

Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America
Western American Diocese



THE WAY TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD
Commemorative Book

ANNUAL
2011
ГОДИШЊАК

*Commemorating the Ninetieth Anniversary of the Establishment
of the First Serbian Diocese for America and Canada (1921-2011)*

SEBASTIAN
PRESS

2011



Western American Diocese

Published by

**Sebastian Press of the Western American Diocese
of the Serbian Orthodox Church**

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Designed and Printed by

Interklima-grafika, Vrnjci

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Front cover:

George Kordis – Creation of the World, Water-Glass Wall-Painting,
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Columbia, South Carolina, 2011

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COMMEMORATIVE BOOK

A Word from the Patriarch

Dear Spiritual Children,

This year, 2011, we commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the establishment of the first Serbian American-Canadian Diocese in the New World, which inaugurated the traditional episcopal and diocesan stage into the life of our countrymen in the Church in these regions. The deep conciliar yearning of our ancestors on the American continent was, in fact, expressed most beautifully in the person of Bishop Mardarije Uskokovic, the first Serbian Bishop on your continent. In their hardly effortless step in going to a foreign land, our ancestors dared not fear the inevitable difficulties, bearing their strong faith in their Orthodox Church identity and their human patristic heritage. They sensed and knew that their dedication to the Church and maintaining the struggle of establishing the community and being implanted within its organism far surpassed one's personal interests and aspirations.

Attentive to their conscience of the significance of unity, inherited from their Serbian homeland, our ancestors gathered quite frequently in common parishes with their Orthodox brethren: Russians, Greeks and others, remaining open in their witness of evangelical love towards all of their new heterodox neighbors. The complex conditions of church life in America led our church leaders in bringing together and strengthening the church communities with the election of the first Bishop for Canada and America. This first stage on the thorny path towards church unity, to which are firmly connected the names of St. Nikolai of Zicha and Sebastian Dabovic, has only in recent years spawned its delightful fruit with the complete overcoming of all administrative disagreements among our dioceses. Apart from the many others, primarily those laborers known to God for this honorable deed, we emphasize here the merits of Metropolitan Christopher, the newly departed in the Lord. For the further strengthening and establishing of our church life and its witness, it is necessary that through conciliar communion we pronounce the unity of all Orthodox, for which reason the Bishops from all the Orthodox peoples of America have recently begun to work in a unified Episcopal Assembly for North America.

May this Jubilee which we commemorate in Los Angeles as well as the Commemorative Book marking the ninetieth anniversary of the establishment of the American-Canadian Serbian Orthodox Church and the gathered documents and testimonies therein, remind us all of the zeal of our ancestors and guide us to the sacred goal of unity in Christ and His Orthodox Church.



Поздрав Његове Светости Патријарха Српског Г. Иринеја

Драга наша духовна децо,

Обележавамо ове 2011. године деведесетогодишњи спомен на установљење прве Српске Америчко-канадске Епархије за „нови“ континент чиме је у овим областима живот наших земљака у Цркве узведен на предањски епископски и епархијски ступањ. У лику епископа Мардарија Ускоковића, првог српског Епископа на вашем континенту, на најлепши начин је заправо овенчано дубоко саборно стремљење наших предака досељених у Нови свет. На нимало лак корак одласка у туђину они су се одважили не стрепећи од неминовних потешкоћа, имајући дубоку веру у свој црквени православни идентитет и чојствено отачко наслеђе. Осећали су и знали да оданост Цркви и непосустала борба за изграђивање заједнице и уграђивање у њен организам далеко надмашује личне интересе и аспирације.

Брижљиви према, из српског завичаја наслеђеној, свести о значају слоге, саборовали су наши преци, у почетку врло често и у заједничким парохијима са православном сабраћом Русима и Грцима, остајући отворени да сведоче јеванђељску љубав према свим новим иноверним суседима. Сложени услови црквеног живота у Америци, навели су наше црквене прваке да објединеи оснаже црквене заједнице избором првог Епископа за Канаду и Америку. Та прва етапа трновитог пут ка црквеном јединству, за коју су снажно везана и имена Светога Николаја Жичкога и Севастијана Дабовића, свој диван плод изнедрила је управо у последње време, потпуним превладавањем преосталих административних неусаглашености наших Епархија. Поред многих других, пре свега Богу знаних трудбеника на том благочестивом делу, истакнимо овде заслуге недавно у Господу престављеног митрополита Христофора. За даље јачање и утврђивање нашег црквеног живота и сведочења неопходно је кроз саборно општење пројављивати јединство свих Православних, због чега однедавно Епископи свих православних народа у Америци заједнички делају у јединственом Епископском сабрању-асамблеји за Северну Америку.

Нека би нас све заједно овај Јубилеј који обележавамо у Лос Анђелесу као и *Сјоменица* поводом деведесетогодишњице оснивања Епархије Америчко-Канадске Српске Православне Цркве и у њој сабрани историјски документи и сведочанства, подсетила на прегалаштво предака и упутила свештеном циљу јединства у Христу и Његовој Цркви Православној.



