



*St. Anthony*

Maronite Catholic Church

كنيسة مار أنطونيوس المارونية



**OFFICE HOURS**

M-TH: 9 AM - 4PM

Friday: 9AM-2PM

Saturdays: By Appointment

Phone: 978.685.7233

Fax: 978.688.4475

rectory@stanthonylawrence.org



**LITURGIES**

**SUMMER SCHEDULE**

**Daily Liturgies**

Monday - Thursday: 9 AM

**Weekend Liturgies**

Saturday: Vigil Liturgy @ 4 PM

Sunday Liturgies:

9:00 AM - English

11:00 AM - English & Arabic

**Holy days of obligation**

Vigil Liturgy @ 7 PM

Feast Day @ 9 AM



**SACRAMENTS**

**Baptism & Confirmation**

1 month in advance with the Pastor

**Matrimony**

Couples should make arrangements six months prior to the wedding date

**Reconciliation**

One hour Before Thursday & Saturday Liturgies, or by appointment

**Anointing of the Sick**

Please notify the Rectory ASAP.

Please refer to our website for more Sacrament Celebrations Guidelines

Season of Pentecost - زمن العنصرة



**Summer Motivational Theme**

**Dive Deep Into Your Faith**



Saint Anthony Maronite Church Lawrence, MA

# Saint Anthony Maronite Church Presents



# 44<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL

# MAHRAJAN - Lebanese Festival

Featuring Live Entertainment:  
Folkloric Dance and Belly Dancing

Homemade Lebanese  
Cuisine & Pastries

Raffles, Hookah, & Souvenirs  
Children Games & Activities

# Labor Day Weekend

Friday 8/31 from 6pm - 12am  
DJ & Ensemble

Saturday 9/1 from 5pm - 12am  
Doris Farhat & Ensemble

Sunday 9/2 from 12pm - 12am  
Chadi Naddaf & Ensemble

**FREE  
ENTRY**



PARKING  
AVAILABLE



## Meet Our Staff

**Pastor:** Fr. Elie Mikhael

305.807.9087

pastor@stanthonylawrence.org

**Parochial Vicar:**

Fr. Jebrael Moussalem

412.616.4144

pv@stanthonylawrence.org

**Sub-Deacon** James T. Demers

**Sub-Deacon** Nadim B. Daou

**Parish Secretary** Pat McKeever

### Parish Ministries

♦ Religious Education  
ccd@stanthonylawrence.org

♦ Publishing: Bulletin  
bulletin@stanthonylawrence.org

♦ Choirs (English, Arabic & Syriac)

♦ Kids Choir

♦ Knights of the Altar

♦ Knights of Mary

kom@stanthonylawrence.org

♦ Maronite Youth : MYO

myo@stanthonylawrence.org

♦ Maronite Young Adults

♦ Bereavement Ministry

♦ Cenacle of the Rosary

(Wednesdays @ 6PM)

♦ Cenacle of Divine Mercy

(Sundays Before the Liturgies)

♦ Sacristan (s)

## Divine Liturgies Intentions

### 9th Sunday of Pentecost

أحد التاسع من العنصرة

**Saturday, July 14 @ 4:00 PM:**

• For: + Joan Marie Chiklis, *By her children.*

**Sunday, July 15 @ 9:00 AM:**

• For: + Philip, Roseanne, and Melvin Gallant

*By Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Zappala.*

**Sunday, July 15 @ 11:00 AM:** For: + Private Intentions.

### 9th Week Pentecost

أسبوع التاسع من العنصرة

**Monday, July 16 @ 9 AM - Our Lady of Mount Carmel**

• For: + Private Intentions.

**Tuesday, July 17 @ 9 AM - St. Marina, the nun of Qannaoubeen**

• For: + Private Intentions.

**Wednesday, July 18 @ 9 AM - Sanfrosia and her 7 Children, M.**

• For: + Private Intentions.

**Thursday, July 19 @ 9 AM - Margaret, M.**

• For: Private Intentions.

