

**HOMILY GIVEN AT THE BAPTISM OF MICHAEL GOLDSHTEYN**  
**February 8, 2025**

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Today is a great day of joy and celebration. After months of diligent preparation by attending the Divine Services, prayer, and study, Michael was baptized into the Orthodox Church. Through holy baptism a man enters into the mystical supernatural Kingdom of the Holy of Holies. Life as Michael has known it up until now has radically changed. Having been previously born from his mother, today Michael has been born “from above,” “another” in Greek, as it says in holy scripture. Michael takes his first step today on a journey that will last for the rest of his life. He will see, hear, and experience Divine mysteries that can only be experienced through Holy Baptism. His life will be a tireless devotion to repentance and self-improvement, spiritual growth, and service and lovingkindness to his fellow man.

In life there is much light and joy, today being an example of one of the most joyous and light-filled days that Michael will experience. However, we also know that in life, from time to time we experience moments of self-doubt, sadness, and darkness. Let it be of some comfort to Michael and to all of us that three of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament, Moses, Elijah, and Jonah also experienced moments of such despair. Their despair was so profound that they apparently considered their lives as no longer worth living and prayed for their own imminent demise.

Moses: “And Moses said to the Lord, “Why have you dealt ill with Your servant, and why have I not enjoyed Your favor, that You have laid the burden of all this people upon me?...If You would deal thus with me, kill me rather, I beg You, and let me see no more of my wretchedness!” (Numbers 11:11 and 15).

Elijah: “He himself [Elijah] went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush and sat down under it, and prayed that he might die. “Enough!” he cried. “Now, O Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my forefathers” (1 Kings 19:4)

Jonah: “Please, Lord, take my life, for I would rather die than live” (Jonah 4:3).

There are three important points to note immediately. Firstly, in none of the above cases did the great individuals concerned entertain, even for a moment, the possibility of taking their own lives. Secondly, all three of them transcended their moment of “crisis” and proceeded to continue to live good, meaningful and fulfilled lives. Thirdly, each of these moments of crisis was precipitated by a threat to the very essence of these great prophets’ *raison d’être*. In other words, they saw an apparently insurmountable threat to their lifetime’s core spiritual and religious mission, and it was that which led them to consider their lives as no longer worth living.

Therefore, if to some extent, despair and disappointment are unavoidable components of our lives, how are we supposed to cope with and overcome them? First of all, never completely abandon your regular pattern of service to God. Secondly, remember that previous negative experiences were followed by positive and happy ones and cling to the certain knowledge and belief that this will, sooner rather than later, be the case once again. This too shall pass. Remember that at all times God always walks by our side. True recognition and acknowledgement of God’s presence alongside us in times of uncertainty and travail is one of the most reassuring things on to which we can hope to hold. Similarly, consider the well-known words of King David in Psalm 23, “Even though I may walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me.

Congratulations, Michael, and may God always walk by your side. Amen.