It was not until recently that I realized the words humility, humanity, and humus are interlinked. They all are made up of the Latin root, “hum” meaning “ground” or “earth.” All three of these words play a huge role in each of our lives and especially in my vocation! As Orthodox Christians, we understand humility to be one of our highest callings so that we might overcome our pride, sin, and ego. We also understand that Christ offered the greatest example of humility to us all with His Sacred Passion and death on the Cross. As for us, we remember that we were created from the dust of the earth. “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). When God became Incarnate and took on flesh, He remained divine while becoming “human” (“of the ground”). Humus, “a dark-brown or black organic substance made up of decayed plant or animal matter” is what plants need to survive. As humans, we depend on plants for survival, and by extension we need humus to live. Humus can be metaphorical to our spiritual lives; just as plants and animals must die and decay in order for new plant life to occur, so too did Christ die in order that we might live. Among these three words—humanity, humility, and humus—there seems to be a common theme of lowering oneself to the ground in order to bring new life. Creation itself reflects the story of our salvation: Christ’s passion, resurrection and our restoration.

It was by no accident that God placed the first human in a scene of perennial beauty—none other than in a garden! It was as if to demonstrate how important it is for God and humanity, and humanity and nature, to coexist in harmony. Did not God walk and talk in this garden with Adam? Were not Adam and Eve given everything that was good and succulent, nutritious fruits of all kinds to meet their every need? Was it not Adam, a human, unique to all of creation, who was asked to name the animals? Adam was given the great duty of stewarding the Earth, caring for what God has provided us with. All living things in Eden lived in agreement. Adam lived with nature, not against it. Humanity was in perfect harmony with its surroundings; all of Eden grew and acted with one, sole purpose: to praise God and be in alignment with our Creator.

God speaks to us in a way we can understand, sometimes through metaphors explaining His love through the visible world. He understands
that we are connected to the land and for this reason He speaks to us through parables of none other than farmers! Christ reveals Himself to His people as the Sower, the Vinedresser, the Good Shepherd, the Paschal Lamb! These lessons have withstood the test of time and convey the same meaning to an illiterate person thousands of years ago, as to impoverished farmers and pastoralists worldwide, as to the most brilliant contemporary thinkers!

The way we take care of ourselves (minds, bodies, and souls) and the way we take care of our environment (the way we farm and get our food, the plants, and animals) should be in alignment with the original image of Eden. We are entrusted to steward, holistically nurture, and restore them: this is how God gently looks after us.

I have icons of your face etched into my memory and you of mine we were never meant to be away from one another but this partition of sickness ate away at you this sin metastasizes and multiples paints our halos black to convince us we are an empty block of wood where no painter wants to lay their color.

It is never too late to come home; I will always have spare oil for your lamp and walk boldly into the dark to find you.

Come home, there is room at this feast for everyone – even in the eleventh hour – the tables are heavy laden and overflowing.

Even in the Eleventh Hour

Catherine Dillon, July 2014
The primary goal of the Orthodox Christian is to struggle toward theosis—deification. The word theosis often conjures up images of super heroes, like Thor, or of the Greek gods, like Zeus. When St. Athanasius proclaimed that “God became human so that humans can become gods,” he was not envisioning super-human strength, nor was he envisioning a life of moral perfection. To become like God is to love as God loves, which means, as Jesus proclaimed, even the enemy and the stranger. The struggle for theosis is one that entails learning how to love. It is often so very difficult to love even our parents, siblings, friends—imagine now learning how to love the enemy and the stranger.

This learning how to love ultimately entails seeing all human beings as created in the image of God. This is not as easy as it seems. It’s one thing to declare that all humans are created in the image of God; it’s another thing to form oneself in such a way that such a belief is evident in our thoughts, feelings, actions—our very being toward the other person, especially the one who is different from us.

On the surface, then, it would seem that, of course, Christians are against racism—we should never think someone is inferior because of race. But theosis calls us to a deeper level. The struggle to learn how to love is one that includes rooting out racism in our own hearts and in the very structures that constitute the political, cultural, and economic matrix within which we locate ourselves. The first requires incessant self-reflection; the second requires action.