**Friday, July 20: No Liturgy**

### 10th Sunday of Pentecost

الأحد العاشر من العنصرة

**Saturday, July 21 @ 4:00 PM:**

• For: +Deceased members of the Shadeed and Fitzpatrick Families,

*By Mr. and Mrs. Frank Shadeed.*

**Sunday, July 22 @ 9:00 AM:** For: + Private Intentions.

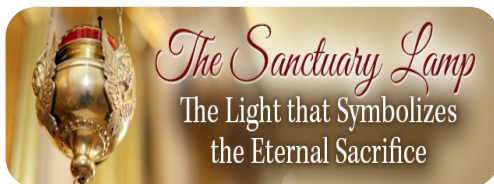
**Sunday, July 23 @ 11:00 AM:** For: + Private Intentions.

**“God is Love**

**But without Jesus Christ & the Holy Spirit,  
His love is harder to find.”**

### POPE PRAYER INTENTIONS

**July 2018 - Evangelization** – *Priests and their Pastoral Ministry That priests, who experience fatigue and loneliness in their pastoral work, may find help and comfort in their intimacy with the Lord and in their friendship with their brother priests.*



*The Sanctuary Lamp*  
The Light that Symbolizes  
the Eternal Sacrifice

### Right Sanctuary Lamp

This week's Sanctuary Lamp will burn

*In Loving Memory of*

*Mr. & Mrs. Boutros Daou*

Offered by Mr. & Mrs. Samir Daou.

### Left Sanctuary Lamp

*In Loving Memory of*

*Mr. & Mrs. Boutros Daou*

Offered by Mr. & Mrs. Samir Daou.

**Monthly Operational Expenses - July 2017**

<b>Income</b>	
Church Hall Income	
Church Hall Cleaning	100.00
<b>Total Church Hall Income</b>	<u>100.00</u>
Liturgical Music	250.00
Bank Fee Reversal	150.00
Candles / Other Devotional Item	524.01
Miscellaneous (SPECIFY)	55.68
Parking Lot Donations	2,700.00
Sunday Coffee Hour	111.00
<b>Total Auxiliary Receipts</b>	<u>3,540.69</u>
Donations from Individuals	1,650.00
Donations In Memory of...	45.00
Donations to Church for Baptism	200.00
Funeral Clergy Stipend	400.00
Funeral Donation to Church	475.00
Total Other Extraordinary (SPECIFY)	0.00
<b>Total Extraordinary Income</b>	<u>2,770.00</u>
<b>Ordinary Income</b>	
Regular Collections	
Sunday & Holy Day Collections	10,096.22
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>16,756.91</u>
Expense	
Employee Health Insurance	420.00
Furniture & Equipment	826.96
Household	
Household Supplies	292.26
Table Expenses	790.40
<b>Total Household</b>	<u>1,082.66</u>
Insurance on Personal Belonging	12.75
Salaries	
Clergy	1,900.00
Housekeeping	260.00
Office Work	400.00
Organist / Singers	650.00
Parochial Vicar Salary	1,700.00
Secretarial	2,200.00
<b>Total Salaries</b>	<u>7,110.00</u>
Other Ordinary	
Books, Periodicals & Subscript	923.04
NAM Convention	684.02
Maintenance & Repairs	
Cleaning	1,000.00
Software Maintenance	2.15
Waste Management	157.71
<b>Total Maintenance &amp; Repairs</b>	<u>1,159.86</u>
Seminarian Assistance	45.75
Utilities	
Cellular Phone	100.79
Cable / Satellite TV	335.36
Electric	1,806.44
Fuel or Gas	167.51
<b>Total Utilities</b>	<u>2,410.10</u>
<b>Total Other Ordinary</b>	<u>5,222.77</u>
Parish Office Administration	
Advertising & Public Relations	147.51
Auto Expenses (Gas, Ins., etc.)	604.34
Copier (new lease)	167.45
Office Supplies	645.88
Postage	87.95
Printing	128.00
Telephone & Internet Service	388.12
<b>Total Parish Office Administration</b>	<u>2,169.25</u>
Parish Programs	
Knights of the Altar	542.22
Sunday Coffee Hour	45.00
<b>Total Parish Programs</b>	<u>587.22</u>
Payroll Expenses	168.30
<b>Total Expense</b>	<u>17,599.91</u>
	<u><b>-843.00</b></u>

