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# The Word



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Primate

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Bishop Basil

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editor's letter

# Ligonier revisited

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF HISTORIC MEETING OF ORTHODOX BISHOPS



SCOBA Bishops 1994

This month marks the tenth anniversary of the historic meeting of Orthodox hierarchs in Ligonier, PA. During this meeting, the members of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America changed the course of history for Orthodoxy in America by articulating their commitment to cooperation, mission and an acceptable canonical structure. This meeting produced papers and statements that are certainly worthy of our attention and review today. In this issue of *The WORD*, we present the original documents, as well as some brief reflections from our Church leaders ten years after the meeting. We are also able to share some highlights of the enthronement of Bishop Joseph of Los Angeles. The Archdiocese of North America asks God to grant His Grace Bishop Joseph many years of mercy, life, peace and health to rightly divide the Word of Truth.





I think of Ligonier as a moment in the history of Orthodoxy in North America when a love for the missionary mandate of the Gospel transcended ethnic and cultural barriers and concerns. Ligonier provided a venue where Orthodox bishops offered words and visions of ecclesial unity. Ten years ago, the prophetic spirit of Ligonier stood *opposed* to jurisdictional pluralism even when other hierarchs, here and abroad, sought to justify the *uncanonical status quo*. Ten years ago, the bishops of Ligonier expressed a oneness of mind which exposed the falsehood that jurisdictional pluralism does not impede Eucharistic unity when, in fact, the presence of two or more bishops in one city undermines the very reality of ecclesial and, therefore, Eucharistic unity.

Over the last ten years, the national and international stages have drastically changed. People across North America and the world are divided by religion, race, politics and economics. A divided world needs the unifying voice of Christ. But the voice of Christ, if it is to properly convey its healing power, demands the unity of His Church here and across the globe. The work begun ten years ago must continue and be brought to fruition. As long as there are those who hear and do the word of the Lord in North America, the message of Ligonier will not be silenced.

## *Statements from bishops on diaspora*

*Metropolitan Herman  
Primate,  
Orthodox Church in America*

November 30 to December 2, 1994 was the brightest moment in the history of Orthodoxy in North America. For the first time, twenty-nine Orthodox bishops from the United States and Canada gathered at the Antiochian Village to pray together, discuss Orthodox problems together and formulate a common vision for the future. This brotherly and well-meaning meeting caused an unexpected earthquake in some of the ancient Orthodox Patriarchates. Let us hope that the spirit of Ligonier will be born again and our dream for a united Orthodoxy in America will never fade away.

*Metropolitan Philip,  
Primate  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian  
Archdiocese  
of North America*





America needs Orthodoxy, without Orthodoxy becoming Americanized. Orthodoxy must continue to develop in spirituality and maturity, growing gradually and appropriately toward a developed polity. I am concerned that aggressive attempts toward premature separation from the mother churches of the old lands will result in disarray and schism. Instead, we are called by the Lord to continue in humble growth and obedience to our organic link with the Patriarchates. We hope and pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit in the future life of our church.

*Metropolitan Nicholas of Amissos,  
Ruling Hierarchy of the American  
Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese  
of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of  
Constantinople*



What we — the canonical Orthodox bishops — had done 10 years ago was good. But there are no results so far. It is only a good desire. That means — such is God's will. Without Him we can do nothing.

Therefore, I beseeched the Lord to teach me His statutes. After my prayer as usual I opened my Bible with closed eyes and put my finger on the right place. For the first time I opened Revelation 1:3 — “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” I asked the Lord: “O Lord! What about until then?” And again I opened the Bible, that time on 1 Timothy 1:15 — “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” And for the third time I tempted the Lord, saying: “O Lord! I am not an Abraham nor a Jew, I'm a sinner, but involve me to understand Your Will.” And then I opened the Book of Sirah — Joshua — 24:29-30, where I read in the new American Translation: “Said to myself, I will water my plants, my flower bed I will drench; and suddenly this rivulet of mine became a river, then this stream of mine, a sea. Thus do I send my teaching forth shining like a dawn, to become known afar off. Thus do I pour out instruction like prophecy and bestow it on generations to come.”

And now it is clear for me, that this prophecy should be fulfilled, but not during my life. I think that all of us, Orthodox bishops, who were born and came to America from the old countries, like me, and now control the jurisdictional eparchies, must die. The Holy Orthodox Church needs new generations of Americans to come after us, who shall fulfill the Lord's instructions and prophecy. Because now, as Fr. Vladimir Berzonsky writes: “Spiritually we are still drinking mother's milk, not yet ready for loftier and deeper experiences of the life reaching out to us from Christ and present through the Holy Spirit within our hearts.”

*Metropolitan Joseph  
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese  
of the USA, Canada and Australia*

## *Statements from the bishops*



The meeting in Ligonier of Orthodox hierarchs in North America in November, 1994 was extremely encouraging and positive in its decision making. It concluded that there was need for canonical unity in America among the Orthodox jurisdictions. The gathering offered great hope for the unity of Orthodoxy in America. My vision for the future remains the same — One United Canonical Church in the Americas.

*Archbishop Kyrill  
of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania  
Orthodox Church in America*



Congratulations on the November, 2004 *The WORD* issue, commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Ligonier meeting of our Orthodox North American Bishops. Unfortunately, things have not drastically changed since that time. We still hope and pray for complete and visible unity in the Orthodox Diaspora of North America. Let us hope that, as promised to us in Washington, D.C., fourteen years ago, the ranking Orthodox jurisdiction, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, will assume a leadership role in order for this to happen, hopefully during our lifetime.

*Metropolitan Maximos  
Metropolis of Pittsburgh  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*





SCOBA Bishops in 1994 with some staff and supporters of the meeting



The Ligonier meeting of the Orthodox bishops in North America was a milestone in the history of Orthodoxy in America. The vision of Orthodoxy that was seen at that meeting is still relevant today, but has yet to be realized. Orthodox jurisdictional unity in North America must be our continued vision; any deviation from this is a contradiction to the order and canons of the Orthodox Church. Let us fervently pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us in making this vision a reality.

*Archbishop Peter  
Archbishop of New York and New  
Jersey  
Orthodox Church in America*

The Conference at Ligonier was an exciting moment for many of us who were priests serving the faithful at that time. All who read of the meeting and of its call to unity were inspired with high hopes.

Ten years later, we still note that there is no place in Holy Orthodoxy for the present case of multi-jurisdictionalism in North America and across the globe, as this only impedes the Church's evangelizing efforts. This was reflected in the Mission and Evangelism Statement issued at Ligonier: "We commit ourselves to avoiding the creation of parallel and competitive Orthodox parishes, missions, and mission programs ... and to move forward towards a concerted, formal, and united mission program in order to make a real impact on North America through Orthodox mission and evangelism."

Our prayer and efforts should be for one Holy Orthodox Church in North America, a goal that can only be accomplished in the spirit of cooperation and not division.

*Bishop Nikolai  
Bishop of Sitka, Anchorage and  
Alaska  
Orthodox Church in America*

Orthodox Christians working out their salvation in Canada and the United States of America must separately be united into two local Autocephalous Churches, each pastored by hierarchs synergetically working in two unique Holy Synods, each one headed by its own Patriarch. The long-term goal of one hierarch shepherding one metropolis will, in time, manifest itself through the will of the Holy Spirit inspiring the entire Church. Inasmuch as each "jurisdiction" serves both an ethnic and indigenous flock, it should continue its ministry uninterrupted. Present imperfect "Eucharistic unity" will be perfected because of administrative unity. Temporarily, administrative unity means each jurisdiction will keep its own administrative structures which, nonetheless, are brought into a national unity through representation by each hierarch in his national, Canadian or American, Holy Synod. Each Autocephalous Church must create a single Constitution and By-laws/Statutes to best serve the needs of the native-born and the immigrant. The unity of the hierarchs, in Synodia, would manifest itself in unity of purpose of internal and external evangelization as outlined ten years ago in the two documents born of the Ligonier meeting. This to be achieved through the movement of the Holy Spirit empowering these Orthodox Christians through fasting, prayer and almsgiving to act creatively.

*Nathaniel  
Archbishop of Detroit  
Orthodox Church in America  
Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of  
America*

## *Statements from the bishops*

The time has come for Orthodoxy in America to move beyond simple affirmation of historical, canonical order. It is time to encourage and develop cooperation among churches, which will prove to be a genuine blueprint for greater unity on all fronts. Specific principles need to be articulated and accepted by all jurisdictions in a common commitment to work in consort. Programs of pan-Orthodox endeavor, at the grass roots, should be initiated and supported so that the faithful experience a oneness in purpose and action. Everything is achievable through mutual respect and sensitivity flowing from faith and love in Christ.

*Bishop Ilia of Philomelion  
Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America*



I honestly thought after Ligonier that we were beginning a new era of cooperation and Orthodox unity on this continent. For the first time since the early years of our presence in the Americas, it seemed there was a common vision, or at least a common goal of working together, not just for the sake of working together, but toward a canonically proper end of a unified Church. For me, the chance to sit down with brother bishops, many of whom I had never met, was a great and awesome experience. What made this experience great and awesome, besides just getting together, was that there was a purpose. Oftentimes we had gotten together in the past, but just for social purposes or anniversaries, celebrations, etc. This time it was for the good of the Church. Unfortunately, what happened in the aftermath of Ligonier left us further apart and more disunited than we were in the years that led up to that historic gathering.

*Bishop Antoun  
Bishop of Miami and the Southeast  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North  
America*





In 1994 I was a relatively new and young bishop when the now famous Conference of Bishops was convened at the Antiochian Village, and so together with another young bishop, His Grace Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada, I was appointed to the Conference's secretariat. Ligonier '94 was without doubt one of the brightest moments — if not THE brightest moment — in the history of Holy Orthodoxy in the New World. Dozens of bishops met and prayed and deliberated on that Pennsylvania mountaintop, while hundreds of thousands of our young people across the continent prayed and fasted that we might accomplish a good for Holy Orthodoxy. And, by God's grace, a great good was indeed accomplished! The common hope and vision expressed by my brother bishops during those several days and reflected in the two historic documents produced by the Conference caused a refreshing and invigorating breeze to blow across this continent, opening the doors of our Orthodox congregations with hope and joyful anticipation. But sadly and all too quickly, dark storm clouds blew in from the East, causing those doors to be slammed shut once more. Some of those doors were and remained locked to this very day, while others stand ajar, awaiting another refreshing and invigorating breeze to open them once again. May that breeze come quickly!

*Bishop Basil*

*Bishop of Wichita and Mid-America*

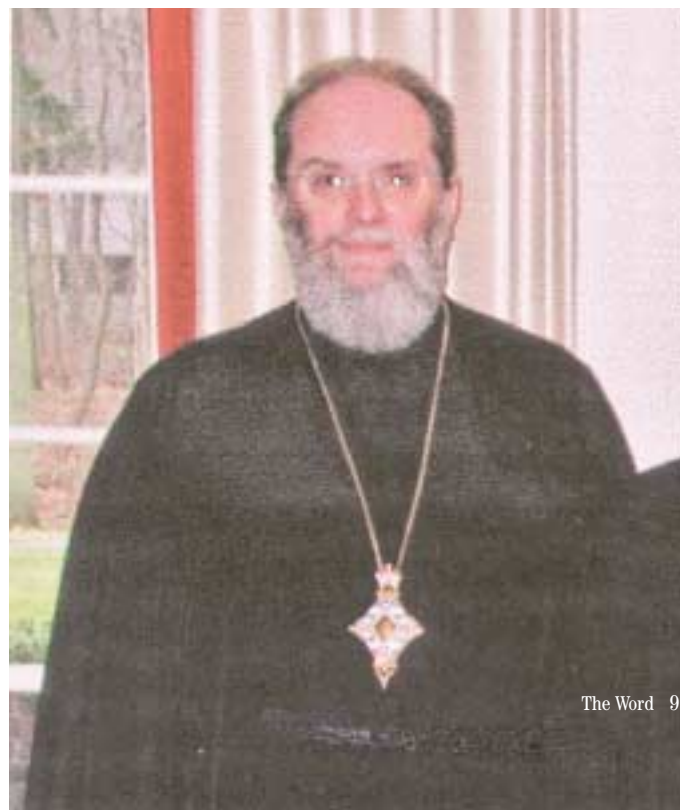
*Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*

The Orthodox Church offers the spiritual healing so many need as they realize the emptiness of secularism and materialism. The task for us in the Church is to offer true spirituality rather than the empty entertainment that passes for Christianity in the West. We must get beyond duels over the Scripture with fundamentalists and revisionists, and instead challenge people with the evidence we have for the true healing and *theosis* found only in the Orthodox Church.

