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ENCYCLICAL

Feast of St. Basil and New Year

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this first day of the new year and the blessed Feast of our Father among the Saints, Basil the Great, we anticipate the abundant blessings and great works of God, and we continue to give Him honor and glory through our worship and faithful service to Him.

As we dedicate the year and our lives to the holy will of God, it also is fitting at the beginning of this year 2016 that we commemorate the 25th anniversary of the ministry of His All-Holiness our beloved Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. This is truly a significant event for our Holy Archdiocese and for Orthodox Christianity, as this time has included tremendous changes and challenges in our world. In the apostolic spirit of St. Basil and many other Saints and Hierarchs, His All Holiness has provided spiritual guidance from a foundation of deep faith in God and a commitment to His will. He has offered compassionate pastoral leadership from his experience and understanding of the power of the grace of God. He has adeptly addressed critical issues using the great theological and liturgical heritage of our Orthodox Christian faith. Our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has led and continues to lead faithful around the world in offering a true witness of the blessed life we have in Christ and of an enduring hope that rests on the promises of God.

We give glory and thanksgiving to God for the apostolic ministry of our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. We also give thanks for all the offerings of our Hierarchs, Clergy, and Laity in addressing the needs and supporting the work of His All Holiness and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This has been a tremendous contribution in sharing the Gospel, advocating for religious freedom, offering spiritual guidance on environmental issues, and helping those who need urgent assistance.

The ministry and leadership of His All-Holiness reflects the compassion and faith that were exemplified by St. Basil. This is also the witness of our beloved

Ecumenical Patriarch Convenes Preparatory Meeting for Great Council Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew convened a synaxis of the primates of the local Orthodox Churches Jan. 21–28 at the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Orthodox Center in Chambisy, Geneva, Switzerland.

The meeting considered matters relating to preparation for the Holy and Great Council, set to convene this year. Archbishop Demetrios was a delegation member of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The official announcement follows:

COMMUNIQUE

At the invitation of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the Synaxis of Primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches took place at the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambesy, Geneva, from

21st to 28th January, 2016. The following Primates attended:

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, Patriarch Irinej of Serbia, Patriarch Daniel of Romania, Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria, Patriarch Ilia of Georgia, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus, Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, Archbishop Rastislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia

The following Primates were unable to attend: Their Beatitudes Patriarch John X of Antioch and Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland, for health reasons,

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NEXT DEADLINE

Deadline for submitting information, articles and photos for consideration in the **February** issue: **Friday, Feb. 12**. Photos should be sent as a large format .jpg attachment (300 dpi min.).
E-mail to: jim@goarch.org
Regular mail: Editor, Orthodox Observer, 8 E. 79th St., New York, NY 10075.

FAITH Endowment Offers Grants to Ionian Village

NEW YORK—Continuing for the tenth consecutive year, “FAITH: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism” will once again sponsor a series of financial aid travel grants this summer to campers participating in the Ionian Village Summer Camp program. FAITH provides full and partial scholarships to those participants who qualify.

The travel grants are primarily need-based financial aid; however, each applicant’s academic performance will also be weighed into the evaluation review process. Priority is given to high school seniors.

Ionian Village participants will travel across Greece visiting significant sites of Greek history and culture. At the end of each program, the campers return home with strengthened faith, lifelong friendships and an expanded appreciation for the Orthodox Church and Greek culture.

Elaine Jaharis, a Founder of the FAITH Endowment, Ionian Village alumna and

committee chairman spoke on behalf of the Founders, “We the Founders of FAITH) are proud to support young people wishing to participate in Ionian Village. The camp provides a truly transformative and enriching experience for intellectual and spiritual growth and lifelong friendships as these young people connect to their Hellenic roots. For over 40 years, Ionian Village has been, and still is, the premiere program for young Greek Americans to understand their Hellenic heritage and identity, to offer this financial aid opportunity through this program.”

In 2015, FAITH underwrote 63 full and partial financial aid travel grants for young people to attend the Ionian Village Summer Camp. Eva T., who received a 2015 FAITH Travel Grant, recalled her experience as a camper: “There are absolutely no words to express my sincere gratitude towards FAITH. I learned so much about our rich and beautiful motherland, the others around me, myself and

our Orthodox Faith.”

Each year, FAITH also funds other scholarship programs, including many merit-based scholarships for the FAITH Scholarships for Academic Excellence to students graduating from public, parochial and private high schools across the country.

FAITH – Ionian Village Travel Grant applications are available for session one and session two participants, ages 16-18 at www.thefaithendowment.org. Completed applications must be received by February 5, 2016.

FAITH: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism supports the development of innovative educational, cultural, and scholarship programs for young people that promote an understanding of the Orthodox faith, Hellenism, and the relationship of the two to America’s history and multicultural landscape. For more information, call: 212-644-6960.

2016 Archdiocesan Yearbook Available

NEW YORK – The 2016 Archdiocese Yearbook is dedicated to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his enthronement. It is now available online at www.goarch.org/archdiocese/yearbook. The yearbook can also be downloaded from the website as a pdf and used as a digital book on tablets, smart phones and other digital reading devices. Hard copies of the 2016 Yearbook are now available by mail. Every parish of the Archdiocese will receive two complimentary copies.

The yearbook is designed as an easy-to-read, accurate, reference handbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The new edition includes updated directories of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Archdiocesan departments and institutions, Metropolises, parishes, clergy, religious and secular media resources plus additional information.

The significance of this year’s book is highlighted in the letter by Archbishop Demetrios, in which he states: “His All-Holiness has provided spiritual guidance

from a foundation of deep faith in God and a commitment to His will. He has offered compassionate pastoral leadership from his experience and understanding of the power of the grace of God. We dedicate this Yearbook to His All Holiness in recognition of the contribution his leadership has made to the vitality and witness of our Holy Archdiocese. As with previous editions over the last few decades, this yearbook represents a tremendous growth at all levels of the Church in America.

Parishes continue to grow with additions of new missions each year. The range of national ministries and work in the metropolises has expanded.

Resources for the work of the ministries and the vital work of clergy and laity in the parishes have grown impressively.”

Limited prepaid copies may be obtained by calling (212) 774-0244 or by sending a check/money order or credit card information for \$24 (\$18 cost of yearbook plus \$6.00 s&h) payable to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Attn: Yearbook – 8 East 79th St., New York, NY 10075.

How to Contact Archdiocesan Institutions, Metropolises and Related Agencies and Organizations

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212.570.3500; www.goarch.org

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Metropolis of San Francisco

415.753.3075; www.sanfran.goarch.org

Metropolis of New Jersey

908.301.0500; www.nj.goarch.org

Archdiocesan Institutions

Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity

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Hellenic College Holy Cross School of Theology

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Saint Basil Academy

845.424.3500; www.stbasil.goarch.org

St. Michael’s Home

914.476.3374; www.stmichaelshome.org

St. Photios National Shrine

904.829.8205; www.stphotios.com

Other key organizations and services

National Philoptochos

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Internet Ministries: www.internet.goarch.org

• Orthodox Jobs: www.orthodoxjobs.com

• Orthodox Marketplace: www.orthodoxmarketplace.com

• Online Store for Parishes: www.goarch.org/freebookstore

• Orthodox Children’s Bible Reader Online: cbr.goarch.org



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ENCYCLICAL

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Saint Basil Academy. Led by our National Ladies Philoptochos Society and local chapters, it is our annual tradition on this day and during the month of January to offer prayers and support for this ministry. Each and every day of the year, the benefactors, directors, and staff of Saint Basil's are serving the needs of children and youth who need love, guidance, and the healing power of faith. This vital ministry has been supported for over sixty years by the Ladies Philoptochos Society through the annual cutting of the Vasilopeta, and I ask that you give generously and offer your prayers for St. Basil Academy.

In the cutting and sharing of the Vasilopeta at the inception of this New Year, may we also offer our prayers and support for His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and wish him many more years of faithful and dedicated service to Christ and His Church. And may the blessings of our Lord be upon each of you and your families for peace, health, and opportunities to share His love and the power of faith throughout the year.

With paternal love in Christ,

Archbishop Demetrios

† DEMETRIOS, Archbishop of America



GOA-Dimitrios Panagos photo

Epiphany Service

Archbishop Demetrios officiates at the Jan. 6 Epiphany Service at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Tarpon Springs, Fla., with the participation of Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta, Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, Fr. Sampson Kasapakis, proistamenos; other area clergy and Archdeacon Panteleimon and Deacon Eleftherios. Following the service, clergy and hundreds of parishioners proceeded to nearby Spring Bayou for the traditional Blessing of the Waters and Cross Diving event. (Full Epiphany coverage page 23).

Roman Catholic, Orthodox Christians Affirm Sanctity of Life

WASHINGTON—Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians joined in prayer and public gathering on the 43rd anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion, to express their longstanding belief that all life is sacred.

An official delegation of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States participated in choir in the National Prayer Vigil for Life at the Roman Catholic Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on Jan. 21.

The following day, Jan. 22, Catholic and Orthodox bishops jointly offered prayer to begin the March for Life at noon on the National Mall.

As he reflected upon the importance of this year's sanctity of life events, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York and chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), said: "While we lament the tragedy of abortion in our land, our Lord continues to show us how good can come from evil. Our collaborative and prayerful efforts with our Orthodox brothers and sisters have certainly been a sign of hope in our combined efforts to build a culture of life."

Highlighting the importance of prayer when addressing the issue of abortion, Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh, chairman

of the Committee for Church and Society of the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops in the U.S., stressed the need to "pray not only for those who are currently considering an abortion, but also those who have already undergone the procedure and may despair of God's love and mercy."

The following statement was signed prior to the event by Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., president of the USCCB; Archbishop Demetrios, chairman of the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops; Cardinal Dolan; and Metropolitan Savas.

Seeking Life, Mercy, and Healing – A Common Statement by Orthodox and Catholic Bishops on the 43rd anniversary of Roe v. Wade.

"On January 22, Catholic and Orthodox Christians will once again stand in solidarity on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of Roe v. Wade. As our communities firmly believe in the sanctity of life, the faithful – along with many people of other traditions and goodwill – lament the legal circumstances that facilitate abortion and the cultural phenomena that present abortion as the only choice for expectant mothers experiencing difficult conditions.

"We recognize that the choice to abort an unborn child ultimately reflects the broken condition of humanity.

"We remind the world of our common teaching that life begins at the earliest moments of conception and that life, at all stages of its development, is sacred. We denounce the termination of a life as a response to unwanted pregnancies or as a method of overcoming social and economic challenges. We embrace the mothers and the couples who, in spite of difficulties, choose to bring their pregnancy to term. At the same time, however, we invite those who may have undergone or facilitated an abortion to turn to Christ with contrite hearts, seeking to overcome their grief through His forgiveness, mercy and healing."

Archbishop Demetrios of America
Chairman, Assembly of Canonical Orthodox
Bishops of the USA

Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh
Chairman, Committee for Church & Society
Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops
of the USA

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz
Archbishop of Louisville
President, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

CLERGY UPDATE

Ordinations to the Diaconate

Whittaker, James – Metropolitan Methodios of Boston, at St. Sophia Church, New London, Conn. 11/29/15
Constas, Maximos – Archbishop Demetrios, St. Nicholas, Flushing, N.Y. 12/06/15
Callas, William – Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, Holy Trinity Church, San Francisco 12/27/15
Delaveris, Nikolas – Bishop Andonios of Phasiane, St. Sophia Cathedral, Washington 01/10/16

Ordinations to the Priesthood

Dn. Maximos Constas – Archbishop Demetrios of America, Holy Trinity Cathedral, New York 12/20/15

Assignments

V. Rev. Fr. George Nikas – Chancellor, Metropolis of New Jersey 01/15/16

Assignments

Fr. Michael Ellis – Sts. Constantine & Helen Church, Mansfield, Ohio 12/01/15
Fr. James S. Katinas – St. Demetrios Church, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. 12/15/15
Fr. Gregory Trakas – Assumption Church, Manchester, NH 12/15/15
Fr. George Kouzelis – St. Demetrios Church, Upper Darby, Pa. 01/15/16

Offikia

Fr. Athanasios Haros – Office of Protos-priester, bestowed by Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta 11/25/15
Fr. Chrysostom Panos – Office of Archimandrite, bestowed by Archbishop Demetrios 11/30/15
Fr. George Zugravu – Office of Economist, bestowed by Archbishop Demetrios 12/13/15
Fr. Maximos Constas – Office of Archimandrite, bestowed by Archbishop Demetrios 12/24/15

Receptions

Fr. Michael Ellis – Dec. 1, 2015 (from the American Carpatho – Russian Orthodox Diocese of the USA)
V. Rev. Fr. Christodoulos Papadeas – Dec. 1, 2015 (from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of New Zealand)
Fr. Sasa Turkic – Dec. 23, 2015 (from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia)

Returned to the status of layman

Constantine Mersinas – defrocked for violation of the Archdiocese Sexual Misconduct Policy 07/15/14

Orthodox Observer 2016 Deadline Schedule

Note: The following is the tentative deadline schedule for submitting articles and photos to the Orthodox Observer for consideration in 2016. In rare instances, it may be necessary to change a deadline. If that occurs, the new date will appear in red letters.

Month	Deadline	Highlights
Feb. – March	Friday, Feb. 12	pre-Lenten issue
April	Friday, March 11	Lenten issue
May	Friday, April 8	Pascha issue
June	Friday, May 20	pre-Clergy-Laity Congress
July – Aug.	Friday, June 24	Clergy-Laity Congress
September	Friday, Aug. 26	New Ecclesiastical Year
October	Friday, Sept. 30	Archdiocesan Council, Archons
November	Friday, Oct 28	Thanksgiving
December	Friday, Nov. 28	Christmas issue

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

▷ from page 1

and Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece, for personal reasons. Nevertheless, all three were represented by official delegations of their Churches.

The Primates of the Orthodox Churches convened to finalize the texts for the Holy and Great Council. In the framework of the Synaxis, on Sunday, 24th January, a Divine Liturgy was held at the Holy Stavropegic Church of St. Paul. Along with the Ecumenical Patriarch, who presided, Their Beatitudes and Heads of the delegations of the Orthodox Churches concelebrated the Liturgy, with the exception of the Head of the delegation of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

During the Synaxis, whose sessions were held in the apostolic spirit of "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4.15), in concord and understanding, the Primates affirmed their decision to convene the Holy and Great Council. The Council will be held at the Orthodox Academy of Crete from June 16th to 27th, 2016. To this end, the Primates humbly invoke the grace and blessing of the Holy Trinity and fervently invite the prayers of the fullness of the Church, clergy and laity, for the period leading to and the sessions of the Holy and Great Council.

The items officially approved for referral to and adoption by the Holy and Great Council are: The Mission of the Orthodox Church in the Contemporary World, the Orthodox Diaspora, Autonomy and its Manner of Proclamation, The Sacrament of Marriage and its Impediments, The Significance of Fasting and

Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches



Ecumenical Patriarchate photos

Hierarchs at one of the sessions of the synaxis. Among those attending was Archbishop Demetrios, seated at the far end of the table at left, nearest Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who presided.

its Application Today, and Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World. By decision of the Primates, all approved documents will be published.

The Primates also discussed and determined the establishment of a Panorthodox Secretariat, the by-laws of the Council, the participation of non-Orthodox observers in the opening

and closing sessions, and the budgetary costs related to the Council.

Moreover, the Primates expressed their support for the persecuted Christians of the Middle East and their ongoing concern for the abduction of the two Metropolitan, Paul Yazigi of the Patriarchate of Antioch and Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of the Syriac Archdiocese.

The proceedings of the Synaxis of the

concluded on Wednesday evening, January 27, 2016, with the closing address by its President, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

At the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambesy – Geneva, 27 January, 2016

From the Secretariat of the Sacred Synaxis

Scholars Convene for Discussions at Ecumenical Patriarchate

ISTANBUL – A group of 30 Orthodox Christian scholars participated in a gathering at the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople Jan. 4-5, to connect with theologians and academics working in various disciplines and ministries throughout the world and to become better acquainted with their interests and aspirations for the Church, especially in light of the forthcoming Holy and Great Council.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew addressed those gathered, and then, as representing different communities of scholars (representing theological schools, scholars in the secular academy, those working in mission fields, and in



Ecumenical Patriarchate photos

Orthodox Christian scholars with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

other areas), to offer to His All-Holiness reflections on the particular challenges the Church faces today and how to work together, more effectively.

Metropolitan John of Pergamon offered reflections on the preparations for the Council and engaged in dialogue for almost four hours, with His Eminence, sharing our thoughts and concerns in a very engaging and stimulating conversation.

In his address, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew noted, "We have invited you because we consider you as a small representative group of a much larger segment of our Church, a symbol of our loving concern for all those ministering to the Word of God in manifold ways throughout the world.

"You comprise theologians and historians, scholars and teachers, women and

men from the United States and Europe, as well as from Asia and Australia.... In this way, we can strengthen the bonds between hierarchal ministry and lay diakonia for the benefit of the Body of Christ."

The scholars in attendance presented their reflections and responses in their respective fields and capacities as heads of Orthodox seminaries and institutes; as professors in non-Orthodox academic institutions; as theologians serving in mission, religious education and publishing; and as scholar-practitioners in the natural and social sciences, human rights and social justice.

The afternoon of Jan. 5 was dedicated to an open discussion on preparations for the Holy and Great Council, during which Metropolitan John chaired two extensive sessions, addressing participants and engaging them in wide-ranging discussions

about goals, challenges and opportunities of the Council. Texts of the presentations will be made available as they are received.

Participants from the United States included Frs. John Behr and Alexander Rentel, both of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, Fr. John Chryssavgis, Ecumenical Patriarchate; George Demacopoulos, Fordham University; John Klentos, Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute; Fr. Panteleimon Manoussakis, Holy Cross School of Theology; Aristotle Papanikolaou, Fordham University; Elizabeth Prodromou, Tufts University; James Skedros, Holy Cross School of Theology; Fr. Nathanael Symeonidis, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; Alexis Torrance, Notre Dame University; Anton Vrame, Archdiocese Department of Religious Education; and Gayle Woloschak, Northwestern University.

Change of Address

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Be sure to include old address,
new address and name of parish.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

NATIONAL CALENDAR



N. Manginas photos

The heads of the Autocephalous Orthodox Christian Churches (above) with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew during a break at their meetings in Chambesy. (below) Archbishop Demetrios and other hierarchs at the opening prayer of one of the sessions.



ARCHDIOCESE NEWS

Niarchos Foundation Honors Archbishop Iakovos' Civil Rights Efforts

NEW YORK – The Stavros Niarchos Foundation has contributed a grant of \$2 million and Co-President Andreas Dracopoulos has given a \$1 million donation to the National African American History and Culture Museum in Washington in honor of the civil and human rights work of Archbishop Iakovos, head of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America from 1959-1996.

The Museum, currently under construction, is expected to open in 2016, and aspires to become a landmark that will present African-American history.

In the middle of last month the museum featured a high-tech projection of

images on its outside walls with the title "Commemorate and Celebrate Freedom," featuring the period from the ratification of the 13th Amendment, which ended slavery in 1865, to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The images featured Archbishop Iakovos with Martin Luther King Jr. The Washington Post published a first-page photograph of that moment in the projection on Nov. 16.

The Greek Orthodox Church in America and His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios continue the longstanding legacy of Archbishop Iakovos to fight against racism and to defend human rights.

New Divine Liturgy Books in Production

The Holy Eparchial Synod of the Archdiocese has been working on a new translation of the Divine Liturgy for some time. The Priest Edition of the text is at the printer. Department of Religious Education Director Dr. Anton Vrame said he is waiting for shipment date in the very near future.

The department is also working on the edition for the church pews that will be

released in Pew Edition in about four to six weeks after the Priest Edition is published.

A new Hymnal is being produced by members of the Choir Federation, which should be available sometime this summer.

Holy Cross Press is publishing the Priest Edition and Pew Edition. The Department of Religious Education will probably produce the hymnal, Dr. Vrame said.

Below is the annual calendar of major events throughout the Archdiocese submitted for this issue. (Note: The abbreviation TBD signifies To Be Determined).

PHILOPTOCHOS

- Feb. 4-6 - Executive and National Board meetings, Houston
- Feb. 11-14 - FDF, Anaheim, Calif. (Faith-Dance-Fellowship)
- Feb. 19-20 - Winter meeting
- Feb. 27 - Boca Raton, Fla. Challenge Fashion Show
- March 5 - Pittsburgh Metropolis Daffodil Luncheon, Cleveland
- March 6 - Kids vnv Cancer Reception, Newport Beach, Calif.
- March 17-18 - Atlanta Metropolis Board meeting and spiritual retreat, Diakonia Center, South Carolina
- April 16 - Direct Archdiocesan District Lenten Retreat, Archangel Michael Church, Port Washington, N.Y.
- May 16-17 - New Jersey Metropolis Convention
- June 9-12 - Camp Agape, Mayer, Ariz.
- July 3-8 p Philoptochos Biennial Convention, Nashville
- July 25-30 - Camp Agape, Gig Harbor, Wash.
- July 30-Aug. - Camp Agape, Portland, Oregon
- Aug. 4-7 - Camp Agape, Dunlap, Calif.
- Aug. 25-28 - Camp Agape, Ramona, Calif.
- Dec. 16 p Direct Archdiocesan District Agape Luncheon

NEW JERSEY Metropolis

- Jan. 30 - Northern New Jersey Three Hierarchs/Greek Letters Celebration, St. John the Theologian Cathedral, Tenafly, NJ
- Jan. 31 - Delaware Valley Three Hierarchs/Greek Letters Celebration, Holy Trinity Church, Wilmington, Del.
- Feb. 2-4 - Metropolis of New Jersey Clergy Retreat, Annapolis, Md.
- April 3 - Greek Independence Day Parade, Philadelphia
- May 16-17 - Metropolis Clergy Laity Assembly and Philoptochos Convention, The Venetian, Garfield, N.J.
- May 28-29 p NJ Metropolis GOYA Outdoor Olympics, Monmouth University, West Long Branch, N.J.
- July 10-16 - Camp Good Shepherd p Virginia, Hartfield, Va.
- July 10-16 - Camp Good Shepherd p JOY, Branchville, N.J.
- July 17-23 - Camp Good Shepherd GOYA No.1, Branchville.
- July 24- July 30 - Camp Good Shepherd GOYA No.2, Branchville
- Sept. 18 - Holy Cross Celebration, Asbury Park, N.J.
- Nov. 6 - Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey Ambassador Awards Banquet, The Merion, Cinnamons, N.J.
- Nov. 12-13 p Feast day Celebration of St. John Chrysostom, patron saint of the Metropolis of New Jersey, GOMNJ Headquarters, Westfield
- Dec. 11 - Annual Christmas Tree Lighting and Open House, GOMNJ Headquarters, Westfield

SAN FRANCISCO Metropolis

- Jan. 22-24 - Metropolis Presbyteres Retreat, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center - Dunlap, Calif.
- Jan. 28 - Pan-Orthodox Bay Area Clergy Retreat, Ascension Cathedral, Oakland, Calif.
- Jan. 30 - Metropolis Church Music Institute-Eastern California, St. Katherine Church, Elk Grove, Calif.
- Jan. 31 - Metropolis Greek Letters Day Celebration, Ascension Cathedral, Oakland
- Feb. 6 - Metropolis Church Music Institute-Bay Area, Ascension Cathedral, Oakland
- Feb. 11-15 - Metropolis Folk Dance and

Choral Festival, Anaheim Marriott hotel, Anaheim, Calif.

Feb. 18- 21 - Leadership 100 annual conference, The Phoenician Hotel, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Feb. 28-29 - Metropolis Council meeting, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center, Dunlap, Calif.

Feb. 29-March 1 - Metropolis Clergy-Laitly Assembly, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center, Dunlap

March 1- March 2 - Metropolis Clergy Retreat, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center, Dunlap

March 13- June 19 - Mochas for Missions Campaign, Metropolis Commission for Orthodox Missions and Evangelism

March 20 - Pan-Orthodox Celebration of the Sunday of Orthodoxy, Location TBD

April 10 - Metropolis Philoptochos Kids vnv Cancer Agape Reception, Newport Beach, Calif.

April 15-17 - Young Adult Lenten Retreat, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center

May 14 - Metropolis St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center

May 27-30 - Metropolis Family Camp, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center

June 18-25 - Greek Village Immersion Camp, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center

June 24- 26 - Metropolis Church Music Federation Conference, Resurrection Church, Castro Valley, Calif.

July 10-16 - Metropolis Summer Camp-Session I, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center

July 17- 23 - Metropolis Summer Camp-Session II, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center

July 24-30 - Metropolis Summer Camp-Session III, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center

Sept. 19-23 - Metropolis Adult Resort Camp, St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center

Date TBD - Metropolis Clergy Couples Retreat, Camarillo, Calif.

Oct. 3 - The Twelve Great Feasts Through Icons and Hymns-Part I, Online Metropolis Webinar

Oct. 10 - The Twelve Great Feasts Through Icons and Hymns-Part II, Online Metropolis Webinar

Date TBD - Archdiocese Conference on Missions and Evangelism, Portland, Oregon

Nov. 5 - Metropolis Religious Educatorvs Workshop, Southern California

Nov. 12 - Metropolis Gala, Southern California

Date TBD - Light the Path, Metropolis Philoptochos Christmas Luncheon, Southern California

ATLANTA Metropolis

Jan.15-18 p Hellence Dance Festival, Orlando, Fla.

Feb. 5-7 p St. Photios National Foundation meeting, St. Augustine, Fla..

Feb. 13 - Metropolis of Atlanta Parish Council Presidents meeting, Atlanta

March 1-3 p Metropolis of Atlanta Clergy Retreat, Diakonia Retreat Center, Salem, S.C.

March 31-April 3 - Metropolis of Atlanta Council meetings, Atlanta

May 14-15 p Metropolis of Atlanta Oratorical Festival, Daytona Beach, Fla.

June 26-July 2 - Metropolis of Atlanta, St. Stephens Summer Camp 1st session, Diakonia Retreat Center, Salem, S.C.

July 3- 9 p Metropolis of Atlanta St. Stephens Summer Camp 2nd session

10-16 - St. Stephens Summer Camp 3rd session

ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT - METROPOLIS NEWS



Members of the Direct Archdiocesan District clergy assembled in early January to meet with Archbishop Demetrios, who gave a pastoral presentation. The occasion also included the cutting of the Vasilopita.

Chicago Parish Celebrates

CHICAGO – About 300 supporters of St. Basil parish recently celebrated the rebirth and restoration of their church.

The event, chaired by Maren Karras, was held at Chicago's Drake Hotel. Metropolitan Iakovos and Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos were guests of honor.

In addition, several key individuals were recognized for their tireless efforts, over the past two-and-a-half years, in shepherding the massive reconstruction project.

The rebuilding committee included Fr. Panteleimon Dalianis, Tom Bezanis, Anthony Frankos, Harry Michas, John Regas, Jayme Schenk, and Christ Shaskos. The evening's honored guest was architect and designer, John P. Regas.

Proceeds benefitted the St. Basil Capital Campaign, chaired by George Tzahanis, and were matched by a \$65,000 grant from the Kulis Foundation, yielding over \$130,000.

'Tables Extraordinaire' an Extraordinary Outreach

by Elaine Cladis

GREENWOOD VILLAGE, Colo. – For the past 17 years the Philoptochos chapter of St. Catherine Church in Greenwood Village has sponsored its annual fundraising event "Tables Extraordinaire".

The fundraising is comprised of several events: two private Christmas teas, Tables Extraordinaire, the Ornament Exchange Dinner, Holiday Bake Sale and the Giving Trees. The amazing display of spectacular table settings is the foundation for the weekend of events.

Each table is hosted by ladies from the Greek Orthodox churches in the greater Denver area. Each year, for a small donation, hundreds of people come through our doors to view the tables, enjoy Greek pastries with family and friends and purchase our delicious baked goods. For many it has become a tradition and the kick-off of their holiday season. The private "Christmas Teas" are held, brunch is served and these guests have the opportunity to be the first to view all the magnificent tables.

On the evening of the last day of the fundraiser, it is time for the "Ornament

Exchange Dinner." Our table hostesses and their invited guests partake in fellowship, a delicious catered meal and a gift exchange. In addition, guests bring sundry items which are collected for local charities.