**TITHES & OFFERINGS - July 8, 2018**

Sunday Collection (Online)	\$ 3,087.00
Candles	\$ 92.00
Coffee Hour	\$ 63.00
Donation	\$ 300.00
Donations – Mass Intentions	\$ 25.00
Donations - Daughters of St. Anthony	\$ 100.00
<b>Total Deposit</b>	<b>\$ 3,667.00</b>

**Keep your church with you on your summer Break! Contribute to Our Parish Growth.**

**Apply Online:**

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/donate-now/>



**Or scan this code with your mobile device to get started!**



**St. Anthony Church**

Sign up today at our church website: [www.stanthonylawrence.org](http://www.stanthonylawrence.org)

## 44TH ANNUAL LEBANESE MAHRAJAN



### VOLUNTEER!!!!

**Make CHANGE happen VOLUNTEER !!!**

Help Needed:

- ✓ Kitchen & Food Preparation
- ✓ Cooking & Serving Line
- ✓ Sweet & Sandwiches
- ✓ Raffle, Set Ups & Cleaning

*"Volunteers are not paid  
-- not because they are  
worthless, but because  
they are priceless."*

## PARISH MINISTRIES & NEWS

### Religious Education

#### Registration 2018-2019

Registrations are open throughout the summer. Please continue to check your email and the bulletin for any information regarding religious education.

*On behalf of Religious Education, we wish you a safe and fun summer. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Susan Veilleux,  
[ccd@stanthonylawrence.org](mailto:ccd@stanthonylawrence.org)*

### Parish Spiritual & Social Programs

Will Resume in September!! Stay Tuned!!!

### Become a Sponsor

We appeal to you for your generosity towards our 44th Annual Mahrajan. Show your support through sponsorship. More details will be forthcoming.

### Raffle Tickets are out

By now, many of you have received two (2) books of 5 Raffle Tickets at \$5.00 per ticket or \$20.00 for the book. Take a moment to support this Raffle by purchasing one book and offering the second book your neighbor or your friends. This is one way to become an active participant of the Mahrajan, our largest fundraiser of the year.

Checks can be made payable to "St. Anthony Maronite Church", Memo: Raffle. In the event you need more tickets, feel free to contact the church office at 978-685-7233. If your neighbor does not wish to participate, kindly ask that you mail back the extra to the church.

### Dabke Troupe

For more information, practice dates and times, call or text Carla Khoder @ 978-697-1725 or e-mail @ [stanthonydabketroupe@gmail.com](mailto:stanthonydabketroupe@gmail.com)

### Mahrajan Basket

I am happy to announce that I am available to make a basket for you in your chosen price range to donate for our Mahrajan Festival on Labor Day weekend August 31<sup>st</sup> thru September 2<sup>nd</sup>.. Please place all orders by August 12th. "Baskets" may also be items such as gift certificates or popular electronic devices. I am in need of new ideas for basket themes and welcome any suggestions.

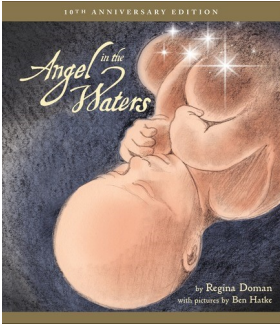
I can be reached at (978) 273-0693 to answer any questions or take orders. All donations should be delivered to the rectory during office hours by August 30th. It has only been with your support and generosity that the basket raffle has become more successful each year.

Thank you and God Bless you all.

*Dianne Dewan*

Begin Your Faith Journey Now!!! [Stanthonychurch.formed.org](http://Stanthonychurch.formed.org)  
Get Formed on the Go!!! Saint Anthony Church Parish Code: N3CCNK

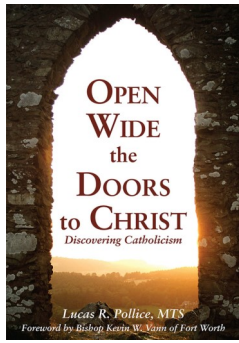
## FORMED PICK OF THE WEEK



### Angel in the Waters

In its mother's womb, a tiny baby grows, explores the waters, and talks with the angel who is there.