*Bishop Joseph*

*Diocese of Los Angeles and the West*

*Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*



# Mission & Evangelism

AS DELIVERED AT THE HISTORIC MEETING IN 1994

Your Eminence, my Beloved Brothers in Christ,

I was indeed delighted when the venerable Chairman of SCOBA, His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos, asked me to deliver at this first Orthodox Episcopal Conference in North America, a paper on “Mission and Evangelism,” a topic which is significant to Orthodox Christianity in this hemisphere. The Biblical text which I chose for this paper is Matthew 28:18: “And Jesus came and said to them ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.’”

Our Lord Himself was indeed the Missionary par excellence. In Matthew 4:23, we read: “And He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.” And in the “fullness of time,” the “Word became flesh”<sup>2</sup> and entered time on a mission of salvation. He was sent by the Father to make us “partakers of the Divine Nature.”<sup>3</sup> In John 20:21, Christ said: “As the Father has sent me even so I send you.” The Church, which is the extension of Christ in time and space, is sent by Christ to missionize and evangelize. Evangelism means to preach the Gospel. “Woe unto me if I do not preach,”<sup>4</sup> said St. Paul. After the birth of the Church on Pentecost Day, the apostles and early Christians went about the Oikomene, the known world at that time, preaching the Gospel and missionizing, despite their persecution and the monumental difficulties which they had to face. Although the Church



was born in Jerusalem, Antioch became the greatest center for missionary activities. It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.<sup>5</sup> For more details on the role which Antioch played in evangelism, I recommend the “History of the Church of Antioch,” by Chrisostomos Pappathopoulos, Professor of History at Athens University.<sup>6</sup>

There are many stories about the missionary travels of the apostles.<sup>7</sup> It is clear, however, that Christianity did not spread throughout the entire Roman Empire until after the Edict of Milan. The Pax Romana presented what Michael Green<sup>8</sup> describes as both opportunities and difficulties for Evangelism. Some of the opportunities were:

- (a) Peace and unity
- (b) Philosophical hunger
- (c) Religious dissatisfaction.

Some of the difficulties were:

(a) The cultural offensiveness of the Gospel, i.e., the Jewish communities and their Gentile adherents openly affronted by the central language of the Gospel: God’s incarnation and death.

(b) Political considerations, i.e., the Christian unwillingness to participate in the state cult of the emperor was seen as political treason,<sup>9</sup> and the closed nature of the Christian gatherings likewise led to charges of cannibalism.

After 313 A.D. circumstances changed radically, and





organized missionary enterprises became normal. Metropolitan Anastasios divides the history of Byzantine missions into two major periods:

(1) The fourth to the sixth centuries witness the Christianization of the empire and its immediate peripheries.

(2) The ninth to the eleventh centuries, Byzantium's "classic" outreach into the Balkans and Russia.

## The First Great Missionary Period

The post-Constantinian emperors concentrated on removing all vestiges of paganism from the empire. By this time, the urban centers of Spain, Southern Gaul, Germany, Italy, Macedonia, Greece, Central Asia Minor and the Black Sea Region, greater Syria, lower Egypt and Africa had all received the Christian witnesses, as had Armenia, the Arab Peninsula<sup>10</sup> and India outside the empire boundaries.

In Palestine, at the close of the fourth century, St. Hilarion mobilized some two thousand monks to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants, many of them nomadic Bedouins, not easily reached. He used his monasteries in Gaza as a missionary center, and it became the norm of the Church for monks to have a larger portion of the responsibility for missions.<sup>11</sup>

Both in Antioch as a Presbyter, and in Constantinople as Patriarch, St. John Chrysostom was an outspoken and enthusiastic supporter of mission.

In 380/381, Emperor Theodosius outlawed heathen sacrifices and mission became extended to the hinterlands. Emperor Justinian (527-565) was instrumental in many ways in spreading Christianity outside the boundaries of the empire. He even directed that missions be dispatched into the Berber region of North Africa. Georgia had become familiar with the Gospel through the life of faith and complete virtue of a Cappadocian captive, St. Nina.

The non-Chalcedonian churches made tremendous missionary strides, especially at the hand of Jacob Baradeus, who wandered all his life from Egypt to Euphrates, preaching and founding churches. It is significant here to note that the non-Chalcedonian missionaries had reached India and China.

## The Second Great Missionary Period: The Ninth to the Eleventh Century

In 862, the Moravian ruler, Rathislave, approached Emperor Michael III about receiving Slavic-speaking Greek missionaries to enlighten his people. War broke out

between the Byzantine Army and Boris of Bulgaria. "Boris capitulated, abandoned the Franks and promised to accept the Byzantine form of Christianity."<sup>12</sup> Boris was baptized in 864, taking the name Michael in honor of his Imperial Godfather. A missionary company of bishops and priests, aided by Archbishop Joseph, was dispatched to Bulgaria. They were accompanied by a corps of architects, painters and other artisans needed to build and adorn churches.

Under Boris' son, Symeon, Greek theological books were translated into the vernacular Slavic. Further north in Moravia, mission work was proceeding well under Prince Rotslav, who wrote to Emperor Michael III, "Our people



have renounced paganism and are observing the Christian law, but we do not have a teacher to explain to us the true Christian faith in our own language in order that other nations even, seeing this, may emulate us. Send us, therefore, Master, such bishop and teacher, because from you emanates always, the good law."<sup>13</sup>

The Moravians were not immediately granted a bishop,<sup>14</sup> but they received two remarkable evangelists, SS. Cyril and Methodius. The two brothers were raised in Thessalonika, a region with a large minority concentration of Slavs, whose dialogue they learned from childhood. The two brothers were highly educated in theology, philosophy and they mastered the Greek, Hebrew and Syriac languages.

In 863, Cyril invented an alphabet perfectly suited for the phonology of the old Slavic language and began the task of translating the scriptures and liturgy. "The body of literature in Slavonic, including the Bible and the liturgy, played an important role in the Christianization of Russia. The influence of SS. Cyril and Methodius far outlasted their own efforts. It is no wonder that they are commemorated in the Liturgy as 'equal to the apostles,' evangelists of the Slavonians."<sup>15</sup>



I would like to emphasize here that the genius of Cyril and Methodius lies in the fact that they did not impose the Greek language on the Slavs. They used the vernacular for worship, and taught converts to praise God in their own language. The second distinct element of the Slavic mission was the use of indigenous clergy. Instead of imposing foreign clergy on the Slavs, converts were to care for the spiritual needs of the people. I wish that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem would learn from Cyril and Methodius this valuable lesson before it is too late.

The emphasis on indigenization led to the third element, which is selfhood of the Church. Orthodox canon law permits the establishment of local churches, but there has not always been agreement between the Mother Church and the Mission Church over when self-government is granted. Unfortunately, this problem continues to disturb the peace of the Church until today.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, a dark night settled on the mission of the Orthodox Churches of Byzantium. The Lord, however, works in mysterious ways. The light which was extinguished in Byzantium, continues to shine brightly through the deep spirituality and missionary zeal of the Russian Church. Missions were established in Northern Russia, and Alaska was missionized in 1794. The nineteenth century was called “the Great Century of Russian Orthodox Missions.”<sup>16</sup> Missions were established in Japan, Korea and China. In all their missions, the Russian missionaries followed the example of Cyril and Methodius.

I have presented this historical survey on Orthodox Mission and Evangelism in order to re-emphasize that Mission and Evangelism is not, by any means, a Protestant idea. Long before the Reformation, Orthodox missionaries preached the Gospel to hundreds of millions of people. “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in



all Judea and Samaria and the utter-most ends of the earth.”<sup>17</sup> The Church, therefore, is divinely sent to the nations that She might be “the universal sacrament of salvation.” She, in obedience to the command of Her Founder, and because it is demanded by Her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men. The apostles followed the footsteps of Christ, “preached the word of truth and begot churches.” It is the duty of their successors to carry on this work so that “the word of the Lord may spread and triumph,” and the “Kingdom of God proclaimed and renewed throughout the whole world.”<sup>18</sup> It is obvious then that the Church on earth is, by its very nature, missionary. Missionary activity is nothing else, and nothing less, than the manifestation of God’s plan, its epiphany and realization in the world and in history.

Reflecting on the theme of this paper, which is “Mission and Evangelism” (Matthew 28:16-20), we find that our Lord told us clearly and plainly that He received “all power on heaven and on earth,” and because of that power over the universe, He can initiate a universal mission. He commanded us, through His disciples, to do three things:

- (a) Make disciples,
- (b) Baptize,
- (c) Teach.

To make disciples is the first part of the divine command. In Matthew 10:6, He told His disciples to go only to the people of Israel. The mission is now to the whole world; the Gentiles are now included. The eleven apostles are to make disciples of all nations; the Jews are not excluded but they no longer enjoy a privileged status as the chosen people. Christ died for all men. The process begins with the proclamation of the Gospel, “Make disciples.” The process continues with baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Although the Church may have initially baptized in the name of Jesus, by the time Matthew wrote his Gospel, the Trinitarian formula had already been in use.<sup>19</sup> Matthew conceives of baptism as incorporation into the life of God and of His church. It is no longer circumcision that makes a person a member of the Church of God, but it is baptism. As the process continues, Jesus sends His apostles to “teach,” and they are instructed to teach man to “observe all things I have commanded

you.” It is Jesus Himself who is the norm of all truth and all morality. It is what He has commanded that must be taught. The ministry of “Word” and “Sacrament” of the Church is rooted in this sacramental mission given to the apostles. This very ministry of Word and Sacrament is what distinguishes Orthodox Christianity from superficial evangelism, which has already severed all connections with the historic Church. Mission and Evangelism, therefore, in the Church is not a matter of choice. It is a Divine command. Jesus did not say “make disciples if you want,” or “please baptize and teach if you wish.” He said “Go” and the disciples obeyed and became fishers of men.

St. John Chrysostom said: “For not to one, or two or three cities shall you preach, says Christ, but to the whole world. You will traverse land and sea, the inhabited country and the desert, preaching to princes and tribes alike, to philosophers and orators, saying everything openly and with boldness of speech.”<sup>20</sup>

This divine lesson transcends time and space. We cannot just seek the comfort of a past period in our history and freeze there in it. Nor can we remain with a geographic area like Byzantium or Russia. The Lord’s command was to go to all nations, and He promised that He will be with us until the end of time. This means that the missionary work of the Church did not end in the eleventh century Byzantium or the nineteenth century Russia. Furthermore, this means that Mission and Evangelism must continue until the end of time: the Parousia. “And I will be with you always.”<sup>21</sup> As He was with Peter and Paul and Cyril and Methodius, He will be with us at this very moment if we obey His command.

My dear Brothers in Christ,

The Church is not a museum for historical nostalgia. Nor is the Church an archeological site from the time of

Justinian. The Church is indeed the living body of Christ. She is dynamic and always permeated by the power of the Holy Spirit who descended on the disciples like a mighty wind. The Church must live with the conviction that She is always sent. Therefore, we must “go” and never stop until the end of time. As we prepare to face the challenges of a new century, we Orthodox of North America must ask ourselves: “To whom are we sent?”

If the Lord has commanded the Church to make disciples of all nations, He must have meant this nation, too. Consequently, Orthodoxy has a mission to this country. We do have a special ministry to those who came from Greece, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Russia. But, we also have a special mission to all the people of North America, and they are men and women of every race and people on earth. Looking at the religious scene in North America today, you would think that we are living in a post-Christian era. Some American and Canadian Christians no longer believe in the virgin birth. They say that the Virgin Mary was raped by a Roman soldier. Some do not believe in the Resurrection of Christ. A so-called Christian Bishop claims that St. Paul was a homosexual. Some denominations are marrying people of the same gender. If you pray in an ecumenical gathering, you must not mention the name of Jesus Christ; let alone the Triune God. Some Christian denominations no longer baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, but rather in the name of the “Creator and Redeemer.” Many Christians believe that religion is a private matter and everything is relative. Thus, the absolute truth does not exist, and the Good News which was preached by our Lord was, perhaps, good for His time, but not ours.

