

The Western Rite Vicariate

The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America

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Report to the 50th Antiochian Archdiocese Convention
Chicago, Illinois, July 2011

In 1961, the Antiochian Archdiocese received by Chrismation, several Western Rite parishes which had earlier had been under the care of the Russian Holy Synod, but had lost that connection due to the upheavals of the Russian Church situation in the 1930's. At that time, a special Western Rite Commission was also appointed and charged with overseeing these parishes. It included Fr Alexander Schmemmann, Fr. John Meyendorf, Fr. Stephen Upson, and Fr. Paul Schneirla. This year marks the 50th anniversary of these Chriasmations and the first Western Rite Commission in the Archdiocese. These several parishes have grown today to include 24 parishes and missions of the Antiochian Archdiocese; cared for by 31 priests and 11 deacons.

In 1962, Metropolitan Anthony Bashir wrote that "The purpose of the Western Rite is to provide a home in the Orthodox Church for western people of non-Byzantine cultural and religious background, and to witness to the catholicity of the Orthodox Church to her Byzantine Rite people, priests and theologians." We try to keep both of these purposes central to our mission within this Archdiocese. While providing a missionary outreach to Western Christians and others throughout North America, we also preserve an important part of the Orthodox Catholic Tradition as a precious treasure of the Church; not to be forgotten or overlooked by our Byzantine brethren. We offer the fullness of the Orthodox Faith and Spirituality to those searching for the Truth, and we offer the depths and treasures of the Western Traditions to our Byzantine brothers and sisters to help them appreciate all the profound beauty and richness of the whole of Orthodoxy.

We welcome especially this year Joseph Gleason and the parishioners of Christ the King Mission in Omaha, Illinois, who have joined the Archdiocese since our last convention in 2009.

We are especially excited to note the growth of the Western Rite in our sister jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia. The recent reception of some 10 parishes and missions in addition to the several that they already had, changes the landscape of Western Rite Orthodoxy in America. We wish them every blessing and success in the future.

We must thank our Metropolitan PHILIP for his leadership and guidance, as well as Bishop Antoun, Bishop Joseph, Bishop Basil, Bishop Thomas, Bishop Mark, and Bishop Alexander for their on-going interest, help, and support for the very special ministry of the Vicariate. Without their kind intentions and active support it would be impossible for us to do this work.

Thanks also to Fr. John Fenton, Fr. Bernard Kinnick, and Mr. Dale Crakes, for their considerable help in organizing, researching, and communicating all that is necessary to keep things going smoothly.

There is no way to thank the priests: the pastors of our communities who have sacrificed so very much to bring their flocks to Orthodoxy and to care for them in our Archdiocese. Being widely scattered, they often feel isolated and alone. Because the communities are, for the most part, small, many of them work with little or no remuneration; relying on their wives or their retirement incomes, or holding several jobs at once to sustain them and their families. Many of them are working very hard despite having already reached and passed normal retirement age. Their commitment, sacrifice, and enthusiasm are heroic and inspiring. Their families are saints. May God protect and keep each and every one of them.

Please keep this special ministry of our Archdiocese in your daily prayers.

Respectfully submitted,

V. Rev. Edward Hughes
Vicar General.