These gentle illustrations and wise words tell the story of that baby and the angel in the waters . . . a story that will delight all young children, because the journey from conception to birth is their story, too.



### Open Wide the Doors to Christ

Open Wide the Doors to Christ is a powerful tool for both teachers and students of the Catholic faith. An excellent resource for RCIA and Adult Faith Formation, this insightful book discusses the basics of the Catholic Faith—and how we can live it fully. As the "meat and potatoes" of Catholicism, it is an introduction to the Church's teachings on the Creed, the Sacraments, the moral life, prayer, and much more—with particular focus upon those who are seeking to become Catholic. Presented in a way that adults from all walks of life can understand, the book challenges readers to dig deeper, and to continue to grow in their understanding of Christ and the Catholic Church.



### Marriage

From the dawn of human history, mankind has understood the value of a lifelong, faithful, procreative union of one man and one woman in marriage. This natural bond, which was raised to a Sacrament by Our Lord Jesus Christ, has been the foundation of Christian civilization for over two thousand years. This powerful film presents the enduring Catholic vision and understanding of marriage and the natural law, including the beauty and meaning of human sexuality, family, and the gift of children. This film also addresses the challenges in marriage and family life that we face in our world today.

## LECTORS

**Saturday, July 14 @ 4:00 PM: Roy Rossi**

**Sunday, July 15**

**9:00 AM Sub-Deacon Jim Demers**

**11:00 AM English: Raghida Ramey**

**Arabic: Claudine Raad**

**Saturday, July 21 @ 4:00 PM: Dianne Dewan**

**Sunday, July 22**

**9:00 AM Elizabeth Frias**

**11:00 AM English: Mounira Daher**

**Arabic: Sleiman Ramy**

**ALTAR SERVERS: Volunteers during the Summer**

10th Annual MYA Conference Presents

MARONITE YOUNG ADULTS

**MARONITE IDENTITY AND SPIRITUALITY**

October 5th-7th  
Washington DC

Registration Coming Soon  
[www.maroniteyoungadults.org](http://www.maroniteyoungadults.org)

9th Sunday of Pentecost: *Jesus in the Synagogue of Nazareth*

**2Corinthians 5:20-21, 6:1-10**

We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.' See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and yet see we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