Do we have an Orthodox response to this spiritual decadence? Of course we do; only if we put our house in order — only if we could create one strong and well financed Department of Mission and Evangelism. We need missionaries and evangelists who know this country, its language, its history, its ethos, its problems, and its religions. In summary, we need Orthodox missionaries who know how to communicate with North America. “For these reasons, communication of the Gospel in a foreign culture can no longer be a superficial presentation of biblical Christianity. Instead, it must be a careful, thoughtful and precise cross-cultural communication which speaks in such a way that the biblical Gospel is understood within the culture and native framework of thought.”<sup>22</sup>

This year, we are celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of the evangelization of Alaska, and next year the Antiochian Archdiocese will be celebrating the Centennial



of Antiochian Orthodoxy in North America. These are significant occasions for us to reflect on the past, meditate on the present, and focus on the future.

Ten years ago in Worcester, Massachusetts, in a message which I delivered to the Orthodox on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, entitled "Orthodoxy in America: Success and Failure," I said: "We have a tremendous opportunity in this land to dream dreams and see visions, only if we can put our house in order. Where in the whole world today



can you find seven million free Orthodox, except in North America? We are no longer a church of immigrants; the first Orthodox Liturgy was celebrated on this continent before the American Revolution ... We have contributed much to the success of this country in the fields of medicine, science, technology, government, education, art, entertainment and business. We proudly consider ourselves American — except when we go to Church. We suddenly become Greeks, Russians, Arabs, etc. ... Despite our rootedness in the American soil, we are still divided into so many jurisdictions, contrary to our Orthodox ecclesiology and canon law which forbids the multiplicity of Orthodox jurisdictions in the same territory.

Individually, we have done much for ourselves ... collectively, however, we have not been able to rise above our ethnicity and work together with one mind and one accord to bring America to Orthodoxy. Why should we have fifteen Departments of Christian Education, Media Relations, Sacred Music, Youth Ministry, etc.? Where is our spiritual and moral impact on this nation? Why is it that every time there is a moral issue to be discussed, a Protestant, a Roman Catholic and a Jew are invited for such discussions? How can we explain our Orthodox absence even to our own people? ... We cannot be agents of change in full obedience to the truth unless we transcend ethnicism and establish a

new Orthodox reality in North America ... The mission of the Church is not to be subservient to any kind of nationalism. The mission of the Church is the salvation of souls — all souls. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are one in Christ Jesus.'<sup>1</sup> <sup>23</sup>

Yes, we can missionize and evangelize North America, only if we unite. We pray that the mother churches will realize, soon, that we are no longer little children and that the Preparatory Commission for the Great Synod will stop discussing the "diaspora" in "absentia."

My dear Brothers,

North America is searching for the New Testament Church. North America is searching for the Church which was born on Pentecost Day. North America is ready and waiting for us, but are we ready for North America?

Finally, I would like to conclude with these words from the Perfect Missionary, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Do not say, 'there are yet four months then comes the harvest.' I tell you, lift up your eyes and see how the fields are already white for harvest. He who reaps receives wages and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper may rejoice together" (John 4:35-36).

BY THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITAN PHILIP SALIBA

1 Galatians 4:4  
 2 John 1:14  
 3 2 Peter 1:4  
 4 1 Corinthians 9:16  
 5 Acts 11:26  
 6 This volume was written in Greek and was translated into Arabic by Bishop Estephanos Haddad.  
 7 Egypt was evangelized by St. Mark: Aziz S. Atiya. *A History of Eastern Christianity*, second ed., Millwork, NY, reprinted 1980.  
 Armenia by Saints Thaddeus and Bartholomew, *ibid.*  
 "Sythia" between the Caspian & Black Sea, by St. Andre.  
 South India, by St. Thomas, *ibid.*  
 Proconsular Asia (Mysia, Lydia and Cosia) by St. John the Evangelist.  
 Arabia, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Italy & Spain by St. Paul. He is claimed by every region as their evangelist.  
 8 *Evangelism in the Early Church*, pgs. 13-47.  
 9 Paul D. Garrett, Memo to Metropolitan Philip, pg. 5  
 10 Atiya writes: "In 225, a Bishopric was in existence at Beth Katraye, the country of Qatar in Southeast Arabia, opposite the island of Bahrain. Christianity had found its way to the tribes of Himyar, Ghassan, Taghlib, Tannukh and Quda'a, long before Islam." *ibid.*  
 11 James J. Stamoilis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission, Theology Today*.  
 12 Francis Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions Among the Slavs*, Ss. Cyril & Methodius, pgs. 126-27.  
 13 Quoted by Dvornik, pg. 73.  
 14 Methodius refused the Episcopal dignity following his return from the Khazar mission, preferring to return to a monastery. Dvornik, pg. 104.  
 15 Stamoilis, pg. 21.  
 16 Stamoilis, pgs. 28-49.  
 17 Acts 1:8  
 18 Decree on the Church's Missionary Activities, Vatican 11, 7, December, 1965.  
 19 John P. Meier, Michael Glazeer, Inc., Wilmington, DE, pg. 371.  
 20 Chrysostom on Matthew 10:23.  
 21 Matthew 28:20.  
 22 *Common Roots, A Call to Evangelical Ministry*, by Robert E. Webber, pg. 170.  
 23 *Metropolitan Philip, His Life and Dreams*, Thomas Nelson Publishing, Nashville, pgs. 282-84.



# Statement on Mission & Evangelism

## SCOBA CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS

*Antiochian Village, Ligonier, PA • November 30-December 2, 1994*

The end of the second millennium after Christ coincides with a unique missionary challenge to the Orthodox Church around the world. To mention only two dimensions of this challenge will show its scope. 1) The fall of communist totalitarianism in Central and Eastern European countries opens the way for the re-evangelization of the peoples of these countries. 2) In the United States and Canada millions of people are in spiritual crisis, millions of people are unchurched, the societies are afflicted with a spiritual and moral vacuum, and the Orthodox Church is therefore presented with a challenge to bear witness to the Orthodox faith and to evangelize.

We, the Orthodox bishops of North America, assembled at the Antiochian Village, Ligonier, Pennsylvania, November 30-December 2, 1994, have heard an address on Mission and Evangelism by His Eminence Metropolitan Philip of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, and a response by His Eminence Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas, Orthodox Church in America, and have reflected together on the missionary task of the Orthodox Church in North America.

We wish to express the following convictions and commitments regarding mission and evangelism in North America:

—It is our conviction that mission is the very nature of the Church, and is an essential expression of her apostolicity, and that the Orthodox Church is therefore commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ to teach, to preach, and to make disciples of all nations;

—It is our conviction that the Orthodox Church's history and experience give numerous examples of commitment to mission and to the preaching of the Good News of Christ (missions to the Slavs, missions in Siberia, China, Korea, and Japan, the evangelization of the Alaskan native people, and contemporary mission in Africa, Indonesia and Albania);

—We believe that our task in North America is not limited to serving the immigrant and ethnic communities, but has at its very heart the missionary task, the task of making disciples in the nations of Canada and the United States;

—We believe that the Orthodox of North America — bishops, clergy and laity — are called to think together, plan together, and work together in order to do mission work together;

—We commit ourselves to show special pastoral attention to couples coming to marry in the Church, especially in mixed marriages, and to their Orthodox Christian education and inauguration into Church life;

—We commit ourselves to the evangelization, or re-evangelization, of those many people who call themselves Orthodox, and have indeed been baptized and chrismated in our churches, but whose lives are in fact distant from the fullness of the Orthodox Faith and the fullness of the Orthodox Church's sacramental life;

—We commit ourselves to common efforts and programs to do mission, leaving behind piecemeal, independent, and spontaneous efforts to do mission, moving forward towards a concerted, formal, and united mission program in order to make a real impact on North America through Orthodox mission and evangelism;

—We strongly endorse the unified Orthodox Christian Mission Center, the Mission Conferences (at present co-sponsored by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and the Orthodox Church in America), and encourage further consolidation of mission efforts and programs here and throughout the world;

—We commit ourselves to express a common vision of mission and to work towards this end in the teaching of mission as an important part of the theological education of our future priests;

—We respectfully petition His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch to convene a world conference of mission representatives to help coordinate Orthodox mission strategies and efforts around the world;

—We Orthodox in North America commit ourselves to bringing our household into order for the sake of the preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ, His Incarnation and His teaching, His crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection, and His presence in the Church through the descent of the Holy Spirit.

# statement

## SCOBA CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS on the Church in North America

Antiochian Village • November 30-December 2, 1994

We, the Orthodox Hierarchs in the United States and Canada, assembled at the Antiochian Village, Ligonier, Pennsylvania from November 30 through December 2, 1994, do first and foremost offer most sincere gratitude to the venerable Fathers and Brothers, the Hierarchs of our Mother Churches beyond the seas for their love and concern, exhibited by the prominence given to the “diaspora” on the agenda for the forthcoming Great and Holy Council evidenced in the Adopted Texts of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission.

We await the next meeting of the Commission referred to in the Adopted Text of November 1993. We maintain that it is critical that the Church in North America be directly and concretely represented at that and future meetings. How is it possible for there to be discussion about the future of the Church in North America in our absence? We must be present to share the two hundred years of experience that we have had of preaching the Gospel and living the Orthodox Faith outside of those territories that have historically been Orthodox. We would humbly ask His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch to seek a way, through the venerable Hierarchs of the Standing Conference, to accomplish this representation. We also humbly request the Primates of the other Mother Churches to support this initiative. The demands upon our Church’s life by an unbelieving society do not allow for any further delay in this process. Therefore, this episcopal assembly supports the repeated requests of SCOBA for its officers to be granted an audience with His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch and the other Patriarchs and Primates of the Mother Churches to discuss the North American reality.

Furthermore, we have agreed that we cannot accept the term “diaspora” as used to describe the Church in North America. In fact the term is ecclesiologicaly problematic. It diminishes the fullness of the faith that we have lived and experienced here for the past two hundred years.

Moreover, as we reflect on the ways in which the Church in North America has matured, it is important to recognize that much has been done as the natural and organic response of Orthodox Christians who share the same faith while living together in one place. We celebrate and build on already existing structures. Some are formal. The first of these is SCOBA itself. There are, in addition, various agencies of SCOBA such as the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), the Orthodox Christian Education Commission (OCEC), the Orthodox Theological Society in America (OTSA), the Orthodox Christian Missions Center, and other North American-wide pan-Orthodox efforts. There are also less formal structures such as the joint meetings of our theological schools and seminarians, the joint monastic assemblies, the local councils of churches and clergy brotherhoods, and sacred art and liturgical music associations. They give witness to the strong foundation upon which we continue to build.

To this end, all of our efforts should be coordinated within an overall ecclesial framework. This would provide the freedom and flexibility to allow us to organically become an administratively unit-

ed Church. As in any Orthodox ecclesiological framework for a local Church, there are three levels. The first is the national, or in our case the continental. The second is the regional or diocesan. And the third is the local or deanery. All of these depend upon and grow out of the parish, which is the primary place where Christians express and encounter their faith.

On the national or continental level the body which coordinates the life of a Church is the Synod of Bishops. We have had in SCOBA an Executive Committee that has guided Church life in North America for over thirty years. In convening this present Conference of Bishops, we find ourselves to be an Episcopal Assembly, a precursor to a General Synod of Bishops. We express our joy that, in addition to the regular meetings of SCOBA, this Episcopal Assembly will convene on an annual basis to enhance the movement toward administrative ecclesial unity in North America.

The regional level presents a special challenge because this is one area in which few models of cooperation presently exist. Bishops who live within a given region of North America should meet and concelebrate regularly. They should coordinate activities, encourage clergy and laity to get to know one another and to work together, and initiate concrete joint programs. In essence, they should duplicate regionally what SCOBA has pioneered on the continental level for the past thirty three years.

The local level is where the greatest diversity of models presently exists. These range from very informal clergy or lay associations to highly structured clergy brotherhoods or clergy and lay councils of churches. The bishops of a given region should continue to encourage the clergy and laity of their parishes to work together with other parishes in their area. Without imposing any one model, bishops should seek to formalize and regularize those models that already exist. In areas where there are as yet no such structures, bishops should work with the clergy and laity to develop a model that is appropriate in that locality. The principle is to encourage diverse models within a broader canonical ecclesiological framework.

The Church in North America also benefits from our various monastic communities. Their meeting together should be encouraged by their hierarchs so that the monastics might share their spiritual experience and wisdom with one another and with the whole Church of a given region.