The highlight of the evening consisted of a guest speaker from one of the charities we support sharing her story. We are humbled and inspired by how lives have been transformed, addiction and abuse have been overcome, and relationships with children and families restored. We hear firsthand how what we do makes a difference.

All of this would not be possible without the commitment of our Philoptochos sisters, table hostesses, bakers and a multitude of volunteers that work tirelessly for months.

We are grateful for the revenue received from all these events because we are able to underwrite the many local and national philanthropic ministries undertaken by our chapter.

Elaine Cladis is a member of the Metropolitan of Denver and National Philoptochos Boards.



Orthodox Observer photo

Cathedral Board

Archbishop Demetrios welcomed 18 members of the Holy Trinity Archdiocesan Board to Archdiocese headquarters Jan. 13 for the service of affirmation. Board members (in random order) are: Fr. John Vlahos, cathedral dean; Dean Poll, board president; Jim Gianakis, first vice president; Justin Bozonelis, second vice president; Peter Doukas, treasurer; Elias Lambiris, assistant treasurer; Peter Chrisanthopoulos, secretary; John Paterakis, assistant treasurer; Stephen Cherpelis, past president; Harry Gaveras, George Kaneris, Miranda Kofinas, ex-officio/cathedral Philoptochos president; Pauline Kotsilimbas, George Liakeas, Chris Neamonitis, Dorothy Poli, Katherine Relle and Nick Tsoukaris.

Direct Archdiocesan District Parochial Schools Annual Spelling Bee Finals

The Spelling Bee Finals for Greek American parochial day school students took place on Friday, Jan. 15th at Archdiocese headquarters with 16 students participating.

Finalists and runners-up from each school were: Nicoletta Baltzis, a 6th grade student of the St. Demetrios School of Astoria was the winner. Yorgo Vetter, a 6th grader at the Holy Trinity Cathedral School, Manhattan was the runner-up. The winning word was "patrician."

Additionally, Manolis Lambrakis, a 6th grade student of the Holy Trinity Cathedral School was the finalist amongst the runners-up, while Evgenia Katehis, also a 6th grader at St. Demetrios School of Astoria, was the runner-up. The winning word was "hyperbole."

Following are the names of the other contestants, their grade level, and school:

FINALISTS AND RUNNERS-UP

1. St. Spyridon School, New York City,

Christopher Labra, 6th grade Jonathan Rogers, 8th grade

2. D.G.K. School of Holy Cross, Brooklyn, Grigory Ivanov, 6th grade Konstantinos Voyiazis, 8th grade

3. "A. Fantis" Parochial School, Brooklyn, Julia Adelaine, 6th grade Allesandra Stratigakis, 7th grade

4. "W. Spyropoulos" School, Flushing, Evangelos Stathopoulos, Sotiris Emmanouil, 8th graders

5. E.&S. Valiotis School, Whitestone, Angelica Frangopoulos, Petros Vithoulkas, 5th graders

Following the competition, Archbishop Demetrios presented each student with a Certificate of Award. In addition students received gift cards on behalf of the District Office of Education.

Nick Katsoris, president of The Hellenic Times Scholarship Fund (HTSF), which sponsors the Archdiocesan District Competition, offered school



GOA/D. Panagos photo

Maria Makedon welcomes the parochial school participants to the annual spelling bee competition.

finalists a check for \$100 and \$50 to the runners-up.

The citywide Spelling Bee competitions are sponsored by The E.W. Scripps Company. The competitions aim at improving spelling, increase vocabulary, learn concepts, and develop correct English usage. They are open to boys

and girls, in grades 5 through 8. In New York City, competitions are sponsored by the New York *Daily News*.

The Office of Education of the Direct Archdiocesan District, headed by Maria Makedon, coordinates the competitions among the New York City Greek-American day schools.

ARCHDIOCESAN INSTITUTIONS - PHILOPTOCHOS

2015: Looking Back at a Great Year

National Philoptochos is grateful for the guidance, leadership and support of Archbishop Demetrios who led us through an important and wonderful year 2015 filled with expanded philanthropic endeavors.

We also thank our spiritual advisor Bishop Sevastianos of Zela for his constant support and the Philoptochos Chapters, members and stewards nationwide who continue to accelerate their commitment to the Philoptochos mission and open their arms and hearts with love and support to those most in need. We reflect with humility, joy and gratefulness upon the important philanthropic works collectively offered in 2015. Visitors to the Center praise this wonderful acquisition and especially admire the magnificent Chapter Giving Tree that adorns an entire wall. The Center is used for National Board and other meetings, for receptions, gatherings as well as webinars in addition to housing our wonderful National Philoptochos staff. National Philoptochos is poised to expand social services, offer workshops and varied webinars at the Center to promote understanding and leadership for the members.



March – Daughters of Penelope Grand President Anna-Helene Grossomanides (right) presents philanthropy award to National Philoptochos Vice President Arlene Siavelis Kehl and Bishop Sevastianos of Zela.

National Philoptochos Recognized

March 2015 – The Daughters of Penelope honored National Philoptochos with its Philanthropy Award at ceremonies in Washington.

Daughters of Penelope President Anna Helen Grossomanides presented the award to National Philoptochos First Vice President Arlene Siavelis Kehl who accepted on behalf of National President Maria Logus and the entire Philoptochos membership. Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, the National Philoptochos advisor, was also present representing Archbishop Demetrios.

HCHC graduation

May 2015 – Hellenic College Holy Cross Graduation – National President Maria Logus presented scholarships to male and female students pursuing a life in support of the Church.

October 2015 –HCHC Presidential Inauguration– National President Maria Logus offered moving remarks on behalf of National Philoptochos to hundreds in attendance for the inauguration of Fr. Christopher Metropulos as the new president.

St. Nicholas National Shrine

National Philoptochos has undertaken a major campaign that engages each Philoptochos member and chapter to raise funds in support of this important edifice that will serve as a beacon for humanity overlooking the memorial garden and fountains at the World Trade Center.

The National Board participated in a unique and moving afternoon during its May meeting in New York that included



June – National Philoptochos officers present Archbishop Demetrios a \$200,000 donation for St. Nicholas Church and National Shrine.

walking tours, private tours of the Shrine construction, the 9/11 Museum and the new World Trade Center Tower. Members and chapters from across the country are holding special programs and events to raise the important funds in support of this campaign so that the St. Nicholas National Shrine shines as an Orthodox Church, a National Shrine and a Sign of Hope for all who visit the site.

National President Sets Chapter Outreach Goals

National Philoptochos President Maria Logus set a vision and goals for National Philoptochos and the chapters, “To engage all members of the community in our work so that Philoptochos is fully integrated into the Church’s life.”

She introduced the “Feed the Hungry” program with a national goal to serve 250,000 meals in eighteen months before the national convention. We are well on the way to reaching this goal. Chapters are encouraged to continue ‘hands on philanthropy’ so that members participate in more meaningful engagement.



October – Metropolitan Iakovos of Chicago helps Metropolitan Board members feed the hungry.

15th Children’s Medical Fund Luncheon

The Children’s Medical Fund Luncheon held Oct. 31, 2015 in Boston was a resounding success with over 650 guests and supporters from across the United States joining Archbishop Demetrios and Metropolitan Methodios of Boston.

Archbishop Demetrios noted that this historic event has become a “super luncheon and a Banquet of Love.” Held every two years the CMF Luncheon raises life-saving funds for critically ill children and their families. Popular television personality Maria Stephanos charmed us as master of ceremonies and guest speaker Jeanette G. Clough, President and Chief Executive Officer of Mount Auburn Hospital, provided important data about health and social issues plaguing our youth. Rosemary Nikas, 2013 Luncheon chairman in Pittsburgh was honored for her good works. National Philoptochos President Maria Logus and Luncheon Chairman Frances Levas presented donations totaling \$167,000 to 10 hospitals, University research programs and special programs serving young people with disabilities.

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Saint Basil Academy: Fulfilling the Mission

by Evan Scurtis

As Orthodox Christians, we pride ourselves on respecting and providing for family. Following a first visit to Saint Basil Academy, many ask, “What happened to the family?” Society, today more than ever, is experiencing the breakdown of the family unit. When a child is born, the awesome responsibility given to parents is to nurture, protect and love this precious gift, to help him or her grow and thrive in a safe environment with guidance to become a good Orthodox Christian and an honorable citizen of society. For these reasons, Saint Basil Academy is more important today than ever...a safe haven for Orthodox children to flourish in a warm, loving environment.

Saint Basil Academy serves the needs of children from dysfunctional homes, children of chemically imbalanced parents, children who have witnessed the murder of a parent, children who have been physically and emotionally abused, children whose families do not want them.

There is without a doubt value in providing a Christian home to these children. Each one is worthy of being a part of the Academy. We must continue to provide impactful support for each and every child

in need. Saint Basil is the heart of our Orthodox Church mission. Philoptochos, with the generosity and support of many, is able to protect and help these children, to help them flourish, to provide unconditional love, to expose these children to the arts, to sports, to language, to the Orthodox Faith and most important, to the comfort of knowing that we love them and that they are God’s children of the Orthodox Christian Church.

Philoptochos is grateful for the work of Fr. Constantine Sitaras and his staff, who dedicate their efforts daily to helping these children in great need. Their work directly aligns with the Philoptochos mission to provide philanthropic assistance to anyone requiring the help of the Philoptochos sponsors two drives to benefit Saint Basil’s: the Vasilopita in January, which supports operating expenses; and the Sisterhood Fund in April, which provides for the physical needs of the children including clothing, furnishings and expenses. Please support these drives within your local parishes.

“Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

Matthew 25:40

New Approaches for St. Nicholas Initiative

by Anne Michals

Chapters throughout the country continue to raise funds for the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine building project, using creative new approaches to plan events, both large and In the Metropolis of Denver, St. Catherine Church and Assumption of the Theotokos Cathedral of Denver joined together to dedicate Sunday, Sept. 27, to raise funds for the project. All parish organizations, including Philoptochos, parish councils, choirs and GOYA, committed themselves to the effort. As the clergy and choirs served together for the glorious celebration, Philoptochos and parish councils sponsored the coffee hour and all monies raised through the sale of candles and trays were dedicated to the building project. In the Metropolis of Chicago, the St. Andrew Philoptochos in Chicago, organized an event held after Divine Liturgy on Sunday, Oct. 4, in support of the project. A luncheon, donated by a local restaurateur, followed by a downtown cruise aboard Chicago’s First Lady’s Cruise

Boat, became a day of fun and devotion for those who participated. A docent of the Chicago Architectural Foundation served as an expert guide while the cruise ship made its way past many historic sites. All proceeds from the event were earmarked to benefit the St. Nicholas project.

In the Direct Archdiocesan District, to promote fundraising efforts through individual donors, a Philoptochos member of Holy Resurrection Church in Brookville, N.Y., crafted a replica of St. Nicholas Church and Shrine. Donations, both large and small, make their way into the replica of St. Nicholas, which acts as an inspirational reminder of the support needed to bring to life the Church and in the Metropolis of New Jersey, sales of a Philoptochos cookbook, chapter luncheons, holiday candy and candle sales, along with private donations, have assisted chapters to finalize their commitment to raise funds for St. Nicholas Church and National Shrine.

To be a part of the fundraising Initiative, donate directly to your local chapter or your Metropolis Philoptochos.

Virginia Church’s ‘Acts of Kindness’

by Elli Costulis

Since 2013, the Philoptochos Society of Sts. Constantine and Helen Church, St. Helen Chapter 1095, Newport News, Va., has undertaken its own brand of kindness by its participation in the Act of Kindness (AOK) Project. The project, made up of volunteers from the entire church community, provides support to cancer patients who are receiving chemotherapy infusions at the Virginia Oncology Center in Newport News. Along with much needed friendship, support also comes in the form of food, packed with love and prayers.

Each Monday, team members make sandwiches, which are packaged along with chips and cookies, and serve them to the patients who are receiving chemotherapy infusions.

The Act of Kindness Project falls under the auspices of the Cancer Care Foundation of Tidewater Virginia. The St. Helen Philoptochos AOK Team was vetted thoroughly before being accepted into the AOK Volunteer Program. Chapter members have been serving lunch consecutively every Monday at Virginia Oncology since June 2013.

This act of kindness has become a point of pride for not only the Philoptochos chapter, but also the entire church family. The AOK Team is also supported by area restaurants and other generous donors who help by supplying the food items that go into the packages of love and care. The chapter knows that kindness matters and has witnessed these small acts of kindness become contagious among those who understand that everyone needs support at one time or another in their lives.

METROPOLIS NEWS

Michigan Parish Joins L-100

by George Schira

SOUTHGATE, Mich. – Three new memberships from the Metropolis of Detroit were added to Leadership 100 in fall 2015 with the decision of St. George Church, to join at its Parish General Assembly on Nov. 15.

The total membership is now 980, close to the goal of 1,000 members by the Annual Conference in February, according to Theodore K. Zampetis, Leadership 100 Membership Committee chairman.

Becomes the Third in the Metropolis to Join since the Fall

Fr. Anthony J. Cook, St. George's priest, spoke passionately about the scholarship assistance Leadership 100 had provided to him and to his brother, Fr. Timothy Cook, while they were seminarians at Holy Cross School of Theology. Fr. Timothy was recently ordained and began his first assignment serving at St. Demetrios Church in Saginaw, Mich., a year ago.

"Without Leadership 100, I doubt that I could have become a priest," said Fr. Anthony. "I felt a calling to the priesthood, but I didn't know how I would pay for it. I fear that without the help of Leadership 100, I would not have made it. I am grateful for the

help that Leadership 100 gave to my brother and to me, and I'm very happy that we are now helping others become priests through the scholarships given by Leadership 100".

Zampetis was on hand to accept the initial membership payment. "Membership in Leadership 100 isn't just for individuals" Ted noted. "There are now five parishes across the country that are members of Leadership 100. We pray that others will join as well to help fund the future of our faith." In September, the Zampetis Family Foundation enrolled Metropolitan Nicholas of the Metropolis of Detroit as a member of Leadership 100. "His Eminence was almost speechless as the emotionalism of his gratitude welled up inside him," said Zampetis.

"His Eminence is a strong believer in the power of Leadership 100 to support our faith".

A third recent new membership from the Metropolis of Detroit was that of Christopher and Katherine Rongos of Holy Trinity Church, Fort Wayne, Ind., earlier in November. The couple, business owners, who joined after hearing more about Leadership 100 and the ministries it supports at the Metropolis of Detroit Clergy-Laity Conference in October, said they believed that joining Leadership 100 was an excellent way to support the Orthodox Faith and help others for years to come.

In joining Leadership 100, St. George Church chose to honor the memories of Fr. Henry and Pani (Carpatho-Russian for wife of priest) Irene Yakima, and Robert and Betty Carlton. The Yakimas and Carltons were significant benefactors to the parish,



Photo courtesy of Leadership 100

Parish council President Stavros Dionyssopoulos and Fr. Anthony Cook (center) present check for Leadership 100 membership to Theodore Zampetis, Leadership 100 Membership Chairman. Others in front row (from left) Parish Council members Tom Volzikos and Bill Colovos, Leadership 100 Members Sam Galanis and Lazaros Kircos and (far right) parish council member Kosta Grias. Back row (from left) parish council members Mike Liakos, Chris Kontos, Nicholas Minton, George Kotronis, Pete Makarounas.

with large bequests made through their estates and the parish felt it was appropriate to honor their memory in this lasting way. Fr. Henry Yakima, who once served as assistant priest at St. George, felt strongly about helping HCHC as the institution that produces our priests and the Yakima's son, John, believes that his parents would also want to support the St Nicholas Greek

Orthodox National Shrine, both of which are strongly supported by Leadership 100.

The Carltons had previously funded a full scholarship for a seminarian at Hellenic College/Holy Cross. At the time of joining L100, St. George had three individual members – the late Dr. William Athens, who passed away on Nov. 30, 2015, Sam Galanis, and Lazaros Kircos.

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Evan Lambrou photo

Ithaca Alderman Joseph Murtagh presents an official proclamation to St. Catherine Church in Ithaca for the church's 50th anniversary. (from left) Fr. Tom Parthenakis (pastor), Alderman Murtagh, Ann Bantuvanlis (parish council president) and Fr. George Dragas, featured speaker.

Ithaca Church Celebrates 50th Year

ITHACA, N.Y. – St. Catherine Church celebrated the 50th anniversary of its official church charter recently with a special event, which was attended by the wider Ithaca community including local ministers, other area Orthodox Christian priests and Cornell University and Ithaca College faculty.

Rev. Dr. George D. Dragas, professor of patristics and Church history at Holy Cross School of Theology was the event's featured speaker. Fr. Dragas has represented the Ecumenical Patriarchates of Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem in scores of inter-faith dialogues at the ecumenical level for more than 35 years. To mark the occasion, Archbishop Demetrios also sent his archiepiscopal greetings to Rev. Dr. Athanasios Parthenakis, pastor, and the St. Catherine's parish community for the event: His Eminence wrote, in part: "For the last 50 years,

you have gathered humbly and joyfully before God in prayer. You have proclaimed the Gospel with power and conviction. You have taught the precepts of the Orthodox Christian faith, through your words and deeds, to each generation... You share in a sacred history as an ecclesial community of the Great Church of Christ."

Alderman Joseph Murtagh of Ithaca presented St. Catherine's community with an official proclamation from the City of Ithaca: proclaiming Nov. 25 as 'St. Catherine Greek Orthodox Church Day. Four sons of the parish graduated from Holy Cross: the late Metropolitan Epiphanius (Gus) Perialas; the Very Rev. Seraphim (John) Poulos, pastor of Sts. Nicholas, Constantine & Helen Church in Roseland, N. J.; Rev. Steve Dalber, pastor of St. Nektarios Church in Charlotte, N. C.; and Evan C. Lambrou, event organizer.

METROPOLIS NEWS

New Jersey Parish Sends Aid to Syrian Refugees in Greece

PISCATAWAY, N.J. – Thousands of Syrian refugees at a camp in Eidomeni, Kilkis, northern Greece, received 31 boxes bursting with winter clothing, coats, boots, blankets, hats, gloves, scarves, diapers, and toys given by St. George Church members in Piscataway, NJ, as the result of a two-week initiative, "Heartfelt Action."

Eidomeni is the sole border crossing point between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) on the national highway along the Vardar River north of Thessaloniki. This camp is just one stop on the dangerous journey refugees endure as they travel to other parts of Europe.

Parishioner Alexandra Avgitidis, project coordinator of "Heartfelt Action," was inspired to start this initiative after viewing the devastation experienced by the Syrian refugees daily via the evening news. After doing some research, she found that more than 6,000 refugees were arriving on the Greek islands daily, and from there were put on boats to Piraeus and Athens. Then they were packed on buses to go to the refugee camp in Eidomeni.

There they rest for a few days before continuing on-foot to Skopje, FYROM, where they would be either be bused or continue on foot to more stable situations.

However, with many Balkan nations recently closing their borders to these refugees, their stay in Eidomeni has been extended. She also learned that most refugees arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs and the children in their arms. With winter coming, she was moved to act.

"My grandparents and my husband's



Young parishioners of St. George Church in Piscataway prepare to send boxes of supplies to the Syrian refugees in Greece.

grandparents were also refugees coming from Turkey to Greece in the 1920s. Watching these people arriving to Greece in the same condition as our grandparents did, with a child in their arms and nothing else, I was seeing my grandparents in their faces. The same agony, the same uncertainty, the same devastation. I had to do something to help these refugees and at the same time honor our grandparents' memory," Alexandra said. "History is repeating itself, the least we can do is ease the pain it inflicts on the unfortunate victims."

After making phone calls to family in northern Greece, she was connected with a group of volunteers from Eidomeni and nearby Polykastro organized by the Eidomeni Coordinating Refugee Help, who took it upon themselves to feed and clothe the arriving refugees in Eidomeni, at the border of Greece and FYROM. These volunteers described the humanitarian crisis occurring there – thousands of refugees

arriving daily, the lack of food and basic necessities, as well as the current inability of the European governments to decide how to proceed with the replacement of these refugees. A few NGO's started operating in Eidomeni in the last few weeks, but the number of arriving refugees is so great that the situation has become volatile and dangerous.

With the support of St. George Church, the two-week initiative was launched on Nov. 11 with a Facebook campaign, and a call to action throughout the St. George Community. Parishioners opened their closets and drawers in an effort to send hope, love and warmth to the Syrians arriving in Eidomeni. The initiative collected hundreds of coats, scarves, hats, blankets, boots, toys, and diapers among other necessities, as well as messages of hope from the parishioners. The 31 boxes were shipped via Argos Packing and Shipping, who donated the packing boxes and part of the shipping cost.

"The response of the community was overwhelming and there were times when I was moved to tears," Alexandra said. "Some people did not just donate their used clothing, but actually went out and bought blankets, towels, children's coats.

I had to use airless bags to manage the packaging to fit everything at minimum cost. I called this movement Heartfelt Action because, more than anything, our community opened its heart. We will warm a child, a mother, a family and this thought will warm our own hearts.

My favorite box is the one filled with small stuffed animals. Imagine a child that has nothing holding a toy while walking the long trek to Europe. In the boxes there are notes from families and drawings with good wishes from our Sunday School children to be given to the refugees. We want them to know they are in our thoughts and give them hope for their future."

Chicago Metropolis Calls for Support of UN Resolution

by Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos

Since the end of the Second World War, an international effort has been undertaken to protect civilians in armed conflict and to prevent genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. In 2005, recognizing the ongoing failure to adequately respond to the most heinous crimes known to humankind, world leaders at the United Nations World Summit made a historic commitment to protect populations through a resolution titled the "Responsibility to Protect," which stipulates that:

1. The State carries the primary responsibility for the protection of populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

2. The international community has a responsibility to assist States in fulfilling this responsibility and;

3. The international community should use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to protect populations from these crimes. If a nation fails to protect its populations or is in fact the perpetrator of crimes, the international community must be prepared to take stronger measures through the

United Nations Security Council.

Syria conflict

The current conflict in Syria, once confined but now enveloping Iraq and much of the Middle East, has endured far too long in endless fighting. The international community has witnessed numerous examples of war crimes, of ethnic cleansing, and far too many examples of genocide against Christian minorities.

Just earlier this year in a barbaric, visual display, 21 men were executed for no other reason than being Christians. This incident itself is the very definition of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

In yet another example, we have seen the Arabic letter "N" appear on Christian properties throughout the region, a readily visible reminder of the Jewish Star placed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Once an individual finds this mark on their property, they have less than 24 hours to leave or face certain death for themselves and their family.

Yet despite signing to support the principles of "Responsibility to Protect," the elected leaders of our own nation have yet to officially enact this important resolution. While it may seem like we in the United States have little ability to change

matters in the Middle East and elsewhere, I am convinced change can be achieved through added education and attention to the problem. We made a commitment along with the other member nations of the United Nations to never again sit back and allow such heinous crimes to be committed. Now that we see them displayed before our very eyes, how can we ignore that commitment?

The Metropolis of Chicago has called on our President, Senators and Congressmen to take the steps required to officially enact the "Responsibility to Protect" resolution. We have sent them our own resolution addressing this issue passed by our

Clergy Laity Assembly as well as strongly encouraged each individual parish and parishioner to reach out to their individual national leader on this topic.

The Metropolis of Chicago Clergy Laity Assembly Resolution concerning the Middle East can be viewed on our website at www.Chicago.GOArch.org. We encourage everyone to print it off and share it with your family and friends as well as presenting it to your national elected leadership. Together we can make a difference. Together our voices cannot be ignored.

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos is Chancellor of the Metropolis of Chicago.

Utah Church Preparing for Centennial Event

PRICE, Utah -- Members of the Assumption Church are preparing to celebrate the centennial of their church. The event will be held Aug. 19-21 weekend. Assumption was the 13th Greek Orthodox church to be built in the United States, and is believed to be the oldest Greek Orthodox church in continuous use west of the Mississippi. This early church was financed by the many Greek immigrants who came to Utah—mostly to work in the coal mines of Carbon County.

The descendants of these early settlers now live in all parts of the United States. Parish officials say they hope that some of them may want to celebrate with the Assumption community. They also invite anyone with photographs or stories about those early Greek immigrants of Carbon County, Utah, to share them. They may send any materials to Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, History Committee, P.O. Box 688, Price, Utah 84501.



Photo courtesy of Fr. Touloumes

Archdiocese Presbyters Council Retreat Draws Large Attendance

by Fr. John Touloumes

SAN DIEGO, Calif. – A record number of clergy from around the Archdiocese convened in San Diego for the Archdiocese Presbyters Council's 2015 National Clergy Retreat Nov. 1-3.

The theme for this biennial event, *Be Well. Be Real. Be Love*, provided numerous opportunities for those in attendance to focus on physical, spiritual and emotional wellness and to return to their ministries with renewed energy, focus and dedication. These retreats, coordinated by the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council, are a central part of the mission of the APC "to serve the clergy of the Archdiocese by supporting our priests through spiritual growth, educational development and personal wellness."

Metropolitan Gerasimos of the host

Metropolis of San Francisco opened the event with a warm and personal welcome, followed by greetings from retreat Chairman Fr. Louis Noplos, who announced that with nearly 180 hierarchs, priests and deacons present, the largest National Clergy Retreat in Archdiocese history.

Archbishop Demetrios presided from the throne for the Divine Liturgy on Nov. 3 at St. Spyridon Church in San Diego, with APC President Fr. John Touloumes and host priest Fr. Andrew Scordalakis serving.

Following the Liturgy, the clergy were greeted with gracious hospitality and a delicious brunch by St. Spyridon Parish Council and Philoptochos members.

Archbishop Demetrios then offered a pastoral address and insights on the retreat theme.

Dr. Trent Orfanos, a respected cardiologist and dedicated servant of the Church,

led the first "Encounter," focusing on the "Be Well" segment of the theme. Using his own extensive experience supported by studies and research, he gave the clergy insights and advice on being good stewards of their gift of physical health.

Strong emphasis was placed on the benefits of the Mediterranean diet, a natural extension of the cultural environment in which our clergy serve. He also challenged the group with question such as "How do you benefit spiritually by being healthy?" and "What appropriate boundaries can you establish so that your health, which is essential for your ministry, will not be jeopardized?"

The second encounter session was offered by Bishop Gregory of Nyssa, ruling hierarch of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the USA and former priest of the Metropolis of Atlanta. His Grace offered a powerful message calling on priests to "be real" in every of their ministry and life, drawing upon his own experience as a layman, priest and hierarch. He raised questions such as "What are mercy and compassion and how do they fit into our priesthood?" and "What are some of the challenges to your integrity?"

Workshop discussion groups, called "engagements" and led by the APC representatives, provided all participants the opportunity to reflect, share and discuss their own experiences in an open and honest forum with their co-workers in Christ. Retreat attendees have expressed a great appreciation for the opportunity to do so and often note that those sessions are a highlight of the biennial retreat.

In keeping with the health and well-

ness theme, professional fitness trainers conducted sessions to teach the participants exercises and fitness techniques based on their level of activity. Meal selections were also based on healthy food choices throughout the event. George Caravakis from the Orthodox Health Plan was also on site to offer health and wellness information, including answering questions about the health insurance coverage and Aetna health incentive programs.

In keeping with the "retreat" model and offer opportunities beyond presentations and discussions, an afternoon of "adventures" was provided on Thursday, including options to tour the *USS Midway* Museum or enjoy an afternoon of fishing, golfing or simply relaxing personal refreshment time.

The retreat's goals of providing crucial priestly fellowship as well as ministry enrichment were well- reflected in the comments of one participant, who said, "The retreat gave me an opportunity to meet and form relationships with other clergy around the country. Having this sort of support network is vital for me as a young priest." This first-time participant also stated, "I was able to acquire new skills through presentations and workshops that I will be able to use in my ministry." Archbishop Demetrios, recognizing the value and important of such opportunities, continued to challenge the APC to strive for even greater participation in the future so that all the clergy of our Archdiocese can share in those benefits.

For more information on the APC, visit apc.goarch.org.

Fr. Touloumes is APC president.



