



27 June, 2021

Dear Fathers and Friends,

A blessed Sunday of All Saints!

We are pleased to share with you some updates about recent events, and introduce the theme for the annual OTSA meeting, which is planned for this coming Fall.

1. **The mixed marriages online seminar**, “The Two Become One? Mixed Marriages in the Orthodox Church,” was held on May 29, and is now posted to the OTSA webpage at: <https://www.otsamerica.net/the-two-become-one-mixed-marriages-in-the-orthodox-church/>

As expressed in the seminar, the issues around mixed marriages in the Orthodox Church are extensive, complex, convoluted, and painful for a great many of our faithful. Speakers included OTSA members: Dr. Vigen Guroian, Deacon Nicholas Denysenko, Dr. Despina Prassas and Fr. Anthony Roeber. Dr. Guroian set the tone by offering personal reflections to illuminate the cost suffered through the absurdities and confusion in the treatment of mixed marriages. Deacon Denysenko offered in a measured and thoughtful manner bold proposals for liturgical reform that would work toward the inclusion of the whole family in the life of the Church. The final presenter, Dr. Prassas, founded her comments on Acts 15 and the Council of Jerusalem to offer a way forward in the treatment of marriages and other interactions between Orthodox and other Christians. Fr. Roeber concluded with responses that clarified the different conditions pertaining to Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox marriages, and examined more carefully the definition and boundaries of “church.” We see this seminar as an important first step in opening thoughtful conversation on this topic.

2. **Addendum to the Document on the Covid-19 Vaccines:** The authors of the document answering questions on the efficacy and safety of the Covid-19 vaccines, posted to the OTSA webpage, have provided an addendum that addresses recent additional questions and concerns, such as the safety of the vaccine for pregnant women, and recommendations as the country continues to lift restrictions. This update is now on the

OTSA webpage, accessed directly here: https://www.otsamerica.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Update-to-the-vaccine_document_06242021.pdf

Both the update and the original document on the vaccines are on the master coronavirus page located at <https://www.otsamerica.net/coronavirus/>

3. **Annual Meeting – Fall 2021:** Looking forward to the OTSA national meeting, we have chosen the theme “Orthodoxy in a Pluralistic World.” This theme encompasses many of the issues members have identified as deserving attention this year, including discussion of relations with other Christians and people of other faiths, mixed and interfaith marriages, and the growing number of people who identify as having no faith. It also embraces several of the themes within the document issued in 2020: “For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church.” A more detailed call for proposals for papers and presentations will be posted in our next newsletter, but we anticipate a deadline in about mid-September for proposals.

We are hoping to host the meeting in a hybrid format, with both virtual and in-person attendance, and are asking our members for assistance in identifying possible locations that have the facilities to accommodate us and are affordable. Please send suggestions to Helen (helen60067@yahoo.com) or Teva (teva@mit.edu).

4. We ask that you join us in assisting the Assembly of Bishops and OCAMPR in promoting a survey to assess the mental health needs of our communities. This survey has been developed in conjunction with the newly formed Mental Health Task Force, and is not a self-assessment but rather seeks to gather the faithful's perceptions on the topic. The information that is gathered will be used in developing mental health resources for our faithful.

You can find the survey here: <https://www.assemblyofbishops.org/ministries/mental-health-task-force/mental-health-needs-assessment-survey>

5. We continue to recommend the ongoing sermon series “**Orthodox Scholars Preach**,” offered by The Orthodox Christian Studies Center at Fordham University, in partnership with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Many of the participants have been OTSA members. The page listing the sermons and linking to them has been recently updated, and can be accessed here:

https://www.fordham.edu/info/30496/orthodox_scholars_preach

6. We encourage you to offer submissions for our continuing blog, The Church and the Academy. Please send submissions (of approximately 1000 words) to Teva (teva@mit.edu).
7. **Dues Reminder—Important:** The OTSA yearly dues have a special importance this year in enabling us to comply with the new Assembly of Bishops requirements for its

affiliated organizations. OTSA is now required to carry insurance, which constitutes a new and significant part of our operating budget! OTSA needs your support and commitment! Members who are not yet current in their dues can pay online at <https://www.otsamerica.net/pay-dues/> If for some reason you need to send a check instead of using PayPal, please send your check to Fr. Gabriel Rochelle, P.O Box 540, Mesilla NM 88046.

Respectfully submitted,

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