We would like to emphasize again: this is presented as a broad outline or framework within which the whole Church in North America can grow to manifest the deep unity of faith that we share in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father who sent Him, and the Holy Spirit who continually makes Him known to us. The visible unity of the Church is a profound witness of our love for Him and for one another.

Finally, we would like to thank and bless our Christ-loving flocks: the pious priests, deacons, monastics, and laity — who praying and laboring together, incarnate the oneness which our Church on this continent already enjoys. We ask for their prayers and support, as we pledge to work with them for the glory of God and His Holy Church.





# UNITY IN THE ORTHODOX “Diaspora”

As we speak of unity in the Orthodox “diaspora,” it is important to define what we mean by “diaspora.”

It is obvious that “diaspora,” as we now understand it, is very different from the biblical concept of “diaspora”: that of the “dispersion” of the chosen people of God amongst the Gentiles.

In the case of the chosen people of God dispersed amongst the Gentiles, the goal was the return to the “promised land,” with Jerusalem as its capital. The concept of “diaspora” was also related to that of the Messiah expected to come to this “promised land,” so that the Jewish nation might receive the benefit of His presence.

This, however, is not the case for Christianity, because the Messiah has come, and His kingdom has been inaugurated. This kingdom is present not only in the “promised land” and earthly Jerusalem, but also in all parts of the world, where the church, “Jerusalem from above,” lives and operates.

Thus, today’s Orthodox Christian “diaspora” is actually a “missionary presence” of Orthodox Christians in lands which are not traditionally Orthodox. From the point of view of Orthodox ecclesiology, Christian churches in the lands of the so-called “diaspora” are as “indigenous” and “established” as the “mother churches” from which these “diaspora” churches derive.

The “diaspora” churches are entitled to the same characteristics and privileges of the churches in traditionally Orthodox lands. Therefore, these churches enjoy the four marks of the Church of Christ, which are: oneness and unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity.

To remain within the limits of our topic, “Unity in Orthodox Diaspora,” we will consider the nature of unity of the Church as it applies to the “diaspora” churches. We will discuss the problem of disunity created in the lands of Orthodox diaspora; and we will seek ways of solving the problem and healing the divisions. Finally, we will make some practical recommendations with regard to fostering Orthodox unity in the lands of diaspora.

## I. The Gift of Unity Given to the Church

By faith, which we profess in the creed, the Church of Christ is One. This oneness is based upon the mystery of our

Christian God, tri-hypostatic, but one in essence and energies.

As a reflection of the mystery of divine life, the church is profoundly one, as the life of God which it reflects is also one. Christ’s supplication for his disciples was one of unity, so that “as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21).

According to the very words of Christ, the mystery of Christian unity is founded upon the mystery of the Oneness of God. There is a “*perichoresis*” of Christian persons, just as there is an inter-dwelling of divine hypostases in God. As the late Vladimir Lossky puts it, a Christian person reflects the personhood of the divine hypostases: Christians share together and in an unselfish way the new humanity in Christ which is redeemed and deified. They are the One people of God, the One Body of Christ, and the One Temple of the Holy Spirit, the One Kingdom of God inaugurated upon our planet earth, and the One Church of God.

Because this unity of the church is founded in the mystery of the divine life, it is both a gift given and a dynamic reality. For human beings called to this unity, the process of unity is eternal, as the ultimate goal of this unity is unity with the divine hypostases as they communicate themselves in their energies. The goal of this unity is constant growth in the life of *theosis*, which is life in communion with God.

From an empirical point of view, the unity of the church is realized on three different levels and in three different ways: doctrinally, sacramentally, and administratively.

The unity of the church is firstly experienced as a unity in *apostolic faith, life, and practice*. The teachings of Christ and of the apostles are treasured in the life of the church as a *depositum fidei*, handed down through the fathers and teachers, lived and experienced in the life of the church. It is a living faith, which is believed, practiced, elaborated upon, defended against heresy, sometimes dogmatized, but always lived in the liturgical life of the church. It is a faith which is reflected in the teachings of the “teaching authority” of the church. This authority is the bishops who are entrusted with this truth, and of which they are the guardians. Their responsibility is to “teach aright the word of Truth,” mostly in a liturgical and sacramental context.

Secondly, the unity of the church is *sacramental*. Christ





Himself, made present through the work of the Holy Spirit, is the celebrant of the sacraments of the church. His abundant life for the world is made available in the sacramental life of the church, the life of the kingdom. Signs of the kingdom, the sacraments unite all Christians in that life that the sacraments confer through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The most central of all of these sacraments is the Holy Eucharist, the celebration of the life of the Kingdom, which is new life in Christ. Participation in the Eucharist presupposes unity in the faith. Thus, the Eucharist is both the seal and the expression of the unity of the Church.

The Eucharist is not only the means of communion, but also the expression of this communion in the one faith, and abundant life of the Kingdom of God. Sharing of communion in the Eucharist with those who are not in communion in the faith is a betrayal of the church's unity. This is the reason why the Orthodox do not practice "Eucharistic hospitality."

The unity of the church is especially expressed in the

unity of worship, centered around the bishop presiding over the one Eucharist and the sacramental life of the church. According to Orthodox Christian practice and canonical tradition, this one Eucharist, presided over by only one bishop in every city, gathers together all people of Orthodox faith, regardless of ethnicity, language, social rank, or color of skin.

Finally, the unity of the church is also *administrative*. The same person who presides over the one Eucharist of the church, the bishop, also presides over the entire life of the church as an extension of these liturgical celebrations. The parish, as the concrete manifestation of the diocese, is the place where the work of the church is accomplished, the Eucharist celebrated, the Kingdom made manifest, and where human persons are afforded the opportunity of joining God's holy Kingdom which has been inaugurated upon the earth.

The goal of parish administration is directing people toward receiving this new life in Christ, which is the life of the Kingdom. This is why the Orthodox parishes are called "eucharistic communities" and "workshops of God's Holy Kingdom."

Once more, the bishop — presiding over the faith, life and worship of his diocese as concretely manifested in the parish, where the bishop is represented by the parish priest — is the sign of unity of the church. He guarantees the unity of his own diocese, as he guarantees the unity of the "universal" church as well. For it is through the bishop that the parishes exit their isolation to become part of the diocese; and it is through the diocesan bishop that the diocese is in communion with the "universal" church, that is, the rest of the "sister churches" throughout the world, also presided over by their bishops.

As the concelebration of the presbytery of a given diocese with their God-loving bishop expresses the unity of the diocese, so the concelebration of the Orthodox bishops under the presidency of their ranking, First (Protos) bishop, is the expression of the unity of the local, national, regional, or even "universal" church. As there is a first bishop in every region, presiding over the concelebration, so there is an order among the ranking bishops, the Ecumenical Patriarch, presiding over the concelebration of all the Orthodox sister churches, and also presiding over the episcopal conferences, councils, and synod of Orthodox bishops. It is through these structures of unity that the unity of the Orthodox Church is practically and empirically expressed.

Now we can ask the question: how does this apply to the Orthodox churches in "diaspora"?



## II. The “Diaspora” Problem of Parallel Jurisdictions

Normally, that is, according to traditional norms as expressed above, there should be no problem of Orthodox unity in the churches of “diaspora,” for the same norms apply as in the lands which are traditionally Orthodox.

However, because of the way in which the churches in “diaspora” were formed, a problem was created in terms of Orthodox unity: that of parallel Orthodox jurisdictions. The problem exists in all lands of “diaspora,” i.e., Western Europe, the United States, Canada, Latin America, Asia, and Australia.

With the “ethnic cleansing” that Greeks suffered in Asia Minor; with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia; and with the influx of immigrants following the two World Wars, new churches were created in all these “lands of diaspora.” In addition to this, one must add situations such as that of the New Smyrna Greek Orthodox slaves (1765), and the evangelization of Alaska by the Russian Orthodox missionaries (1794).

Each of the new communities in these “new worlds” with regard to traditionally Orthodox lands, kept its own ties with their mother church, thus creating a pluralism of Orthodox jurisdictions.

The principle of “one bishop in one city” presiding over the one eucharist of the church in a given place has been and continues to be violated repeatedly.

The basic unity structure, the parish and the diocese, is not utilized in order to create the desired Orthodox canonical unity. To the contrary, Orthodox people live in separation and isolation from each other in the same cities and regions of these “new worlds,” which is tantamount to scandal in terms of Orthodox unity. The apparent disunity, due to non-theological factors, does not allow Orthodoxy to be itself and be the “role model” of unity which it is supposed to exemplify both for itself and its own mission, but also in relation to the other Christians. What are we to do? How must we work to solve this problem of Orthodox disunity seen in the problem of “parallel jurisdictions”?

## III. Resolving the Problem of Parallel Jurisdictions

Various solutions have been proposed regarding this problem of “parallel jurisdictions” and Orthodox disunity in the lands of “diaspora.”

One of these proposed solutions is to abide by the claim of one of the jurisdictions which alleges to have “come first” to these lands, thereby establishing a hold over a given land, much as secular conquerors do. The dilemma of this solution is that missionaries do not necessarily bring “jurisdictions” to the land of mission: they bring the Christian faith. Thus, the Orthodox Church in its entirety may decide

what the church affiliation of that “mission” church will be.

Another solution is to apply Canon 28 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council to the “lands of mission,” considering them as “lands of barbarians.” There are those who feel that this canon has its merits, in giving to the ranking Orthodox Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the right to establish these new churches and have “jurisdiction” over them.

The dilemma of this is that it is difficult to apply a canon of the fifth century to today’s situations, especially when the “new worlds” are not necessarily “lands of barbarians.” On the other hand, we do apply other canons to today’s situations, like the one which creates the problem of Orthodox unity: “One bishop in one city.” Is today’s megapolis the village/city of the fourth century?

However, there is a *spirit* behind each canon; and that spirit always applies to all new situations.

As the ranking church has an important primatial role to play in the life of the One Church of Christ, as the ranking Orthodox church has always exercised a primatial role amongst the sister Orthodox churches (most of them actually its *daughters!*), it is only ecclesiological proper for that primatial church to exercise its primatial role in the lands of “diaspora.”

Actually, the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I affirmed his role and his determination to help our church in the United States and Canada solve the problem of parallel jurisdictions. In his speech at the St. Nicholas O.C.A. Cathedral in Washington, D.C., on July 4, 1990, he told his audience that the Mother Church of Constantinople has not abdicated its responsibility to restore unity in the lands of Orthodox diaspora: the Patriarch deplored the unilateral proclamation of the former Metropolia as an “autocephalous” church (O.C.A.) by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1970. At the same time, the Patriarch kept the dialogue open with the O.C.A. and acknowledged the need for “canonical status” of that church, which before 1970 was “hanging in an ecclesiological vacuum”; the Ecumenical Patriarchate acknowledged this church as a “self-governing” church, until such time as the “Great and Holy Council” of the Orthodox Church will resolve the problem of the “diaspora” parallel jurisdictions.

In fact, the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission which met in Chambésy, Switzerland, November 10-17, 1990, proposed the first steps of the solution of the problem, by proposing “Episcopal Assemblies” as a first path towards resolving the problem of disunity in the “diaspora.”

The next meeting of the same commission, November 7-13, 1993, “defined the regions where episcopal assemblies will be created,” and “asked the Secretariat for the

Preparation of the Great and Holy Council to prepare a *regulatory plan* (projet de Règlement) for the functioning of the episcopal assemblies, effective for the transitional period of the organizations of the Orthodox diaspora.” It is hoped that this plan will be discussed and finalized in the next (fourth) meeting of the Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference.

Of course, these are steps in the right direction for resolving the problem of disunity in the Orthodox diaspora.

It is to be noted that in two instances, the United States and Canada, and Australia, these “Episcopal Assemblies” advocated by the Chambésy meetings are already in place: the “Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas” (S.C.O.B.A.), and “Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Churches of Australia” (S.C.C.O.C.A.).

#### IV. Practical Recommendations for Creating Orthodox Unity

In facing the Orthodox “diaspora” problem in a very realistic way, the late Fr. John Meyendorff made the following statement [published in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 17 (1972) 1041-50]: “In areas and countries where two or more Orthodox autocephalous Churches are sending clergy to exercise a permanent ministry, canonical order requires establishment of a united church. Procedures to be followed are to be elaborated by consultation by all parties involved on the universal level. Pluralism of language and traditions will be maintained and guaranteed wherever necessary through the establishment of appropriate structures organized on a temporary basis.”