**Luke 4:14-21**

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

الأحد التاسع من زمن العنصرة: يسوع في مجمع الناصرة

**قورنثس 5:20-21, 6:1-10**

نَحْنُ سُفْرَاءُ الْمَسِيحِ، وَكَأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَفْسَهُ يَدْعُوكُمْ بِوَسَائِطِنَا. فَتَسْأَلُكُمْ بِاسْمِ الْمَسِيحِ: تَصَالِحُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ! إِنَّ الَّذِي مَا عَرَفَ الْخَطِيئَةَ، جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ خَطِيئَةً مِنْ أَجْلِنَا، لِنَصِيرَ نَحْنُ فِيهِ بَرًّا لِلَّهِ. وَبِمَا أَنَّنَا مُعَاوِنُونَ لِلَّهِ، نُنَاشِدُكُمْ أَلَّا يَكُونَ قَبُولُكُمْ لِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ فَايِدَةٍ؛ لِأَنَّهُ يَقُولُ: «فِي وَقْتِ الرِّضَى اسْتَجَبْتُكَ، وَفِي يَوْمِ الْخَلَاصِ أَعْنَتُكَ». فَهِيَ هِيَ الْآنَ وَقْتُ الرِّضَى، وَهَا هِيَ الْآنَ يَوْمُ الْخَلَاصِ. فَإِنَّا لَا نَجْعَلُ لِأَحَدٍ سَبَبَ زَلَّةٍ، لِيَلَّا يَلْحَقَ خِدْمَتَنَا أَيُّ لَوْمٍ. بَلْ نُظْهِرُ أَنْفُسَنَا فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ أَنَّنَا خُدَّامُ اللَّهِ، بِبُنْيَانِنَا الْعَظِيمِ فِي الضِّيقاتِ وَالشَّدَائِدِ وَالْمَشَقَّاتِ، فِي الضَّرَبَاتِ، وَالسُّجُونِ، وَالْفِتَنِ، وَالتَّعَبِ، وَالسَّهْرِ، وَالصَّوْمِ، وَبِالنَّزَاهَةِ، وَالْمَعْرِفَةِ، وَالْأَنَاةِ، وَاللُّطْفِ، وَالرُّوحِ الْقُدُسِ، وَالْمَحَبَّةِ بِلا رِيَاءٍ، فِي كَلِمَةِ الْحَقِّ، وَقُوَّةِ اللَّهِ، بِسِلَاحِ الْبِرِّ فِي الْيَدَيْنِ الْيُمْنَى وَالْيُسْرَى، فِي الْمَجْدِ وَالْهَوَانِ، بِالصِّبْتِ الرَّدِيءِ وَالصِّبْتِ الْحَسَنِ. نُحَسِبُ كَأَنَّنَا مُضِلُّونَ وَنَحْنُ صَادِقُونَ! كَأَنَّنَا مَجْهُولُونَ وَنَحْنُ مَعْرُوفُونَ! كَأَنَّنَا مَائِتُونَ وَهَا نَحْنُ أَحْيَاءُ! كَأَنَّنَا مُعَاقِبُونَ وَنَحْنُ لَا نَمُوتُ؛ كَأَنَّنَا مَحْزُونُونَ وَنَحْنُ دَائِمًا فَرِحُونَ! كَأَنَّنَا فَقْرَاءُ وَنَحْنُ نُعْنِي الْكَثِيرِينَ! كَأَنَّنَا لَا شَيْءَ عِنْدَنَا، وَنَحْنُ نَمْلِكُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

**لوقا 4:14-21**

عَادَ يَسُوعُ بِقُوَّةِ الرُّوحِ إِلَى الْجَلِيلِ، وَذَاعَ خَبْرُهُ فِي كُلِّ الْجَوَارِ. وَكَانَ يُعَلِّمُ فِي مَجَامِعِهِمْ، وَالْجَمِيعُ يَمَجِّدُونَهُ. وَجَاءَ يَسُوعُ إِلَى النَّاصِرَةِ، وَدَخَلَ إِلَى الْمَجْمَعِ كَعَادَتِهِ يَوْمَ السَّبْتِ، وَقَامَ لِيَقْرَأَ. وَدَفَعَ إِلَيْهِ كِتَابُ النَّبِيِّ اشْعِيَا. وَفَتَحَ يَسُوعُ الْكِتَابَ، فَوَجَدَ الْمَوْضِعَ الْمَكْتُوبَ فِيهِ: «رُوحَ الرَّبِّ عَلَيَّ، وَلِهَذَا مَسَحَنِي لِأُبَشِّرَ الْمَسَاكِينَ، وَأَرْسَلَنِي لِأُنَادِيَ بِإِطْلَاقِ الْأَسْرَى وَعَوْدَةِ الْبَصَرِ إِلَى الْعُمْيَانِ، وَأَطْلِقَ الْمُقْهُورِينَ أَحْرَارًا، وَأُنَادِيَ بِسَنَةِ مَقْبُولَةٍ لَدَى الرَّبِّ».

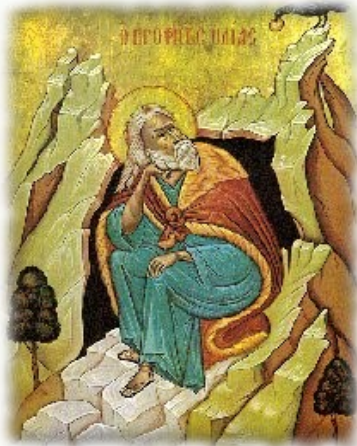
«ثُمَّ طَوَى الْكِتَابَ، وَأَعَادَهُ إِلَى الْخَادِمِ، وَجَلَسَ. وَكَانَتْ عِيُونَ جَمِيعِ الَّذِينَ فِي الْمَجْمَعِ شَاخِصَةً إِلَيْهِ. فَبَدَأَ يَقُولُ لَهُمْ: «الْيَوْمَ تَمَّتْ هَذِهِ الْكِتَابَةُ الَّتِي تُلَيْتُ عَلَى مَسَامِعِكُمْ