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St. Photios Shrine Essay Contest Winners Named

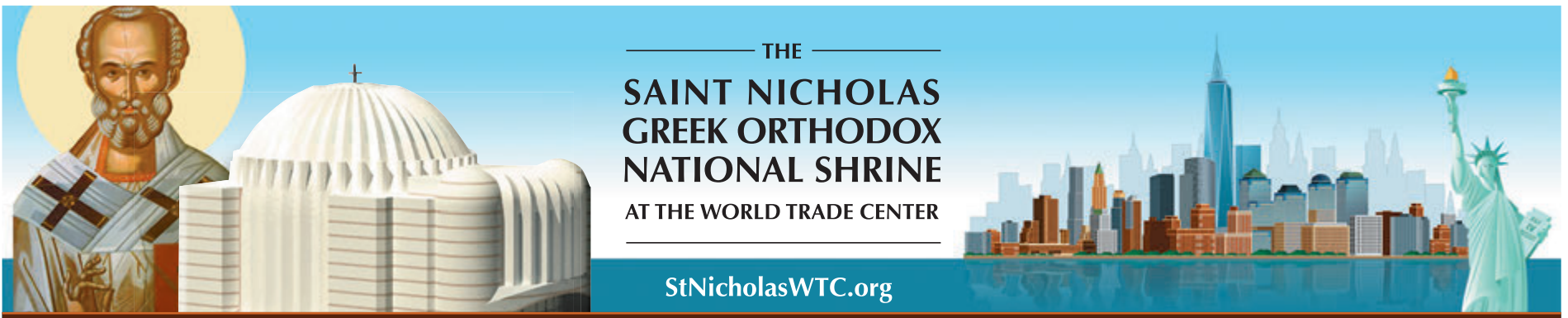
by Polyxeni Maouris Hillier

ST AUGUSTINE, Fla. – St Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine Essay Contest program Chairman Katherine Bacalis has announce the winners of the 11th annual National Shrine Essay Contest. High school students compared the immigrant story of a family member with the immigrant story of the Greeks who arrived in America with the Turnbull expedition in 1768.

Florentina Sergiou, of St. Barbara Church in Toms River, N.J., placed first; Joshua Graziani of St. George Church in Southgate, Mich., placed second; and Victoria Martine of Holy Trinity Church in Carmel, Ind., placed third. The St Photios Foundation trustees join the Essay Committee members in offering congratulations to the students, their parents and their parishes. First Vice President Archon Dr. Manuel N. Tissura expressed his gratitude to Kate D'Anna and AHEPA Speedway Chapter 410 for their financial support of the program. "It is one of the few ways to connect with high school

students across the country. The essay contest gets our kids thinking about early Greek Immigration to America and the history of their own families." Mrs. Bacalis expressed deep appreciation to essay judges Dr. Eleni Derke, Dr. Constantine Santos and Stathis Xynidis and committee members Dr. Tony Tsitos and Renee Gahagan for the time and resources they bring to this valuable program. Florentina Sergiou underscored the mission of the Essay program in her essay summary: "I learned a lot from writing this essay. I never knew that some of the first Greek immigrants came over in the 1700's. I always thought that it wasn't until Ellis Island opened that there were Greeks in America. When you think about it, our culture has been broadcasted throughout the nation for almost 250 years, we still follow our religious traditions, teach our children to speak, read and write the language and learn the dances and music and so much more."

Polxeni Maouris Hillier, Director St Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine



GOA EarthCam photo

Progress Continues at St. Nicholas Church and Shrine Site

Recent photos from the Archdiocese webcam that records the daily construction progress at the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine feature a visit to the site by executives and other officials of Titan and Corona cement companies, which are donating the concrete used to build the structure. Fr. Alex Karloutsos, assistant to the Archbishop for public affairs, and Jerry Dimitriou, executive director of administration, briefed the visitors on the work under way. The above panoramic view also shows the area of the memorial park that will surround the church.



Photos courtesy of Andrew Veniopoulos



Photo courtesy of Persefone Sticka

Hartford Philoptochos Raise Thousands for Church and National Shrine

NEW YORK.— The Ladies Philoptochos Society of St George Cathedral in Hartford, Conn. raised \$9,000 for St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center. The Society held a Christmas Dance on the eve of the Feast Day of St Nicholas, with all proceeds from the event benefiting this National Shrine Initiative. It was held at the Cathedral’s social hall on Dec. 5 and included a buffet dinner and live music by George Karatzas and Athenian Entertainment.



Baltimore Event to Benefit St. Nicholas Project

BALTIMORE – A benefit concert for St. Nicholas Church and National Shrine sponsored by AHEPA Worthington Chapter 30 will take place March 12 at Germano’s Cabaret, 300 S. High St. in the “Little Italy” neighborhood. The concert will feature vocalist Tony Ziesat and pianist Stef Scaggiari in their “Roller Coaster of Love” concert, featuring music from the Great American Songbook and jazz standards. Tony is a

member of Annunciation Cathedral and second vice president of the AHEPA chapter. The cabaret dining room will open at 6:00 p.m. The music will begin at 7:30 and end at 9:30. Ticket price is \$25 and 40 percent of the proceeds will be donated to the St. Nicholas project. To purchase tickets, call (410) 752-4515. Or tickets may be purchased online, via the following website: <http://germanospiattini.com/events/>

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to the St. Nicholas National Shrine, make checks payable to:
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www.stnicholaswtc.org

OBITUARIES

Fr. John Romas

It is with deep sorrow that the Archdiocese announces the passing of Fr. John Romas on Jan. 24. He was the pastor of St. Nicholas Church in lower Manhattan that was destroyed in the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Fr. John died shortly after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and reposed peacefully at White Plains Hospital, NY.

Fr. Romas (Ιωάννης Ρωμαίου) was born on April 10, 1929, to Demetrios and Basiliki Ραμπαούνη in Dorvitsa, Nafpaktias, Greece.

Upon completion of his high school education, he went on to complete a four year program at the School of Mechanics in Athens, Greece. He arrived in the United States on August 29, 1952, and later that year married Lorraine (Ourania) Papa-christou in Mt. Vernon, N.Y.

Fr. John followed his calling later on in life and in August 1984 was ordained a deacon and presbyter in Greece. Following his return to the United States in 1987, Archbishop Iakovos assigned him as the proistameno of St. Nicholas Church.

A priest for almost 32 years, Father John served with zeal and dedication, and indeed was the heart and soul of the St. Nicholas Church, especially after its destruction.

He labored tirelessly for the rebuilding of the church and anxiously awaited the completion of his beloved St. Nicholas, taking much pride in its designation as a National Shrine of our Archdiocese.

A compassionate and kind man with a gentle soul, Father truly loved his Church, his parishioners, and his beloved Presvytera of 64 years who survives him. May the Good Lord grant him rest in His



FR. JOHN ROMAS

heavenly kingdom and give comfort and strength to his loved ones.

May his memory be eternal!

Funeral service was held Jan. 29 at Sts. Constantine and Helen Cathedral in Brooklyn, where he assisted following 9/11, with Archbishop Demetrios officiating.

The family requests that donations be made in memory of Father John to the St. Nicholas Rebuilding Fund or for the St. Nicholas kouvouklion used for the Good Friday Epitaphion.

Fr. Stephen Peter Theophilos

FREDRICKSBURG, Va. - Fr Stephen Peter Theophilos, a retired priest, passed away Dec. 23, at his home. He was 84 and

had been retired since May 31, 2002.

He was born in Montreal, Canada on Dec. 19, 1931, the youngest of four brothers: Fr. Theo, Apostolos and Christos Theophilos; all deceased.

He was the devoted husband to Presvytera Betty Theophilos, father to Panayota Kevgas (George), and Papou to Marianna, Markella and John Kevgas.

He attended Holy Cross School of Theology from 1952-58 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He continued his education at Holy Cross School of Divinity in 1958-59, and Boston University receiving his Bachelor of Divinity as well as his Master of Sacred Theology degrees. In the early sixties, he attended the University of Athens where he received his doctoral degree in theology.

He eventually returned to Boston University where he received his Master of Science degree in communications and public relations.

In his early years, he spent a great deal of time working for the Archdiocese as a special diocesan assistant, director of Religious Education and as executive secretary for the Archdiocese, followed by a position as managing editor of the Greek Orthodox Theological Review. In the late 1960s, Fr. Steve served concurrently as executive vice president, admissions director and public affairs director at Hellenic College.

In 1972, he met his future wife, Betty, and they married six months later in November. The following December, their only child, Panayota, was born, named after Fr. Steve's mother.

He spent many of his early years working for the Archdiocese before being ordained. He then served as priest at St. Luke in Broomall, Pa., and St. George Church in Trenton, N.J. before moving to Fredericksburg, where he served at Nativity of the Theotokos. Four years later, Fr. Steve semi-retired and continued to perform Sunday liturgies at various parishes in Virginia, including Transfiguration Church in Charlottesville.

Prof. Theodore Kaltsounis

SEATTLE - Theodore "Ted" Kaltsounis, Ph.D., a University of Washington Professor Emeritus of Education, who was instrumental in the development and production of new Archdiocese Sunday School materials, died Dec. 13. He was 85.

Born in Divri, Albania on Feb. 15, 1930, to Fr. Haralampos and Sophia (Pappas) Kaltsounis, and his family fled to Greece at the end of World War II to escape persecution by Albania's communist regime. He came to the U.S. on a Fulbright Scholarship and subsequently earned his doctorate at the University of Illinois, focusing his research on social studies and civics instruction for elementary-school students. He met his wife, Maria (Mesires), during his first university teaching position in Oswego, N.Y. They married Aug. 25, 1963, in Watertown, N.Y. and moved to Seattle when he joined the University of Washington faculty in 1967.

His career was marked by many creative programs he initiated and his leadership in local and national organizations. In the late 1980's, as part of a commission established by the Department of Religious Education, he presented a plan to Archbishop Iakovos to redo the pre-school through 5th grade curriculum.

The result was the acclaimed and widely used series "Living Our Orthodox Faith." Dr. Kaltsounis wrote the 1st and 2nd grade books, "Me and My World" and "Loving God," as well as helping to select the authors and providing oversight for the other volumes.

Another highlight was his 13-year project to help democratize Albania through reforming its education system. Funded by the U.S. State Department, this project trained hundreds of educators and created curriculum materials to teach Albanian children the principles of democratic governance as the country emerged from decades of communism. Dr. Kaltsounis' work there is described in his 2010 book "The Democratization of Albania." In his honor, Albania's University of Elbasan created the Theodore Kaltsounis Center for Democratic Citizenship Education.

Dr. Kaltsounis also served as UW Faculty Senate chairman and as president of the National Council for the Social Studies. He authored many other books, including one of Silver Burdett Ginn's most successful elementary social studies textbooks. Active in university affairs even after his retirement, Dr. Kaltsounis spearheaded the creation of the UW Hellenic Studies Program in the Jackson School of International Studies and a study-abroad program for UW students to attend the University of Ioannina in Greece. A long-time member of St. Demetrios Church in Seattle, Dr. Kaltsounis served as parish council president and as a psalti.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 52 years, Maria; his children Sophia (Chris) Tobe, George (Christina) Kaltsounis, and Andreas (Sarah) Kaltsounis; and six grandchildren. He is also survived by his younger siblings Yiannoula Beroukas, Vasilios "Bill" Kaltsounis, Kassiani Zikos, Orestes "Rusty" Kaltsounis, and Eleftheria Mpras, and their families.

Funeral services were held at St. Demetrios Church on Dec. 21.

Submitted by Clifford T. Argue

Fr. Chris Hadgigeorge

TOLEDO - Fr. Chris Hadgigeorge, retired priest and pastor emeritus of Holy Trinity Cathedral, died Dec. 17 in his Sylva Township home. He was 91.

Holy Trinity community was organized in June, 1915, and has worshiped at its distinctive home on Superior Street north of downtown since 1919. Fr. Chris arrived as pastor in 1960.

Holy Trinity was consecrated as a cathedral in 1966. Fr. Chris oversaw renovations to the building and the educational center and the purchase of surrounding property while supporting parish leaders' decision to stay put.

Fr. Chris was enthusiastic when the parish threw a festival in 1971, and Holy Trinity's Greek festival has become an annual affair.

He retired as Holy Trinity pastor in 1991. Afterward, he served as interim pastor of Assumption Church in Springfield, Ohio, for several months but stayed in Toledo.

He was named a protopresbyter in 1973 by Archbishop Iakovos and received the patriarchal cross from Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in 2006.

Fr. Chris was born Aug. 3, 1924, in Youngstown, to Paraskevi and William Hadgigeorge, immigrants from the Greek island of Samos. He was an altar boy growing up and sang in the choir.

He was a 1942 graduate of Youngstown's East High School. He went to Holy Cross School of Theology and was ordained in 1948.

He was ordained a deacon April 25, 1948 at Annunciation Church in Woburn, Mass., and as a priest at Holy Trinity Church in Indianapolis, where he served as priest

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FAITH RELATED

Proposals sought for Human Trafficking Project

St. Catherine's Vision (SCV), an international, pan-Orthodox Christian, non-profit organization, is circulating an open "Call for Proposals" requesting help from qualified persons who wish to participate in a public service ministry or "diakonima" in "Divine Compassion and Human Trafficking."

This initiative will facilitate the establishing of a pan-Orthodox Christian response that is spiritually and psychologically safe, engaging the issue of Human Trafficking, "cultivating a dialogue to promote sound collaborative initiatives across Orthodox Christian jurisdictions, agencies and interested persons to "light a Candle in the darkness" of this ongoing tragedy.

SCV seeks to bring a measure of competent, practical relief to help in healing and liberation in as many contexts as possible and to draw together a small, select pan-Orthodox group of experienced theologians, leaders and practitioners whose proven work and expertise directly engage in this ministry or service.

This invitation also is extended to respected non-Orthodox experts in the field.

A Three-to-Five Year Process:

In order to discern and help build the first phase of this collaborative framework, SCV anticipates a three to five year process

of private consultations, which will also be organized in conjunction with an annual public event (e.g. a lectureship or conference), so that Orthodox Christians and the general public may benefit from these conversations and service. The ministry also will release updates through the social media outlets of SCV, our collaborators and friends, and other organizations.

St. Catherine's Vision is an international, pan-Orthodox Christian, non-profit organization. SCV brings women theologians together with ordained and lay servant-leaders addressing contemporary concerns in a manner that is established in and accountable to the living tradition and canonical heritage of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Founded in 2001, it is an endorsed organization of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. SCV is governed by a board of directors who manage general affairs and a larger advisory board (or advisory council), who, together comprise the bulk of a "prayer-based think tank...that also acts." Dr. Kyriaki FitzGerald is the executive director.

For more information, contact SCV at www.saintcatherinesvision.org.

OBITUARIES

until Feb. 28, 1957. His next assignment was St. Nicholas in Detroit until Nov. 30, 1960, then was assigned to Holy Trinity, Toledo.

He was a board member of the Toledo Council of Churches and was active in the International Institute.

Surviving are his wife, Presvytera Ann Hadgigeorge, whom he married March 7, 1948; daughters, Pattie Senerius and Angie Bohland; son, William; sister, Presvytera Zafera Bartz; six grandchildren, and two great-granddaughters.

An vesperal liturgy Dec. 22 was followed by funeral services in the cathedral.

Fr. Demetrios Michaelides

ABINGTON, N.H. – Fr. Demetrios Michaelides, 98, a retired priest, died Jan. 1. He had been retired since Jan. 1, 1987.

He was born Oct. 9, 1917 in Larnaka, Cyprus, and came to the United States in 1936. He attended the University of Chattanooga, Tenn., and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, then enrolled at Holy Cross Seminary in Ponfret, Conn., graduating in 1942.

He was ordained a deacon May 10, 1942 at Holy Trinity Church in Fitchburg, Mass., and as a priest Feb. 23, 1943 at Annunciation Cathedral in Boston, by Bishop Athenagoras Cavadas.

His first assignment was at Annunciation as a deacon, then was assigned to Assumption Church in Ipswich, Mass., from Feb. 24, to November 1943.

Fr. Michaelides subsequent parishes included St. Demetrios, Biddeford, Maine (1943-46), Annunciation in Chattanooga (1946-1952), St. Paul, Savannah, Ga., (1952-55), St. John, Wheeling, W.Va. ((1955-61), St. Catherine, Wollaston, Mass. ((1961-69), Holy Trinity, Fitchburg, Mass. (1969-80), and St. Nicholas, Portsmouth, N.H. ((1980-86).

He was predeceased by this presvytera Angeliki Demetriou Cotoulas Dec. 26, 2008. Survivors include three children, Joh, Catherine and Eleni Efrosyne.

George P. Brown

COLUMBUS, Ohio – George P. Brown, 98, an Archon, member of Leadership 100, the Archdiocesan Council and a member of Archbishop Iakovos' Advisory Council died March 24. Locally, he was a benefactor to the Annunciation Cathedral in Columbus, Ohio.

Brown was born in Columbus April 13, 1916 to immigrant Greek parents, Peter G. and Panagiota Kalantjopoulos Brown.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 53 years, Helen Spiropoulos Brown, his sister Esther Brown Sakellariou and his parents.

He graduated from Central High School in 1934 and Ohio State University in 1938.

He was a certified public accountant and businessman.

He served the Greek Orthodox Church at all levels. He also was a member of the Order of AHEPA.

A decorated World War II veteran, having served in the European Theater in the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps, as an undercover special agent.

Survivors include his three children, Pamela B. (George) Limbert, Stella B. Economy, Peter G. (Joni) Brown; nine grandchildren, Maria Limbert (George) Markakis, Elena Limbert, Mitchell Limbert, George Brown (Rita) Limbert, Diana Economy, Michael (Katie) Economy, Kathryn Economy, Angela Brown and George P. Brown; three great grandchildren, Aristotle and Panagiota Markakis and George R. Economy; nephew, Nicholas (Darla) Sakellariou; sister-in-law, Christine Spiropoulos; numerous extended family.

Funeral services took place at Annunciation Cathedral. Memorials may be made to the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral Foundation Columbus; Chapel Fund, 555 N. High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

ENCYCLICAL

Feast of the Three Hierarchs and Greek Letters Day

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In our annual commemoration of the Feast of our three Holy Fathers, the Great Hierarchs and Ecumenical Teachers Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom, we affirm the power of their witness and guidance down through the centuries. As during the days of their pastoral ministry, their faith in God, their wisdom, and their holiness continue to lead us to Christ and deepen our understanding and experience of our relationship with Him.

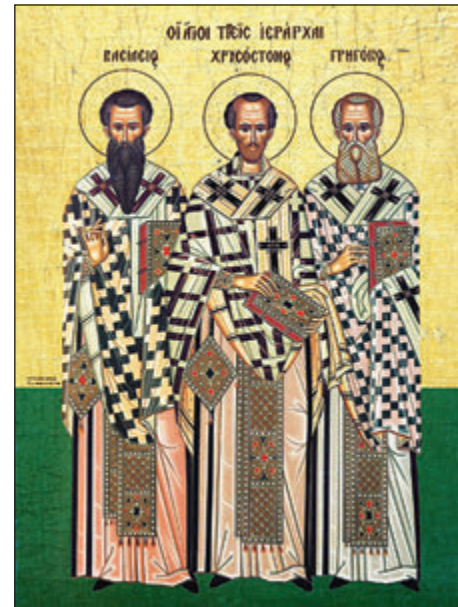
The blessed hymns of this Feast guide us in honoring the Three Hierarchs, and they also direct us to their teachings to explore the power and potential of our faith. In the service of Great Vespers we proclaim the Holy Fathers and Teachers as "instruments of the grace of God" and "stewards of the grace and words of Christ." As instruments of God's grace, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom offered divine compassion through their unwavering service to the people of God, their constant effort to help those in need, and their willingness to sacrifice their own health and security for the salvation of others.

Their stewardship of the grace and words of Christ are evident in the breadth and depth of their teaching and preaching. They were gifted and inspired expositors of the Holy Scriptures. They were willing messengers of God, seeking to communicate the truth in clarity and guide hearts and minds to the Source of grace and life. As they dedicated their minds and abilities to God, He consecrated their intellectual and oratorical abilities and their spiritual acumen for the sharing of the Gospel.

The Three Holy Hierarchs were able to be witnesses of God's grace because they knew firsthand the transformative power of grace. Saint Gregory the Theologian describes this power in his Oration on Holy Baptism: "Just as God gave existence to what did not exist, so too He gave new creation to what did exist, creation more divine and lofty than that which existed before, a seal for those only just entering life, and for those of more mature age a gift and a restoration to the image obliterated through wickedness."

In his commentary on Ephesians, St. John Chrysostom also describes the impact of God's grace, which He freely bestowed on us (Ephesians 1:6). Comparing the transformation of the soul to "a leper, wasted by distemper and disease, age and poverty" and turning "him all at once into a graceful youth, surpassing all mankind in beauty...arraying him in purple and diadem and all the attire of royalty," he states: "It is thus that God has arrayed and adorned this soul of ours, and clothed it with beauty, and rendered it an object of His delight and love."

This wisdom and truth concerning divine grace combined with their experi-



ence of it throughout their lives, gave the Three Hierarchs insight into the potential of grace. In his theological treatise *On the Spirit*, St. Basil affirms that the Spirit "sends forth grace sufficient and full for all mankind." In his commentary on *Thessalonians*, John Chrysostom explains how God gives us eternal comfort and good hope through grace (II *Thessalonians* 2:17). He states, "For if God has given so many things by grace, much more will come in the future." Chrysostom asks his hearers to see the potential of grace through the hope and comfort they have found in Christ.

This understanding of grace and its role in our lives is important in view of what happens today in our society. In our contemporary world we see ideologies, some even claiming divine origin, that combine hatred, violence, sin, and death with twisted views of human nature and destiny. It is evident that these movements and ideas are ignorant of or contrary to the reality of God's grace and its transforming power. They are radical distortions of the purpose and potential of human life because they are completely void of the grace and power of God.

Our celebration of this Feast and our annual commemoration of Greek Letters Day confronts these false ideologies with a vision of human life as it is intended to be transformed by the grace of God. The Three Hierarchs, Basil, Gregory, and John Chrysostom, combined their experience of God's grace with learning, language, and some of the highest forms of human expression. They offer a witness to us of how the presence of grace accentuates and transforms our abilities, creativity, and understanding of our existence by restoring our fellowship with God, destroying the power of sin, and giving us life, abundant and eternal.

As we commemorate these great champions of our faith, may we also celebrate the unique gift of the presence and grace of God. May His abundant grace be upon you and with you as you share His love through your faith, worship and service in His name.

With paternal love in Christ,

Archbishop Demetrios

† DEMETRIOS, Archbishop of America

OCMC

Miracles and Milestones: Missions in 2015

by Alex Goodwin

ST AUGUSTINE, Fla. – 2015 was an amazing year for Orthodox missions and the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC). None of it would have been possible without your prayers, support, and service. What follows are some highlights from the Mission Center programs that have shared Christ with a wanting world.

Following a wonderful term in Mongolia, the Moore family returned to the United States so that Chris could pursue a seminary education.

They plan to return to Mongolia, but while they are away OCMC missionary Kurt Bringerud will continue their growing “studies in the Faith” group.

The Ritsi family gave birth to their son Moses while in Albania. Both Deacon Stephanos and Alexandria were able to continue serving the youth of Albania while hosting mission teams that worked to share the Faith with young people. Alexandria taught at the Protagonist school directed by OCMC Missionary Presvytera Georgia Bendo.

The Hoppe family advocated for strong Albanian families. Nathan Hoppe, the Macdonald family, and Anastasia Barksdale continued training future Church leaders at the seminary.

Kenya welcomed Dr. William Black who began teaching at the Makarios III Seminary in Nairobi where Meagan Engelbach is also working on translating Church texts.

In Romania, Floyd Frantz expanded the reach of the Church’s substance abuse initiatives while his wife, Ancuta, continued

to direct the Protection of the Theotokos Day Center for unwed mothers.

The Chakos family, along with Jesse Brandow, saw the opening of a new clinic and further catechism of the Mayan people in Guatemala. The Ruckers returned to Alaska where Fr. David teaches at St. Herman seminary while Blake DiLullo continued construction and restoration projects throughout Diocese.

Sixteen Orthodox mission teams served around the world in 2015 including the first OCMC mission team to Indonesia and the first OCMC healthcare team to Guatemala. Teams also helped build a school in the Turkana village of Loupwala in northern Kenya.

A second OCMC team spent time with the people of San Esteban and Pisaflores, Mexico, where they taught the Faith to the Aztec people that call these villages home.

Two long-time priests who have been supported through the Support-a-Mission Priest Program (SAMP) were elevated to the episcopacy in Kenya in the past year. At the end of 2014, Fr. Neophytos Kongai was enthroned Bishop of Nyeri and later in 2015 Fr. Athanasius Akunda was ordained bishop of Kisumu.

In all, the SAMP program helped enable the pastoral ministries of 376 clergy in 16 countries.

The OCMC was also able to direct thousands of dollars to help fund various church projects as initiatives around the world aimed at building up the Church and encouraging self-sustainability around the world.



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COMMENTARY

Understanding Religious Fundamentalism

by Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis

Since the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979), religious fundamentalism has increasingly become known for its violent outbursts. The term refers to a pattern of militancy where self-styled true believers attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity by outsiders, fortify the borders of their community, and create alternatives to secular institutions, processes and behaviors.”

Its surge has caught many secularists by surprise. They had assumed that religion was a relic of the past, destined to disappear as Enlightenment thinking had overtaken the world.

These movements rose from conditions of the late 20th century that resulted in social and cultural change. They emerge in every religion as a reaction to major cultural and socioeconomic challenges and fears.

The key issue is less about what fundamentalists believe, than about the means they use. Some resort to violence against real or imaginary foes of their traditional beliefs and practices. However, not all use violence to advance their causes. Every religiously Orthodox, literate, and committed believer must not pejoratively called “fundamentalist.”

There is an enormous difference between ordinary, pious Muslims and bomb-throwing Islamic terrorists. Many pious Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Jews strenuously object to the claim their extremist co-religionists are the only one’s upholding or defending their faiths’ basic tenets.

Characteristics of religious fundamentalism

Specific modern social, political and cultural conditions have contributed to its resurgence.

Modernity has altered how people view themselves and others, and their relationships with one another. Profound changes have affected people’s worldviews, altered their relationship with the divine and contributed to dislocation from traditional personal and communal life.

People cope with modernity and its implications in various ways. Some react positively, enthusiastically endorsing modernity, leaving their beliefs and becoming secularists. Others relate to their tradition and faith with the positive aspects of modernity.

And still others dismiss modernism as a threat to everything they believe that leads to the devil and destruction. The only antidote to the consequences of modernity is adherence to a militant way through the basics of their religion and traditional culture.

They are critical of scientific rationalistic worldviews, but their opposition is not total. When they oppose television and the internet as technologies, their primary concern is mainly about the content transmitted through them, which promotes practices opposed to their religious values. Most, though, do not categorically reject technology and its achievements.

Their objection often occurs when the “decoupling” of religion and science has removed restraints from modern technology. For them, technology and science must be subordinated to religious principles.

There are only right and wrong, good

and evil, insiders and outsiders with no room for shades of gray. They imagine the world divided into realms of light and darkness, the pure and impure, the orthodox and the infidel.

Many dramatize this worldview within an apocalyptic framework: the world is in spiritual crisis, human history will come to a miraculous end with the ultimate triumph of good over evil, usually in the not-too-distant future, through divine intervention.

They have an absolutist moral outlook, seeing sacred truths as the foundation of genuine knowledge, and religious values as the base and summit of morality— a trait they share with other believers. They emphasize the importance of literally interpreting texts, considered to be of divine origin, inerrant and beyond question; invulnerable to critical analysis by secular science, history, cultural studies and literary theory. Yet, fundamentalists cannot retrieve their traditional beliefs without some theological revisions relating to modernity.

They selectively retrieve from the sacred past stories or lines and passages from their venerable texts to justify action designed to protect and bolster the besieged basic tenets of the religion and to fend off or conquer outsiders.

They interpret their tradition’s central texts to prove their faith can meet modern life’s challenges.

Fundamentalists focus on a utopian golden age of religion, a glorious past, whether historically accurate or mythical, they project into the future and believed to be within their reach through a transformative action.

This is compelling narrative to those disillusioned with modernity. It offers a comprehensive view of life grounded in an imaginary glorious past with a promise of an exalted future for those who think, act, and believe within their particular ideology.

They attribute the present decline in religious purity and perfection to the purposeful and treacherous dilution of religion by their co-religionists and set as their goal to overturn this catastrophic trend. This results in a deep sense of commitment.