Even if Fr. Meyendorff does not make reference to the role of the primatial church at this “universal level” where the discussions should take place, Fr. Meyendorff otherwise emphatically acknowledged the need for this primatial church and its role. He indicated this by going to Constantinople to make peace with the Mother Church and to bring back the good news of the “self-governing church” status for the O.C.A.

The statement of Fr. Meyendorff is very realistic with regard to the “diaspora” situation, where more than one autocephalous church sent priests for permanent ministry, and where the unity of the church should be established. Fr. John acknowledges the need for linguistic (and cultural) pluralism, and the need for “temporary structures” which will serve this pluralism.

Now, from a practical point of view, all kinds of good things may happen, in terms of fostering intrajurisdictional Orthodox unity. Some of these things happen, or may happen in the United States and Canada; similar things may

happen in Australia and other lands of “diaspora.” Let us review some of these things:

1) *S.C.O.B.A.* This body of church representatives, which serves us so well, may very well develop into an episcopal conference which will be regularly convened to discuss the problems and concerns of all the Orthodox Christians in the United States and Canada. Let us hope that the Episcopal Conference convening now will be established as such a S.C.O.B.A. instrument.

2) *I.O.C.C.* The International Orthodox Christian Charities, created by S.C.O.B.A. and the Greek Archdiocese, has proven to be not only the only international charitable Orthodox organization, but also a factor of unity for all the Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States and Canada.

3) *The United Board of Orthodox Missions* based in St. Augustine, Florida. This board now allows for only one missionary agenda to enhance the missions (both domestic and foreign) of all Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States and Canada.

4) *The Orthodox Christian Education Commission* (O.C.E.C.), allowing all Orthodox jurisdictions to share in their religious education resources.

5) *Mini-S.C.O.B.A. groups.* The small group of bishops who meet in the Pittsburgh area has proven a factor of Orthodox unity in our area. We would like to recommend similar organizations of Orthodox Canonical bishops in other regions of the country (United States and Canada.)

6) *Clergy Brotherhoods.* The clergy brotherhoods throughout the U.S.A. and Canada have proven to be a strong factor for Orthodox unity. We encourage these associations to keep up the fine work they are doing.

In addition to all of these, I would personally recommend the following:

1) A S.C.O.B.A. permanent joint *Liturgical Commission* for the unification of our liturgical texts and translations.

2) A S.C.O.B.A. permanent joint *Commission on Church Music.*

3) A joint *Doctor of Theology Program* with the efforts and resources of Holy Cross and St. Vladimir’s Schools of Theology.

4) A joint program of *Continuing Education* for all Orthodox clergy.

5) Joint *D.Min. Programs* for all Orthodox clergy.

6) *Exchange of priests* between area Orthodox parishes.

7) Intensify *common activity programs*, lectures, services, retreats, pilgrimages, pre-marital counseling, marriage encounters, *Theosis* programs.

8) Pursue *Common Music Festivals*, especially at Christmas and Easter.

9) *Share educational resources, materials and personnel.*

10) Share in the support of monasticism as a means of spiritual renewal.

11) Organize joint *Spiritual Life and Renewal Conferences.*

12) *Support one another* in causes that are important to the nations we represent.

13) *Speak with one voice* when we are called to do so by the news media.

14) *Speak with one voice* especially when it comes to *social issues and concerns* and when the Orthodox faith and the ethical teachings of our church are at stake.

These are just some practical things that allow for a joint effort on behalf of all the Orthodox jurisdictions, showing Orthodox unity in action.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that our Holy Orthodox Church is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, the church of unity of the past, present and future. There is no doubt that the unity of our church is a gift of God, given and deeply present and experienced at the levels of faith and sacramental life. However, when it comes to administrative unity in the land of Orthodox “diaspora,” things are left to be desired.

Our church experiences fragmentation and disunity, at times even division. This is certainly not the way of the Orthodox Church, according to its canonical order. It is of paramount importance for us Orthodox bishops in the United States and Canada to do our utmost to restore the full Orthodox unity, including the administrative one.

We are now doing very well in terms of social action, education, youth programs, Orthodox charities, and the like. But there is much more to do both at the grass roots level and the episcopal level. Let us make certain that we use our traditional system for coordinating our church’s mission: episcopal conferences. Can’t we make this conference at least a yearly, if not bi-annual, event?

We are certainly anticipating the good guidance of the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference, which will give us the *regulatory plan* for the functioning of our own episcopal assembly. It behooves us to be ahead of the Commission by just applying the canonical tradition of our Church pertaining to such assemblies. The holy canons provide for a bi-annual meeting.

As far as our work is concerned, the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission (November 1990) says: “The work and responsibility of these Episcopal Assemblies will bear

witness to the unity of Orthodoxy. They will begin to develop a common ministry for all Orthodox living in the region; to project inter-Orthodox cooperation in the relationship with other confessions, as well as in the society at large; to cultivate theological and religious education, etc. Decisions on matters will be made by majority vote [of the Assembly members].”

So, let our work begin: for the unity of Orthodoxy, for the sake of our faith, and for the greater glory of God’s Holy Name! Amen.

by Bishop Maximos

# daily devotions

DECEMBER, 2004

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. 1 TIMOTHY 5:22-6:11;<br>LUKE 20:1-8 ( <i>fast</i> )               | 16. HEBREWS 7:1-6;<br>MARK 9:10-16 ( <i>fast</i> )                   |
| 2. 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-21;<br>LUKE 20:9-18 ( <i>fast</i> )                | 17. HEBREWS 7:18-25;<br>MARK 9:33-41 ( <i>fast</i> )                 |
| 3. 2 TIMOTHY 1:1-2, 8-18;<br>LUKE 20:19-26 ( <i>fast</i> )           | 18. GALATIANS 3:8-12;<br>LUKE 13:18-29 ( <i>fast</i> )               |
| 4. GALATIANS 3:23-29;<br>MARK 5:24-34 ( <i>fast</i> )                | 19. HEBREWS 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40;<br>MATTHEW 1:1-25 ( <i>fast</i> ) |
| 5. GALATIANS 5:22-25, 6:1-2;<br>LUKE 13:10-17 ( <i>fast</i> )        | 20. HEBREWS 8:7-13;<br>MARK 9:42-10:1 ( <i>fast</i> )                |
| 6. HEBREWS 13:17-21;<br>LUKE 6:17-23 ( <i>fast</i> )                 | 21. HEBREWS 9:8-10, 15-23;<br>MARK 10:2-12 ( <i>fast</i> )           |
| 7. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-4:4;<br>LUKE 21:12-19 ( <i>fast</i> )              | 22. HEBREWS 10:1-18;<br>MARK 10:11-16 ( <i>fast</i> )                |
| 8. 2 TIMOTHY 4:9-22;<br>LUKE 21:5-7, 10-11, 20-24<br>( <i>fast</i> ) | 23. HEBREWS 10:35-11:7;<br>MARK 10:17-27 ( <i>fast</i> )             |
| 9. GALATIANS 4:22-31; LUKE<br>8:16-21 ( <i>fast</i> )                | 24. HEBREWS 1:1-12;<br>LUKE 2:1-20<br>( <i>strict fast</i> )         |
| 10. TITUS 1:15-2:10;<br>LUKE 21:37-22:8 ( <i>fast</i> )              | 25. GALATIANS 4:4-7;<br>MATTHEW 2:1-12                               |
| 11. EPHESIANS 1:16-23;<br>LUKE 18:18-29 ( <i>fast</i> )              | 26. GALATIANS 1:11-19;<br>MATTHEW 2:13-23                            |
| 12. COLOSSIANS 3:4-11;<br>LUKE 14:16-24 ( <i>fast</i> )              | 27. ACTS 6:8-15, 7:1-5, 47-60;<br>MATTHEW 21:33-42                   |
| 13. HEBREWS 3:5-11, 17-19;<br>MARK 8:11-21 ( <i>fast</i> )           | 28. HEBREWS 12:25-26, 13:22-25;<br>MARK 11:11-23                     |
| 14. HEBREWS 4:1-13;<br>MARK 8:22-26 ( <i>fast</i> )                  | 29. JAMES 1:1-18; MARK 11:23-26                                      |
| 15. HEBREWS 5:11-6:8;<br>MARK 8:30-34 ( <i>fast</i> )                | 30. JAMES 1:19-27;<br>MARK 11:27-33                                  |
|  | 31. JAMES 2:1-13; MARK 12:1-12                                       |

Very Rev. George Alberts



# Archdiocesan Office

## ENTHRONEMENT ADDRESS

His Grace Bishop Joseph  
September 12, 2004

I would like to begin my remarks with a passage from the Book of Hebrews:

*“For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was.”*

*(Hebrews 5:1-4)*

This passage, I believe, is one of the best descriptions of the calling of a bishop. He intercedes for his flock, dealing with them in gentleness and compassion. He knows their weaknesses because he himself is honest about his own. He is not puffed up with pride, but rather boasts, as the Apostle

Paul did, in the mighty miracles the Lord has done for us.

Today we give thanks to the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who has fulfilled this Scripture in our hearing. He has granted us great men, such as our esteemed Metropolitan Philip and my brother bishops, those now serving and those who will soon join our Local Holy Synod. Least of all, there is me, who has nothing to offer but my love for you all, the people of God.

We have arrived at this holy and historic moment in the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America through the visionary leadership of His Eminence Metropolitan Philip. I am humbled that God has brought me, through our Archbishop, to all of you, to serve as your Diocesan Bishop and represent you in the Local Holy Synod of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

I have been seated on this throne to proclaim the Gospel and minister to the suffering in this Diocese through

I would love to take this opportunity to thank my brothers in Christ, His Eminence Metropolitan Philip and His Grace Bishop Basil, the beloved Clergy, and all the faithful who traveled from near and from far to be at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Los Angeles, California, for my Enthronement as the first Bishop of Los Angeles and the West on September 12, 2004. I also would love to thank the Enthronement Committee and all those who labored diligently for the success of that historic day.

Asking you to keep the Holy Diocese of Los Angeles and the West, along with our God-protected Archdiocese, in your prayers, I remain,

In His Service,  
+Bishop Joseph,

*Bishop of Los Angeles and the West*



the love and mercy of the Holy Spirit. Today's enthronement is accomplished by the economy of the Holy Spirit. The unction of the Spirit flows down from Christ over my human weakness, and over all the faithful of this newly-established diocese. The Spirit dwells here and envelops this diocese with its perfume. We share in this grace, as we are One Body in Christ. Where the Spirit is, there the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West is.

I am enthroned by our primate, Metropolitan Philip, to shepherd not individual human beings alone, but a vast and diverse diocese. The grace of the Holy Spirit makes the pilot skilled in navigation, and gives the bishop who sits at the helm of the Church, the knowledge how to bring the souls of those who sail with him safe into the haven of God.

This moment is of great importance, for this new step shall increase and perfect the ministries we have struggled to establish as an Archdiocese for many years. For many, this day brings with it new life. The Bible says, *“I have set before you life and death; therefore, choose life.”* Today we are called to choose life over death. You have been counted worthy to become living temples of God, and

not sepulchers of the dead spirit of this world. Materialism, contentiousness, selfishness, schism and other such sins are of this world, bringing only death. Instead, we are offered a life of love, compassion, patience, selflessness and joy beyond measure.

But it is an immeasurable blessing to work diligently with the grace of the Spirit which the living God has bestowed upon us in this diocese. We were made to be a living diocese without blemish, beautiful, not adorned with gold or pearls but with the Spirit that is more precious than these. We are called today to go about carrying a living temple in which the fragrance of the Holy Spirit pours out in abundance. By doing so, this diocese will be filled with the aroma of life unto life, as you give yourselves up to God, an offering to God for a perfume of a sweet smell of holiness. This glorious incense drives away sinfulness and heals every wound. It brings us together, as one people, a holy nation. The Spirit of God brings unity and concord, things that the world does not comprehend.

In this enthronement, I am called to lead you humbly to enthrone the spiritual over the material, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. *"You ought not to think that which is divine to be like gold or silver or stone, the graven form of man's art and imagination"* (Acts 17:29). Do not look to the outside of things, but peer through the material and see the spiritual truth behind it. The bishop on the outside looks like a worldly leader, but if you allow your vision to penetrate more deeply, you will see the self-sacrificial calling of the bishop. He is a servant, one who is called to give his life for the healing of the spiritually sick and the unity of the flock. He chases after the lost sheep, and guards the flock against the snares of the devil.

