

I'm thinking of one of the sayings of one of the great early fathers of the Church, St. Ignatius of Antioch. He wrote this while waiting for martyrdom. About to be transported from Asia Minor, he was an elderly man, who had been arrested for the crime of sedition. He was unwilling to acknowledge the supremacy of the state in the person of the emperor. He had another emperor. He had an emperor in Christ. So he had to be made an example of. He was arrested in his see of Antioch, dragged up to the north coast of Asia Minor, to a city called Troas. I used to be the bishop of that city before I became the bishop of Pittsburgh. He wrote letters from Troas to the communities that he had passed through, that had shown him hospitality along the way. He gave them reminders of what was central to the faith. And talking about the bishop he said that it was better to be and not speak than to speak and not be. I'd rather just be and not speak, rather than speak from lack of experience. But it's part of my responsibility as a bishop to teach; that's what supposedly sets me apart.

So I do want to say a few words. First of all I want to give my heartfelt thanks to everyone who made this evening possible. ... Fr. Josiah who managed to praise both states, without sacrificing the dignity of either. It's a tough thing. We're kind of an either/or culture. We like to oppose things. The Church is more of a both/and. It's not about making hard divisions; it's about finding connections. Just saying "monastic community" is kind of an oxymoron. What does that mean? Monastic, that comes from the Greek word *monachos*, one who is alone. A community of loners? But that is what we're talking about. A Cenobium is a bunch of monks, loners, living together. We ought not to try to force our minds. We talk about monks as bearers of the sacred Tradition. They are that. But they are also the avant-garde of the Church. They're not just a wall of defense; they're pushing the Church forward. They're the front ranks. We call it a prophetic life. They live the life of the future; they live the angelic life. They're supposed to live a life that bears witness of the life to come. They're kind of the beachheads of the Kingdom. They're to remind us that our life is not about food and drink; it isn't about acquisition; it's not about material pleasures. It's not about that. It's got to be about something else. Those things don't last. Those things disappoint. Where you're treasure is there your heart will be. Those things aren't worth your heart. The monks and nuns point us in the direction of,

you know, today's Gospel was a very appropriate Gospel. When Peter kept his eyes on Christ, Peter could do impossible things. It was when Peter noticed that he was doing impossible things, when he became self-conscious. When he said 'how is it possible that I am doing such things when the waves are so rough, when the winds are so strong? This can't be happening.' He began to sink. But he could walk the walk if he kept his eyes on Christ. As long as it is Christ that we are working towards, that we are reaching out towards. Paul says, I forget what lies behind, I stretch out towards the goal. The past doesn't concern me. Which is not to say that we are not to revere the past. But you know, the roots don't produce the fruit. The fruit is above ground. We don't have to fetishize the stuff that came behind us. The stuff that came behind us in order to push us forward. We transferred roots from overseas in order that those roots gain purchase here and go down deep and come up and be fruit-bearing. So we're very grateful.

And by the way, that's how God works His miracles. This catastrophe resulted in Orthodoxy coming to the New World. So we don't really know the fullness of the story. We won't know the fullness of the story until the fullness is revealed to us in the world to come. [27:31]