Public morality is a central concern to most of these groups. They strongly believe that religion should have a central role in their societies’ public life. They approach the political arena with an anti-democratic outlook, rejecting the essentials of a democratic polity, including the notions of freedom of expression and inquiry, bargaining and compromise in reaching political agreements in a free society.

There is only one correct answer for them to all questions whether moral or political.

Those who believe differently are not simply mistaken but have allowed themselves to become instruments of the devil since they have failed to uphold the truth, which for them is simple.

They claim to be favored by God because they uphold the fundamentals of faith. They set clear boundaries between the threatening and dangerous outside world and their protected and sheltered world. The rigidity of their views is pro-

ΙΕΡΑ ΣΥΝΑΞΕΙΣ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΚΑΘΗΜΕΝΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΩΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΩΝ



Εγκύκλιος

Έορτή Αγίου Βασιλείου και Νέου Έτους

Πρός τούς Σεβασμιωτάτους και Θεοφιλεστάτους Αρχιερείς, τούς Εύλαβεστάτους Ιερείς και Διακόνους, τούς Μοναχούς και Μοναχές, τούς Προέδρους και Μέλη των Κοινοτικών Συμβουλίων, τά Ημερήσια και Απογευματινά Σχολεία, τίς Φιλοπτώχους Αδελφότητες, τήν Νεολαία, τίς Έλληνορθόδοξες Οργανώσεις και όλόκληρο τό Χριστεπώνυμον πλήρωμα τής Ιεράς Αρχιεπισκοπής Αμερικής.

Προσφιλείς Άδελφοί και Άδελφές εν Χριστώ,

Τήν πρώτη ημέρα του νέου χρόνου και κατά τήν εύλογημένη Έορτή του Αγίου Βασιλείου του Μεγάλου, προσδοκούμε τίς άφθονες εύλογίες και τά μεγάλα δωρήματα του Θεού και συνεχίζουμε νά Τόν δοξολογούμε και νά τόν τιμούμε διά τής λατρειας μας και διά τής πιστής διακονίας μας στό όνομά Του.

Καθώς αφιερώνουμε τό νέο έτος και τήν ζωή μας στό άγιο θέλημα του Θεού, άρμόζει επίσης στην άρχή αυτού του χρόνου νά τιμήσουμε τήν 25^η επέτειο διακονίας του προσφιλεστάτου Παναγιωτάτου Οικουμενικού Πατριάρχου μας κ.κ. Βαρθολομαίου. Πρόκειται, άληθώς, περί σημαντικού γεγονότος για τήν Ιερά Αρχιεπισκοπή μας άλλα και για τόν Όρθόδοξο Χριστιανισμό, καθώς ή περίοδος αυτή έμπεριείχε τεράστιες αλλαγές και προκλήσεις στόν κόσμο μας.

Στό άποστολικό πνεύμα του Αγίου Βασιλείου και πολλών άλλων Αγίων

► Σελίδα 18

ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΗ.- Προσκήλσει του Παναγιωτάτου Οικουμενικού Πατριάρχου κ. Βαρθολομαίου, έπραγματοποιήθη ή Σύναξις των Προκαθημένων των Όρθόδοξων Αύτοκεφάλων Έκκλησιών εις τό Όρθόδοξον Κέντρον του Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου εις Σαμπεζύ - Γενεύης από 21^{ης} - 28^{ης} Ιανουαρίου 2016.

Παρέστησαν οι Προκαθημενοι: Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Βαρθολομαίος, Άλεξανδρείας Θεόδωρος, Ιεροσολύμων Θεόφιλος, Μόσχας Κύριλλος, Σερβίας Ειρηναίος, Ρουμανίας Δαβιήλ, Βουλγαρίας Νεόφυτος, Γεωργίας Ήλιος, Κύπρου Χρυσόστομος, Άλβανίας Αναστάσιος και Τσεχίας και Σλοβακίας Ραστισλάβος, ενώ έκωλύθησαν νά παραστούν οι Μακαριώτατοι,

Πατριάρχης Άντιοχείας Ιωάννης και Μητροπολίτης Βαρσοβίας και πάσης Πολωνίας Σάββας, εκ λόγων υγείας, και ό Αρχιεπίσκοπος Αθηνών και πάσης Ελλάδος Ιερώνυμος, διά προσωπικούς λόγους, εκπροσωπηθέντες όμως δι' έπισήμων αντιπροσωπειών των Έκκλησιών αυτών.

Οί Προκαθημενοι των Όρθόδοξων Έκκλησιών συνήλθον διά νά ολοκληρώσουν τά θέματα τής Αγίας και Μεγάλης Συνόδου. Εις τό πλαίσιον τής Συνάξεως, τήν Κυριακήν, 24^η Ιανουαρίου, έτελέσθη Συλλειτουργον εις τόν Σταυροπηγιακόν Ναόν του Άπ. Παύλου, προεάρχοντος του Οικουμενικού Πατριάρχου

► Σελίδα 18

ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ ΤΑ ΑΓΙΑ ΘΕΟΦΑΝΕΙΑ ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΙΣ

Ή Α. Θ. Παναγιότης ό Πατριάρχης, τήν Τετάρτην, 6^η Ιανουαρίου, προέστη τής Θείας Λειτουργίας τής Έορτής των Θεοφανείων εν τῷ Π. Πατριαρχικῷ Ναῶ, εν συλλειτουργία μετά των Σεβ. Μητροπολιτών Γέροντος Νικαίας κ. Κωνσταντίνου, Γέροντος Περγάμου κ. Ιωάννου, Προικοννήσου κ. Ιωσήφ, Φιλαδελφειας κ. Μελίτωνος, Σεβαστειας κ. Δημητρίου, Ίκονιου κ. Θεολήπτου, Νειλουπόλεως κ. Γενναδίου, Προυσης κ. Ελπίδοφόρου, Κυδωνιάν κ. Αθηναγόρου και Σηλυβρίας κ. Μαξίμου. Έν τῷ τέλει τής Δοξολογίας, ή Α. Θ. Παναγιότης ό Πατριάρχης, έτέλεσε τόν Μέγαν Άγιασμόν. Μετά τήν Απόλυσιν τής Θ. Λειτουργίας, ό Πατριάρχης προέστη τής τελετής του Άγιασμού των υδάτων και τής Καταδύσεως του Τιμίου Σταυρού εις τήν θάλασσαν, εκ τής αποβάθρας του Φαναριου, συμπαραστατούμενος υπό των συλλειτουργών Αυτου Ίεραρχών, του λοιπου Κλήρου και του λαου εν πομπή εκ του Π. Πατριαρχικου Ναου, των κωδώνων αυτου κρουομένων χαρμοσύνως. Τόν Τιμιον Σταυρόν ανέσυρεν εκ τής θαλάσσης ό Έντιμ. κ. Νικόλαος Σολής, εξ Άγρινιου, εις δν ό Παναγιώτατος προσέφερεν εις εύλογίαν Σταυρόν καθώς και εις τούς ύπολοιπούς κολυμβητάς.

Επίσης, για πρώτη φορά μετά την καταστροφή του 1922 τελέστηκε ο αγιασμός των υδάτων για τα Θεοφάνεια στη Σμύρνη. Ο εορτασμός ξεκίνησε το πρωί με τη θεία λειτουργία στην Αγία Φωτεινή και στη συνέχεια έγινε ο αγιασμός των υδάτων και η κατάδυση του Τιμίου Σταυρού στο λιμάνι της Σμύρνης, απέναντι από το κτίριο του ελληνικού προξενείου. Στο λιμάνι της ιστορικής πόλης ο εορτασμός έλαβε πανηγυρικό χαρακτήρα. Τα λιγοστά μέλη της παροικίας και οι ορθόδοξοι της περιοχής έκαναν για πρώτη φορά ελεύθερα την τελετή του αγιασμού των υδάτων σε ανοικτό χώρο, μετά από επίσημη άδεια που έλαβαν από τις τουρκικές αρχές. Τον αγιασμό τέλεσε ο Αρχιμανδρίτης π. Κύριλλος Συκής, ο πρώτος ορθόδοξος ιερέας, ο οποίος λειτουργεί μόνιμα στη Σμύρνη μετά την καταστροφή.

Ετήσιος Αγιασμός των Υδάτων στο Τάρπον Σπρινγκς



Φωτογραφίες: GOA-ΔΗΜΗΤΡΗΣ ΠΑΝΑΓΩΣ

ΤΑΡΠΟΝ ΣΠΡΙΝΓΚΣ.- Τήν Τετάρτη, 6 Ιανουαρίου, ανήμερα της Εορτής των Θεοφανείων, τελέστηκε ο καθιερωμένος ετήσιος καθαγιασμός των υδάτων και η κατάδυσις του Τιμίου Σταυρού στο Τάρπον Σπρινγκς της Φλόριδας, προεάρχοντος του Σεβασμιωτάτου Αρχιεπισκόπου Γέροντος Αμερικής κ. Δημητρίου, με συλλειτουργούς το Μητροπολίτη Ατλάντας, Αλέξιο, τον Επίσκοπο Ζήλων Σεβαστιανό (Αρχιγραμματέα της Ιεράς Επαρχιακής Συνόδου) και τον π. Δ. Ρουσσάκη, με την παρουσία περισσοτέρων από 200.000 ομογενών. Το σταυρό ανέσυρε ο 17χρονος μαθητής Αντερσον Κομπς.

Η ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΗ ΤΗΣ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΥ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΣΥΓΧΡΟΝΩ ΚΟΣΜΩ

Ἡ συμβολή τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας εἰς ἐπικράτησιν τῆς εἰρήνης, τῆς δικαιοσύνης, τῆς ἐλευθερίας, τῆς ἀδελφοσύνης καὶ τῆς ἀγάπης μεταξύ τῶν λαῶν, καὶ ἄρσιν τῶν φυλετικῶν καὶ λοιπῶν διακρίσεων.

Σχέδιον κειμένου τῆς Ἁγίας καὶ Μεγάλης Συνόδου, τὸ ἐγκριθὲν ὑπὸ τῆς ἐν Σαμπεζύ-Γενεύης ἀπὸ 21 ἕως 28 Ἰανουαρίου 2016 Συνάξεως τῶν Ὀρθοδόξων Προκαθημένων Δημοσιεύεται συμφώνως πρὸς τὴν ἀπόφασιν τῆς Συνάξεως τῶν Προκαθημένων.

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ ζῆ «ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ», ἀλλὰ δὲν εἶναι «ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου» (Ἰωάν. 17, 11 καὶ 14-15). Ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἀποτελεῖ σημεῖον καὶ εἰκόνα τῆς Βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν τῇ ἱστορίᾳ, εὐαγγελιζομένη μίαν «καινὴν κτίσιν» (Β΄ Κορ. 5, 17), «καινοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ γῆν καινὴν... ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ» (Β΄ Πέτρ. 3, 13), ἕνα κόσμον, εἰς τὸν ὁποῖον ὁ Θεός «ἐξαλείψει πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν (τῶν ἀνθρώπων), καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι» (Ἀποκ. 21, 4-5).

Τὴν προσδοκίαν αὐτὴν βιώνει ἤδη καὶ προγεύεται ἡ Ἐκκλησία, κατ' ἐξοχὴν δσαὶς τελεῖ τὴν θείαν Εὐχαριστίαν, συνάγουσα «ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό» (Α΄ Κορ. 11, 20) τὰ διεσκορπισμένα τέκνα τοῦ Θεοῦ (Ἰωάν. 11, 52) εἰς ἕνα ἄνευ διακρίσεως φυλῆς, φύλου, ἡλικίας, κοινωνικῆς ἢ ἀλλῆς καταστάσεως, ὅπου «οὐκ ἐν Ἰουδαίῳ, οὐδέ Ἕλλην, οὐκ ἐν δοῦλος οὐδέ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἐν ἄρσεν καὶ θήλῳ» (Γαλ. 3, 28, πρβλ. Κολ. 3, 11), εἰς ἕνα κόσμον καταλλαγῆς, εἰρήνης καὶ ἀγάπης.

Τὴν πρόγευσιν αὐτὴν τῆς «καινῆς κτίσεως», τοῦ μεταμορφωμένου κόσμου, βιώνει ἐπίσης ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἰς τὰ πρόσωπα τῶν Ἁγίων τῆς, οἱ ὁποῖοι διὰ τῆς ἀσκήσεως καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς τῶν κατέστησαν ἤδη εἰς τὴν ζωὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνας τῆς Βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀποδεικνύοντες καὶ βεβαιοῦντες τοιοῦτοτρόπως ὅτι ἡ προσδοκία ἐνὸς κόσμου εἰρήνης, δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἀγάπης δὲν εἶναι οὐτοπία, ἀλλὰ «ἐπιζόμενα ὑπόστασις» (Εβρ. 11, 1), δυνατὴ μὲ τὴν χάριν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὸν πνευματικὸν ἀγῶνα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Ἐμπνεομένη διαρκῶς ἀπὸ τὴν προσδοκίαν καὶ τὴν πρόγευσιν αὐτὴν τῆς Βασιλείας τοῦ

Θεοῦ, ἡ Ἐκκλησία δὲν ἀδιαφορεῖ διὰ τὰ προβλήματα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τῆς ἐκάστοτε ἐποχῆς, ἀλλὰ, ἀντιθέτως, συμμετέχει εἰς τὴν ἀγωνίαν καὶ τὰ ὑπαρξιακά προβλήματά του, αἴρουσα, ὅπως ὁ Κύριός τῆς, τὴν ὀδύνην καὶ τὰς πληγὰς, τὰς ὁποίας προκαλεῖ τὸ κακὸν εἰς τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἐπιχέουσα, ὡς ὁ καλὸς Σαμαρείτης, ἔλαιον καὶ οἶνον εἰς τὰ τραύματα αὐτοῦ (Λουκ. 10, 34) διὰ τοῦ λόγου «τῆς ὑπομονῆς καὶ παρακλήσεως» (Ρωμ. 15, 4, Εβρ. 13, 22) καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐμπράκτου ἀγάπης. Ὁ λόγος τῆς πρὸς τὸν κόσμον ἀποβλέπει πρωτίστως ὄχι εἰς τὸ νὰ κινήσει καὶ καταδικάσει τὸν κόσμον (πρβλ. Ἰωάν. 3, 17 καὶ 12, 47), ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸ νὰ προσφέρῃ εἰς αὐτὸν ὡς ὀδηγὸν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον τῆς Βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὴν ἐλπίδα καὶ βεβαιότητα ὅτι τὸ κακὸν, ὑπὸ οἰανδήποτε μορφὴν, δὲν ἔχει τὸν τελευταῖον λόγον εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν καὶ δὲν πρέπει νὰ ἀφεθῇ νὰ κατευθύνῃ τὴν πορείαν τῆς.

Ἀντλοῦσα ἀπὸ τὰς ἀρχὰς αὐτάς καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν ὀλην ἐμπειρίαν καὶ διδασκαλίαν τῆς πατερικῆς, λειτουργικῆς καὶ ἀσκητικῆς τῆς παραδόσεως, ἡ Ὀρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία συμμετέχει εἰς τὸν προβληματισμὸν καὶ τὴν ἀγωνίαν τοῦ συγχρόνου ἀνθρώπου ὡς πρὸς θεμελιώδη ὑπαρξιακά ζητήματα, τὰ ὁποῖα ἀπασχολοῦν τὸν σύγχρονον κόσμον, ἐπιθυμοῦσα νὰ συμβάλῃ εἰς τὴν ἀντιμετώπισίν των, ὥστε νὰ ἐπικρατήσῃ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Θεοῦ, «ἡ πάντα νοῦν ὑπερέχουσα» (Φιλ. 4, 7), ἡ καταλλαγὴ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη.

Α. Ἡ ἀξία τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου προσώπου

1. Ἡ ἀξία τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου προσώπου, ἀπορρέουσα ἐκ τῆς δημιουργίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὡς εἰκόνας τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἀποστολῆς αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ σχέδιον τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ τὸν κόσμον, ὑπῆρξεν πηγὴ ἐμπνεύσεως διὰ τοὺς Πατέρας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἐνεβάθυσαν εἰς τὸ μυστήριον τῆς θείας οἰκονομίας. Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος τονίζει χαρακτηριστικῶς διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὅτι ὁ δημιουργὸς «οἶόν τινα κόσμον ἕτερον, ἐν μικρῷ μέγαν, ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἴστησιν, ἄγγελον ἄλλον, προσκυνητὴν μικτόν, ἐπόπτην τῆς ὀρατῆς κτίσεως, μύστην τῆς νοουμένης, βασιλεῖα τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς, ... ζῶον ἐνταῦθα οἰκονομούμενον, καὶ ἀλλαχοῦ μεθιστάμενον, καὶ πέρας τοῦ μυστηρίου, τῆ πρὸς Θεὸν νεύσει θεοῦμένου» (Λόγος ΜΕ΄, εἰς

τὸ Ἅγιον Πάσχα, 7. PG 36, 632 AB). Ὁ σκοπὸς τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Λόγου Θεοῦ εἶναι ἡ θῆσις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ὁ Χριστός, ἀνακαινίσας ἐν Ἐαυτῷ τὸν παλαιόν Ἀδὰμ (πρβλ. Ἐφ. 2, 15), «συναπεθεύου ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, ἀπαρχὴν τῆς ἡμῶν ἐλπίδος» (Εὐσεβίου, Εὐαγγελικὴ Απόδειξις, 4, 14. PG 22, 289A). Τοῦτο διότι, ὅπως εἰς τὸν παλαιόν Ἀδὰμ ἐνυπῆρχεν ἡδὴ ὀλοκλήρον τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος, οὕτω καὶ εἰς τὸν νέον Ἀδὰμ συνεκεφαλαιώθη ὀλοκλήρον ἐπίσης τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος. «Ἀνθρώπος γέγονεν ὁ Μονογενής, ... ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαί πάλιν καὶ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀναλαβεῖν τὸ διολισθήσαν γένος, τοῦτέστι, τὸ ἀνθρώπινον» (Κυρίλλου Ἀλεξανδρείας, Ἑρμηνεία ἢ ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην Εὐαγγέλιον, Θ΄. PG 74, 273D-275A). Ἡ διδασκαλία αὐτὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι ἀνεξάντλητος πηγὴ πάσης χριστιανικῆς προσπάθειας διὰ τὴν περιφρούρησιν τῆς ἀξίας καὶ τοῦ μεγαλεῖος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

2. Ἐπ' αὐτῆς τῆς βάσεως εἶναι ἀπαραίτητον νὰ ἀναπτυχθῇ πρὸς ὅλας τὰς κατευθύνσεις ἡ διαχριστιανικὴ συνεργασία διὰ τὴν προστασίαν τῆς ἀξίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, αὐτονοήτως δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τῆς εἰρήνης, οὕτως ὥστε αἱ εἰρηνευτικαὶ προσπάθειαι ὅλων ἀνεξαιρέτως τῶν Χριστιανῶν νὰ ἀποκοτῶν μεγαλύτερον βάρος καὶ δύναμιν.

3. Ὡς προϋποθέσεις μιᾶς εὐρύτερας ἐν προκειμένῳ συνεργασίας δύναται νὰ χρησιμεύσῃ ἡ κοινὴ ἀποδοχὴ τῆς ὑψίστης ἀξίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου προσώπου. Αἱ Ὀρθόδοξοι Ἐκκλησίαι καλοῦνται νὰ συμβάλλουν εἰς τὴν διαθρησκειακὴν συνεννόησιν καὶ συνεργασίαν, δι' αὐτῆς δὲ εἰς τὴν ἀπάλειψιν τοῦ φανατισμοῦ ἀπὸ πάσης πλευρᾶς καὶ τοιοῦτοτρόπως εἰς τὴν συμφιλίωσιν τῶν λαῶν καὶ ἐπικράτησιν τῆς ἐλευθερίας καὶ τῆς εἰρήνης εἰς τὸν κόσμον πρὸς ἐξυπηρέτησιν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἀνεξαρτήτως φυλῆς καὶ θρησκευματοῦ. Ἐννοεῖται ὅτι ἡ συνεργασία αὐτὴ ἀποκλείει τὸσον τὸν συγκρητισμὸν, ὅσον καὶ τὴν ἐπιδίωξιν ἐπιβολῆς οἰαδήποτε θρησκείας ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων.

4. Ἐχομεν τὴν πεποῖθησιν ὅτι ὡς «Θεοῦ συνεργοί» (Α΄ Κορ. 3, 9), δυνάμεθα νὰ προχωρήσωμεν εἰς τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην ἀπὸ κοινοῦ μεθ' ὅλων τῶν ἀνθρώπων καλῆς θελήσεως, τῶν ἀγαπῶντων τὴν κατὰ Θεὸν εἰρήνην, ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ τῆς ἀνθρώπινης κοινωνίας ἐπὶ τοπικοῦ, ἐθνικοῦ καὶ διεθνικοῦ ἐπιπέδου. Ἡ διακονία αὐτὴ εἶναι ἐντολὴ Θεοῦ (Ματθ. 5, 9).

Β. Περὶ ἐλευθερίας καὶ εὐθύνης

1. Ἐν ἐκ τῶν ὑψίστων δώρων τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, τὸσον ὡς συγκεκριμένον φορᾶ τῆς εἰκόνας τοῦ προσωπικοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅσον καὶ ὡς κοινωνίαν προσώπων ἀντανακλώντων κατὰ χάριν διὰ τῆς ἐνόητος τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου γένους τὴν ἐν τῇ Ἁγίᾳ Τριάδι ζωὴν καὶ κοινωνίαν τῶν θείων προσώπων, ἀποτελεῖ τὸ θεῖον δῶρον τῆς ἐλευθερίας. «Ὁ πλάσας ἅπ' ἀρχῆς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐλεύθερον ἀφῆκε καὶ αὐτεξούσιον, νόμῳ τῷ τῆς ἐντολῆς μόνον κρατούμενον» (Γρηγορίου Θεολόγου, Λόγος Γ΄, Περὶ φιλοπρωπίας, 25. PG 35, 892A). Ἡ ἐλευθερία καθιστᾷ μὲν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἰκανόν νὰ προοδεύῃ πρὸς τὴν πνευματικὴν τελειότητα, ἀλλὰ, συγχρόνως, ἐμπερικλείει τὸν κίνδυνον τῆς παρακοῆς, τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ αὐτονομήσεως καὶ, δι' αὐτῆς, τῆς πτώσεως, ἐξ οὗ καὶ αἱ τραγικαὶ συνέπειαι τοῦ κακοῦ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

2. Συνέπεια τοῦ κακοῦ τούτου εἶναι αἱ ἐπικρατοῦσαι σήμερον ἐν τῇ ζωῇ ἀτέλειαι καὶ ἐλλείψεις, ὡς ἡ ἔκκοσμίκευσις, ἡ βία, ἡ ἐκλύσις τῶν ἡθῶν, τὰ παρατηρούμενα νοσηρὰ φαινόμενα τῆς λαίλαπος τῶν ναρκωτικῶν καὶ ἄλλων εξαρτήσεων εἰς μερίδα τῆς συγχρόνου νεότητος, ὁ φυλετισμὸς, οἱ ἐξοπλισμοί, οἱ πόλεμοι καὶ τὰ τούτων ἀπότοκα κοινωνικά κακά, ἡ καταπίεσις κοινωνικῶν ὁμάδων, θρησκευτικῶν κοινοτήτων καὶ λαῶν ὀλοκλήρων, ἡ κοινωνικὴ ἀνισότης, ὁ περιορισμὸς τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων εἰς τὸν χώρον τῆς ἐλευθερίας τῶν συνειδήσεων καὶ τῆς θρησκευτικῆς εἰδικώτερον ἐλευθερίας, ἡ παραπληροφόρησις καὶ ἡ χειραγώγησις τῆς κοινῆς γνώμης, ἡ οἰκονομικὴ ἀθλιότης, ἡ ἄνισος κατανομή ἢ καὶ ἡ παντελὴς στέρησις τῶν ἀπολύτως ἀναγκαίων πρὸς τὸ ζῆν ἀγαθῶν, ἡ πείνα τῶν ὑποσιζόμενων ἐκατομμυρίων ἀνθρώπων, αἱ βίβαιαι μετακινήσεις πληθυσμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀθέμιτος διακίνησις ἀνθρώπων, τὸ προσφυγικὸν χάος, ἡ καταστροφὴ τοῦ περιβάλλοντος, ἡ ἀνεξέλεγκτος χρῆσις τῆς γενετικῆς βιοτεχνολογίας καὶ βιοϊατρικῆς ἀναφορικῶς πρὸς τὴν ἀρχὴν, τὴν διάρκειαν καὶ τὸ τέλος τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Πάντα ταῦτα ὑφαίνουσι τὸ ἄπεραντον ἄγχος τῆς

ἀγωνιώδους συγχρόνου ἀνθρωπότητος.

3. Ἐναντὶ τῆς καταστάσεως αὐτῆς, ἡ ὁποία ὠδήγησεν εἰς τὴν ἀποδυναμῶσιν τῆς θεωρήσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου προσώπου, καθῆκον τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι, ὅπως προβάλῃ σήμερον, διὰ τοῦ κηρύγματος, τῆς θεολογίας, τῆς λατρείας καὶ τοῦ ποιμαντικοῦ ἔργου τῆς, τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐλευθερίας. *Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν, ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα συμφέρει· πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν, ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα οικοδομεῖ. Μηδεὶς τὸ ἐαυτοῦ ζητεῖτω, ἀλλὰ τὸ τοῦ ἐτέρου ἕκαστος... Ἦνα τί γάρ ἡ ἐλευθερία μου κρίνεται ὑπὸ ἀλλῆς συνειδήσεως;* (Α΄ Κορ. 10, 23-24 καὶ 10, 29). Ἐλευθερία ἄνευ εὐθύνης καὶ ἀγάπης ὀδηγεῖ τελικῶς εἰς τὴν ἀπώλειαν τῆς ἐλευθερίας.

Γ. Περὶ εἰρήνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης

1. Ἡ Ὀρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ἀναγνωρίζει καὶ ἀναδεικνύει διαχρονικῶς τὴν κεντρικὴν θέσιν τῆς εἰρήνης καὶ τῆς δικαιοσύνης εἰς τὴν ζωὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Αὐτὴ αὐτὴ ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀποκάλυψις χαρακτηρίζεται «*εὐαγγέλιον τῆς εἰρήνης*» (Εφ. 6, 15), διότι ὁ Χριστός, «*εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ*» τὰ πάντα (Κολ. 1, 20), «*εὐηγγελισατο εἰρήνην τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ τοῖς ἐγγύς*» (Εφ. 2, 17) καὶ κατέστη «ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν» (Εφ. 2, 14). Ἡ εἰρήνη αὐτῆ, ἡ «*ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν*» (Φιλ. 4, 7) εἶναι, ὡς εἶπεν ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Κύριος εἰς τοὺς μαθητάς Του πρὸ τοῦ Πάθους, εὐρύτερα καὶ οὐσιαστικώτερα τῆς εἰρήνης, τὴν ὁποῖαν ἐπαγγέλλεται ὁ κόσμος: «*Εἰρήνην ἀφήμι ὑμῖν, εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν· οὐ καθὼς ὁ κόσμος δίδωσιν, ἐγὼ δίδωμι ὑμῖν*» (Ἰωάν. 14, 27). Καὶ τοῦτο, διότι ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι ὁ ὄρμος καρπὸς τῆς ἐν Αὐτῷ ἀνακεφαλαιώσεως τῶν πάντων, τῆς ἀναδείξεως τῆς ἀξίας καὶ τοῦ μεγαλείου τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου προσώπου ὡς εἰκόνας Θεοῦ· τῆς προβολῆς τῆς ἐν Αὐτῷ ὀργανικῆς ἐνόητος τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου γένους καὶ τοῦ κοσμοῦ· τῆς καθολικότητος τῶν ἀρχῶν τῆς εἰρήνης, τῆς ἐλευθερίας καὶ τῆς κοινωνικῆς δικαιοσύνης καί, τέλος, τῆς καρποφορίας τῆς χριστιανικῆς ἀγάπης μεταξὺ τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν λαῶν τοῦ κόσμου. Ἡ πραγματικὴ εἰρήνη εἶναι ὁ καρπὸς τῆς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐπικρατήσεως ὅλων αὐτῶν τῶν χριστιανικῶν ἀρχῶν. Εἶναι ἡ ἄνωθεν εἰρήνη, περὶ τῆς ὁποίας πάντοτε εὐχεταὶ ἡ Ὀρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία εἰς τὰς καθημερινὰς τῆς δεήσεις, ἐξαιτουμένη ταύτην παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, τοῦ τὰ πάντα δυναμένου καὶ εἰσακουόντος τὰς προσευχὰς τῶν μετὰ πίστει ἄνθρωπων.