You ought, therefore, to entrust your souls to your bishop to soften them by the fervent warmth of the Holy Spirit. Do not believe this world, which tells you that you must be hardened to avoid the pain and suffering of life. The truth is that, if we patiently endure all suffering with hands outstretched to God, He will turn our curses into blessings, and our afflictions into mighty gifts. Be zealous to work with your Archbishop and your bishops, earnestly desiring the spiritual things, that this promise might become yours. A softened heart, a mind full of love for God and all people, is filled with light and purity.

We must all use this light of the Spirit for teaching and preaching. The bishop is commanded to preach and speak authoritatively, so that those who hear may also attain this light. The Apostles were commanded to share this light with the world, through the preaching of the Good News, the sharing of the sacraments and the instruction of the faithful. For this purpose, the Apostles established the

episcopacy, which exists to this very moment.

He who is *"nourished up in the words of sound doctrine,"* first receives the benefit of it himself and then from teaching his flock. From teaching others, the bishop is blessed in return with the people's edification. You see, bishops do not live to receive blessings from others or try to take what they want, but rather they are blessed by blessing and receive by giving. Our Lord Jesus Christ shows the duty of teachers, when He says, *"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old"* (Matthew 13:52). And the blessed St. Paul gives the same advice, that, *"we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"* (Romans 15: 4). Our Lord Jesus Christ made a new covenant with you, putting His laws into your minds, and in your hearts. Saint Paul said that the believers had received a law, *"not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."*





Beloved in Christ, you are the pillars of the Church throughout this diocese, who drink the cup of Christ, and were baptized with His baptism. You have “*put on Christ*” (Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27), having “*feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace*” (Ephesians 6:15). In Him you live, and move, and have your being, through the repentance and humility with which you approach God.

From this point forward, great diligence and fervent desire on the part of all is needed for teaching the Orthodox Faith to this nation. Great challenges lie ahead of us, as we move forward towards the goal of bringing the light of Christ to the Western States.

All the unchurched people within this diocese are your responsibility. As Apostles sent from above, you are called to reach out to them. If you approach them with love and Orthodox fortitude, they will marvel at the beauty of your souls, and the bloom of that virtue that God promises to those who earnestly seek Him.

If you have made ready your souls through prayer, study and good works, you will speak to them from the depths of the Spirit. You are friends of the King Himself, and you will speak of the love and light you have been given by God. “*I have called you friends,*” He says, “*for all things that I have heard*

*of My Father, I have made known unto you*” (John 15:15).

This is the Orthodox message we have received from Christ through His Gospel and proclaim to you, that God is light, and you are the light of the world. The glory of His kingdom has been given unto you; and you are established in His kingdom, and excellent greatness has been added unto you. I pray that the Spirit of God shall rest upon you, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of God, so that you may continue to grow and bring hope to this nation. By seeking God’s will, the grace of the Holy Spirit shall work even more miracles in our midst.

Let us embrace God, dedicating ourselves to this holy work in One Body of Christ. I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all your love and support, because your faith is revealed today in your presence. To God our Father, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

## Enthronement Banquet Address of Bishop Joseph

This has been a very busy day! We have seen history being made in the worship of God and the blessings He has bestowed on us. We are here now enjoying the fruit of the labors of those

before us, and we work now to prepare for the future. Is our future bright? I say “yes” as I look at all of you, remembering the many sacrifices so many of you have made for the sake of this Archdiocese, for your parishes and for the people you have served.

We are so very honored to have with us His Eminence Metropolitan Philip, who has served with selfless love and honor for over 35 years. By yielding himself to the Gospel, and tirelessly working for the preaching of the Orthodox faith, he has seen God grow this Archdiocese from a small immigrant community to a rich and diverse family that is expanding almost beyond our ability to keep up.

These are times of change, as we try to adjust to the constant growth we experience each day. This is not easy, as we must continue to serve the faithful flock, go after the lost sheep and proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven to those looking for the true Church. As we struggle in our daily lives, we are constantly reminded that there is so much more to life rather than worldly cares.

If we lift up our hearts from the daily grind, we can experience the joy of life in Jesus Christ. If we realize God’s protection and care for us, we can abandon fear and live in total freedom. If we courageously move out from our tiny world of material comfort, we can experience the mysteries of God’s infinite mercies.

Through the eyes of faith, we see the possibilities of goodness in all things. No longer do we have to live in insecurity and shame. The universe is transformed by our own vision of God’s love for us all. The people we think are our enemies or have done us wrong are seen with love, and we can forgive them and be at peace with all.

Unity is the key. If we refuse to be united, then we reject the love and for-







*effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.*

*For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these things is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

*Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:3-11).*

My beloved, as we hear these joyous words of the Apostle, let us renew our hope and strength. Faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection and love ... these are all ours if we remain loyal to Jesus Christ, the Church, this Archdiocese, this Diocese, our parish community and to one another. Each of these blessings builds us up to the next, so that we may pass from glory to glory, hope to hope, joy to joy.

May God bless you all.

givenness that our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated on the Cross. Our Lord was so committed to the unity of mankind that He died even for those who hated Him. His outstretched arms embraced all people. He draws all mankind to Himself, and by restoring our communion with God, He restores our communion with one another. This is unity: to be patient, forgiving and tolerant of all people. With God's love, we can look past conflict and see the things we share with others. We may not always agree, but that does not scare us. We see something more: the Heavenly Kingdom.

On this day, we celebrate the memory of one such man who saw the Heavenly Kingdom. He preached the word of God to the unbelievers, tore down the pagan temples and converted many to Jesus Christ. He built a great church. He ordained priests, established communities throughout Asia and taught the masses.

His Eminence knows of whom I am speaking. This great apostle's name is Saint Autonomos! I do not think this is any coincidence that we are celebrating the establishment of this diocese, which is the direct result of our new self-ruling status, on St. Autonomos' feast. This saint is a model for our own work as an Archdiocese, to spread the Good News of the Orthodox Faith to North America. This diocese shall be

committed to this work, the work of St. Autonomos, the work commanded by God for us to carry out.

My words to you today are not my own. Having been raised on the food of the Scripture, what I am saying now is the joyous proclamation of St. Peter. Listen to this passage from his second epistle:

*“[God’s] divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.*

*For this very reason make every*



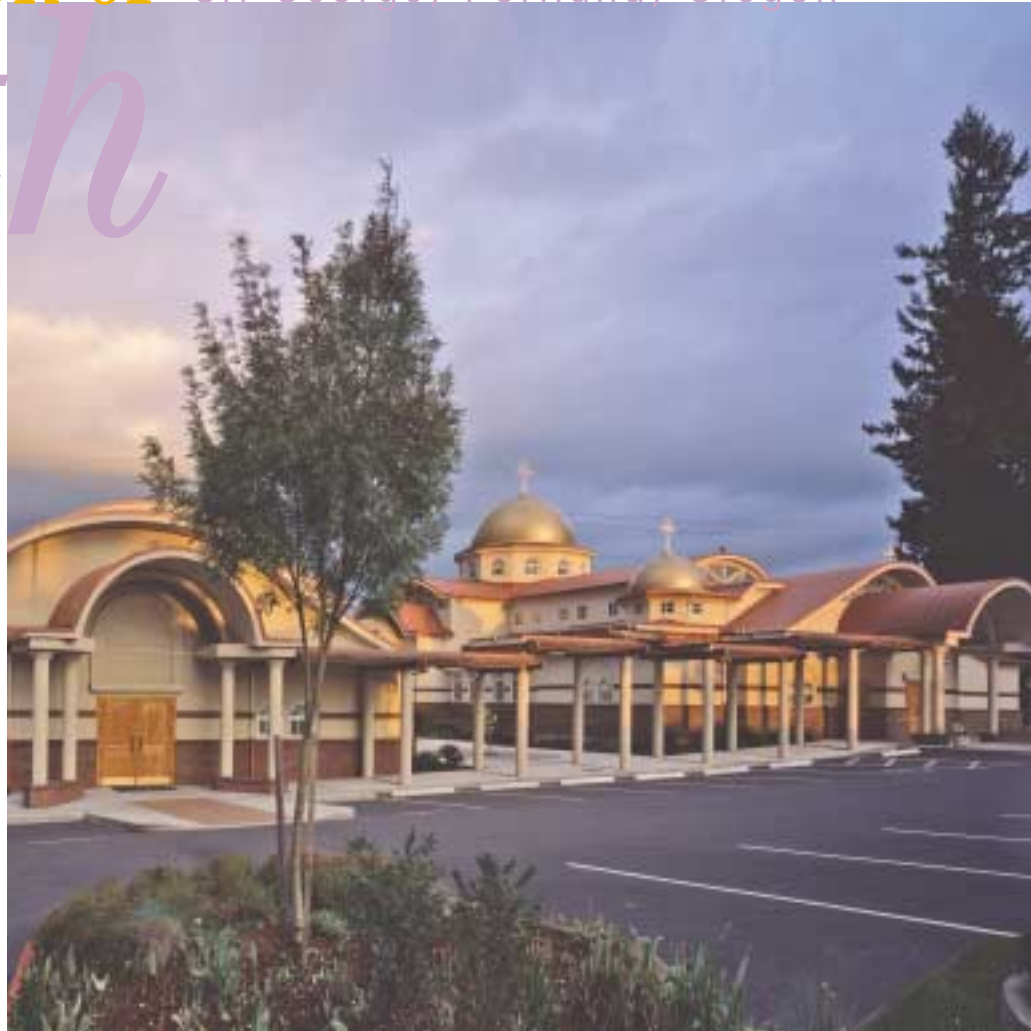
# A Continuation of St. George, Portland, Oregon

# *faith*

On September 19, 2004, a newly consecrated St. George Church proclaimed the continued fruitful interaction of Almighty God and the hands of men in Portland, Oregon. St. George, the oldest parish in the recently apportioned Diocese of Los Angeles and the West, bears testimony to a 75-year heritage of faith and work to make the glory, majesty, and unchanging truth of the Orthodox Christian faith known in the Pacific Northwest.

The first efforts of the Antiochian faithful to establish a church in Portland began in 1920, reaching fruition in 1930 with the purchase of a church building for \$700. These devout forefathers of the current parish, many of whom are relatives of current members, dug the basement by hand. Various itinerant priests served the parish until the arrival of the first permanent priest, Fr. George Harb, in 1960.

The blossoming of the parish over the years resulted in the purchase of a new second building in 1965, originally a Methodist church, to accommodate the growing numbers of faithful. Local carpenter Roger Sogge built and installed a beautiful walnut iconostasis in the temple. (The same craftsman was located 35 years later to expand, modify and fit the iconostasis into the new church.) This second home of St. George saw continued growth, proclaiming the fullness of



the faith to many. New converts included Blaine West and his wife Krista, who would eventually oversee the building of the new temple as Father Alban and Khouriye Krista.

By the early 1990's, the inadequacies of the once-Methodist building became apparent, with an expanding community and a desire to share the faith. The vision for a proper Orthodox home, with an altar facing the correct direction, instigated a process of prayer and labor that would last over a decade in an effort to build a new St. George.

Following this vision, the members of St. George purchased a two and

one-half acre lot in northeast Portland in 1992. Plans for the building did not move forward, however, until the visit of His Eminence Metropolitan Philip in 1998 when, during the fund-raising banquet, he memorably declared that he would not leave the banquet hall until \$300,000 had been pledged for the new church. Needless to say, through the faithful and sacrificial giving of the community, the funds were committed and the process began in earnest.

Architect John O. Sachs used modern technology and techniques to design a new St. George patterned

after the beautiful Orthodox churches of the Byzantine era. The construction of the new temple, overseen by volunteer general contractor William Bitar and his chief associate Kent Lucas, with copious assistance from Dr. Khalil Azar, progressed at a steady pace until its completion in early 2001. On March 28 of the same year His Grace Bishop Joseph celebrated an Agiasmos service and then a pan-Orthodox Lenten Presanctified Liturgy to open the church.

But the project, however, was not yet complete. The estate of Frank and Margaret Bitar generously donated a beautiful parish hall and classroom facility, reflecting the Byzantine architecture of the church. Work continued on the new house of worship with the arrival of iconographer Ayman Bitar from Syria, who completed the renovation of the iconostasis with the addition of new Byzantine icons. With the birth of the temple and facilities completed, baptism and chrismation were next.

