

# Love of God & Love of Neighbor

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IOCC for over 28 years has provided aid in times of need—both in our nation and in many countries. For the essential ministry of IOCC to continue, your support is needed to tell the great story and share in this work. Let us remember to love God and to serve Him. Let us give of our talents, gifts, and time in support of IOCC. Let us also do as our Lord taught us: Love God, love our neighbor, and take care of our brethren.

Very Reverend Theodore Boback, Rector  
St. Andrew Orthodox Church | Baltimore, MD

If you wish to contribute a reflection to the next issue of *Priest to Priest*, please email [rlouniotis@iocc.org](mailto:rlouniotis@iocc.org)

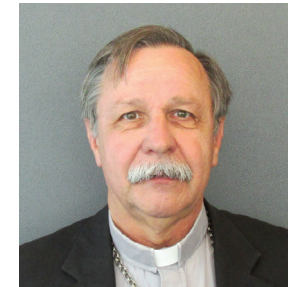
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# PRIEST *to* PRIEST

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## Love of God & Love of Neighbor

*Caring for Others with IOCC*

Very Reverend Theodore Boback

IOCC fosters within our society the teachings of our Lord: Love of God, love of neighbor, taking care of the least of our brethren.

When I think of the work and ethos of IOCC, it reminds me of my personal experience of a disaster in 1972. Hurricane Agnes left scars across the Wyoming Valley in northeast Pennsylvania as the Susquehanna River rose to eight feet above flood stage. My family's home was inundated to half of the second floor; my childhood parish up the street, St. John the Baptist, also flooded. In the aftermath, response teams organized by the American Red Cross and others came to our aid.

Twenty years later, in 1992, IOCC was established, and is now an Orthodox organization active in US disaster response (and humanitarian service around the world). Our local parish of St. Andrew in Baltimore supports this work in various ways: They participate in the annual IOCC Souper Bowl Sunday, our children have packed hygiene kits, and one parishioner coordinated a group to run for IOCC in the Baltimore Running Festival.



I've had the opportunity to train and deploy as a Frontliner in IOCC's disaster relief work. The ministry of presence, coupled with the ministry of action in the spirit of God's love, was readily accepted. In one instance, we shopped for items needed in a shelter. The shelter manager was excited that we could provide exactly what they'd asked for; residents also offered thanks. Employees and customers in stores where we bought items, upon seeing the IOCC emblem on the vests we wore, began to converse with us and expressed gratitude that IOCC had come to help. In addition, we worked closely with the IOCC team in clean-up activities. Our endeavors enabled us to bring hope, comfort, and inner peace to those facing grief, pain, and suffering in the aftermath of the disaster.

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# Navigating Adversity: Grieving With Hope

## Tips & Tools

### GENERAL TIPS

1. Identify and acknowledge the primary and secondary loss(es) you may be feeling. You can't grieve what you haven't acknowledged.
2. Facilitate and practice helpful mourning traditions, rituals, and processes.
3. Remember that grief and mourning exist on a continuum.
4. Grief is a process, not an event: It takes time, occurs in phases, and is expressed in different emotions.
5. Explore and develop healthy support systems.
6. Face the realities of the loss and adjust to a changed world.



*Created by an IOCC Frontliner Advisory Group comprised of Orthodox clergy, licensed clinicians and counselors.*

### First Responder Focused



Acknowledge your grief: It's okay to hurt, be angry, etc. Feelings are normal. Grief can only exist with Love.



You are not alone: It is important for first responders to develop a relationship with a trusted person that "gets it" in order to have someone to talk with. Share your story (stories are sacred) and remember that sharing helps to make sense of your story.



Life will be different. Adjusting to the loss, processing emotions, letting go of how things were: these are part of the process.



Growth through Grief: Account for different perceptions of loss. How can we learn or grow from the loss we grieve? What is the silver lining? Readjusting and moving forward is not a betrayal of the loss and grief.



There may be a fear of being perceived as weak by feeling grief, but it's okay to feel this and to share it. "Jesus wept" when He knew Lazarus was dead; He was going there to raise Lazarus from the dead, but He still shared the family's grief and experienced their pain and cried with them.

### Faith Focused



We think of grief primarily with the death of a loved one. Grief, however, occurs when there is any significant loss. The first step is to acknowledge this and that the various emotions one goes through after a significant loss are often grief-induced.



Grief is a process. It's not linear but has many ups and downs. It is a process that takes time. That's okay. Be patient with yourself even though others might want to rush you.



When another is grieving, try to be there for them. Often one doesn't have to say anything, but just be present with the other person in their pain and grief. We don't have to "fix" another, we can just be there for them.



The Church rituals of: The Funeral and Mercy Meal, Memorial services at specified intervals, and on the 4 Saturdays of the Soul are very helpful for anyone going through grief and an opportunity to support those who are. Similar corporate or personal prayer gatherings can be creatively incorporated on anniversaries or in the midst of one's own, a family's, a parish's, or even a nation's significant losses.



FAITH, HOPE and LOVE. One's FAITH in God produces HOPE that all things negative and even death — in Christ Jesus — is transformed to life, through God's eternal compassion and unending LOVE. Therefore, ALL things work to the good of those who LOVE God. (Romans 8:28). Therefore even painful, negative experiences, sicknesses, and even death, OVER TIME in the grief process, can be transformed to positive, blessed and life giving experiences through God who LOVES us.



Acknowledge that grief is more than death. Everyone is going through it and it looks different for each of us. We grieve with hope.