2. Ἐκ τῶν ἀνωτέρω καθίσταται δῆλον διὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, ὡς «*Σῶμα Χριστοῦ*» (Α΄ Κορ. 12, 27), δέεται πάντοτε ὑπὲρ εἰρήνης τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου, ἡ ὁποία εἰρήνη, κατὰ τὸν Κλήμεντα Ἀλεξανδρῆα, εἶναι συνᾶνουν τῆς δικαιοσύνης (Στρωματικός, 4, 25. PG 8, 1369B-72A). Ὁ δὲ Μέγας Βασίλειος προσηγάγει: «οὐ δύναμαι πείσαι ἑμαυτὸν, ὅτι ἄνευ τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγάπης καὶ ἄνευ τοῦ, τὸ εἰς ἐμὲ ἦκον, εἰρηνεύει πρὸς πάντας δύναμαι ἀξιὸς κληθῆναι δοῦλος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ» (Ἐπιστολὴ 203,1. PG 32, 737B). Τοῦτο εἶναι, ὡς σημειώνει ὁ αὐτός Πατήρ, τὸσον αὐτονοήτον διὰ τὸν Χριστιανόν, ὥστε «οὐδὲν οὕτως ἰδιὸν ἐστὶ Χριστιανῶς ὡς τὴν εἰρηνοποιεῖν» (Ἐπιστολὴ, 114. PG 32, 528B). Ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι ἡ μυστικὴ δύναμις, ἡ ὁποία πηγάζει ἀπὸ τὴν καταλλαγὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πρὸς τὸν οὐράνιον Πατέρα Του, «κατὰ πρόνοιαν Ἰησοῦ, τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν ἐνεργούντος, καὶ ποιούντος εἰρήνην ἄρρητον καὶ ἐξ αἰῶνος προωρισμένην καὶ ἀποκαταλλάσσοντος ἡμᾶς ἐαυτῷ καὶ ἐν ἑαυτῷ τῷ Πατρί» (Διονυσίου Ἀρεοπαγίτου, Περὶ θείων ὀνομάτων, 11, 5, PG 3, 953AB).

3. Ὀφειλομεν συγχρόνως νὰ ὑπογραμμίσωμεν ὅτι τὰ δῶρα τῆς εἰρήνης καὶ τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἐξαρτῶνται καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἀνθρώπινης συνεργίας. Τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα χορηγεῖ πνευματικὰ δῶρα, ὅταν ἐν μετανοίᾳ ἐπιζητήσωμεν τὴν εἰρήνην καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην τοῦ Θεοῦ. Τὰ δῶρα ταῦτα τῆς εἰρήνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἐμφανίζονται ἐκεῖ ἔνθα οἱ Χριστιανοὶ καταβάλλουν προσπάθειαν εἰς τὸ ἔργον τῆς πίστεως, τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ἐλπίδος ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν (Α΄ Θεσ. 1, 3).

4. Ἡ ἁμαρτία εἶναι πνευματικὴ ἀσθένεια, τῆς ὁποίας τὰ ἐξωτερικὰ συμπτώματα εἶναι αἱ ἀταχαί, αἱ ἔριδες, τὰ ἐγκλήματα καὶ οἱ πόλεμοι, μετὰ τῶν τραγικῶν αὐτῶν συνεπειῶν. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἐπιδιώκει νὰ ἐξαλείψῃ οὐ μόνον τὰ ἐξωτερικὰ συμπτώματα αὐτῆς τῆς ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὴν ταύτην τὴν ἀσθένειαν, τὴν ἁμαρτίαν.

5. Συγχρόνως, ἡ Ὀρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία θεωρεῖ καθῆκον αὐτῆς νὰ ἐπικροτῇ πᾶν ὁ,τι ἐξυπηρετεῖ πραγματικὴν τὴν εἰρήνην (Ρωμ. 14, 19)

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► Σελίδα 16

καί ανοίγει την όδον προς την δικαιοσύνην, την αδελφοσύνην, την αληθήν ἐλευθερίαν καί την ἀμοιβαίαν ἀγάπην μεταξύ ὄλων τῶν τέκνων τοῦ ἐνός οὐρανόυ Πατρός, ὡς καί μεταξύ ὄλων τῶν λαῶν τῶν ἀποτελούντων τήν ἐνιαίαν ἀνθρωπίνην οἰκογένειαν. Συμπάσχει δέ μεθ' ὄλων τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οἱ ὅποιοι εἰς διάφορα μέρη τοῦ κόσμου στεροῦνται τῶν ἀγαθῶν τῆς εἰρήνης καί τῆς δικαιοσύνης.

Δ. Ἡ εἰρήνη καί ἡ ἀποτροπή τοῦ πολέμου

1. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καταδικάζει γενικῶς τόν πόλεμον, τόν ὅποιον θεωρεῖ ἀπόρροϊαν τοῦ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κακοῦ καί τῆς ἁμαρτίας. «Πόθεν πόλεμοι καί μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; Οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν;» (Ἰακ. 4,1). Ἐκαστος πόλεμος ἀποτελεῖ ἀπειλήν καταστροφῆς τῆς δημιουργίας καί τῆς ζωῆς.

Ὅπως ἰδιαίτερως, εἰς περίπτωσεις πολέμων δι' ὅπλων μαζικῆς καταστροφῆς, αἱ συνέπειαι θά εἶναι τρομακτικαί, ὅχι μόνον διότι θά ἐπέλθῃ ὁ θάνατος εἰς ἀπρόβλεπτον ἀριθμόν ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλά καί διότι δι' ὅσους θά ἐπιζήσουν ὁ βίος θά καταστῇ ἀβίωτος. Θά ἐμφανισθοῦν ἀνάτοι ἀσθένειαι, θά προκληθοῦν γενετικά ἀλλαγαι καί ἄλλα δεινά, τά ὅποια θά ἐπηρεάζουν καταστρεπτικῶς καί τὰς ἐπομένους γενεάς.

Λίαν ἐπικίνδυνος δέν εἶναι μόνον ὁ πυρηνικός ἐξοπλισμός, ἀλλά καί οἱ χημικοί, οἱ βιολογικοί καί πάσης μορφῆς ἐξοπλισμοί, οἱ ὅποιοι δημιουργοῦν τήν ψευδαίσθησιν τῆς ὑπεροχῆς καί κυριαρχίας ἐπὶ τοῦ περιβάλλοντος κόσμου. Τοιοῦτοι ἐξοπλισμοί καλλιεργοῦν ἀτμόσφαιραν φόβου καί ἐλλείψεως ἐμπιστοσύνης καί καθίστανται αἰτία ἐνός νέου ἀνταγωνισμοῦ ἐξοπλισμῶν.

2. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ, θεωροῦσα κατ' ἀρχήν τόν πόλεμον ἀπόρροϊαν τοῦ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κακοῦ καί τῆς ἁμαρτίας, ἐνθαρρύνει πᾶσαν πρωτοβουλίαν καί προσπάθειαν πρὸς πρόληψιν ἢ ἀποτροπὴν αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ διαλόγου καί διὰ παντός ἄλλου προσφόρου μέσου. Εἰς περίπτωσιν κατὰ τήν ὅποιαν ὁ πόλεμος καταστῇ ἀναπόφευκτος, ἡ Ἐκκλησία συνεχίζει προσευχομένη καί μερμνώσα ποιμαντικῶς διὰ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς, τά ὅποια ἐμπλέκονται εἰς τὰς πολεμικὰς συγκρούσεις διὰ τήν υπεράσπισιν τῆς ζωῆς καί τῆς ἐλευθερίας αὐτῶν, καταβάλλουσα πᾶσαν προσπάθειαν διὰ τήν ταχύτεραν ἀποκατάστασιν τῆς εἰρήνης καί τῆς ἐλευθερίας.

3. Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία καταδικάζει ἐντόνως τὰς ποικιλοτρόφους συγκρούσεις καί τοὺς πολέμους, τοὺς ὀφειλομένους εἰς φανατισμόν, προερχόμενον ἐκ θρησκευτικῶν ἀρχῶν. Βαθεῖαν ἀνησυχίαν προκαλεῖ ἡ μόνιμος τάσις ἀδήσεως τῶν καταπιέσεων καί διώξεων τῶν χριστιανῶν καί ἄλλων κοινοτήτων, ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς πίστεως αὐτῶν, εἰς τήν Μέσην Ἀνατολήν καί ἄλλα, καθώς καί αἱ ἀπόπειραι ἐκρίψωσης τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ ἐκ τῶν παραδοσιακῶν κοιτιδῶν αὐτοῦ. Τοιοῦτοτρόπως, ἀπειλοῦνται αἱ ὑφιστάμεναι διαθρησκειακαί καί διεθνεῖς σχέσεις, ἐνῶ πολλοὶ χριστιανοὶ ἀναγκάζονται νά ἐγκαταλείψουν τὰς ἐστίας αὐτῶν. Οἱ ἀνά τόν κόσμον Ὁρθόδοξοι συμπάσχουν μετὰ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτῶν χριστιανῶν καί ὄλων τῶν ἄλλων διακομῶνων ἐν τῇ περιοχῇ καί καλοῦν εἰς ἐξέυρεσιν δικαίας καί μονίμου λύσεως τῶν προβλημάτων τῆς περιοχῆς.

Καταδικάζονται ἐπίσης πόλεμοι, ἐμπνεόμενοι ὑπὸ ἐθνικισμοῦ, προκαλοῦντες ἐθνοκαθάρσεις, μεταβολὰς κρατικῶν ὁρίων καί κατάληψιν ἐδαφῶν.

Ε. Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ἐναντι τῶν διακρίσεων

1. Ὁ Κύριος, ὡς Βασιλεὺς τῆς δικαιοσύνης (Εβρ. 7, 2-3), ἀποδοκιμάζει τήν βίαν καί τήν ἀδικίαν (Ψαλμ. 10, 5) καί καταδικάζει τήν ἀπάνθρωπον στάσιν πρὸς τόν πλησίον (Μάρκ. 25, 41-46. Ἰακ. 2, 15-16). Εἰς τήν Βασιλείαν Αὐτοῦ, ἡ ὅποια εἰκονίζεται καί εἶναι παρούσα ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ Του ἡδὴ ἐδῶ εἰς τήν γῆν, δέν ὑπάρχει τόπος οὔτε διὰ τὸ μῖσος, οὔτε δι' ἔχθραν καί μισαλλοδοξίαν (Ἦσ. 11, 6. Ρωμ. 12, 10).

2. Ἡ θέσις τῆς Ὁρθόδοξου Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι ἐν προκειμένῳ σαφής. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία πιστεύει ὅτι ὁ Θεός «ἐποίησεν ἐξ ἐνός αἵματος πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ πᾶν τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γῆς» (Πράξ. 17, 26) καί ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ «οὐκ ἐν

Ἰουδαίος οὐδέ Ἕλληνας, οὐκ ἐνὶ δούλος οὐδέ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἐνὶ ἄρσεν καὶ θήλῃ· πάντες γὰρ εἰς ἓστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ» (Γαλ. 3, 28). Εἰς τὸ ἐρώτημα «καί τίς ἐστὶ μου πλησίον;» ὁ Χριστὸς ἀπήντησε διὰ τῆς παραβολῆς τοῦ καλοῦ Σαμαρείτου (Λουκ. 10, 25-37). Καί οὕτως ἐδίδαξε τήν κατάλυσιν παντός μεσοτοίχου ἐχθρας καί προκαταλήψεως. Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ὁμολογεῖ ὅτι ἕκαστος ἀνθρώπος, ἀνεξαρτήτως χρώματος, θρησκείας, φυλῆς, φύλου, ἐθνικότητος, γλώσσης, ἔχει δημιουργηθῆ κατ' εἰκόνα καί καθ' ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ καί ἀπολαμβάνει ἴσα δικαιώματα ἐν τῇ κοινωνίᾳ. Συνεπῆς πρὸς τήν πίστιν αὐτήν, ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία δέν δέχεται τὰς διακρίσεις δι' ἕκαστον ἐκ τῶν προαναφερθέντων λόγων, ἐφ' ὅσον αὐταὶ προϋποθέτουν ἀξιολογικὴν διαφορὰν μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

3. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία, ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ σεβασμοῦ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων καί τῆς ἴσης μεταχειρίσεως τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀξιολογεῖ τήν ἐφαρμογὴν τῶν ἀρχῶν αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τὸ φῶς τῆς διδασκαλίας αὐτῆς περὶ τῶν μυστηρίων, τῆς οἰκογενείας, τῆς θέσεως τῶν δύο φύλων ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ καί τῶν ἐν γένει ἀξίων τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς παραδόσεως. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἔχει δικαίωμα ἵνα διακηρύττῃ τήν μαρτυρίαν τῆς διδασκαλίας τῆς εἰς τὸν δημόσιον χῶρον.

ΣΤ. Ἡ ἀποστολή τῆς Ὁρθόδοξου Ἐκκλησίας ὡς μαρτυρία ἀγάπης ἐν διακονίᾳ

1. Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία, ἐπιτελοῦσα τήν σωτηρίαν αὐτῆς ἀποστολὴν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, μερμνῶν ἐμπράκτως διὰ πάντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους χρίζοντας βοθειάς, τοὺς πεινῶντας, τοὺς ἀπόρους, τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς, τοὺς ἀναπήρους, τοὺς υπερρήλικας, τοὺς διακομμένους, τοὺς αἰχμαλώτους, τοὺς φυλακισμένους, τοὺς ἀστέγους, τὰ ὄρφανὰ, τὰ θύματα τῶν καταστροφῶν καί τῶν πολεμικῶν συγκρούσεων, τῆς ἐμπορίας ἀνθρώπων καί τῶν συγχρόνων μορφῶν δουλείας. Αἱ καταβαλλόμεναι ὑπὸ τῆς Ὁρθόδοξου Ἐκκλησίας προσπάθειαι διὰ τήν καταπολέμησιν τῆς ἐνδείας καί τῆς κοινωνικῆς ἀδικίας ἀποτελοῦν ἐκφρασιν τῆς πίστεως αὐτῆς καί διακονίαν Αὐτοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου, ὁ ὅποιος ἐταῦτισεν ἑαυτὸν πρὸς πάντα ἀνθρώπον, ἰδίως πρὸς τοὺς ἐν ἀνάγκαις ἐυρισκομένους: «Ἐφ' ὅσον ἐποίησατε ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων, ἐμοὶ ἐποίησατε» (Ματθ. 25, 40). Ἐν τῇ πολυπύχῳ ταύτῃ κοινωνικῇ διακονίᾳ, ἡ Ἐκκλησία δύναται νά συνεργάζηται μετὰ τῶν διαφορῶν σχετικῶν κοινωνικῶν φορέων.

2. Οἱ ἀνταγωνισμοὶ καί αἱ ἐχθρότητες ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰσάγουν ἀδικίαν καί ἀνισότητα εἰς τήν συμμετοχὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων καί τῶν λαῶν εἰς τὰ ἀγαθὰ τῆς θείας δημιουργίας. Στεροῦν ἀπὸ ἑκατομμῦρια ἀνθρώπων τὰ βασικά ἀγαθὰ καί ὁδηγοῦν εἰς ἐξαθλίωσιν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ὑπάρξεως, προκαλοῦν μαζικὰς μεταναστεύσεις πληθυσμῶν, διεγείρουν ἐθνικὰς, θρησκευτικὰς καί κοινωνικὰς συγκρούσεις, αἱ ὅποια ἀπειλοῦν τήν ἐσωτερικὴν συνοχὴν τῶν κοινωνιῶν.

3. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία δέν δύναται νά μείνῃ ἀδιάφορος ἐναντι τῶν οικονομικῶν καταστάσεων, αἱ ὅποια ἐπηρεάζουν ἀρνητικῶς ὀλόκληρον τήν ἀνθρωπότητα. Ἐπιμένει εἰς τήν ἀνάγκην, οὐχὶ μόνον ἡ οἰκονομία νά ἐρείδεται ἐπὶ ἠθικῶν ἀρχῶν, ἀλλά καί ἐμπράκτως νά διακονητῆ δι' αὐτῆς ὁ ἀνθρώπος, συμφῶνως καί πρὸς τὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Παύλου, «κοπιῶντας δεῖ ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι τῶν ἀσθενούντων, μνημονεῦν τε τῶν λόγων τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, ὅτι αὐτὸς εἶπε· μακάριόν ἐστι μᾶλλον διδόναι ἢ λαμβάνειν» (Πράξ. 20, 35). Ὁ Μ. Βασίλειος γράφει ὅτι «σκοπὸς οὖν ἐκάστῳ προκειμένου ὀφείλει ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ ἢ ὑπηρεσίᾳ τῶν δεομένων, οὐχὶ ἡ ἴδια αὐτοῦ χρεία» (Ὅροι κατὰ πλάτος ΜΒ'. ΡΓ 31, 1025 Α).

4. Τὸ χάσμα μετὰ πλουσίων καί πτωχῶν διευρύνεται δραματικῶς ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς οικονομικῆς κρίσεως, ἡ ὅποια εἶναι συνήθως ἀποτέλεσμα κερδοσκοπίας χωρὶς φραγμοὺς ἐκ μέρους οικονομικῶν παραγόντων, συγκεντρώσεως τοῦ πλοῦτου εἰς χεῖρας ὀλίγων καί στρεβλῆς οικονομικῆς δραστηριότητος, ἡ ὅποια, στερούμενη δικαιοσύνης καί ἀνθρωπιστικῆς εὐαισθησίας, δέν ἐξυπηρετεῖ, τελικῶς, τὰς πραγματικὰς ἀνάγκας τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος. Βιώσιμος οἰκονομία εἶναι ἐκείνη, ἡ ὅποια συνδυάζει τήν ἀποτελε-

► Σελίδα 18

Εγκύκλιος

Ἑορτὴ τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν καί Ἡμέρα τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν Γραμμάτων

Πρὸς τοὺς Σεβασμιωτάτους καί Θεοφιλεστάτους Ἀρχιερεῖς, τοὺς Εὐλαβεστάτους Ἱερεῖς καί Διακόνους, τοὺς Μοναχοὺς καί Μοναχές, τοὺς Προέδρους καί Μέλη τῶν Κοινοτικῶν Συμβουλίων, τὰ Ἡμερήσια καί Ἀπογευματινὰ Σχολεῖα, τίς Φιλοπτώχους Ἀδελφότητες, τὴν Νεολαία, τίς Ἑλληνορθόδοξες Ὀργανώσεις καί ὀλόκληρο τὸ Χριστεπώνυμον πλήρωμα τῆς Ἱεράς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Ἀμερικῆς.

Προσφιλεῖς Ἀδελφοί καί Ἀδελφές ἐν Χριστῷ,

Στόν ἐτήσιο ἑορτασμό τῆς Ἑορτῆς τῶν τριῶν Ἁγίων Πατέρων καί Μεγάλων Ἱεραρχῶν καί Οἰκουμεικῶν Διδασκάλων μας, Βασιλείου τοῦ Μεγάλου, Ἰρηγορίου τοῦ Θεολόγου καί Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσόστομου, ἐπιβεβαιώνουμε τὴ δύναμη τῆς μαρτυρίας καί καθοδηγήσεως πρὸς προσφέρον διὰ μέσου τῶν αἰώνων. Ἡ σοφία καί ἀγιωσύνη τῶν ἐξακολουθοῦν νά μᾶς ὁδηγοῦν στό Χριστὸ καί νά δυναμώνουν τὴν κατανόησιν καί βιωματικὴ ἐμπειρία τῆς σχέσεώς μας μαζί Του ὅπως συνέβαινε καί τὴν ἐποχὴν τῶν ἱερωτάτων ἡμῶν τῆς Ἑορτῆς μᾶς ἐμπνέουν στήν ἀπόδοση τιμῆς στοὺς Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες καί μᾶς κατευθύνουν στίς διδασκαλίες τῶν γιὰ τὴν διερεύνησιν τῆς δυνάμεως καί τῆς προοπτικῆς τῆς πίστεώς μας. Στὴν ἀκολουθία τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἑσπερινοῦ, χαρακτηρίζουμε τοὺς Ἁγίους αὐτοὺς Πατέρες καί Διδασκάλους ὡς «ὄργανα τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ» καί «οἰκονόμους τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ λόγου τοῦ Χριστοῦ». Ὡς ὄργανα τῆς θείας χάριτος, ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος, ὁ Ἰρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος καί ὁ Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος προσέφεραν εὐδπλαγχία τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ τῆς ἀκλονήτου ὑπηρεσίας τῶν στοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοῦ Θεοῦ, διὰ τῆς συνεχούς προσπάθειας τῶν νά βοηθήσουν τοὺς ἔχοντες ἀνάγκη καί διὰ τῆς προθυμίας τῶν νά θυσιάσουν τὴν ὑγείαν καί ἀσφάλειαν τῶν γιὰ τὴν σωτηρία ἄλλων.

Ἡ προβολὴ τῆς χάριτος καί τοῦ λόγου τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι ἐμφανὴς στό εὖρος καί βάθος τῆς διδασκαλίας καί τοῦ κηρύγματος τῶν. Ἐπὶ τῆς προκισμένοι καί ἐμπνευσμένοι ἕρμηνευτές τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς. Ὑπῆρξαν πρόθυμοι ἀγγελιαφόροι τοῦ Θεοῦ, προσπαθώντας νά διαδόσουν τὴν ἀλήθειαν μετὰ καθαρότητα καί νά ὁδηγήσουν τίς καρδιές καί διάνοιες στήν Πηγὴ τῆς χάριτος καί τῆς ζωῆς. Ἐκεῖνοι ἀφιέρωσαν τὴν διάνοιαν καί τίς ἰκανότητές τῶν στόν Θεό, καί Ἐκεῖνοι ἀγίασε τίς διανοητικὰς καί ρητορικὰς δεξιότητές τῶν καθὰς καί τὴν πνευματικὴν οὐξυνοία τῶν γιὰ τὴν διάδοσιν τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου.

Οἱ Τρεῖς Ἁγιοὶ Ἱεράρχες εἶχαν τὴν δυνατότητα νά καταστοῦν μάρτυρες τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ διότι γνώριζαν ἐκ προσωπικῆς πείρας τὴν μεταμορφωτική δύναμη τῆς χάριτος. Ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος περιγράφει αὐτὴ τὴ δύναμη στήν Ὀμιλία του περὶ Ἁγίου Βαπτίσματος: Ὅπως ὁ Θεός ἔπλασε τὰ ὄντα ἐκ τῶν μὴ ὄντων, ἔτσι καί ἀνέπλασε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὄντα.

Στό σχολιασμό του ἐπὶ τῆς Ἐπιστολῆς πρὸς Ἐφεσίους, ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος περιγράφει τὴν ἐπίδρασιν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐν ἣ ἑχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς (Ἐφεσ. 1:6), λέγοντας ὅτι ὁ Θεός ἐνέδυσσε καί ἐκόσμησε τὴν ψυχὴν μας, καί τὴν περιέβαλε μετὰ κάλλος καί τὴν κατέστησε ἀντικείμενον τῆς ἀγαλλιάσεως καί τῆς ἀγάπης Του.

Αὐτὴ ἡ σοφία καί ἀλήθεια ἡ ὅποια σχετίζεται μετὰ τὴν θεία χάριν καί εἶναι συνδυασμένη μετὰ τὴν προσωπικὴ ἐμπειρία τῶν ἰδίων καθ' ὅλη τὴ διάρκεια τῆς ζωῆς τῶν, προσέδωσε στοὺς Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες τὴν ἐπίγνωση τοῦ δυναμικοῦ τῆς χάριτος. Στὴ θεολογικὴ διατριβὴ του Περί τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, ὁ Ἅγιος Βασίλειος ἐπιβεβαιώνει ὅτι τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα «ἀποπέλλει χάριν ἀρκοῦσα καί πλήρη γιὰ



ὀλόκληρη τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα». Στό σχολιασμό του ἐπὶ τῆς Ἐπιστολῆς πρὸς Θεσσαλονικεῖς, ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος ἐξηγεῖ πῶς ὁ Θεὸς μᾶς χαρίζει αἰώνια παρηγορία καί ἐλπίδα ἀγαθῆ διὰ τῆς χάριτος (Θεσ. Β', 2:16). Λέγει: Ἐάν ὁ Θεὸς ἐδῶκε τοσαῦτα διὰ τῆς χάριτος, τὰ μελλούμενα θά εἶναι πολὺ περισσότερα. Ὁ Χρυσόστομος ζητεῖ ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀκροατές του νά ἀνακαλύψουν τὴ δυναμικὴ τῆς χάριτος μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν ἐλπίδα καί τὴν ἀνάπαυση τὴν ὅποια βιώνουν ἐν Χριστῷ.

Ἡ κατανόησις τῆς χάριτος καί ὁ ρόλος τῆς στὴ ζωῆν μᾶς εἶναι σημαντικὸς λαμβάνοντας ὑπ' ὄψιν τὰ ὅσα συμβαίνουν στίς ἡμέρες μας στήν κοινωνία. Στό σύγχρονον κόσμον μας συναντοῦμε ἰδεολογίες, οἱ ὅποιας συνδυάζουν τὸ μῖσος, τὴ βία, τὴν ἁμαρτία καί τὸν θάνατον καί περιέχουν διαστρεβλωμένες ἀπόψεις περὶ τῆς ἀνθρώπινης φύσεως καί προορισμοῦ. Εἶναι ἐκδηλοῦν πῶς αὐτὰ τὰ κινήματα καί οἱ ἰδέες ἀγνοοῦν ἢ ἐρχονται σέ ἀντίθεση μετὰ τὴν πραγματικότητα τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ καί τὴν μεταμορφωτικὴ τῆς δύναμη. Αποτελοῦν ριζοσπαστικὰς στρεβλώσεις τοῦ σκοποῦ καί τῆς προοπτικῆς τῆς ἀνθρώπινης ζωῆς διότι εἶναι τελείως κενὸς τῆς χάριτος καί τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ὁ ἑορτασμός μας αὐτῆς τῆς Ἑορτῆς καί ἡ ἐτήσια ἀνάμνησις τῆς Ἡμέρας τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν Γραμμάτων συγκροτεῖται μετὰ αὐτὰς τίς ψευτικὰς ἰδεολογίας ἀντιτάσσοντας τὸν ὁραματισμὸ τῆς ἀνθρώπινης ζωῆς σύμφωνα μετὰ τὸν προορισμὸ τῆς, μεταμορφώσεως ἀπὸ τὴν χάριν τοῦ Θεοῦ. Οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες, Βασίλειος, Ἰρηγόριος καί Ἰωάννης, συνδύσαν τὴν ἐμπειρία τῶν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ μετὰ τὴν μόρφωση, τὴ γλώσσα καί ὀρισμένες ἀπὸ τίς ὑψηλότερες μορφές ἀνθρώπινης ἐκφράσεως. Μᾶς προσφέρουν μαρτυρία τῆς δυνάμεως καί μεταμορφώσεως τῶν ἰκανότητων, τῆς δημιουργικότητος καί τῆς κατανόησεως μας περὶ τῆς ὑπάρξεώς μας διὰ τῆς παρουσίας τῆς χάριτος, ἀποκαθιστώντας τὴν σχέση μας μετὰ τὸν Θεό, συντρίβοντας τὴν δύναμη τῆς ἁμαρτίας καί χαρίζοντάς μας ζωὴν, ἄφθονη καί αἰώνια.