The events of the consecration weekend, overseen by Nektaria Blalock, began with a Friday evening reception for Metropolitan Philip, Bishop Joseph, visiting hierarchs, visiting clergy, parishioners and friends at the home of Dr. Joseph and Suzy Hadeed. Following the Saturday meetings of the hierarchs with the church school, SOYO, and parish council, a grand banquet was held in the elegantly decorated Frank and Margaret Bitar Parish Hall with about 200 in attendance.

Among the highlights of the evening, including Metropolitan Philip's challenging address on Orthodox unity in America, was the presentation of awards to two pillars of the recently completed building project. First, Kent Lucas received the Certificate of Meritorious Service for his tireless efforts in the building of the church. Next, Metropolitan Philip conferred the Archdiocese's highest honor, the Antonian Gold Medal, on Bill Bitar. His Eminence pointed out that Bill received the medal not only for his significant financial contributions, work as Building Committee chairman, and efforts as volunteer general contractor, but also for the legacy of service which he continued on behalf of the Bitar family. The Bitars had generously aided the community at the previous home of St. George, and his father, Frank Bitar, and uncle, Robert Bitar, were among the founders of the first St. George in 1930. However, the humility with which Bill's service was offered truly made his efforts remarkable, according to His Eminence Metropolitan Philip. Confirming this sentiment, Fr. Alban said, "No job is beneath Bill's dignity; he is the first one to pick up a broom when there is a mess in the parking lot."

Although the efforts of many individuals were recognized over the weekend of September 17-19, 2004, the attitude and

speech of all involved reflected the knowledge that the efforts of men were not the focus, but the glorification of the true builder. "For every house is built by some one, but the builder of all things is God" (Heb. 3:4).

The celebration of 75 years as a parish and the completion of the new temple and hall came to a culmination on Sunday morning. About 350 faithful witnessed the consecration of a beautiful black walnut altar table, built by Kh. Krista's father, Bill Lamvik, and the applying of holy chrism to the walls as the church of St. George was dedicated to the service of God, recalling the baptism and chrismation of each member.

The glorious services were celebrated with many distinguished clergy in attendance: His Eminence Metropolitan Philip; His Grace Bishop Joseph; Fr. Paul Doyle, Protosyngelos and former Pastor of St. George; Fr. Alban West, current Pastor of St. George; Fr. James Bernstein, Dean of the Pacific Northwest; Fr. Nabil Hanna, Pastor of St. George in Indianapolis and son of St. George, Portland; Archdeacon George Shishim; Subdeacon Michael Habib; the invited clergy of the Pacific Northwest Deanery; and members of the Oregon pan-Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood.

Concluding the splendor of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was the elevation of St. George's beloved Fr. Alban West to the dignity of archpriest. Fr. Alban's seven years of service was a shorter time than usual for this distinction, but, as His Eminence Metropolitan Philip said, "I have made an exception to the rule because you (Fr. Alban) are an exceptional priest."

Along with Fr. Alban's elevation, the gathered community witnessed the blessing of St. George's Philip Knop as subdeacon, and the induction of eight new members into the Order of St. Ignatius.

In his message to the parish, Bishop Joseph urged, "We must build up what has been given to us, not as tombs for the dead, but as centers from which the powerful seed of the Gospel may be scattered." Truly, this is the history of St. George, but also the future. In the words of Fr. Alban, "We must share the Orthodox faith as widely as possible and live that faith as deeply as possible, transforming the community in which we live as we are transformed ourselves."

by F. Dow Stephens



# Divorce The Last Resort



“He was humanized that we might be deified,” the well-known words of St. Athanasius, sound remote to those involved in divorce. Theosis, man’s union with God, sounds “pie in the sky” to those whose earthly unions have disintegrated. In the midst of sin-consciousness combined with the emotional agonies of discouragement and self-loathing, where is this strength and consolation of God’s inner presence?

“Christ in you the hope of glory” said a man who once killed Christians, who spent wilderness years learning Christ, who could tell other struggling new Christians before they had our Scripture “how to do church” ... who called these people saints raising them from self-recrimination and blindness. What happens when the marital romantic bloom fades, when the demands of children stifle moments of intimacy, when communication becomes monosyllabic, and when “that other person in the house” couldn’t care less about ME? It is here when blindness crowds out the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Another former egotist, who, cursing and denying the Lord he had chosen to follow, later quoted a venerable forebear to a large crowd at Pentecost, “For He is at my right hand that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh will rest in hope ... You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence” (Acts 2:25b-27). Marriage is just another vehicle for us to learn that we do not wrestle against

flesh and blood. That adversarial spouse is not there to make life miserable for us, but one used of God where the Holy Spirit can uncover the presence of ego-centrism, selfishness, greed, pride, lust for power, ad infinitum. Fortunately, these issues can be dealt with in the privacy of our homes, through counseling, through communication, where humility can be practiced through mutual forgiveness, and through the practice of Confession. All this is learned on-stage by our children where the safety of the home teaches, protects, and nurtures.

How about those domestic deadlocks? One spouse grows, the other resists. The “grower” begins to discover peace, even God’s joy, but suffers the loneliness of the journey. “Status quo,” on the other hand, may go in one of three directions: (1) doldrums of blindness continued; (2) an awakening of spiritual and emotional desire; or (3) total repudiation of relationship-building or maintenance. The last alternative can be manifest in substance abuse, domestic abuse or violence, or even homosexual activity. The agony and alienation of children and surviving spouses in the last alternative cannot be underestimated. It is here where none of the positive alternatives work. The emotional and physical safety of adult and juvenile victims is at stake. Where such situations exist, here, and here only, is separation the only alternative for survival. Divorce can follow depending on the ultimate direction of the individuals. Sometimes, but not often, true repentance takes place and the home can be restored. We pray for this to happen more often.

Let us choose our battlefields carefully. Whatever our marital state, Christ’s message resounds victoriously. The joy of the Lord, the message of forgiveness, and the work of the Holy Spirit can be experienced by the divorced as by all others. While the “slough of despair” runs deeper and longer for the survivors of ship-wrecked marriages, let us all lay hold of the words of St. Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

by Alice Prewett

*Alice Prewett is a member of the Committee on Marriage and Family of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West.*

*The Department of Marriage and Parish Family Ministries offers many seminars on marriage and family issues for parishes. For information please contact: Kh. Maggie Hock, 15225 Corby St., Omaha, NE 68116; Telephone: 402-445-0150.*

# fellowship footnotes

"Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path."

(Psalm 119:105)

The Fellowship of St. John the Divine of the New England Region launched its first workshop in a series called "Footlamps." The first one this past September at St. Mary Church, Pawtucket, RI, was specifically geared to young adults and was titled: **"Cultivating Christian Relationships for Young Adults."** Dr. Al Rossi led the workshop about how we are all trying to find Christ and to find fellow companions on the Way. We all long to be able to love and to be loved. Cultivating Christian relationships has two sides, being able to cultivate and being able to be cultivated. They discussed some of the issues for young Orthodox adults living in the world today.

On October 23rd, Fr. Michael Nasser led the workshop at St. George in Lawrence entitled: **In the Trenches: Effective Communication with Your Teen.** It was a great opportunity for parents, teachers and all members of the community to come together and learn. All are invited to attend these outstanding workshops! The evenings begin with Vespers at 5 pm, followed by the workshop with refreshments and fellowship.

Mark your calendars for the remaining schedule of "Footlamps" Workshops:

### **Taking Time Out to Strengthen Your Marriage**

with Dr. Philip Mamalakis

Friday, November 19, 2004, 7pm, at St. John of  
Damascus Church - Dedham, MA

### **Building the Right Foundation: Getting Started as a Married Couple**

with Dr. Philip Mamalakis

Saturday, November 20, 2004, 9am-5pm, at St. John  
Church - Dedham, MA (pre-marriage seminar)

### **Figuring It Out: The Mind of Your Teenager**

with Dr. John Dalack

Saturday, January 22, 2005, 5pm, at St. George Church -  
West Roxbury, MA

### **Monasticism: The Forgotten Path of Christian Spirituality**

with Dr. Kyriacos C. Markides

Saturday, February 19, 2005, 5pm, at St. George Church -  
Norwood, MA

### **Building the Right Foundation: Getting Started as a Married Couple**

with Dr. Philip Mamalakis

Saturday, March 26, 2005, 9am-5pm, at St. George  
Cathedral - Worcester, MA (pre-marriage seminar)

### **Infertility and Loss: An Orthodox Couple's Journey**

with Fr. Mark & Ana Leondis

Saturday, April 9, 2005, 5pm, at St. Mary Church -  
Cambridge, MA

**For more information and to RSVP, contact Sonia Daly at 617-850-1285 or [ner-fellowship@yahoo.com](mailto:ner-fellowship@yahoo.com)**

**[www.antiochian.org/footlamps/](http://www.antiochian.org/footlamps/)**

# Oratorical Festival

Judges' Choice  
Christopher Khorey  
Midwest Region

Adults, imagine yourselves as parents of a small child. Kids, imagine yourselves on a walk with your parents. You are going shopping, not in a mall of today, but in a dusty square, in Judea, 2000 years ago. In front of you, a multitude has gathered. In the center sits the Teacher, the one they call the Christ. If you are a child, you want to meet the Great Man. If you are the parents, you want to send your child to Him for a blessing. But His closest followers, the ones they call "the twelve," stop you, telling you the master is busy. But then Jesus himself speaks up, saying, "Let the little children come unto me, and do not forbid them, for such is the Kingdom of God."

Only a few weeks ago, I graduated from high school, and only a few weeks from now, I'll be going off to college. It seems that everyone I meet tells me it's time to put away childish things and move on to adulthood. But every week in the church bulletin, I read, "Let the little children come unto me, for such is the Kingdom of God." Am I to remain a child, for such is the Kingdom? How can that be?

The wise commentators who edited the Orthodox Study Bible explain Jesus' words in the following way: "Jesus points to the little child as a model of a true disciple. Children have the spiritual attitudes necessary to enter the kingdom." So what are the spiritual attitudes that children have that are required to enter the Kingdom?

After careful reflection, and watching the children of my parish, I've found a few characteristics of children that we can all emulate.



Christopher Khorey

The first childlike spiritual attitude is humility, in particular humility about the power of our human reason and understanding.

Small children know that they have limits on their knowledge. They comprehend relatively little about the world around them. When my sister was young, she constantly asked "tizit?" as she pointed at things, wondering what they were. Often, children ask "why?" Children are conscious of their ignorance, which results in a certain humility. They must rely on those around them for help, guidance and understanding.

Like little children, we all have limits on our knowledge, especially about God. We cannot presume to know the essence of His mysteries. There are certain mysteries which are beyond the scope of our five senses and certain truths which are beyond the scope of our intellects. Trying to use human reason to fully understand Who Christ is can be futile.

A few years ago, my mom was teaching Sunday School kindergarten. She showed the class an icon of Christ, and asked them who was pictured. Now, many adults in this situation, thinking pridefully that they know more than they do, would try to respond with a reasoned argument like, "some say He's a good example of how to live, but I think He's more than that because I was thinking it over the other day and I came to the conclusion that ..." well, you get the idea. So what was the kindergartners' response? They



answered without pretense or reason, but instead with strong faith. They said simply, “God.”

As Father Alexander Schmemmann said about growing up, “We understand more and more, but we begin less and less to truly comprehend.”

Therefore, we must acknowledge and defer to God’s wisdom as little children defer, by default, to the wisdom of their parents. As St. Peter said in his first epistle, “Be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

The second childlike attitude is awe, both in the sense of reverence and in the sense of wonder, the kind of thing that makes kids spontaneously say, “Awesome.”

A few years ago, Sayedna Philip visited our church. He was talking to the Sunday School when one of the youngest members of our parish toddled away from his mother and walked up to where the Metropolitan was sitting, gazing up at His Eminence as he sat with his staff in the bishop’s chair. Many of the parents were horrorstruck — what must Sayedna think of our parish if we can’t control our children? But His Eminence just smiled at the look of awe on the child’s face. Sayedna explained that the parent’s efforts to chase the child caused more disruption than the wandering child.

We cannot approach God on an equal playing field. Children would not mistake themselves for God. Only adults, who have supposedly put away “childish” things, do that. We must approach Him with awe, born of a deep understanding of our own shortcomings relative to Him. We are children of God, not just because we are His creation, but also because we are, at most, children in the face of His almighty presence.