Racism today looks different than it did prior to the 1960s, when there were actual visible signs that proclaimed that black persons were inferior to white persons, especially through segregation of bus seats, drinking fountains, restaurants, sidewalks, hotels, etc. Those signs are, for the most part, gone, but there are other, less visible signs, such as the disproportionate incarceration rate of black and Latino Americans, the continued segregation of schools, the continued and widening gap between white household incomes and the incomes of people of color, or the decision of persons to opt often for prison as a way of avoiding gang culture because there are no other options. One could go on and on. These disparities, as well as others, such as access to loans or the best public schools, evince clear signs of privileging of white persons, notwithstanding the fact that lower- to middle-class white persons have suffered economically over the past two decades. It also points to the reality that although the visible signs of racial segregation are not as evident, or that overtly racist actions are not as socially acceptable, racism is still operative in the complex social matrix in which we are embedded; and, if that is true, then it requires self-reflection in our struggle to learn how to love or to identify how we may be contributing to this structural inequality, even when we consciously condemn racism. This type of self-reflection may give us courage to act—to create structures that would facilitate for all people the lived experience of being created “in the image and likeness of God.”

What our struggle for theosis most demands is a politics of empathy. What can this look like? We can, for example, attempt to imagine what it is like to live as a black person in the United States.
of America. For some Orthodox Christians in this country, this imagining shouldn’t be difficult: Greek and Arab Christians living in the South once found Klan crosses burning in their own yards because of their dark skin. But black history, unlike Orthodox immigrant history, is in part founded on the backs of slaves. There is no erasing that tragedy from our history, whose traumatic effects still endure. In imagining what it is like to be in the body of a black person in the USA, perhaps we can see more clearly the structures in place that facilitate the inequality among persons. Those Orthodox Christians who say that blacks should just “improve their culture” (yes—I’ve read this), do not have a sufficiently theological understanding of sin and its insidious and lingering social effects. Is it really that easy, as an example, for people to will themselves better lives when they are constantly surrounded by the threat of violence, such that high school kids in Chicago have trained themselves to walk in the middle of the street in case of a drive-by shooting?[2]

Racism has gone underground in this country, in the sense that it has moved to the realm of the unconscious—both personal and structural. As Orthodox Christians, the challenge of our spiritual life is to reflect incessantly on what blocks our own growth in love of our family, friends, stranger and enemy. If that self-reflection is successful, then it will get us to see that there is, in fact, a privileging of white persons in this country; it will get us to see how we may—even unintentionally—be contributing to this privileging; and it will empower us ultimately to non-demonizing action that attempts to transform the structural matrix that facilitates treating all persons as being made in God’s image. That action may take many forms—prophetically calling attention to injustice, educating parishioners, mobilizing a parish, political involvement, participating in and facilitating anti-racism training, to name simply a few. We must act to excise structural injustice in America, starting within our individual hearts and minds; this is a part of our Orthodox Christian calling to and in this country, today.

Looking for something new and inspiring to read from one of our professors and speakers? The following are new resources; visit www.crossroadinstitute.org/classroom to find more publication info or direct links.

**Rev. Dr. Thomas Fitzgerald**
- “The Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church: What Has Changed” (Eastern Christian Publications)
- “House of God in the Orthodox Church” (Muslim Sunrise)
- “A Blessed Pilgrimage” (New Skete and Alexander Press)
- “Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: The Servant of the Gospel” (Orthodox Observer, online)

**Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou**
- “Women and the Church—Interview with Elizabeth Prodomou, “Coworkers in the Service of the Church” (The Wheel Journal, audio online)
- “Patterns of Perception and (Mis)understanding: Religion and Security” (Belgrade Forum, online)
- “Religious Literacy in Security Operations: A Case Study of the Balkans” (Fletcher RLD, audio online)

**Rev. Dr. Theodore Stylianopoulos**
- The Apostolic Gospel (Holy Cross Orthodox Press)

**Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou**
- Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges – Divergent Positions (coedited, Bloomsbury Publishing)
- Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine (coedited, Fordham University Press)
- “Theosis and Theological Literacy: Identity Formation and Teaching Theology to Undergraduates” (University of Notre Dame Press)
- “Overcoming Political Nestorianism: Towards a Chalcedonian Politics” (Bloomsbury Publishing)
- “Being Christian During a Trump Presidency” (Public Orthodoxy, online)