Καθὼς τιμοῦμε αὐτοὺς τοὺς μεγίστους πρωταθλητὰς τῆς πίστεώς μας, ἄς ἑορτάσουμε ἐπίσης τὸ μοναδικὸ δῶρον τῆς παρουσίας καί χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ. Εἴθε ἡ ἄφθονη χάρις Του νά εἶναι μαζί σας καθὼς εἴσθε μέτοχοι τῆς ἀγάπης Του μέσῳ τῆς πίστεως, τῆς λατρείας καί τῆς ὑπηρεσίας στό Ὄνομα Του.

Μετὰ πατρικὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ἀγάπην,

✠ Ἀμφιανῶν Νικητῆρος

✠ Ὁ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀμερικῆς Δημήτριος

Η ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΗ ΤΗΣ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΥ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΣΥΓΧΡΟΝΩ ΚΟΣΜΩ

► Σελίδα 17

σματικότητα μετά δικαιοσύνης και κοινωνικής αλληλεγγύης.

5. Υπό τās τραγικές τās καταστάσεις, κατανοείται η τεραστία ευθύνη τής Εκκλησίας διά τήν καταπολέμηση τής πείνης και πάσης άλλης μορφής ένδειας έν τῷ κόσμῳ. Έν τοιοῦτον φαινόμενον εἰς τήν ἐποχήν μας, κατά τήν ὅποιαν αἱ χώραί ζοῦν ὑπό καθεστῶς παγκοσμιοποιημένης οἰκονομίας, ὑποδηλοῖ τήν σοβαράν κρίσιν ταυτότητος τοῦ συγχρόνου κόσμου, διότι ἡ πείνα οὐχί μόνον ἀπειλεῖ τό θεῖον δῶρον τής ζωῆς ὀλοκληρῶν λαῶν, ἀλλά και θίγει τό μεγαλεῖον και τήν ιερότητα τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου προσώπου, συγχρόνως δέ προσβάλλει και τόν ἴδιον τόν Θεόν. Διά τοῦτο, ἀν ἡ μέριμνα διά τήν ἰδικήν μας τροφήν εἶναι θέμα ὑλικόν, ἡ μέριμνα διά τήν τροφήν τοῦ συνανθρώπου μας εἶναι θέμα πνευματικόν (1ακ. 2, 14-18). Ἀποτελεῖ, ἐπομένως, ἀποστολήν ὄλων τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων Ἐκκλησιῶν νά ἐπιδεικνύουν ἀλληλεγγύην και νά ὀργανώνουν ἀποτελεσματικῶς τήν βοήθειάν των πρὸς τοὺς ένδειες ἀδελφούς.

6. Ἡ Ἁγία τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησία έν τῷ καθολικῷ σώματι αὐτῆς, περικλείουσα εἰς τοὺς κόλπους αὐτῆς πολλοὺς λαοὺς τής γῆς, ἀναδεικνύει τήν ἀρχήν τής πανανθρωπίνου ἀλληλεγγύης και ὑποστηρίζει τήν στενοτέραν συνεργασίαν λαῶν και κρατῶν πρὸς εἰρηνικήν ἐπίλυσιν τῶν διαφορῶν.

7. Ἀνησυχίαν προκαλεῖ εἰς τήν Ἐκκλησίαν ἡ διαρκῶς ἀξανομένη ἐπιβολή εἰς τήν ἀνθρωπότητα ἐνός καταναλωτικοῦ τρόπου ζωῆς, ὁ ὁποῖος στερεῖται τῶν χριστιανικῶν ἠθικῶν ἀξιών. Ὑπό τήν ἔννοιαν αὐτήν, ὁ καταναλωτισμός οὗτος, έν συνδυασμῷ μετά τής ἐκκοσμικευμένης παγκοσμιοποιήσεως, τεῖνει νά ὀδηγήσῃ τοὺς λαοὺς εἰς τήν ἀπώλειαν τῶν πνευματικῶν καταβολῶν αὐτῶν, εἰς τήν ἱστορικήν ἀμνησίαν και εἰς τήν λήθη τῶν παραδόσεων.

8. Τὰ μέσα γενικῆς ἐνημερώσεως οὐχί σπανίως τελοῦν ὑπό τὸν ἔλεγχον μιᾶς ἰδεολογίας φιλελευθέρας παγκοσμιοποιήσεως και οὕτω καθίστανται διάλοιοι διαδόχων τοῦ καταναλωτισμοῦ και τής ἀνηθικότητος. Ἰδιαιτέραν ἀνησυχίαν προκαλοῦν περιστατικά, καθ' ἃ ἡ στάσις ἐναντι τῶν θρησκευτικῶν ἀξιών χαρακτηρίζεται διά τήν ἔλλειψιν σεβασμοῦ, ἐνίοτε δέ και διά βλασφημίαν, προσξοῦντα διχασμούς και ἐξεγέρσεις ἐντός τής κοινωνίας. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία προειδοποιεῖ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς, διά τὸν κίνδυνον τοῦ ἐπηρεασμοῦ τῶν συνειδήσεων διά τῶν μέσων ἐνημερώσεως και τής χρήσεως αὐτῶν οὐχί διά τήν προσέγγισιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων και τῶν λαῶν, ἀλλά διά τήν χειραγώγησιν των.

ΙΕΡΑ ΣΥΝΑΞΕΙΣ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΚΑΘΗΜΕΝΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΩΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΩΝ

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και συλλειτουργούντων τῶν Μακαριωτάτων Προκαθημένων και ἀρχηγῶν τῶν ἀντιπροσωπειῶν τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων Ἐκκλησιῶν πλὴν τοῦ ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς τής ἀντιπροσωπείας τής Ἐκκλησίας Ἀντιοχείας.

Κατά τήν Σύναξιν, τὰ μέλη αὐτῆς, «ἀληθεύοντες έν ἀγάπῃ» κατά τό ἀποστολικόν (Ἐφεσ. 4, 15), διεξήγαγον τās ἐργασίας των έν πνεύματι ὁμονοίας και κατανοήσεως. Οἱ Προκαθημένοι ἐπεβεβαίωσαν τήν ἀπόφασιν αὐτῶν νά συγκληθῇ ἡ Ἁγία και Μεγάλη Σύνοδος. Αὕτη θά πραγματοποιηθῇ εἰς τήν Ὁρθόδοξον Ἀκαδημίαν τής Κρήτης ἀπό 16ης ἔως 27ης Ἰουνίου 2016. Ἐπὶ τῷ σκοπῷ τούτῳ οἱ Προκαθημένοι ταπεινῶς ἐπικαλοῦνται τήν χάριν και εὐλογίαν τοῦ Τριαδικοῦ Θεοῦ και ἐκζητοῦν τās θερμάς προσευχάς τοῦ πληρώματος τής Ἐκκλησίας, κληρικῶν και λαϊκῶν, κατά τήν περίοδον τήν ὀδηγοῦσαν πρὸς τήν Ἁγίαν και Μεγάλην Σύνοδον και κατά τήν διάρκειαν τῶν ἐργασιῶν αὐτῆς.

Τὰ ἐπισημῶς ἐγκριθέντα θέματα πρὸς ὑποβολήν εἰς τήν Ἁγίαν και Μεγάλην Σύνοδον και υιοθέτησιν ὑπ' αὐτῆς, εἶναι: ἡ ἀποστολή τής Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας εἰς τόν σύγχρονον κόσμον, ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Διασπορά, τό Ἀυτόνομον και ὁ τρόπος ἀνακηρύξεως αὐτοῦ, τό μυστήριον τοῦ γάμου και τὰ κωλύματα αὐτοῦ, ἡ

9. Εἰς τήν πορεία, ἦν διανύει ἡ Ἐκκλησία, κηρύττουσα και ἀσκοῦσα τήν σωτήριο ἀποστολήν αὐτῆς διά τήν ἀνθρωπότητα, ὀλοέν και τακτικώτερον ἐρχεται ἀντιμέτωπος μετά τῶν ἐκφάνσεων τής ἐκκοσμικεύσεως. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καλεῖται νά ἐπαναδιατυπώσῃ και φανέρωσῃ τήν προφητικὴν μαρτυρίαν τής εἰς τόν κόσμον, στηριζομένη εἰς τήν ἐμπειρίαν τής πίστεως, ὑπενθυμίζουσα έν ταῦτῳ και τήν πραγματικὴν ἀποστολήν αὐτῆς, διά τής καταγγελίας τής Βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ και τής καλλιέργειας συνειδήσεως ἐνόττητος εἰς τό ποιμνιον αὐτῆς. Οὕτω, διανοίγεται εὐρὺ πεδιον δι' αὐτήν, δεδομένου ὅτι ὡς οὐσιαστικόν στοιχεῖον τής ἐκκλησιολογικής τής διδασκαλίας προβάλλει εἰς τόν διεσπασμένον κόσμον τήν εὐχαριστιακὴν κοινωνίαν και ἐνότητα.

10. Ὁ πῶτος τής συνεχοῦς αὐξήσεως τής εὐμερίας και ἡ ἄμετρος κατανάλωσις ἀναποφεύκτως ὀδηγοῦν εἰς τήν δυσανάλογον χρῆσιν και τήν ἐξάντλησιν τῶν φυσικῶν πόρων. Ἡ δημιουργηθεῖσα ὑπό τοῦ Θεοῦ κτίσις, ἡ ὁποία ἐδόθη εἰς τόν ἀνθρώπον *ἔργάζεσθαι και φυλάσσειν* (πρβλ. Γεν. 2.15), ὑφίσταται τās συνεπείας τής ἀμαρτίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου: «*Τῆ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπέταξῃ, οὐχ ἔκούσα, ἀλλά διά τὸν ὑπόταξαντα, ἐπ' ἐλπίδι ὅτι και αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τής δουλείας τής φθορᾶς εἰς τήν ἐλευθερίαν τής δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ Θεοῦ. Οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστανάξει και συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν*» (Ρωμ. 8.20-22).

Ἡ οἰκολογική κρίσις, ἡ ὁποία συνδέεται πρὸς τās κλιματολογικὰς ἀλλαγὰς και τήν ὑπερθέρμανσιν τοῦ πλανῆτου, καθιστᾷ ἐπιτακτικόν τό χρέος τής Ἐκκλησίας ὅπως συμβάλῃ, διά τῶν εἰς τήν διάθεσιν αὐτῆς πνευματικῶν μέσων, εἰς τήν προστασίαν τής δημιουργίας τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκ τῶν συνεπειῶν τής ἀνθρωπίνης ἀπληστίας. Ἡ ἀπληστία διά τήν ἱκανοποίησιν τῶν ὑλικῶν ἀναγκῶν ὀδηγεῖ εἰς τήν πνευματικὴν πτώχευσιν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου και εἰς τήν καταστροφὴν τοῦ περιβάλλοντος.

Δέν πρέπει νά λησμονῆται ὅτι ὁ φυσικὸς πλοῦτος τής γῆς δέν εἶναι περιουσία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἀλλά τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ: «*Τοῦ Κυρίου ἡ γῆ και τό πλήρωμα αὐτῆς, ἡ ὀικουμένη και πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες έν αὐτῇ*» (Ψαλμ. 23,1). Οὕτως, ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία τονίζει τήν προστασίαν τής δημιουργίας τοῦ Θεοῦ διά τής καλλιέργειας τής εὐθύνης τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐναντι τοῦ θεοσδότου περιβάλλοντος και διά τής προβολῆς τῶν ἀρετῶν τής ὀλιγαρκείας και τής ἐγκρατείας. Ὁφείλομεν νά ἐνθυμωμεθα ὅτι ὄχι μόνον αἱ σημεῖρια, ἀλλά και αἱ μελλοντικά γενεαῖ ἐχουν δικαίωμα ἐπὶ τῶν φυσικῶν ἀγαθῶν, τό ὁποῖο μᾶς ἐχάρισεν ὁ Δημιουργός.

11. Διά τήν Ὁρθόδοξον Ἐκκλησίαν, ἡ ἱκονότης πρὸς ἐπιστημονικήν ἔρευναν τοῦ κόσμου

ἀποτελεῖ θεόδοτον δῶρον εἰς τόν ἀνθρώπον. Συγχρόνως ὁμῶς πρὸς αὐτήν τήν κατάφασιν, ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἐπισημαίνει τοὺς κίνδυνους, οἱ ὁποῖοι ὑποκρῦπτονται εἰς τήν χρῆσιν ὀρισμένων ἐπιστημονικῶν ἐπιτευγμάτων. Θεωρεῖ ὅτι ὁ ἐπιστήμων εἶναι μὲν ἐλεύθερος νά ἐρευνᾷ, ἀλλά και ὅτι ὀφείλει νά διακόπτῃ τήν ἔρευνάν του, ὅταν παραβιάζονται βασικά χριστιανικά και ἀνθρωπιστικά ἀρχαί: *Ἐάντα μοι ἔξεστιν, ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα συμφέρει* (Α' Κορ. 6, 12) και *Ἐάν καλόν οὐ καλόν, ὅταν μὴ καλῶς γίνηται* (Γρηγορίου τοῦ Θεολόγου, Λόγος Θεολογικός Α' 4, PG 36, 16 C). Ἡ θέσις αὐτῆς τής Ἐκκλησίας ἀποδεικνύεται πολυλαπλῶς ἀπαραίτητος διά τήν ὀρθήν ὀριοθέτησιν τής ἐλευθερίας και τήν ἀξιοποίησιν τῶν καρπῶν τής ἐπιστήμης, εἰς πάντας σχεδόν τοὺς τομεῖς τής ὀποίας, ἰδία δέ τής βιολογίας, ἀναμεινῶνται νέα ἐπιτεύγματα, ἀλλά και κίνδυνοι. Ἐν ταῦτῳ, ὑπογραμμίζομεν τήν ἀναμφισβήτητον ἰερότητα τής ἀνθρωπίνης ζωῆς ἀπὸ τής συλλήψεως μέχρι τοῦ φυσικοῦ θανάτου.

12. Κατά τὰ τελευταῖα ἔτη, παρατηρεῖται ἀλματώδης ἀνάπτυξις εἰς τās βιοεπιστήμιας και εἰς τήν συνδεδεμένην μετὰ τās βιοτεχνολογίαν, πολλὰ ἐπιτεύγματα τῶν ὀποίων θεωροῦνται ἐνεργητικά διά τόν ἀνθρώπον, ἄλλα δημιουργοῦν ἠθικά διλήμματα, ἐνῶ ἄλλα κρίνονται ἀπορριπτέα. Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία πιστεύει ὅτι ὁ ἀνθρώπος δέν εἶναι ἀπλοῦν σύνολον κυττάρων, ἰστῶν και ὀργάνων, οὕτε και προσδιορίζεται μόνον ἀπὸ βιολογικοὺς παράγοντας. Ὁ ἀνθρώπος ἀποτελεῖ δημιούργημα *ἕκαστ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ* (Γεν. 1, 27) και θά πρέπει ἡ ἀναφορά εἰς αὐτόν νά γίνηται μετὸν δέοντα σεβασμόν.

Ἡ ἀναγνώρισις τής θεμελιώδους αὐτῆς ἀρχῆς ὀδηγεῖ εἰς τό συμπέρασμα ὅτι τόσοσιν κατά τήν ἐπιστημονικὴν ἔρευναν, ὅσον και κατά τήν πρακτικὴν ἐφαρμογὴν τῶν νέων ἀνακαλύψεων και ἐφευρέσεων, δέν ὀπως διαφυλάσσεται τό ἀπόλυτον δικαίωμα κάθε ἀνθρώπου νά ἀπολαύῃ σεβασμοῦ και τιμῆς εἰς πᾶν στάδιον τής ζωῆς του, καθῶς και ἡ βούλησις τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὡς αὕτη ἐφανερῶθη κατά τήν δημιουργίαν. Ἡ ἔρευνα πρέπει νά λαμβάνῃ ὑπ' ὄψιν τής τās ἠθικῆς και πνευματικῆς ἀρχῆς και τῆς χριστιανικῆς θέσμια. Ἀπαραίτητος σεβασμός δέν νά ἐπιδεικνύεται και εἰς ὄλην τήν Δημιουργίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ τόσοσιν κατά τήν χρῆσιν αὐτῆς ὑπό τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὅσον και κατά τήν ἔρευναν, συμφώνως πρὸς τήν ἐντολήν τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν (Γεν. 2, 15).

13. Κατά τοὺς χρόνους τούτους τής ἐκκοσμικεύσεως, ἰδιαίτερως προβάλλει ἡ ἀνάγκη, ὅπως ἐξαρθῇ ἡ σημασία τής ἀγιότητος τοῦ βίου, έν ὄψει τής πνευματικῆς κρίσεως, ἡ ὀποία χαρακτηρίζει τόν σύγχρονον πολιτισμόν.

Ἡ παρανόησις τής ἐλευθερίας ὡς ἐλευθεριότητος ὀδηγεῖ εἰς τήν αὐξήσιν τής ἐγκληματικότητος, τήν καταστροφὴν και τήν βεβήλωσιν τῶν σεβασμάτων, τήν ἐξάλειψιν τοῦ σεβασμοῦ πρὸς τήν ἐλευθερίαν τοῦ πλησίον και τήν ἰερότητα τής ζωῆς. Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Παράδοσις, διαμορφωθεῖσα διά τής βιώσεως έν τῇ πράξει τῶν χριστιανικῶν ἀληθειῶν, εἶναι φορέυς πνευματικότητος και ἀσκητικοῦ ἠθους, τό ὀποῖον δέν νά ἐξαρθῇ και προβληθῇ ὄλως ἰδιαίτέρως κατά τήν ἐποχὴν ἡμῶν.

14. Ἡ εἰδικὴ ποιμαντικὴ μέριμνα τής Ἐκκλησίας πρὸς τοὺς νέους τυγχάνει διαρκῆς και ἀμετάπτωτος διά τήν έν Χριστῷ διαπαιδαγώγησιν των. Αὐτόνοητος τυγχάνει ἡ προέκτασις τής ποιμαντικῆς εὐθύνης τής Ἐκκλησίας και εἰς τόν θεόδοτον θεσμόν τής οἰκογενείας, ἡτις ἀείποτε και ἀπαραιτήτως ἐστηρίχθη εἰς τό ἱερόν μυστήριον τοῦ χριστιανικοῦ γάμου, ὡς ἐνώσεως ἀνδρός και γυναίκος, ἡ ὀποία εἰκονίζει τήν ἔνωσιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ και τής Ἐκκλησίας Του (Ἐφ. 5,32). Τοῦτο καθίσταται ἐπικαιρον, έν ὄψει μάλιστα και ἀποπειρῶν νομομοιήσεως εἰς χώρας τινὰς και θεολογικῆς θεμελιώσεως εἰς χριστιανικῆς τινὰς κοινότητας, μορφῶν συμβιώσεως, ἀντιτιθεμένων εἰς τήν χριστιανικὴν παράδοσιν και διδασκαλίαν.

15. Εἰς τήν σύγχρονον ἐποχὴν και ἀείποτε, ἡ προφητικὴ και ποιμαντικὴ φωνὴ τής Ἐκκλησίας ἀπευθύνεται εἰς τήν καρδίαν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου και καλεῖ αὐτόν, μετά τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου, ἵνα ἐνστερνεσθῇ και βίωσῃ «*ὄσα ἐστίν ἀληθῆ, ὄσα σεμνά, ὄσα δίκαια, ὄσα ἀγνά, ὄσα προσφιλή, ὄσα εὐφρομα*» (Φιλιπ. 4,8), τήν θυσιαστικὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ Ἐσταυρωμένου Κυρίου τής, τήν μόνην ὀδὸν πρὸς ἕνα κόσμον εἰρήνης, δικαιοσύνης, ἐλευθερίας και ἀγάπης μεταξύ τῶν ἀνθρώπων και τῶν λαῶν.

Εγκύκλιος

Ἐορτὴ Ἁγίου Βασιλείου και Νέου Ἐτους

► Σελίδα 15

και Ἐραρχῶν, ὁ Παναγιώτατος προσέφερε πνευματικὴ καθοδήγησις μέσα ἀπὸ τῆ βαθειὰ πίστη του στὸν Θεὸ και τὴν ἀφοσίωσή του στὸ θέλημά Του.

Προσέφερε στοργικὴ ποιμαντικὴ ἡγεσία ἀπὸ τὴν βιωματικὴ ἐμπειρία του και τὴν κατανόησιν του τής δυνάμεως τής χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Χειρίσθηκε μετ' ἐπιδειξίτητα σοβαρὰ ζητήματα ἀντλῶντας ἀπὸ τὴν μεγάλη θεολογικὴ και λειτουργικὴ κληρονομία τής Ὁρθοδόξου Χριστιανικῆς πίστεώς μας.

Ὁ Οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης μας κ.κ. Βαρθολομαῖος ὀδήγησε και συνεχίζει νά ὀδηγῇ τοὺς πιστοὺς ἀνά τόν κόσμο στήν προσφορά ἀληθοῦς μαρτυρίας τής εὐλογημένης ζωῆς έν Χριστῷ και τής διαχρονικῆς ἐλπίδος ἡ ὀποία βασιζέται στίς ὑποσχέσεις τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Δοξάζομε και εὐχαριστοῦμε τόν Θεὸ γιὰ τὴν ὄντως ἀποστολικὴ διακονία τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου μας. Τὸν εὐχαριστοῦμε, ἐπίσης, γιὰ ὄλες τίς προσφορὲς τῶν Ἱεραρχῶν, τοῦ Κλήρου και τοῦ Λαοῦ στήν ἀντιμετώπιση τῶν ἀναγκῶν και τὴν ὑποστήριξη τοῦ ἔργου τοῦ Παναγιωτάτου και τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου.

Ἡ προσφορά αὐτὴ κατέστη μεγάλη συμβολὴ στή διάδοσιν τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, στήν ὑποστήριξη τής θρησκευτικῆς ἐλευθερίας, στήν προσφορά πνευματικῆς καθοδηγήσεως ἐπὶ περιβαλλοντικῶν ζητημάτων και στήν βοήθεια ἀνθρώπων πού ζοῦν ὑπὸ τό καθεστῶς ἐπείγουσῶν ἀναγκῶν.

Ἡ διακονία και ἡγεσία τοῦ Παναγιωτάτου ἀντικατοπτρίζει τὴν στοργὴν και τὴν πίστη τῆν ὀποία ἐπέδειξε ὁ Μέγας Βασιλεὺς. Ἀντικατοπτρίζει, ἐπίσης, τὴν μαρτυρία τής ἀγαπημένης μας Ἀκαδημίας τοῦ Ἁγίου Βασιλείου.

Ὑπὸ τὴν ἡγεσία τής Φιλοπτώχου Ἀδελφότητος Κυριῶν και τῶν τοπικῶν παραρτημάτων τής, συνεχίζομε τὴν ἐτήσια παράδοσιν τής ἡμέρας αὐτῆς και ὀλοκληροῦ τοῦ μηνὸς Ἰανουαρίου νά προσφέρομε προσευχῆς και στήριξη σὲ αὐτὴ τὴ διακονία.

Κάθε ἡμέρα τοῦ ἔτους οἱ εὐεργέτες, οἱ διευθυντές και τό προσωπικὸ τής Ἀκαδημίας καλύπτουν τίς ἀνάγκες τῶν παιδιῶν και ἐφήβων ὀ ὀποῖοι ἔχουν ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ ἀγάπη, καθοδήγησις και τὴν θεραπευτικὴ δύναμη τής πίστεως.

Αὐτὴ ἡ ζωτικῆς σημασίας διακονία ὑποστηρίζεται ἐπὶ ἐξήντα και πλέον ἔτη ἀπὸ τὴν Φιλόπτωχο Ἀδελφότητα Κυριῶν διά τής ἐτησίας κοπῆς τής Βασιλοπτιτας.

Σᾶς ζητῶ νά προσφέρετε γενναϊὸδωρα μαζί με τίς προσευχῆς σας στήν Ἀκαδημία τοῦ Ἁγίου Βασιλείου.

Στὴν κοπὴ και τὴν διανομὴ τής Βασιλοπτιτας στήν ἀρχὴ τοῦ Νέου αὐτοῦ Ἐτους ἄς προσφέρομε ἐπίσης τίς προσευχῆς και στήριξή μας στὸν Παναγιώτατο Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριάρχη μας κ.κ. Βαρθολομαῖο και ἄς τοῦ εὐχηθῶμεν πλείστα ἀκόμη ἔτη πιστῆς και ἀφοσιωμένης διακονίας στὸ Χριστὸ και τὴν Ἐκκλησία Του.

Εἶθε ὁ καθένας ἀπὸ σᾶς και οἱ οἰκογενεῖες σας νά ἔχετε τίς εὐλογίες τοῦ Κυρίου μας γιὰ εἰρήνη, υγεία και τὴ δυνατότητα νά μοιράζεσθε τὴ δύναμη τής πίστεως στὴ διάρκεια ὀλοκληροῦ τοῦ Νέου Ἐτους.

Μετά πατρικῆς ἀγάπης έν Χριστῷ,

✙ Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀμερικῆς Δημήτριος

✙ Ὁ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀμερικῆς Δημήτριος

Ἐν τῷ Ὁρθοδόξῳ Κέντρῳ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου έν Σαμπεζῦ Γενεύης, τῇ 27ῳ Ἰανουαρίου 2016

Ἐκ τής Γραμματείας τής Ἱερᾶς Συνάξεως.

CHOIR NOTES

by Anna Dounelis

NEW YORK - The Direct Archdiocesan District Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians' annual conference attendees represented states from coast-to-coast and several regional choir federations.

In addition to members from throughout the Direct Archdiocesan District, church musicians from six other federations traveled from the following states to participate in the Nov. 13-15 gathering: California, Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Texas and Utah. Notable guests included Maria Keritsis, chairman of the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians, and Vicki Pappas, president of the Mid-Eastern Federation, Paul Mavromihalidis, Eastern Federation president; and former South-Eastern Federation President Lucy Pappadakas.

Presvytera Stacey Dorrance and Chrysanthi Therianos, of the nationally known music trio EIKONA conducted interesting and educational workshops at Annunciation Church, on Manhattan's Upper West Side, which hosted the conference.

Keynote speaker was Archon Dr. Tikey A. Zes, a pillar of Greek Orthodox Liturgical Music and director of the St. Nicholas Choir in San Jose, Calif. One weekend highlight was a dinner cruise around Manhattan.

The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on Conference Sunday was celebrated by Bishop Andonios of Phasiane, Archdiocese of America and Direct Archdiocesan District chancellor, assisted by Fr. Chrysostomos Gilbert of Annunciation Church and the local federation's spiritual advisor;



Direct Archdiocesan District Church Musicians Hold 31st Conference

Senior Choir photo by Chrissi Nicholas / Youth Choir photo by Stephanie Pavlidis.

Fr. Chrysostomos Panos and Deacon Panagiotis Papazafiroopoulos.

Dr. James Maniatis, choir director at the Assumption Cathedral in Denver, conducted the Conference Choir, accompanied on the organ by his wife, Connie Maniatis.

Leah Pappas Monias of Holy Trinity Church in Hicksville, N.Y, directed the Great Doxology arranged by her late father, Demetrios C. Pappas.

Youth Choir directors Georgia Kaufman and Eleni Rodopoulos Kaufman



▶ to page 27

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CHURCH HISTORY

Fires Plague Church from Early 20th Century, including NY Cathedral

by William H. Samonides, Ph.D.

In recent months, as *Orthodox Observer* readers are aware, there have been fires at several of our parishes. Historically, this is not unusual. Almost every older parish has experienced at least one fire, and some – like the Annunciation in Woburn, Mass., – have had multiple blazes (1923, 1926, and 1956).

Sometimes there was minimal impact. The fire in April 1944 at St. George's in Springfield, Mass., caused no structural damage, though the interior had to be refurbished. Others destroyed churches, like the fires at the Sts. Constantine and Helen parish in Chicago in April 1926 and at the parish of the same name in Richmond, Va., in October 1957.

Perhaps the most spectacular of these catastrophic fires occurred in Manhattan 89 years ago this month. On Tuesday, Jan. 18, 1927, the Holy Trinity Archdiocesan Cathedral at 153 East 72nd Street, between Lexington and Park Avenues, was completely destroyed by a five-alarm fire. One of the finest churches in America, the building had served the parish since April 3, 1904, when the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Holy Monday.