Finally, as we approach Christ, and as we experience life in the church, we must maintain a child’s desire to learn. As Christ said in Matthew 11:29, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.”

Children love to learn, because it expands their horizons and shows that they are growing up. My parish priest once told me that the toughest theological questions are asked not by the greatest scholars, but by the youngest children.

When my sister was very young, Sayedna Antoun visited our church. As is customary in many parishes, the Sunday School teachers decided to have a question and answer session. Amidst questions to the Bishop like, “What is your favorite color?” and “Do you live in a house?” my sister asked, “Why did God make the world?”

Why *did* God make the world?

Sayedna Antoun’s reply was simple yet powerful: “To bring joy.” He then asked my sister why she thought God made her. Her answer? The same as his: “To bring joy.” My sister’s childlike curiosity was unlocking one of the most fundamental secrets of the universe.

Another way this desire to learn is expressed in children is through their power of imagination. Children imagine what they will be when they grow up. As Dr. Vigen Guroian wrote, “Children want and need to explore just what it might be like to turn out finally ‘whole’ and all right.” In this way we must use our powers of imagination to enliven our world and transfigure ourselves to be as much like Christ as possible, so that we too can be “whole” and “all right.”

To become like Christ and to enter the Kingdom, we become like children ultimately because Christ Himself came to us a child. The Son of God could have chosen any number of ways to become human, but in sharing our humanity in full He came as a helpless child. Jesus tells us, in Mark 9:37, “Whoever receives one of these little children in my name receives me.”

As Father Schmemmann wrote, “A child is whole . . . in relation to all of life; he gives himself to everything with his entire being; he does not understand the world by deliberation, through analysis, or through one of his particular emotions, but with his whole being without reservation.” The parallel is clear; Christ Himself came into the world to save us “with his whole being without reservation.” Father Schmemmann also wrote that children are “completely in joy.” Christ Himself is the source of all joy, for “lo, through the cross has joy come into the world.”

So, as I go off to college next fall, even as I try to shed childish actions and habits, I must remember that Christ said that I must be like a little child in my spiritual attitude. As I approach Him, therefore, I must be humble and awestruck, yet desire above all to know more about Him. In order to truly know Him, my wonder and imagination must be directed toward life in the Church and its sacraments. Finally, in order to be like Him, I must be devoted, faithful and joyful in my whole being, without reservation prepared to give for Him what He gave for us. If I keep all of this in mind, I can only hope that when Christ directs, “Let the little children come unto me,” He means me, regardless of my age.

*Christopher Khorey, 18, is a member of St. Nicholas Church, Grand Rapids, MI.*

# archdiocesan office

## ORDAINED

EKLUND, Subdeacon Theodore to the diaconate on September 18, 2004 and to the priesthood on September 19, 2004, by Bishop Basil at St. George Cathedral, Wichita, KS. He is assigned as the pastor of St. Vincent of Lerins Church in Omaha, NE, effective October 11, 2004.

MICHAELS, Subdeacon Anthony (Richard) to the diaconate on September 18, 2004 and to the holy priesthood on September 19, 2004, by Bishop Antoun at St. George Church, W. St. Paul, MN. He is assigned as the pastor of St. Simeon Parish in Ironwood, MI, effective September 20, 2004.

KEIM, Subdeacon David to the diaconate on Sunday, October 3, 2004, by Bishop Antoun at All Saints Church, Raleigh, NC. He is attached to that parish.

SHADID, Subdeacon James to the diaconate on September 19, 2004, by Bishop Basil at St. George Cathedral in Wichita, KS. He is assigned to that parish.

## APPOINTED

DOUGHERTY, Priest James to the pastorate of St. Athanasius Church, Wilmington, DE, effective October 1, 2004.

KHOULY, Priest George as the priest-in-charge of St. George Church, Upper Darby, PA, effective October 1, 2004.

## ELEVATED

KHAYAT, Priest Boulos to the dignity of Archpriest on Sunday, September 12, 2004, by Bishop Antoun at St. George Church, Montreal, PQ.

WEST, Priest Alban to the dignity of Archpriest on September 19, 2004, by Metropolitan Philip at St. George Church, Portland, OR.

## CORRECTION

SHANBOUR, Fr. Michael was assigned to the pastorate of Christ the Savior Mission in Spokane, WA, not St. Nicholas Church in Spokane, as reported in a previous issue.

# antiochian village

**AUTHENTIC COSTUMES FROM BETHLEHEM AND PALESTINE TO FORM NATIVITY SCENE AS HOLIDAY FEATURE AT ANTIOCHIAN HERITAGE MUSEUM**

Beginning around the first of November, the temporary gallery at the new Antiochian Heritage Museum at Antiochian Village will showcase a magnificent display of Eastern costumes from Palestine and Bethlehem, part of the Munayyer Collection within the Palestine Heritage Foundation. The collection, the most complete in existence, is representative of much more than antique fashions. It is an attempt to preserve and honor an entire culture currently under threat of destruction, and to document history.

A special Bethlehem nativity will be the holiday feature of the exhibition, with authentic dress of the region and its heritage. Visitors to the Museum will experience a variety of fabric, colors, accessories such as belts, embroidery design, and styles of headscarves and headdresses. Historically and traditionally, each Palestinian village developed a unique combination of these elements that became a badge of its identity. The costumes prove that geographical area rather than religion was the distinguishing factor in the culture and heritage of the region. In Bethlehem, for instance, the traditional style of dress is identical for Christian and Muslim women.

We expect to have the display ready for public enjoyment by the beginning of November, in time for the holiday season. It will remain on temporary display for about six months, according to Fr. Michael Massouh, Executive Director for Antiochian Village. "We are very pleased to host this special heritage collection that has been displayed at such venues as the United Nations, the National Cathedral, the Fuller Museum in Boston, the Mingei Museum of Folk Art in California, Harvard University and West Point Military Academy," said Fr. Massouh. "As our second temporary exhibition, it further demonstrates that the Antiochian Heritage Museum will offer unique and high quality educational exhibitions related to the Middle Eastern culture, to supplement our religious holdings rotated from our permanent collection," he added.

Farah Munayyer, born in Jaffa, and Hanan, his wife, from Haifa, have spent the past 12 years developing the special collection. As an outgrowth of the costumes, the Munayyers founded the Palestine Heritage Foundation in 1992 to preserve Palestinian arts and crafts and to educate people about Palestinian culture.

# antiochian women

“CARE FOR THOSE WHO CARE FOR US”

*“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2-3)*

Think of the one person, other than our parents, who has been at our side, to care for and support us in all things, from infancy to adulthood. Think of the one person who has cared for us, night and day, while putting his own family or personal needs aside. Think of the one person who cares for the most important part of us — our souls. As St. Peter has named this person in the above verse, the Shepherd of God’s flock, we know him as our parish Priest, our spiritual Father on Earth.

We ask you to continue this thought process and think about that time, when our priest: in Sunday School, told us how proud he was of us in that we could correctly make the sign of the cross; at our Teen SOYO meetings, worked with us to make the right decisions, and trusted us to follow through on those decisions; in front of the Holy Doors, brought us together in marriage with our spouses; at the Baptismal font, baptized our children, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; and, in the hospital, comforted us during our greatest hours of need, when a loved one was ill or dying. Think back over your lifetime, and all of the moments in time, which are so numerous, when our priest was there for us. Those moments in time, added up, would account for hours upon hours, for our Priest was with us always.

We, the Antiochian Women of this great Archdiocese, would like to work with you, once again, the blessed flock, to give back to those who have cared for us throughout our lifetime. “Care for Those Who Care for Us,” our shepherds, our Clergy. Through the wisdom of Metropolitan Philip, the Antiochian Women have been charged to serve those who have served us, diligently and unceasingly, throughout our lives, in so many ways.

It is now our turn to care for our Clergy, our spiritual Fathers, so that they may live their lives with dignity. Our new project is known as **Antiochian**

**Women’s Project: MIB (Men in Black) 2005, Retired Clergy Fund.** We are being asked to raise \$500,000.00 within the next five years. Over the past three decades, we, as a Sisterhood of Charity, have cared for many people, young and old alike, around the world. Now, we have turned our attention towards home and our own. Who better to care for our retired Clergy than those whom they have served faithfully, unselfishly, and without thought of financial or materialistic gain. We, their flocks, have been given the tremendous honor of ensuring that they live out their lives in retirement with a sense of security and comfort, as we would wish for ourselves.





Presently, the Retired Clergy Fund supports 36 retired Clergy and 11 widows of priests.

The retired Clergy are allotted no more than \$700.00 per month. The formula for their allowance is as follows:

- \$23.33 per month times the years of service in this Archdiocese, to a maximum of 30 years and \$700.00 per month; and,
- the widowed Khouriye receives only 75% of the allowance that her husband would have received, once she reaches the age of 65.

The amount received is not only very difficult to live on in this day and age, but does not come close to ensuring that our spiritual Fathers, who care for us, our families, and our souls, at all hours of the day and night, 365 days a year, are able to live in the comfort that they so much deserve. Many of our parish Priests do not have their own homes for they live in parish homes and, once they retire, they must find a place in which to live. What a difficult financial situation to be in when we turn the age of 60, 65, or 70!

How many other instances do you know of when your parish Priest and his family have given up so much and sacrificed financially so that they can support their parishioners, their church, and those in need? Page after page can be filled with these stories.

This should be more than a mere consideration for our Clergy who have spent their lives dedicated to our Lord, His Church, the service and care of others, rather than building a financial fortune. Their “fortune” was made in the great number of souls they nurtured, for Christianity’s sake, from birth to death.

The Antiochian Women have been blessed with this new Project, for it is truly a service of love. We ask you, the flock of this blessed Archdiocese, who have unceasingly been served and cared for by our Clergy, to join us in ensuring that they are well cared for in their retirement years. Please, as you have so graciously and generously done in the past, support your Antiochian Women’s local chapters in all of their activities as they work towards this new and worthy Project. It is only through your continued support and generous contributions that we will see the successful fruition of this Project of love, the ***Antiochian Women’s Project: MIB 2005, Retired Clergy Fund.***

***Antiochian Women: A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others***

by Laila Rizk Ferris, President  
Cindy Nimey, Vice President/Project Coordinator  
Antiochian Women  
North American Board

## 8th Annual Jack G. Shaheen Mass Communications Scholarship

### PURPOSE:

To recognize Arab American students whose major is Journalism, Radio, Television and/or Film.

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Must be a U.S. Citizen.

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4. Copies of official academic transcripts, including your GPA.
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DEADLINE IS APRIL 12, 2005

SEND ALL MATERIALS TO:

ADC Research Institute  
4201 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20008  
Tel: 202-244-2990



# Children's Relief Fund



"Whoever receives one little child like this in my name receives me." ~Matthew 18:5



A central component of our Christian Charities, the Children's Relief Fund (CRF) is a humanitarian project designed for the assistance of children in need. It was initiated in response to pressing appeals coming from Lebanon in the wake of its disastrous invasion in 1982. But it soon caught on as a solid outreach program, serving hundreds of school-age children each year in the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch.

The present situation in the Middle East is even more severe than it was during the war years. The declining economy, unemployment and inflation are tragedies beyond family survival and the need for our help is ongoing.

CRF assistance focuses on: educational sponsorship, medical aid, and international adoption.

## Here's how to begin.

Take the first step today! Fill out the attached envelope and mail it in. We'll send you the photo and personal story of one child on our waiting list. The cost is \$25 a month ... less than a dollar a day. But the hope you'll give a child is priceless.

## International Adoption

Our adoption program in Lebanon continues. Details on this program can be sent to interested parties upon request.

## Medical Aid

Another area of concern for the children besides supplying their basic needs of food, clothing and/or school expenses is often caring for their medical needs such as chemotherapy, transplants and prosthetics.

## Sponsorship

Sponsorships are solicited from individuals and organizations who contribute \$300 a year to a child. Sponsorships do not begin until the initial \$150 is paid. After half payment, a child is assigned to his sponsor for one year. Sponsors receive the child's biography and photograph plus letters dictated by the child to a caseworker.



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at the Antiochian Village Heritage and Learning Center

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Registration forms are available online at <http://www.antiochianvillage.org/camp/>  
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## Give the Gift of Camp!

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For a *pre-wrapped Winter Camp Gift Certificate*,  
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Antiochian Village Camp 20th Anniversary Project  
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