**V. Rev. Dr. Paul Tarazi**
- The Rise of Scripture (OCABS Press)
- Orthodox Bible Commentary - The Old Testament (OCABS, audio online)
- Orthodox Bible Commentary - The New Testament (OCABS, audio online)
- The Rise of Scripture (OCABS, audio online)
In December 2016, the Office of Vocation & Ministry was awarded $1.5 million by the Lilly Endowment to develop a research project—the Telos Project—on how young adults, ages 23–29, and our Orthodox parishes engage one another. In the months since, we invited parishes to apply to become pilot sites, hired a director and interns, and, in August, chose 14 pilot parishes from across the United States to work with us on this incredible opportunity. Annual consultations will bring teams from all the pilot parishes together each spring for the next four years.

The vision for the Telos Project grows out of the inspiration of YOUR lives. Witnessing CrossRoad alums seek to live their faith has energized the OVM to ask how we can best help cultivate a parish culture that supports young adult growth and service.

How can Crossroad alums be involved in The Telos Project?

» Follow the Telos Project on FB, Twitter, and Instagram, and engage with what we share. CrossRoad alums will be sent the quarterly Telos e-newsletter automatically.

» Read the books we recommend on the blog and call or email our director, Jenny Haddad Mosher, (617) 396-8306, telos@hchc.edu, to give us your feedback.

» If your parish is a pilot, introduce yourself to your team and offer your help; if your parish is not a pilot, explore the resources we develop and discuss with your priest the possibility of using some of them in your own parish.

» We believe Telos is an incredible gift to Orthodox America; pray that we will be excellent stewards of this gift and that God will multiply its fruit for the whole Church!

www.teloscommunity.org

CROSSROAD + CHICAGO

We are so excited to announce to our alumni family that this upcoming summer CrossRoad is expanding to Chicago!

By the grace of God, since the first session in 2004, CrossRoad has seen steady growth. In 2008, due to overwhelming interest, CrossRoad added a second session. Since this expansion, interest in CrossRoad has continued to rise over the years, and the OVM has even received requests to bring CrossRoad to other regions in order to widen the reach of the program.

We are thrilled to announce that, for the summer of 2018, we are not only offering a third session, but we are taking CrossRoad on the road and hosting this third session in Chicago on the campus of North Park University. We are so grateful and excited for this growth! Keep us in your prayers!
This year, we encouraged our CrossRoad participants to think about the innumerable gifts God has given each of us—faith, talents, opportunities, relationships, and resources. Our proper response to God’s abundance in our lives is both gratitude and generosity. We challenged this year’s CrossRoaders to open the road for others to attend. Nearly a quarter of our 2017 participants generously responded to that challenge by becoming monthly donors. Will you join them in giving to CrossRoad? By supporting the Sophia Bambalis Scholarship Fund, you too can ensure that no applicant is turned away due to financial need.

**GIVE TODAY!**

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Become a monthly donor to the Sophia Bambalis Alumni Scholarship Fund, and we’ll send you a CrossRoad sweatshirt!
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

ALUMNI UPDATES

Josephine Breen (West) June 2015
2017 was an eventful and exciting year for Josephine! In January, she was hired as the protopsalti and choir director at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Portland, OR. And in September, she married the love of her life. She and her new husband, Lukas, are enjoying married life, taking care of their goat, and chanting together every Sunday.

Gabriella Christy July 2012
Gabriella is currently completing her master’s degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and graduating in May 2018. Gabriella is involved with the OCF and YAM at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Charlotte, NC, and is working towards her goal of being a Licensed Professional Counselor, specializing in Play Therapy with children going through trauma and grief.

Bradley Delmar July 2015
Transferred from HCHC to Dutchess Community College. He is beginning a new period of exploration in his vocation with prayerful support from his campus’ Christian Fellowship Club. Sometimes, Christ will lead you to unexpected places in your journey but, be steadfast in your relationship with Him.