The Gothic-style structure had originally been designed and built as the home of St. James Episcopal Church in 1869 by James Renwick, Jr., who is best known as the architect of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York and the Castle at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

The 1927 conflagration at Holy Trinity was not the first. In March 1906, a fire had damaged the iconography and the floor of the nave.

The church was redecorated, but the result did not suit Fr. Methodios Kourkoulis, who served there from 1904 until his death in 1941. Under his direction, the church, which was elevated to cathedral status after the establishment of the Archdiocese in 1922, underwent a major redecoration. Sparta native Theodore Tsavalas arrived in America in 1911 and started work on the project.

He was very skilled, as his surviving portrait of Fr. Kourkoulis demonstrates. He would continue working for over a decade, but all the results of his labor were destroyed in the 1927 fire.

The blaze started shortly before 1 a.m. on a cold winter night, spreading so quickly that the interior of the cathedral was gutted almost before the firemen arrived.

Although partially obscured by the city high-rises, the fire was visible from blocks away and attracted an estimated 5,000 spectators. The greatest challenge for firefighters was to keep the flames from spreading to the nearby apartment houses in the fashionable Upper East Side neighborhood.

The firemen were also concerned that the gasoline and other flammables stored in the many garages along the street behind the Cathedral could ignite and cause dangerous explosions.

The night of Jan. 17-18 was unusually hectic for New York City firemen.

In addition to the Holy Trinity fire, there were several lesser blazes scat-

tered about the city. Coincidentally, the National Association of Fire Chiefs was having its annual banquet at the Hotel Roosevelt a few dozen blocks south of the fire.

The fire chiefs raced to the scene to watch New York firefighters in action, and the department put on a show for their eminent visitors. More than a hundred firemen were summoned to fight the blaze.

Dozens of fire engines were spread over four city blocks, with many of them coupled on one line of hose to provide enough pressure to carry the water to the heights of the fire. After two hours of frenetic activity, the flames, though not extinguished, were brought under control.

The majestic, three-story, 19th century church with its towering steeple were a total loss.

The fire also consumed the top four floors of the eight-story apartment house next door. The furnishings of the people living on the floors below were completely ruined by smoke and water.

In all, 16 prominent families were made homeless by the fire. Five children suffered from smoke inhalation, but no one else was injured at the fire itself.

Four others were hurt – one critically – when the deputy fire chief, who was speeding to the scene of the fire, struck two vehicles.

Damage to the building and the apartment house next door was estimated at a half million dollars (over \$6.5 million in 2015 dollars). Many irreplaceable objects were lost. The fire did not, however, deter the Orthodox faithful.

The following Sunday, Holy Trinity parishioners met for services on schedule across town at their sister parish, St. Eleftherios.

After the stock market crash of October 1929, property in the city became available at bargain prices.

In November 1930, property located at 337 East 74th St., was purchased.

This turned out to be a controversial move. The property was only three blocks east, but the neighborhood was considered much less desirable.

Although funds were available, the church was not immediately rebuilt. As a result, Athenagoras was enthroned as Archbishop of the Church in America on Feb. 16, 1931, at St. Eleftherios.

On Sept. 16, 1932, the Archbishop laid the cornerstone of the new building.

Gov. Franklin Roosevelt was represented by his wife Eleanor who, on behalf of the governor and the people of the State of New York, offered greetings to several hundred parishioners who attended the ceremony.

After years of delay, construction proceeded at a rapid pace and was completed within a few months.

On Oct. 22, 1933, the structure was consecrated by Archbishop Athenagoras, who proclaimed it "The Cathedral of all Hellenism in America."

It has served the Archdiocese for 82 years and has been the site where archbishops are enthroned, from Archbishop Michael on Dec. 18, 1949 to Archbishop Demetrios on Sept. 18, 1999.

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PARISH PROFILE

Faithful Persevere through Good and Bad Times

PARISH profile

Name: St. John Greek Orthodox Church

Location: Youngstown, Ohio.

Metropolis of Pittsburgh

Founded: 1915

Clergy: Fr. Thomas Constantine
(Holy Cross '82)

Size: About 200 families

Web: www.stjohnboardman.org

E-mail: stjohnboardman@yahoo.org

Noteworthy: Parish recently observed its centennial



St. John Church photo

ST. JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio – For about 150 years, this city located midway between Pittsburgh and Cleveland, and halfway between New York and Chicago, lay in the heart of what was called the “steel belt” that stretched from Pittsburgh to Chicago.

The steel industry is what drew the first Greek immigrants to this part of northeastern Ohio, 10 miles from the Pennsylvania border, that originally was settled by people from Connecticut, of which it was part of in the late 1700s.

Since the mid-1970s, however, with the loss of 40,000 manufacturing jobs, \$414 million in personal income and 400 businesses, the area since became part of the “Rust Belt,” as the entire region is now known.

Beginning in the 1880s, Greeks from the mainland and Asia Minor arrived because they heard the streets “were paved with gold” according to a parish history. Other groups attracted by the booming economy in large numbers included Italians, Eastern Europeans, Irish, Germans and, later, African Americans and Hispanics.

In 1906, nine years before the founding of the parish, the first Greek Orthodox wedding took place in Youngstown between James Chelekis, who figured prominently in the beginnings of the church, and Anna Constas of Martins Ferry, Ohio. A priest from Chicago, Fr. Lacraceas Mandates, officiated. The Youngstown Vindicator newspaper reported that the festivities lasted several days, the parish history noted.

Then, on Dec. 15, 1915, six immigrants, including Chelekis, his brother, George “Bill” Chelekis, and others met to plan the church. A 15-member committee named Antonios Glaros as the first president, drafted a constitution and applied for a state charter that was granted on April 13, 1916.

The community rented space in the YMCA building Feb. 17, 1916 to a chapel. Fr. Neophytos Josepheos became the first priest. The parish received the name St. John the Forerunner from John Bombolis, “godfather” of the church. The congregation soon moved to another rented downtown location.

A women’s philanthropic society, “The Three Hierarchs,” was founded the same month. It evolved into the local Philoptochos chapter in 1956.

A building committee in April 1917 began planning a Byzantine-style church and purchased a vacant lot for \$18,000 and two houses. Archbishop Alexander of Rodostolou laid the cornerstone in 1920. The church was completed in six months at a cost of \$53,000 and the first liturgy took place on Dec. 9, 1920.

Greek and Sunday schools were organized in the late 1920s and ‘30s.

The community faced a large debt of \$43,000 during the Great Depression which was raised by large contributions from contributors. Fund-raisers became a regular occurrence. On March 13, 1940, one of the more unusual fund-raisers took place when world famous professional wrestler Jim Londos promoted a successful wrestling match to benefit the church.

Following World War II, the parish experienced a large increase in membership and plans were discussed made for a new church in the late 1950s.

By the early 1960s the community decided to relocate to Boardman, an adjacent suburb south of the city. Meanwhile, the city, now having about 67,000 residents, lost 60 percent of its population during that period because of a soaring crime rate and the loss of jobs.

On Dec. 20, 1964, Fr. Isaiah Chronopoulos became the church’s 23rd pastor in 50 years. Plans to build a new church, the current house of worship, moved to the construction state with groundbreaking taking place July 17, 1965. The cornerstone was laid in July 1966 by Bishop Meletios of South America (former Youngstown resident and cantor Michael Diakandreou). The new church opened in 1966 with Bishop Gerasimos officiating the thyranoxia, assisted by Fr. Isaiah.

On Thanksgiving Day, 1969, Archbishop Iakovos presided at the consecration.

During Fr. Isaiah’s tenure, the first senior citizen group was founded. In 1971, he was tasked by Archbishop Iakovos to become dean of students at Holy Cross School of Theology. Eventually he was elevated to Bishop Isaiah of Aspendos, becoming chancellor of the Archdiocese, then to his current position as Metropolitan of Denver.

The community established an

outdoor glendi in 1980 that eventually became the Greek festival, now one of the church’s major revenue sources along with stewardship.

Over the years, boys basketball teams, annual golf tournaments, the establishment of AHEPA apartments and a Winterfest have been among the highlights of parish activities and accomplishments. The Winterfest fundraiser features Greek cuisine, pastries prepared by Philoptochos, music and dancing.

Fr. Constantine was assigned to St. John Church on April 11, 2003, as interim pastor and became permanent priest on May 1. Among his accomplishments, he began a weekly “Coffee with Father” and “Speaker of the Month” program, and Lenten-related activities.

As part of the observance of Ohio’s bicentennial in 2004, the parish council donated to the Cleisthenes Project which enabled busts of Greek philosophers to be installed in the legislative chambers of the state Capitol in Columbus.

Fr. Tom said his parish consists of a few immigrants, but is mostly American born with a few converts, a mix of elderly and some younger members. Considerable change has come about over the years because of the city’s significant loss of population. “The community has gotten older,” he said. “We’re trying but struggling while the city population has been going the other way.”

He describes his membership as “very, very dedicated parishioners with

a love for the church.” Many are involved with outreach programs to the to the greater community through feeding the hungry programs, including a soup kitchen, cooking turkeys and providing free meals on Thanksgiving at the Salvation Army and others.

Through the Orthodox Christian Fellowship, Fr. Tom provides outreach to college students at Youngstown State University.

Bible studies, Lenten programs that include speakers and a very successful St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival are all part of the parish ministries. Several young people in the Oratorical Festival have gone on to Metropolis and National competition in the festival.

With the presence of about 12 other Orthodox Christian churches in the area, of various jurisdictions, and the other Greek Orthodox Church in Youngstown, St. Nicholas, and the Campbell parish of Archangel Michael of St. John’s parishioners take part in various pan Orthodox events, especially during Lent.

Also during Lent, a Seafood Fest consisting of a fish fry and Greek food takes place each Friday.

Fr. Tom also participates in the local Clergy Association organization. “It is our main service to the general public and it draws a lot of people from all over the area,” he said.

Originally from Baltimore, Fr. Tom has served parishes in Virginia and in the Atlanta and Detroit metropolises before coming to Youngstown.

The father of nine, including five boys, several of his children have either completed or are currently enrolled at HCHC.

In 2013, Eleftherios was ordained to the diaconate at St. John’s by Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh. He currently serves as Archbishop Demetrios’ deacon.

A daughter, Angeliki, is a recent graduate of the school and works in the Department of Religious Education. Another son, Demetrios, currently attends the school of theology. Another daughter, Maria, is married to Fr. Michael Gavrilos of St. Paul’s Church in North Royalton, Ohio. Another son, Antonios, attends Hellenic College.

Fr. Tom describes the most difficult part of his ministry as trying to compete with the secularization of the world. It’s hard trying to keep people interested and attending church faithfully.”

– Compiled by Jim Golding

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SCHOLARSHIP

Applications Accepted for Agris Scholarships

BOSTON – Angela Christoforos, a Salem, Mass.-native and Time Warner Cable news reporter in Buffalo, N.Y., recently credited the financial backing and community support she received from the Agris Journalism Scholarships as being critical to her success in this challenging field.

“As an up and coming broadcast journalist, being chosen as a recipient of the Peter Agris Memorial Scholarship was a rewarding pat on the back and a confidence building nudge forward to start my career. It is an honor to be recognized for both my work as a journalist and my Greek heritage,” she said.

Christoforos, an award winning journalist, was recognized by the Maine Association of Broadcasters for a 5-part series on Autism Awareness. A graduate of Suffolk University, she interned and worked at NBC affiliate WHDH-TV and New England Cable News before scoring a spot as morning news anchor and reporter at WAGM-TV in Maine.

Over the past 24 years, some \$500,000 has been awarded to more than 100 outstanding young Greek American communications professionals through the Alpha Omega Council of New England and the Agris family.

Comprised of leading professionals of Hellenic ancestry, The Alpha Omega Council annually honors its late founder, also the founder and publisher of *The Hellenic Chronicle*, for 50 years the premier Greek American national English-language

weekly newspaper in this country.

Agris was an Archon of the Greek Orthodox Church, trustee of Hellenic College/Holy Cross School of Theology, Anatolia College, The American College of Greece and an Ahepan.

Six \$5,000 non-renewable scholarships will be presented in June at the Alpha Omega Council's annual Lifetime Achievement Award Dinner, during which time a noted individual will be recognized for contributions to Hellenic and Orthodox ideals.

Prerequisites for the scholarship include: Greek American heritage; U.S. citizenship; current full-time enrollment as a journalism or communications major at the graduate or undergraduate level in an accredited college or university in the United States; active participation in school, community, church organizations; a minimum of a 3.0 GPA and demonstrated financial need.

Interested candidates should visit www.alphaomegacouncil.org or write to: The Peter Agris Memorial Scholarships Committee, c/o Nancy Agris Savage, 9 Nonesuch Drive, Natick, MA 01760. Questions may be directed to nancyasavage@gmail.com.

Applications, transcripts, required essay and any published work that might enhance the application must be returned by email to nancyasavage@gmail.com, or by mail to the above address, no later than March 1.



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PRISON MINISTRY

Alice in Wonderland... Spiritually Speaking

by Fr. Stephen Powley

As a prison chaplain I was responsible for teaching a pre-release program for men who would be getting out of prison soon. One of the important lessons had to do with who they saw themselves as when they looked in the mirror and what was the goal for their lives five years from now. They were challenged to apply this to both their spiritual life and their work life. I invite you to listen in to this session and make applications for your own life.

In that timeless tale, “Alice in Wonderland,” Alice meets up with two strange characters who ask her very pointed questions. Their questions and Alice’s answers give us food for spiritual thought. First, Alice meets up with the Great Caterpillar, sitting on a mushroom, smoking a hookah.

“Who... are... you?” he asks Alice. Alice answers, “I... I hardly know, sir, just at the present... at least I know who I was when I got up this morning. But I think I must have been changed several times since then.”

When it comes to our spiritual lives, it would do us all good to look in the mirror and ask: “Who... are... you?” If our answer sounds a great deal like Alice’s, then it should be a warning to us. If we cannot answer this question in a matter of fact way, then it would suggest that our spiritual life is not where it ought to be.

We’ve all heard the term “Sunday Christian.” That’s someone who has one spiritual identity on Sundays (at Church), another Monday through Friday, and perhaps even another on Saturday night.

This sounds like spiritual schizophrenia, yet there are many, many people living just such spiritual lives and thinking that it is normal. It is most definitely not normal, nor is it healthy. Spiritual commitment involves knowing who you are and being that same person (spiritually), seven days a week... 24 hours a day. Our outer activities can certainly change moment by moment, but who we are on the inside should remain constant. That spiritual consistency will bring both spiritual growth and contentment.

St. Paul knew who he was when he wrote: “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:11-13)

The other character, Alice, runs into while in Wonderland is the Cheshire Cat. The Cat’s insights will build right on the previous matter. Alice asks the Cat: “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” The Cat answers: “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.”

“I don’t much care where...” replies Alice. “Then it doesn’t matter which way you

go,” grins the Cat. Alice adds: “...so long as I get somewhere.”

To which the Cat says: “Oh, you’re sure to do that, if you only walk long enough.”

Many people wonder why their spiritual lives seem to be going nowhere. In order to go someplace spiritually (growth-wise), one first has to deal with the question of “Who are you?” If one decides to be committed to having a spiritual life and being a spiritual person, then the next question is: “Where do you want to get to?” If you have no spiritual goals, then your path will be an aimless one, wandering here and there. And if you wander long enough you will get “somewhere” which in all likelihood will be “nowhere,” perhaps back where you started (which is the case in Alice in Wonderland).

Do you want to be a man or woman of God? If so, there is a path laid out for you to follow. It may not be the easiest path, usually aimless wandering is easier. But, it will be the best path, a path that will actually lead you toward your spiritual goals.

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:6). This path will involve commitment and sacrifice on your part. It may involve some changes in your life.

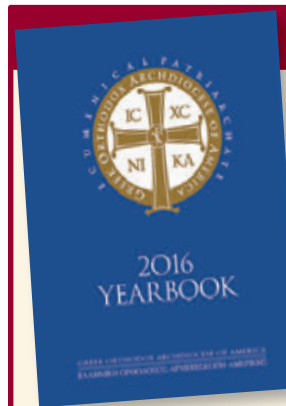
Take a look at yourself, where you are at in different spiritual areas: attending Church, receiving Holy Communion, Confession, daily prayer, fasting, Scripture reading, devotional reading, giving of your time, giving of your money, etc. Set attainable goals each week in all areas and then strive to complete them.

Keep in mind that even when we set “attainable” goals, we may not attain them each week... that’s okay... things come up... things happen... just don’t quit... set your sights on the target for the next week and begin heading in that direction!! As you do this, week after week, you will find the questions of “Who are you?” and “Where do you want to get to?” slowly fading away because you will be on the right path and you will know the answers to those questions!!! And keep in mind that old adage: If you aim at nothing you will surely hit it!

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12-14).

May our Lord help each of us to know who we are and where we want to get to.

Fr. Stephen is the priest at St. John the Baptist Church in Pueblo, Colo., and serves as executive director of Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry under the Assembly of Bishops.



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EPIPHANY 2016



Long Beach, Calif. – Assumption Church ceremony included Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, Bishop Apostolos of Medeias, and Fr. Christos Kanakis and several divers. Mitchell Jennings retrieved the cross.



Fotini Sisois, prepares to release the dove at Tarpon Springs event as happy mom, Artemis Kotis, looks on.



Astoria, Queens, N.Y. – The Very Rev. Archimandrite Nektarios Papazafropoulos, head priest of the Hellenic Greek Orthodox Community of Astoria, NY, tosses the cross into the East River. (Photo courtesy of Costa Bej)



GOA/D. Panagos photo

Tarpon Springs, Fla. – Participants in the St. Nicholas Cathedral's annual Epiphany celebration, the "granddaddy" of the Blessing of the Waters and Cross Diving events in the Archdiocese.



Santa Cruz, Calif. - Prophet Elias Church member Sophie Schier-Hanson, who attends the University of California, Santa Cruz, was the diver. (Maria Thomas photo)

NOTE

Bellingham, Wash. – Fr. Michael Tervo of St. Sophia Church blessed the waters of Puget Sound. Space limitation prevented the use of the submitted photo.



Corpus Christi, Texas – St. Nicholas Church event at Corpus Christi Bay. Amanda Pollakis (13), retrieved the cross.



Buffalo, N.Y. - Frs. Christos Christakis and John Sakellariou, and Annunciation Church parishioners at the Blessing of the Waters of Lake Erie.



San Diego. – Fr. Andrew Scordalakis of St. Spyridon Church, assisted by Fr. David Hostetler, blessed San Diego Bay. Parishioner George Fratian retrieved the cross.



West Palm Beach, Fla. – Young divers from St. Catherine Church dive for the cross tossed by Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta.



Galveston, Texas – Fr. Stelios Sitaras of Assumption Church, this year's cross retriever Charlie Vasut (r), and last year's winner, Nicholas Stamos.



Daytona Beach, Fla. - St. Demetrios Church parishioners gather at Ponce DeLeon Springs. Angelo Klironomos was the cross retriever.

*Photos submitted by the individual parishes, unless otherwise credited.



Louisville, Ky. – Assumption Church Blessing of the Waters took place along the Ohio River on Jan. 9. This is the second time that this service has been held at the river. About 125 people attended.



Camarillo, Calif. – St. Demetrios Church celebrated Epiphany for the 26th year. Fr. Gary Kyriacou officiated at Ventura Harbor. Two teams dived, Harrison Kyriacou for the kids group, and Chris Pulos Jr., for the adults. Tim Harmantzis photo.



Merrick, Long Island, N.Y. – St. Demetrios Church altar boy Greg Aivaliotis successfully retrieved the cross from the Wantagh Marina's frigid waters.

METROPOLIS NEWS

Seattle Workshop Focuses on Parish Missions and Evangelism Ministries

SEATTLE – A vibrant Missions and Evangelism ministry in every parish is a goal of the Metropolis of San Francisco. As part of the process in furthering this effort, Thomaida Hudanish, the full-time Assistant Director of the Metropolis Commission for Orthodox Missions and Evangelism (C.O.M.E.), conducted a workshop for the parishes of the Puget Sound region on Saturday, January 30 at the Church of the Assumption.

Participating in the workshop were clergy and laity from Assumption and St. Demetrios Churches in Seattle, Holy Apostles in Shoreline, and St. Nicholas in Tacoma.

Ms. Hudanish outlined the benefits of a Missions and Evangelism ministry which include “increases in membership and participation, parish and personal spiritual maturity, Stewardship, and an overall Mission mindset in the parish.”

Seven basic components of such a ministry include a Welcome Ministry, In-reach and Adult Education, Increasing Parish Visibility, Mochas



Participants in a workshop at the Church of the Assumption conducted by Thomaida Hudanish, assistant director of the Metropolis of San Francisco Commission for Orthodox Missions and Evangelism focused on the establishment of Missions and Evangelism Ministries in every parish, a goal of the Metropolis.

for Missions which is the annual fundraising drive in support of C.O.M.E., a Bookstore, Outreach Events, and an Orthodox Christian Mission Center Ambassador.

Workshop attendees also shared examples of programs in their parishes that are working well and areas of challenge that are faced.

For more information on creating a Missions and Evangelism Ministry in a parish and about the work of C.O.M.E., go to www.come-sf.org

IOCC

Local Clergy, Volunteers Help Missouri Flood Victims

BALTIMORE, MD. – In the aftermath of record-breaking rains and destructive flooding in Missouri early January, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) US Country Representative Dan Christopoulos, met with clergy and laity from the pan-Orthodox community of greater St. Louis to begin mobilizing volunteers desperately needed for cleanup. The subsiding floodwaters from an overflowing Mississippi River and other nearby rivers have left behind damage to more than 7,000 homes and businesses in and around St. Louis, and nearly \$200 million in destruction to roads,

according to the state governor's office.

How to Help

To help the victims of disasters in the United States, like the Midwest floods, by making a financial gift to the United States Emergency Response Fund, which will provide immediate relief as well as long-term support through the provision of emergency aid, recovery assistance and other support to help those in need. To make a gift, visit iocc.org, call toll-free at 1-877-803-IOCC (4622), or mail a check or money order payable to IOCC, P.O. Box 17398, Baltimore, MD 21297-0429.

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WANT MORE INFORMATION?

CONTACT US TO DISCUSS YOUR GOALS & NEEDS AND ALLOW US TO EXPLAIN HOW WE MIGHT BE OF HELP.



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NATIONAL MINISTRIES - CENTER FOR FAMILY CARE

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Why We Are Called to Serve

by Gerald Largent

A man once asked some of his friends the following question: "What comes to mind when you hear the word 'ministry'?" He received many answers to the question, but two of them were rather unfortunate. "That's Father's job," his friends replied. Ministry simply defined is serving others. The fact of the matter is that every Orthodox Christian is called to ministry. That is, we are all called to serve.

Every year on Meatfare Sunday, two Sundays before the beginning of Great Lent, we hear the Gospel account of the Final Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46). Christ gives a sobering account of the judgment of the righteous and the wicked.

The righteous inherit eternal life, having acts of mercy as evidence of their faith in Christ. The Lord places them at His right hand, stating "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." The wicked, on the other hand, are sent to eternal punishment for their lack of mercy.

"Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to Me." Our Lord identifies with those in need, and our response to them is an indication of our response to Him.

Some people may ask, "Why do I have to serve the less fortunate? Why can't I just worry about my family and friends?"

While it is important to look after our friends and relatives, and to serve them during their times of need, Jesus

clearly states that we benefit when serving those who cannot repay us. In the Final Judgment passage, He uses the following people as examples: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned.

Let us also consider the Savior's words in Luke 6:34: "And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again."

So if serving is important for us as Orthodox Christians, how do we lead our children to it? Children can be quite impressionable.

Parents, grandparents, and godparents often have a profound impact on the younger members of their families, particularly in matters of faith. Their example, or lack thereof, has the potential to shape children's attitudes toward the Church and serving others.

It is essential to make Orthodoxy a regular part of a child's life as early as possible, both on Sunday in church and throughout the week at home. In addition to praying together daily as a family, it is also wise to reinforce your child's Church school lesson from the previous Sunday.

Furthermore, families should make charitable service a regular component of their lives. If your son or daughter happens to ask why your family is visiting the sick, attending Orthodox prayer services at nursing homes, or volunteering to feed the hungry, you may simply respond that "Christ wants us to do this." Stated another way, genuine Christian faith influences our actions. Orthodoxy is not just a religion; it is a way of life.

There are numerous ministry opportunities for Orthodox Christians both in the parish and in the community at large.

Most parishes have ministry opportunities such as altar servers, choir members, chanters, readers, greeters, church school teachers, and many more. It is also important for us to serve those who are beyond our home church's walls: the community at large.

Though opportunities may vary from one city to another, there are many Orthodox ministries that are in need of volunteers and/or donors.

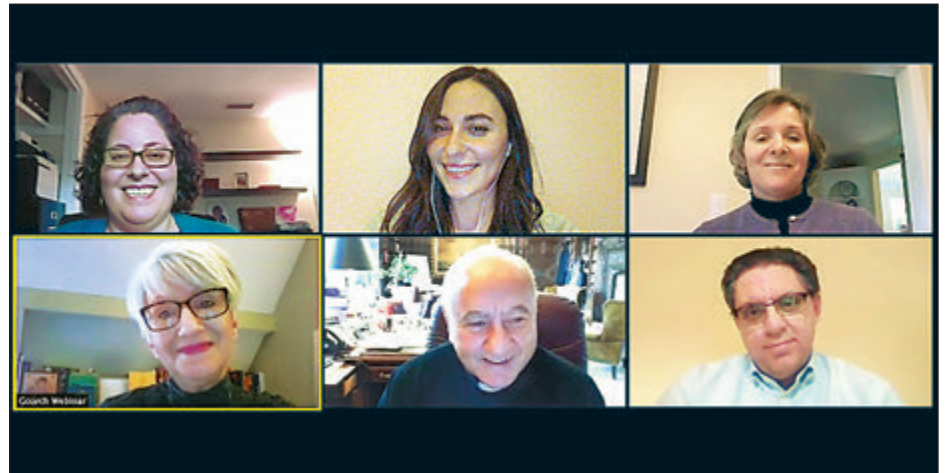
Ask your priest how you may get involved in one or more ministries at your home parish, and discuss the possibilities with your children.

Come up with a project that works for your family.

Christ teaches us about mercy: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

May we emulate the mercy of Christ as we serve those around us.

Gerald Largent is ministry coordinator of the St. Panteleimon Orthodox Christian Outreach, a tax-exempt, pan-Orthodox ministry under the spiritual protection of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Lakewood, Ohio (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA—Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople). He regularly visits residents of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other group homes. You can contact Gerald at gerald@stpanteleimon.com.



Meet the staff - Thanks to Zoom, Fr. Sitaras can hold weekly meetings with his far-flung staff of the Center for Family Care. (top row) Melissa Tsongranis, associate director; Maria McMullen, administrative media coordinator; Presvytera Kerry Pappas MA, LMFT, Clergy and Seminarian Couple Care (Bottom row); Angie Giallourakis, PhD, resource coordinator; Fr. Constantine L. Sitaras, director; and George Tsongranis, MDiv, special projects coordinator. Melissa is the only full-time staff member. George is a full-time contractor and the others are part-time staff.

Center for Family Care a Vital National Ministry

The Center for Family Care, which partly manifests itself in this monthly Family Connections page, offers a broad range of ministries for the support and care of families who avail themselves of its services.

When he's not busy managing things at Saint Basil Academy as its director, Fr. Constantine Sitaras oversees the work of the center's far-flung staff. Thanks to Zoom, the group can at least make a personal connection with each other and coordinate their activities with Fr. Sitaras, who heads the Center from his Academy office in Garrison, N.Y.

Their work involves a tremendous amount of traveling throughout the year. Fr. Sitaras, for example, visits many parishes around the country where he leads retreats, seminars, discussion groups, parenting and other workshops. Melissa Tsongranis, the associate director who is based in Tar-

pon Springs, Fla., also travels extensively, in addition to providing the information for the Family Connections page and performing other duties. Presvytera Kerry, located in Stamford, Conn., counsels clergy and seminarian families around the country.

The Center also has an ongoing presence on the internet, offering webinars, online workshops and e-mail ministry and podcasts, which Maria McMullen and George Tsongranis produce.

Fr. Constantine and his staff also train priests and other individuals at the local level in family ministry, such as conducting parish family nights, counseling couples before marriage.

