

# Salvation, Grace, and Works

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Therefore, our Orthodox Christian tradition informs us that there must be a synergy between our faith and our works: what is often referred to as “Orthopraxy.” That correct belief (Orthodoxy) compels correct action (Orthopraxy). IOCC is one of our best resources in terms of practicing our faith through works. This incarnational ministry, very similar to ministry in the Chaplain Corps, allows us to synergize our faith and our works. So that, like the Good Samaritan, we can take action in what we believe.

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

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# PRIEST *to* PRIEST

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## Salvation, Grace, and Works

Reflections for a New Year

Fr. Mark Vair

The year 2020 was certainly a year which caused reflection. What I reflected upon most last year, as a parish priest and reserve military chaplain, is salvation. We cannot experience the fallout of a world-wide pandemic and civil unrest without contemplation of our own mortality.

The region of Texas where my parish is located is often considered the “Buckle of the Bible Belt.” Many of my colleagues in the Chaplain Corps often speak about “salvation through grace alone,” which is a theological question that forces me to dive deep into our Orthodox Christian tradition for answers. What must be done to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven? Is it grace or works or both?

This question is of course answered by the parable of the Good Samaritan. If we read about the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31–46), it’s obvious that works are an important factor in our salvation. However, if we read the account of Christ and the rich young man, it’s obvious that grace is also an important factor in our salvation. As those who witnessed this encounter ask Jesus, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus informs them, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Lk 18:27). St. Paul confirms this in his letter to the Ephesians: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph 2:8–9). However, St. James informs us that “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (Jas 2:17). If we have faith but have no works, what good is our faith? And yet if we do good works and have no faith, what good are our works? For even Herod I spent lavish sums on building projects for his citizens and often donated generous gifts to others.



IOCC’s service to those in need includes offering food, safe water, education, and more – including teaching families how to stay safe and healthy (shown here before the pandemic).

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We want to help each other weather the storm brought by disruptive disasters, including pandemics.

## TOOLS FOR RESILIENCE

IOCC has created a new suite of tools called Care Compass.

These tools map ways individuals and communities can forge a path toward physical, mental, and spiritual wellness.

Designed in consultation with Orthodox clergy, counselors, and clinicians, these tools are simple to use, adaptable, and can be locally implemented.

No matter where you may find yourself, together, we can help each other navigate toward resilience.

### MODULE 1

#### Healthy Grieving

##### Finding Hope

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.

### MODULE 2

#### Self-Care

##### Overcoming Stress

If you're feeling overwhelmed or anxious, diaphragmatic breathing keeps stress hormones low by accessing the vagus nerve.

This technique can help focus in the here and now and not in the what-ifs of future stress.

It can be used throughout the day, but can be especially helpful in the morning when coupled with prayer routine and allow you to start the day feeling balanced, connected and grounded with a whole heart:

- Step one → take a deep breath in
- Step two → hold
- Step three → exhale
- Repeat 10 times

### MODULE 3

#### Family Dynamics

##### Pulling Together

1. Make a personal inventory of the positive reality which your family's impact has had on the life of your parish.
2. Encourage one another to acknowledge individually how they contribute to making your home a better place and how they can do so in the future.
3. Encourage each family member to participate in the healthy hobbies, interests, or stress relievers which give them joy and release.
4. Seek out fun or even new experiences, together as a family, regularly.
5. Encourage and learn to share expectations with one another openly and without attack about the things each family member can do to insure that the home is safe and in good order.

### MODULE 4

#### Building Resilient Communities

##### Laying Foundations

1. Have a plan in place – identify resources you, your family, and your community can bring to bear before crises. That way you are prepared to provide services and care in the wake of a disaster
2. Create multiple avenues to allow all people to access assistance or service opportunities
3. Focus on courage and hope in spite of fear. While it is okay to feel afraid, demonstrating courage inspires hope and engagement
4. Engage all year round! You don't have to wait until a disaster strikes to get involved. Stay active through volunteering monthly, packing hygiene and cleanup kits, or making your own monthly IOCC Care Calls



FIND MORE AT

[iocc.org/carecompass](http://iocc.org/carecompass)