Presv. Nikolia Hiasiakos 2004
Presv. Nikolia and Fr. Panayiotis moved to Chicago last Christmas to enter a life of ordained ministry with their two children. The days are long and the years are short with children, and she is trying to thank God through the cuddles, the messes, the giggles, and the hard lessons.

Michelle Ibrahim July 2011
After graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology, Michelle is now finishing her Master of Theological Studies degree at St. Paul’s University in Ottawa, ON, as well as working on a Master of Arts with a concentration in Youth Ministry with the Antiochian House of Studies. She is also currently the Youth Advisor at her home parish, St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral.

Alex Krantz June 2017
Alex is attending Chapman University, where he is reminded that realizing what the long-term vocation we are called to fulfill is can be a work in progress. And that all we can do is patiently and prayerfully make the best of each day during this journey of listening for God’s small, still voice.

Andreas Kyrvasilis June 2016
This semester Andreas is taking a religious studies class at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where they’ve so far focused on the creation of sacred space and time. It really reminds him of the “sanctification of nature and time” sessions they had at CrossRoad. This class helped him remember how beautiful and encompassing our faith is, and that Orthodoxy is not only present and existent on a Sunday at church, but rather in our everyday life (at home, at work, at a small family gathering) as well.

Dan Luck 2004
Thirteen years ago, Dan left Boston not knowing if he would return. He did—with his wife, Hannah, while she attended Boston University. He showed her the sites that he appreciated years ago: Boston College, Fenway Park, the Armenian Museum of America, and Holy Cross. Although the plan to join the priesthood hasn’t panned out (yet), being able to return is a blessing unto itself. He also guest-spoke to the 2016 CrossRoad group. Dan, Hannah, and their dog, Billie, currently live in Princeton, NJ.

Nick Makiej July 2016
Nick has recently started his first year at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston, MA. He says, “In one of my classes, we had a brief discussion about creativity. I began to think how we, as created humans, cannot create anything truly original. I thought, (from the perspective of an artist) all I could ever hope to do is rearrange God’s original creation into something beautiful.”

Alexandra Mamalakis June 2013
Alexandra has been reflecting on how her waitressing job is both a challenge and an opportunity to live out her vocation. Christ’s call to love God and love one’s neighbor is far from subtle in the restaurant business! She has learned how far a simple smile, a small conversation, or an effort to connect can go. Amidst all the pain in this world, especially with the recent tragedy in Las Vegas, this part-time job is a reminder of how her true calling is to do small things with great love, and to strive to live out this vocation in everyday interactions.

John Mellas July 2009
After seven years of schooling, John has finally finished his master’s in architecture from the University at Buffalo. (makes sign of the Cross, looks to heaven, mouths “thank goodness”) He has since moved (September 10th) to San Francisco, where he has been blessed to work for Christ Kamages, a prominent Greek Orthodox architect designing Orthodox churches across the US. Working daily with Iconostasis, churches, and people of those communities has affirmed him in his vocation and he feels truly blessed to be “glorifying the beauty of His house” in such a unique way.

Evangelia Pagones June 2011
Evangelia is continually discovering opportunities to be more loving and patient in her second year as a music teacher in the Chicago suburbs. When the busy school schedule does not allow as much time for church activities as she would like, the struggle remains to find moments for prayer, clarity, and thankfulness throughout the day. This year, she has learned that it is important to set aside some time every day to learn something new—to read, chant, or spend time with someone in a deeper way. May we all continue to grow and learn to find Christ in each everyday moment!

Ivan Plis July 2008
Ivan Plis (July 2008) had an unusually busy 2017: in September alone, he married Emma Streett, and had a short-lived run on Jeopardy! He and Emma are living in Washington, DC, where she works as a freelance theater electrician and he is an editor at a small foreign-policy magazine. Ivan has been a member of St. Mary Orthodox Church in Falls Church, VA, since graduating from Georgetown.
George Bryant, Staff 2014, 2017

In the past year or so, George has done quite a bit. He traveled to Greece to visit friends during the month of January, where he took a shower at some point during the summer, and started working as Chaplain and Tutor at a private boarding school in Pomfret, CT, called the Rectory School. After CrossRoad this summer, he worked at St. Nicholas Ranch for the second year in a row before taking a couple of Greyhound bus rides through L.A., Vegas, and Salt Lake City on the way back to the East Coast. If you’re ever in Northeast Connecticut, give him a holler!

