

# Aristotle Papanikolaou

**Aristotle Papanikolaou** was born/raised in Chicago, IL. He is a co-founder and Senior Fellow at Fordham's Orthodox Christian Studies Center and the Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University. In 2012, he received the Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching in the Humanities. He enjoys Russian Literature and Byzantine Music. His areas of expertise are Eastern Orthodox theology, trinitarian theology, and religion in public life. He is currently developing an expertise on the relation between theological anthropology, violence and virtue ethics. His on-going research interests include contemporary Orthodox theology (nineteenth and twentieth centuries) and trinitarian theology. His current research agenda relates to theological anthropology, and specifically explores the relevancy of truth-telling (confession) for understanding what it means to be human. The project is interdisciplinary and focuses on the affective effect of truth-telling; that is, the impact of truth-telling on the landscape of human emotions and desires, and how such an impact is conditioned by the presence or absence of a particular listener. He was awarded a Sabbatical Grant for Researchers from the Louisville Institute for his project *The Ascetics of War*, which explores the relevancy of the Eastern Orthodox notion of virtue and the role of truth-telling for undoing the affective effects of war on the human person. As a theological anthropology, he is interested in the question of how truth-telling can illuminate understandings of identity, sin, virtue, the communication of grace, a relational understanding of personhood, and the Orthodox notion of theosis. Among his publications: *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy*, Notre Dame, Indiana 2012; *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion*, Notre Dame, Indiana 2006; "The Ascetics of War: The Undoing and Redoing of Virtue," in *Orthodox Perspectives on War*, ed. Perry Hamalis, Notre Dame Press, forthcoming; "Modes of Godly Being: Reflections on the Virtues in Eastern Orthodox Christianity", eds. Aristotle Papanikolaou and Perry Hamalis, in *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26:3 (August 2013); *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, eds. George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, eds. George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008); *Thinking through Faith: New Perspectives from Orthodox Christian Scholars*, eds. Aristotle Papanikolaou and Elizabeth Prodromou (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008); "Learning How to Love: St. Maximus on Virtue", in *Knowing the Purpose of Creation Through the Resurrection: Proceedings of the Symposium on St. Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Bishop Maxim Vasiljevi? (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press & The Faculty of Orthodox Theology – University of Belgrade, 2013): 239-250.

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## Truth-Telling as Martyrdom for the Sake of Communion

What are the constitutive elements of martyrdom such that it is distinguishable from suicide or other forms of voluntary death? Martyrdom is an event of communion constituted by a particular kind of interrelation between death, the other, and truth-telling. What constitutes death-as-martyrdom is not death per se out of belief in the promised resurrection, but a death that results from a telling of the truth and which enables communion. The author illustrates what he calls "phenomenology of martyrdom" through the phenomenology of truth-telling. The act of truth-telling which is received by someone else in truth and love becomes an event of freedom; it is a form of martyrdom and enables communion, by removing the mask that prevents communion with the other. The author raises the question whether martyrdom-as-truth-telling for the sake of communion has political implications. He is convinced that in societies of liberal democracies, despite great differences and apparent incompatibilities with the form of communion which is lived within Church, the capacity for truth-telling enables a real "politics of martyrdom", and its sign is discernable in the visible manifestations of political communion, of forms of relationality across deep and abiding differences that constitute human beings a unique. In the concluding remarks the author suggests that the martyrs' gift to humanity is the witness that there can be no communion without martyrdom, without a death--spiritual or physical--that results from truth-telling to an other. It is only in martyrdom that love conquers fear.

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