For more information about the work of the Center for Family Care, e-mail: fr-costa@goarch.org, mtsongranis@goarch.org, or kpappas@goarch.org

Example of Philanthropy: St. Maria of Paris

The holy martyr Maria Skobtsova was a nun and martyr in Paris in the early twentieth century. She encouraged hospitality and love of one's neighbor, often in the most uncompromising of terms. She considered this to be the foundation of the Christian gospel, and she embodied it in her life. St. Mary died a martyr in a concentration camp on Holy Saturday 1945. She took the

place of a Jewish woman who was going to be sent to the gas chamber, and died in her place. She was glorified by the Church of Constantinople on January 16, 2004, along with her companions, Priest Dmitri Klepinin, her son George (Yuri) Skobtsov, and Elie Fondaminsky.

They are commemorated on July 20. - Adapted from www.orthodoxwiki.org

From Mother Maria Skobtsova, Essential Writings

A person should have a more attentive attitude toward his brother's flesh than toward his own. Christian love teaches us to give our brother not only material but also spiritual gifts.

We must give him our last shirt and our last crust of bread. Here personal charity is as necessary and justified as the broadest social work. In this sense there is no doubt that the Christian is called

to social work. He is called to organize a better life for the workers, to provide for the old, to build hospitals, care for the children, fight against exploitation, injustice, want, lawlessness... The love of man demands one thing from us in this area: ascetic ministry to his material needs, attentive and responsible work, a sober and un sentimental awareness of our strength and of its true usefulness.

From Raising Our Sons: Understanding the Inner Life of Boys

Top 10 things we need to know about raising boys

10. Boys utilize the testing of limits to feel alive and masculine.
9. Boys possess invisible mute buttons and use them often.
8. Boys have a fight or flight response to conflict.
7. Boys' number one belief about women is that they use too many words.
6. Boys have two words for love: time and play.
5. Boys have one main emotional response for all of their negative emotions: anger.
4. Boys need training in most areas of their life.
3. Boys emotionally need tenderness from the grown-ups in their lives but often trigger harshness.
2. Boys are prone to having addictive personalities.
1. Boys are completely worth it!

This list is taken from a webinar by George Papageorge, LMFT. To watch the full webinar, visit www.family.goarch.org and click on "Events" then "Webinars."

WATCH OUR RECENT WEBINAR

Golden Rules for the Golden Years: Resources to Help Reduce Symptom Burden and Caregiver Burnout in Older Adults with Evgenia Littrivis, MD. The archive of this online workshop can be found at www.family.goarch.org.

ARCHONS

Archons Symposium on Christian Rights Slated in March

NAPLES, Fla. – The second Archons National Christian Rights and Freedom Symposium to take place in Naples, March 12

Jay Alan Sekulow, PhD, JD, a featured speaker at the 2nd International Archon Conference on Religious Freedom in Berlin in 2013, will address the Symposium.

With the blessings of Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta, the Archons of South Florida in conjunction with St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church of Naples, Florida invite you to attend its second National Christian Rights and Freedom Symposium on March 10-13.

The symposium will feature keynote speaker Jay Alan Sekulow, PhD, JD, Chief Counsel of the American Center for Law

and Justice (ACLJ) and European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) and 2014 recipient of The Athenagoras Human Rights Award. Archon Andrew E. Ekonomou, JD, PhD, who serves as senior counsel to both the ACLJ and ECLJ, will also be one of the speakers.

The event is organized under the leadership of Fr. Philemon Patitsas and St. Katherine community. Regional Commanders John C. Scurtis and Dr. Theodore P. Vlahos will be coordinating a luncheon for all Archons attending.

For further information, schedule, hotel accommodations and to RSVP for the event, contact Victoria Khalil at victoriakhalil@gmail.com or visit the website of St. Katherine.

PEOPLE



Justice investiture

Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos attended the investiture of his first cousin, Costa Michael Pleicones, as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of South Carolina. The ceremony took place Jan. 7 at the state Supreme Court in Columbia. Fr. Michael Platanis, pastor of Holy Trinity Church, delivered the invocation.

NATIONAL CALENDAR

▷ from page 5

17-23 - St. Stephens Summer Camp 4th session

24-30 - St. Stephens Summer Camp 5th session

Oct. 18-20 p Metropolis of Atlanta Clergy Retreat, Diakonia Center

Nov. 10-13 p Metropolis of Atlanta Council meetings, Atlanta

Dec. 27-30 p Metropolis of Atlanta Winter Youth Rally, Atlanta

IONIAN VILLAGE

2015 Summer Camp Reunion: March 11-13, Orlando

Lenten Staff/Alumni Getaway: April 8-10, Chicago

Spiritual Odyssey: June 1-12, Ionian Village Campground (Greece)

Summer Camp Session 1: June 19-July 8, Ionian Village Campground (Greece)

Summer Camp Session 2: July 17-August 5, Ionian Village Campground (Greece) #takemebacktoIV Day 2016: Dec. 17 (this is an online event)

ST. METHODIOS CAMP

Location: St. Methodios Faith & Heritage Center Contocook, N.H.

Dates: Week 1, July 2-6; Summer Family Camp (Week 1 only, all ages as family), Week 2, July 7-13; Week 3, July 14-20; Week 4, July 21-27; Week 5, July 28-Aug. 3; Week 6, Aug. 4-10.

Cost per camper: \$575 per camper; (for Family Camp, \$575 for first three persons, \$50 each additional).

Director or contact person and phone number: Michael Sintros (director), 603.746.4400.

e-mail: mbcamp@tds.net

website: mbcamp.org

Open to: (ages 8-18, and families)

Registration: Begins March 1

METROPOLIS NEWS

Greek American Rehabilitation & Care Centre Making Progress

WHEELING, Ill. - The Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre recently held a Hellenic Legacy Gala where plans were announced to develop and create a multipurpose Hellenic Village for the Greek American Community.

Gala Chairwomen Tina Mantis and Maria Ress, along with advisor, Eleni Bousis, and their committee, organized the event, which is the largest fundraiser of the year for the Centre.

The nursing home, which will celebrate its 14th year anniversary in March, is embarking on a new expansion plan for the benefit of our community. In addition to the existing long- and short-term facility, plans have been developed for a Hellenic International Village. This expanded campus will include independent and assisted living quarters, home health care services, a wellness center, adult day care, retail and office space and a professional medical building. This has all been made possible by the continuous support of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas J. Bouras, of blessed memory, who believed in Mrs. Bousis' vision of a Hellenic

International Village.

Over a decade ago, Mrs. Bousis discussed her dream of a multipurpose campus with Mr. Bouras, who enthusiastically embraced her concept. Together, they developed a plan and set goals for this innovative project for our Greek American community and for people of all religions and ethnicities. With Mr. Bouras' guidance and donations throughout the years, the goal stabilizing the financial position of the nursing home was attained.

Through Mr. Bouras' significant contributions over the years, property was recently purchased that includes a medical office building. Through the continued support of the Nicholas J. and Anna K. Bouras Foundation, the next phase of the Hellenic Village expansion will be made possible.

Another important parcel needed for our planned development was the land and building which is currently home to the Wheeling Senior Center. A short time ago, through the very generous donation of Mr. and Mrs. George A. Paterakis, of blessed memory, this property was purchased.



Koraes School photo

Winning poster

Johnna Baniewicz, an eighth grade student at Koraes School of Sts. Constantine and Helen Church in Palos Hills, Ill., recently took the first step to becoming an internationally recognized artist by winning the national competition sponsored by the Lions Club. Johnna's poster was among thousands of entries submitted nationally in the annual Lions International Peace Poster Contest. Lions Club International is sponsoring the program to emphasize the importance of world peace to young people everywhere.

PEOPLE

Nassau DA

Madeline Singas, an Astoria, Queens, native, was sworn in in January as the Nassau County, Long Island district attorney after winning election in November for a four-year term. She previously was acting district attorney following the election to Congress of her predecessor, Kathleen Rice. Singas, a first-generation Greek American, is a graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, Barnard College at Columbia University and Fordham University Law School.

Singas successfully prosecuted some of the county's most notorious crimes and also played a major role in securing nationwide SAT reforms. She began her career in the

Queens District Attorney's office in 1991.

As Nassau County's Chief Assistant District Attorney since 2011, Singas supervised the prosecution of approximately 30,000 criminal cases each year, and helped design and implement numerous groundbreaking programs in cases involving adolescent offenders, veterans, and those who suffer from mental illness or drug abuse.

She has overseen tough prosecutions of financial criminals, corrupt public officials, and drunk drivers who threaten the safety of everyone in our community.

Singas lives in Manhasset with her husband and teenage twins.

PHILOTOCHOS

▷ from page 7

Beck Shutte, a visually handicapped young man, received a standing ovation when he spoke with his Braille iPad describing the importance of attending the New England Disabled Sports program where he learned to ski with a teenage volunteer guiding him on earphones.

Archbishop Demetrios concluded the program expressing joy for the wonderful gathering and offering gratitude for the great hospitality of Metropolitan Methodios and the Metropolis of Boston Philoptochos.

Philanthropic Giving

Chapters continue to raise important funds in support of the Philoptochos ministries and in response to crises as the Aid to Greece and Cyprus Campaign and the Nepal Disaster Relief.

Make A Difference Day

National Philoptochos partnered again with Nick Katsoris and the Loukoumi Foundation to engage children in 4,000 Acts of Kindness in honor of Archbishop Demetrios for his Name Day.

On a Sad Note

National Philoptochos lost two of its long-time honorary members in 2015. Eula Caras Carlos, a National Board member for 30 years and was a generous benefactor for Philoptochos and the Church in America as well as many philanthropic community endeavors. Sophia Altin served on the National Board for over 30 years attending all the meetings and generously supporting the philanthropic works and Kula Sosangelis also a 30-year member is remembered for her total commitment to the organization.

Looking Forward – 2016: 85 Years of Philanthropy

Members prepare for the upcoming National Philoptochos Biennial Convention July 3-7, 2016 in Nashville, Tenn., where the Metropolis of Detroit will once again roll out the red carpet at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. Each chapter should send delegates to participate in the special programs that are planned so they may return to their chapters inspired and energized to continue their important philanthropic work. National Philoptochos will celebrate its 85th Year of Philanthropy in 2016 highlighting the organization's important work and the work going forward to the 100th Anniversary in 2031.

Archbishop Demetrios stated at the CMF Luncheon that Philoptochos has enhanced its original mission by responding to all human conditions in distress, for the sick, victims of fires, earthquakes and floods, for the old, the lonely the forgotten and those beyond the United States.

As National Philoptochos looks forward to 2016 and beyond, we acknowledge the tremendous nationwide support that allows the Philoptochos women to continue their philanthropic mission, to further expand the Philoptochos reach and to participate together through the Philoptochos Center of Philanthropy to build sustainable leadership for the future.

Submitted by Christine Karavites, chairman, National Philoptochos Archives and History.



"Shophe Philoptochos" project, initiated in the fall, offers an array of gifts.

IOCC

Stranded Refugees Receive Help

BALTIMORE – Four countries along the Balkans refugee route to Western Europe have closed their borders to people not seeking asylum from war-torn countries such as Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan. The decision has cut short the long journey for thousands of migrant men, women, and children fleeing their countries in search of a better life in European nations. They are now left stranded at border crossings or in foreign lands with no resources to return home. Winter weather only worsens their situation. International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) has responded to the urgent needs of migrants in Greece turned back at the border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia after they'd traveled for hundreds of miles or more. Working in cooperation with local partner, Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Church of Greece, IOCC provided hygiene kits to nearly 700 people temporarily housed at the Olympic Tae Kwon Do Stadium in Athens.

While the people at the stadium are free to come and go from the facility, most do not have the means to purchase sufficient food or basic hygiene items on their own. The hygiene kits help by filling the need for basic necessities for personal health: soap, a toothbrush and toothpaste,

toilet paper, antiseptic gel, and antiseptic hand wipes. IOCC, an ACT member, is also providing women with dignity kits containing feminine care items.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is not allowing in people from Morocco, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Liberia, Congo, or Pakistan. On the Croatia-Serbia border, Croats were only accepting war refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine. Slovenia has also closed its border to asylum seekers considered to be economic migrants coming from countries not immersed in war.

Syria's ongoing conflict has triggered the worst humanitarian crisis in recent history, driving more than four million people from their homes in search of safety in countries across the Middle East and Europe. Since 2012, IOCC has provided humanitarian relief to 3.3 million Syrian people, both those displaced in Syria and those who are living as refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Armenia, Greece, and Serbia.

Since its inception in 1992, IOCC has delivered \$534 million in relief and development programs to families and communities in more than 50 countries.

Idaho Priest Receives Serbian Church's Highest Honor

BOISE, Idaho – The Very Rev. Nektarios Serfes of Sts. Constantine and Helen parish in the Metropolis of Denver, was awarded the Order of Saint Sava, the highest decoration of the Serbian Orthodox Church, by Serbian Patriarch Irinej, on Nov. 24. Fr. Serfes was on a humanitarian mission to Kosovo at the time.

The Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church made a unanimous decision to present this award to Fr. Serfes in recognition of his "ardent work on humanitarian assistance to the suffering people of Kosovo and Metoija" for almost 20 years. Since 1998, Fr. Serfes has raised close to \$1 million for the fund, made up of many large and small donations from people across the world.

The dedication which was presented with the medal reads "For showing wholehearted and unselfish dedication and true and active love to the Serbian Orthodox Church by helping the Serbian people in its difficulties in Kosovo and Metoija, as well as spreading and testifying the truth to those abroad about the life and the suffering of the Serbians in Kosovo and Metoija and the destruction of its sacred places of the Raska and Prizren Diocese."

Fr. Serfes is president of the board of the Decani Monastery Relief Fund (DMRF). He actively witnesses on a daily basis to the plight of the Orthodox Church and Christians in Kosovo and Metoija. On his most recent trip in November, he brought 2,000 packets of seeds for the Christians there. On previous visits, he has brought gloves, medical supplies, and other much-needed items.

In addition, he has raised monies to buy pigs for many families so that they can preserve meat for use throughout the year. The Fund has also helped to send 60 young people to a temporary college set up in northern Kosovo. Christian students are not allowed to attend the university in Prizren, as it is now only for Albanian Moslems.

The living conditions of the Orthodox Christians are appalling. The UN peace-keeping forces are now gone from Kosovo, and the people live in constant fear and danger. Food, firewood, and medical care



Photo courtesy of Metropolis of Denver
Fr. Serfes receives the Serbian Orthodox Church honor from Patriarch Irinej

are in short supply. Since 1998 over 400 cemeteries alone have been destroyed, and thousands of graves desecrated.

In addition, 156 churches and monasteries have been destroyed. The Decani Fund is also helping to rebuild churches. Ten churches and three monasteries have been restored.

From the very beginning, the Decani Monastery Relief Fund has worked closely with International Orthodox Christian Charities in order to help the people who are in need. The IOCC has played a tremendous role in assisting the people. After IOCC representatives leave an area, Fr. Serfes then uses the Fund to maintain the momentum of assistance. There is also a fund in Italy that assists in this humanitarian work, and has helped to raise money for a used ambulance, as the Christians are not allowed to use the hospitals in their area. Travel to see a doctor is very dangerous. The medical situation in Kosovo is "deplorable," in Father's words. Fr. Serfes said he hopes to receive enough donations to purchase another used ambulance. Donations to fund food and firewood for the families, as well as operating expenses for the three shelters he has established, are also needed. As unemployment is very high, there has been a bakery started, with the aid from IOCC, and more are planned.

For more information about the Decani Monastery Relief Fund go to www.decani-fund.org or <http://serfes.org>



St. Romanos the Melodist, National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians patron saint.

Church Musicians Conference

▷ from page 19

and 28 of their Youth choir members from the Byzantine Youth Choir of Archangel Michael Church in Port Washington, N.Y. were part of the Conference Choir consisting of more than 120 members who sang the Liturgy arranged by Dr. Frank Desby.

Certificates for 25 to 70 years of service were presented to several members from District parishes. In addition, the Choir Member of the Year Medal and Certificate was awarded to Christine Perry, of St. George Cathedral, Hartford, Conn.

Archbishop Iakovos Distinguished Service Awards were given to Vasso Patrikis, Holy Trinity Church, Hicksville, NY; Peggy Stilianos, Assumption Church, Port Jefferson, N.Y.; and Stephanie Pavlidis, St. Paraskevi Shrine Church, Greenlawn, N.Y.

Fr. Gilbert and Irini Kapareliotis, St. Paul Cathedral in Hempstead, N.Y., received Patriarch Athenagoras I medallions and certificates.

Ms Dounelis is D.A.D. Federation president.

Understanding Religious Fundamentalism

▷ from page 14

ected by erecting boundaries between members and non-members and develops particular modes of dress behavior, and speech, which distinguish them from others.

These groups are organized along authoritarian lines and attribute special powers of knowing and understanding to a charismatic leader who assumes responsibility and claims the totality of people's lives - political, economic and personal.

Followers seek his opinion for all major life decisions. For example, among Israel's ultra-Orthodox Jews, this authority is considerable. Rabbis are consulted regularly on issues of daily life, including where to live, where to send children to school, whom to marry, what names to give one's children, and where to work.

Authority guides all aspects of life and behavior, including private and intimate zones such as sex and the family. This is not an absolute list of traits, however. While they tend to conform to most of these traits, few such movements strictly conform to all of them. When comparing different movements across religions, it is arguable that they have more in common with each other than they do with non-fundamentalist co-religionists.

Fr. Clapsis is Archbishop Professor of Theology at Holy Cross School of Theology.

A GUIDE TO THE NATIONAL MINISTRIES

MINISTRY

Archives

Communications*

**(includes GOTelecom, Press Office, Internet Ministries, Orthodox Observer)*

Greek Education

Information Technologies

Inter-Orthodox Ecumenical, Interfaith

Marriage & Family

Metropolis Ministries

Parish Development

Philanthropy*

**(includes Philoptochos Society, retired clergy benevolence fund, other humanitarian assistance)*

Public Affairs

Registry

Religious Education

Stewardship, Outreach and Evangelism

Youth, Young Adult Ministries*

**(includes camping ministries and Ionian Village)*

WHAT IT DOES

Gathers and records materials relating to the history of the Greek people, their culture and religion in the United States.

Provides information about the Church through electronic, social and print media.

Provides for the instruction of Greek and promotes Hellenic culture.

Responsible for overall technology vision and direction of the Archdiocese of America.

Promotes relations with other Orthodox Christian jurisdictions, other Christian churches and other faith groups in the U.S.

Addresses issues relevant to marriage and family life through the Center for Family Care and Office of Interfaith Marriage.

Coordinates the services of the National Ministries at the Metropolis level.

Assists parishes with fund-raising guidance and development.

Develops and coordinates the philanthropic work, the Archdiocese special funds and also works with the Philoptochos.

Coordinates Archdiocese involvement in public and political issues affecting the Church.

Maintains records relating to the life of the faithful of the Church.

Develops and provides religious education materials to advance the metropolis and parish programs.

Works with National Stewardship Ministries Team and Outreach and Evangelism Advisory Board.

Coordinates the national youth and young adult programs with metropolis youth directors. Administers campus and camping ministries.

HOW IT AFFECTS YOU

Provides information and photographs on request to scholars, researchers and authors.

Connects parishioners to the National Church through print, social and electronic media. Informs the U.S. and Greek media and general public about Orthodoxy.

Provides textbooks and other instructional materials for all Greek afternoon and parochial schools; teacher training.

Provides direct support and training to metropolises and parishes for their technology needs.

Through its efforts, parishes benefit through more meaningful contacts with such groups at the local level.

Brings more aspects of Orthodox faith into the home and more families to church. Helps couples, families and parishes with marriage and family life.

Serves as the vital link between each parish and the National Ministries program, and provides additional ministries at the local level.

Helps with strategic planning, capital improvements, grants, endowments and expanding stewardship.

Provides assistance for local catastrophes such as Hurricane Katrina, fires in Greece, aid to families of 9/11 victims.

Works with local parishes in events such as Patriarchal visits.

Issues marriage licenses, divorce decrees, baptismal and chrismation certificates, replaces lost transcripts.

Sunday schools use materials and run programs including the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival.

Provides resources for parish ministry, support for parish leadership and stewardship activities.

Provides opportunities for parish youth to participate more fully in the Church.

RESOURCES

Online, hardcopy data and photographs.

Videos of religious television productions, Orthodox Observer, annual yearbook, ecclesiastical calendar, website, e-bulletin, listserver.

Textbooks, other educational materials for Greek schools.

Online access the Archdiocese and to various Orthodox websites.

Contacts between the Archdiocese and other Christian denominations and other Faiths.

Provides printed, online, social media resources. Conducts conferences, training and retreats.

Administers national ministries and provides direct assistance to parishes.

Information for financial assistance and planning, guides to each parish.

Provides assistance for charitable causes in each Metropolis and worldwide.

Direct contact with government officials at the local, state and national levels.

Provides important documents for vital statistics and maintains records.

Resources, Sunday School texts and other materials, oratorical festival information.

Provides materials and data to help parishes in their stewardship efforts.

Online and hardcopy materials to youth directors, workers; administers youth camps, including Ionian Village; maintains listserver and blogs..

ATLANTA METROPOLIS HDF



Dancers from the host parish Holy Trinity in Orlando.



Dancers in the adult category from the Metropolis of Chicago begin with a cafenio scene.



St. John the Divine's senior group from Jacksonville.



The senior group "Zoe" from Savannah.



The young adult group from Tarpon Springs performs a dance from Capadocia.



New Orleans Holy Trinity Cathedral dancers in the adult category.

Orlando Hosts Hellenic Dance Festival

ORLANDO, Fla. – The annual Metropolis of Atlanta Hellenic Dance Festival drew another large turnout with some 1,100 participants attending from 21 parishes and the Metropolis of Chicago.

This year's event was marked by a change in leadership as Fr. Mark Leondis, pastor of St. Mark's Church in Boca Raton became the new festival chairman upon the retirement of Gerry Clonaris of Charlotte. Fr. Leondis previously served as director of the Archdiocese Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministry 16 years.

Mr. Clonaris, HDF's founder, guided the annual event for 14 years.

Presiding over the event was Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos, who officiated at the Vespers and Hierarchal Divine Liturgy in the absence of Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta, who was participating in the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.

In addition to two dance groups from the Metropolis of Chicago, the following communities attended: Holy Trinity, Charleston, S.C.; Holy Trinity, Orlando (the host parish); St. Nicholas, Wilmington, N.C.; St. Katherine, Melbourne, Fla.; St. Mark, Boca Raton; St. George, Hollywood, Fla.; Holy Trinity, Charlotte; Annunciation, Winston-Salem, N.C.; St. Nicholas, Tarpon Springs, Fla; St. Demetrios, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Holy Trinity, Raleigh, N.C.; Annunciation, Atlanta; Holy Trinity, Columbia, S.C.; St. George, Greenville, S.C.; St. George, Knoxville, Tenn; and St. John the Divine, Jacksonville, Fla.

Melbourne and Jacksonville were first-time participants.



Drummer girl keeps the dancers in-sync with that "Greek beat."



A Vespers service the evening before the competition was presided by Bishop Demetrios of Xanthos, assisted by Fr. Mark Leondis and Fr. Constantine Simeonidis, pastor of the Orlando host parish.



Holy Trinity, Raleigh, senior group.



Junior category dancers from St. Katherine, Melbourne, Fla.



Raised arms and stepping quickly in place, the "Pontian" group from Wilmington is ready to do battle.



Dancers from St. George, Hollywood, Fla., in the junior category.

Orthodox Observer Photos

To view hundreds of other photos that we couldn't quite fit into this itty bitty space, visit the Metropolis of Atlanta website: youth@atlmopolis.org.

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- 3) Please include information about the photo(s);** place, time and event as well as the names of all persons shown, left to right.

National Ministries {in the now}

youth and young adult news



Over the last year, Y2AM has sought to produce new content in order to encourage young people to live Orthodox in unique ways as they seek to engage the world around them. With two popular YouTube series and an-almost-daily blog, Y2AM is branching out with Pop Culture Coffee Hour!

Pop Culture Coffee Hour stars Steven Christoforou (host of Be the Bee and Director of Y2AM) and Christian Gonzalez (host of the new YouTube series The Trench and Young Adult Ministries Coordinator). Together, the two explore pop culture through the lens of Orthodoxy.

Steve and Christian are self-proclaimed pop culture “experts,” being well-versed in a wide variety of media, as well as hosting their own successful Orthodox YouTube series. In Pop Culture Coffee Hour, they discuss everything from Harry Potter to old Nintendo games, exploring what it means to be decidedly Orthodox while remaining in dialogue with world.

Pop Culture Coffee Hour will focus on all varieties of pop culture (from books and movies to video games, music and art) and will take a look at how we interact with these as Orthodox Christians. The struggles of interacting with media while still maintaining the Faith is something facing teens



Christian Gonzalez and Steven Christoforou are having a great time doing the Pop Culture Hour podcast. Y2AM photo

Engaging with popular culture can be stressful as an Orthodox Christian. On the one hand, we are told to stay completely away from mass media and its supposed deleterious effects on our souls. On the other hand, we can hear the message that we should feel free to view (almost) anything: freedom in Christ!

In order to help navigate this tension, the department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries (Y2AM) is excited to announce Pop Culture Coffee Hour, a new podcast produced by Y2AM in conjunction with Ancient Faith Radio.

and adults alike. But Steve and Christian seek to explore the ways in which it is not only possible to participate in popular culture without losing faith, but possibly even how participating in popular culture

could lead to a thriving faith that is “in, but not of the world.”

Pop Culture Coffee Hour is hosted by Ancient Faith Radio, and will be among their many other Orthodox podcasts.

“From the Director” Salvation and Social Media

by Steven Christoforou

At the end of December, I had the privilege of spending a few days with over three hundred college students at College Conference, OCF’s incredible annual event. In an atmosphere of prayer and true connection, I thought a bit about social media.

I have a love-hate relationship with social media. On the one hand, it opens access to ideas and people away never before imaginable. On the other, it can provide a platform for mistreating people in new and cruel ways.

I led workshops on the opportunities and challenges that social media presents and presented my basic problem: the challenge social media offers to our struggle for salvation.

In Be the Bee # 90 – “How Christ Unites Us,” we discussed some of the writing of St Maximos the Confessor and our challenge to join Christ in reassembling a fragmented world, overcoming the divisions that plague creation and offering all things back up to God. Unfortunately, rather than overcoming these divisions by manifesting God’s love to the world, our sin deepens and hardens these divisions.

And social media seems to add another layer of division, as our analog and digital selves diverge.

On one side, there’s incredible pres-

sure to present a happy face, to present an idealized and romanticized version of oneself: eating fancy food, visiting exotic places, living the sort of life others envy. I recently heard one high school girl describe this as a pressure to both turn herself into a brand and simultaneously be her own brand ambassador, creating clever and desirable content to remain relevant.

If we’re turning our children into Chipotle, products to be marketed, then we have a problem.

On the other side, social media offers a veil of anonymity, behind which the darkest urges can be satisfied. We can both access destructive content and make destructive comments, the sorts of things we’d never say in person.

Even if we’d never have the nerve to say something racist or misogynistic directly to someone’s face, or physically engage in lewd or lustful conduct, the digital world offers the safety of secrecy.

Whatever extreme we choose, the result is an increasingly schizophrenic persona, whereon our digital and analog selves increasingly diverge.

As St Maximos noted, and as we covered in that episode of Be the Bee, our Christian calling involves working with Christ to reassemble a divided and fragmented world. Yet before we can begin to think of unity on a cosmic scale, we must

Upcoming Be the Bee retreats

Information and registration links are available at bethebee.goarch.org/retreats

February 27 - Chicago,
Sts Peter and Paul Orthodox Church
1401 Wagner Road
Glenview, Ill. 60025

March 19 - Boston
St George Orthodox Church
55 Emmonsdale Road
West Roxbury, MA 02132

April 2 - Cleveland
Details coming soon.

May 28, - Baltimore
Cathedral of the Annunciation
24 W. Preston Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Youth Office
youthoffice@go

work to attain unity on a personal scale: to overcome the passions which lead us about and make us their slaves, to unite our minds and hearts and bodies and become whole people rather than broken shards of humanity.

In our time, a big part of that is coming to terms with how we use the technological tools that are now available to us. Specifically, what does our social media use say about us, and our path to salvation?

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