Fr. Stavros and Pres. Ourania Chatzis, Staff 2004, 2005

Thirteen years after being part of the original group of staff for the CrossRoad program, Fr. Stavros and Pres. Ourania are so happy to see how far it has come. They believe God has blessed this program from the beginning because He was placed at the center of it! Their family has been through many trials over these past twelve years since leaving Holy Cross, but they feel so very blessed for all of it. They will always remember their two years in Boston as formative and CrossRoad has continued to find connections between the rituals inherent in both theater and worship. If you are passing through Louisville, give her a shout!

Marina Constantine, Alumnus June 2010; Staff 2016

CrossRoad is one of the most important experiences in the life of Demetri Constantine. He still looks back upon his days as a participant (in 2010) and staff member (in 2016) very fondly. Demetri has now been married for about at least 1,123,200 minutes and counting (roughly over two years) to the most incredible woman in the world, Maria (often referred to as “wifey”). He has entered his senior year at Holy Cross and is looking forward to what God will throw his way after he graduates in May. His wife Maria was recently accepted into PA (Physician’s Assistant) School at Tufts and will be starting in January. They both look forward to continuing the ongoing exploration of their vocation every day. Before signing off, Demetri would like to express his gratitude to the church members and CrossRoaders throughout the years, and is encouraged knowing that we are always connected as the body of Christ, being branches on the same vine, partakers of the same cup, and inheritors of the same glory.

Irene Haji-Georgi, Staff 2017

Irene is still working on her Master of Divinity degree at HCHC, currently focusing on hospital ministry and getting reacquainted with her artistic side with dance and painting.

Sarah Livick-Moses, Staff 2016

Sarah still finds herself reviewing her notes from her time as a CR staff member. She’s finishing up a Masters of Theological Studies degree and the uncertainty of her career still plagues her! She’s truly found that the vocational pursuit of a Christian extends beyond high school, college, and CrossRoad. The focus on becoming a person in Christ is such a beautifully extended process.


Mary is still in Austin and has transitioned fully to the health and fitness industry as a Pilates instructor, helping clients stay strong, recover from injuries, and rehab from surgeries. It has been inspiring to further explore the connection between body and spirit and to be a part of people’s healing and wellness journeys. She loves staying engaged with CrossRoaders throughout the years, and is encouraged knowing that we are always connected as the body of Christ, being branches on the same vine, partakers of the same cup, and inheritors of the same glory.

Elle Pappas, Staff 2017

In NYC Elle saw a homeless man following a group of young guys into McDonalds. The guys asked the homeless man what he wanted to eat, got his food, and ate with him. She wanted to ask the guys if they were CrossRoad alums but didn’t want to ruin the moment!

John Tsikalas, Alumnus June 2010; Staff 2016

John is currently in his third year of seminary at Holy Cross and is staying busy with schoolwork and campus life. In January 2017, he got married to his beautiful wife Kahlee.

Danielle Xanthos, Staff 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016

Danielle is in her second year of the Doctor of Psychology program at the University of Denver and drinks a lot of coffee. She has been a student therapist for a year and some days she is incredibly heartbroken by the heavy burdens people carry around with them. However, she is inspired by the vulnerability, humility, and authenticity offered when they are invited to share their stories.
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UPCOMING EVENTS

CROSSROAD ALUMNI RETREAT
March 23-25, 2018 (Boston, MA)

SAVE THE DATE to join us and your fellow alumni for a rejuvenating weekend of prayer, fellowship, and conversation!

CROSSROAD 2017
SESSION 1: June 16-June 26, 2018 (Boston)
SESSION 2: July 2-July 12, 2018 (Boston)
SESSION 3: July 21-July 31, 2018 (Chicago)