## Congratulations on your Wedding

We Lift Our Prayers of Thanksgiving for our  
New Couple who entered into the  
Sacrament of Matrimony:

♦ **Tatiana Ramy & Charbel Abou Jaoude**

## Saint Elias the Prophet, Feast Day: July 20



Since the early days of the Christian Church, saints have played a key role as intercessors between God and mankind. Saints serve as a source of protection, aid, and miraculous intervention. Today, new saints are recognized by the Church because they have demonstrated their Christian faith at the highest levels throughout

their lives and have died in its cause. Saint Elias, also known as Elijah, was a famous Israelite prophet born in Gilead in the eighth century B.C. The events of Elijah's life are related in the Bible, 1 Kings, chapters 17-19. Focal points, some of which are recounted in this article, demonstrate his unique role in biblical history. His father saw angels around him as a child, dressing and feeding him with fire. When God appeared to Elijah it was in the form of fire similar to His appearance to Moses. Elijah performed miracles such as providing sustaining food during a time of limited resources to the widow who gave him shelter. Her son later died, and Elijah brought him back to life. Elijah opposed King Ahab and his wife Jezebel, who had allowed the pagan temple of Baal to be built. This temple and its false prophets turned many people from God. Elias prayed to God to prevent rain from falling for three years to six months. He challenged the prophets of Baal to call down fire from their god. When they failed, he prayed to God and to kill the false prophets of Baal. Elijah then called down the rains. Elijah prophesied that dogs would lick up Ahab's blood and eat his wife Jezebel. His prophecies became reality. Like Moses, Elijah also talked with God on Sinai and parted the Jordan River with his mantle. Elijah was taken up to heaven in fiery chariot. He is pictorially depicted in two different manners, either with a fiery chariot ascending into heaven or with a fiery sword killing the pagans and challenging the false prophets of Baal. Elijah is also mentioned in the New Testament at the Transfiguration of Jesus along with Moses, as depicted in the mural behind the altar at St. Elias.

Contributed by Tammy Litton

## St. Joe's Registration Open

St. Joseph Regional Catholic School is accepting preschool to grade 8 applications for the '18/'19 school year. Tours are available throughout the summer, by appointment. Come learn about the many benefits of a Catholic school education including our low student/teacher ratio. Ask about the CSF scholarship for transfer students. Questions? **Contact Christine Latino** at [clatino@sjrcs.com](mailto:clatino@sjrcs.com) or [603-893-6811](tel:603-893-6811) x 19.

## KINDLY READ CAREFULLY ALL SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES

**Baptism & Confirmation:** (Check our Website)

**Guidelines :**

[stanthonylawrence.org/guidelines/](http://stanthonylawrence.org/guidelines/)

**Registration :**

[stanthonylawrence.org/online-registration-form/](http://stanthonylawrence.org/online-registration-form/)

**Sacrament of Marriage:** (Check our Website)

**Guidelines :**

[stanthonylawrence.org/guidelines-2/](http://stanthonylawrence.org/guidelines-2/)

**FOCCUS:**

[stanthonylawrence.org/foccus/](http://stanthonylawrence.org/foccus/)

**Pre-Cana:**

[stanthonylawrence.org/pre-cana/](http://stanthonylawrence.org/pre-cana/)

**Banquet Hall Guidelines:**

**Contract Form & Usage Donations:**

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/banquet-hall/>

**Burial Guidelines**

**Burial Charges and Fees:** (Check our Website)

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/charges-and-fees/>

**Lot Sales:**

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/lots-sales/>

## Membership Registration

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/member-information-form/>

**Online Donation**

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/donate-now/>

**Upcoming Events**

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/upcoming-events/>

**Monthly Calendar:**

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/upcoming-events/calendar/>



## **FOLLOWING JESUS – ACCORDING TO THE LETTER OR THE SPIRIT?**

**By Ronald Rolheiser**

I work and move within church circles and find that most of the people I meet there are honest, committed, and for the most part radiate their faith positively. Most church-goers aren't hypocrites. What I do find disturbing within church circles though is that too many of us can be bitter, angry, mean-spirited, and judgmental, especially in terms of the very values that we hold most dear.

It was Henri Nouwen who first highlighted this, commenting with sadness that many of the really angry, bitter, and ideologically-driven people he knew he had met inside of church circles and places of ministry. Within church circles, it sometimes seems, everyone is angry about something. Moreover, within church circles, it is all too easy to rationalize our anger in the name of prophecy, as a healthy passion for truth and morals.

The logic works this way: Because I am sincerely concerned about an important moral, ecclesial, or justice issue, I can excuse a certain amount of neurosis, anger, elitism, and negative judgment, because I can rationalize that my cause, dogmatic or moral, is so important that it justifies my mean spirit: I need to be this angry and harsh because this is such an important truth!

And so we justify our anger by giving it a prophetic cloak, believing that we are warriors for God, truth, and morals when, in fact, we are mostly just struggling with our own wounds, insecurities, and fears. Hence we often look at others, even whole churches made up of sincere persons trying to live the gospel, and instead of seeing brothers and sisters struggling, like us, to follow Jesus, we see "people in error", "dangerous relativists", "new age pagans", "religious flakes", and in our more generous moments, "poor misguided souls". But never do we look at what this kind of judgment is saying about us, about our own health of soul and our own following of Jesus.

Don't get me wrong: Truth is not relative, moral issues are important, and right truth and proper morals, like kingdoms under perpetual siege, need to be defended. Not all moral judgments are created equal, neither are all churches.

But the truth of that doesn't trump everything else or give us an excuse to rationalize our anger. We must defend truth, defend those who cannot defend themselves, and be solid in the traditions of our own churches. But right truth and right morals don't necessarily make us disciples of Jesus. What does?

What makes us genuine disciples of Jesus is living inside his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and this is not something abstract and vague. If one were searching for a single formula to determine who is Christian and who isn't, one might look at the Epistle to the Galatians, Chapter 5. In it, St. Paul tells us that we can live according to either the spirit of the flesh or the Holy Spirit.

We live according to the spirit of the flesh when we live in anger, bitterness, judgment of our neighbor, factionalism, and non-forgiveness. When these things characterize our lives we shouldn't delude ourselves and think that we are living inside of the Holy Spirit.

Conversely, we live inside of the Holy Spirit when our lives are characterized by charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, longsuffering, constancy, faith, gentleness, and chastity. If these do not characterize our lives, we should not nurse the illusion that we are inside of God's Spirit, irrespective of our passion for truth, dogma, or justice.

This may be a cruel thing to say, and perhaps more cruel not to say, but I sometimes see more charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, and gentleness among persons who are Unitarian, New Age, or Baha'i (and are often judged by other churches as being wishy-washy and as not standing for anything) than I see among those of us who do stand up so strongly for certain ecclesial and moral issues but are often mean-spirited and bitter inside of our convictions. Given the choice of whom I'd like as a neighbor or, more deeply, the choice of whom I want to spend eternity with, I am sometimes pretty conflicted about the choice: Who is my real faith companion? The angry zealot at war for Jesus or cause? Or the more gentle soul who is branded wishy-washy or "new age"? At the end of the day, who is the real Christian?

We need, I believe, to be more self-critical in regards to our anger, harsh judgments, mean-spirit, exclusiveness, and disdain for other ecclesial and moral paths. As T.S. Eliot once said: The last temptation that's the greatest treason is to do the right thing for the wrong reason. We may have truth and right morals on our side. But our anger and harsh judgments towards those who don't share our truth and morals may well have us standing outside the Father's house, like the older brother of the prodigal son, bitter both at God's mercy and at those who are receiving that mercy.