Greeting from His Grace, Bishop Maxim of Los Angeles and Western America

Dear brothers and sisters, our beloved Children in the Lord,

Allow me first to express my profound joy to see you all gathered together for the annual Diocesan Days celebration of our Western American Diocese in Alhambra, CA. For fifteen consecutive years these gatherings have testified to our purpose: to build and expand our Orthodox Faith on this blessed Continent, with determination, hope and Christian love.

This year we are celebrating an important jubilee: the commemoration of the Ninetieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the First Serbian Diocese for America and Canada (1921-2011).

Our ancestors who established the first Serbian-American and Canadian Diocese of the “new” Continent, proclaimed the most important treasure that they brought with them from the “Old Country:” that is, the *Catholicity of the Church*, a unity of life in the universality and fullness of Faith—*sabornost*, the eternal living assembly of the faithful. This is how they, as Orthodox Serbs, participated in the “yeasting” still underway in the Americas, a contribution to and an encouragement of a contemporary and creative Orthodox self-awareness. They firmly believed that in following the Lord’s call, they were participating in the divine process whereby every existence, by turning from its place in nature to the *other* in a sacramental bond, actively invokes the Kingdom of God.

Our Diocesan publishing house, *Sebastian Press* has published this special edition of our *Annual*, dedicated to this important anniversary, as a *Commemorative Book*, now in your hands.

This year we are honored to host a distinguished guest from the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos, Archimandrite Vasileios Gontikakis, author of the popular book *Hymn of Entry*, which you may have read. He is invited to visit us and share his theological and pastoral wisdom so that our flock can spiritually benefit and bear witness to their faith and our Holy Church. A profound knowledge of the writings of the Holy Fathers is always a sure foundation amid the labyrinth of modern challenges.

As we emphasized before, the faith of Christians in Christ Jesus as the Truth and Life of the world does not stem from ideological or psychological convictions, but represents an existential fact – the living experience of communion with this Truth and Life par excellence in the resurrectional experience of the Church. This experience occurs “when the whole Church comes together” (“into one place”, 1 Cor.14:23), i.e. in the Holy Eucharist as a place of Truth experienced as a *synaxis*, or rather, communion in the holy community.

As Orthodox Christians we strive to live this Truth while in the midst of an individualistic centered culture that often teaches the opposite of what we believe. We are, in the Eucharist, a *koinonia*, the “Body”, and not merely a collection of individuals. As the Body of Christ, we are more than the sum of our parts. This mystery and practice uniting all the faithful and all creation through the Person of Christ guarantees immortality. Therefore, “for us the truth is not in words but in realizations;” it is not a matter of theory, but of participation in Eucharistic communion.

Consequently, beloved in the Lord, your participation, both today in our 15th Diocesan Days Assembly as in every Eucharistic gathering in your Parish, is that realization and affirmative invocation of the unity of the Heavenly Kingdom of God. May the fullness of that life be our today and always.



Поздрав Епископа Лосанђелеског и Западноамеричког Максима

Драга браћо и сестре, и драга децо у Господу,

На почетку изражавам велику радост гледајући вас све поново сабране на прослави Епархијских дана Западноамеричке епархије у Алхамбри. Петнаест година заредом ова окупљања сведоче о нашој намери: да нашу хришћанску веру са решеношћу, надом и љубављу градимо и ширимо на овом благословеном континенту.

Ове године прослављамо и један важан јубилеј: спомен на деведесетогодишњицу од оснивања прве Српске Америчко-канадске епархије (1921-2011).

Наши преци који су ову прву Епархију основали на „новом“ континенту, били су свесни вредности највећег блага које су донели из „старога краја“: саборност, која је васељенскост и пуноћа Вере, која је вечно живо сабрање верујућих у Христа. И то је био начин на који су они, као Православни Срби, учествовали у правоверном „заквашењу“ у Америци, што је процес који и данас траје: подстаћи и оснажити једну савремену и стваралачку православну самосвест. Они су снажно веровали да, следујући позив Господа, учествују у једном промисаоном делу: да свако словесно биће, окренувши се подвигом изнад природе у сусрет с Другим у светотајинском јединству, делатно пројави Царство Божије.

Наша епархијска издавачка кућа, Севестијан прес, објавила је и посебно издање *Годишњака* посвећено овој значајној годишњици, *Сјоменицу* коју држите у рукама.

Ове године смо почаствовани присуством угледног госта из светогорског Манастира Ивирон, Архимандрита Василија Гондикакиса, писца познате књиге *Химна входа*, коју су неки од вас и читали. Позвали смо га да са нама подели своју богословску и пастирску мудрост како би наше верно стадо имало духовну корист и посведочило своју веру и своју Цркву. Дубоко познавање дела Светих Отаца је увек сигурна основа за излаз из беспућа модерних изазова.

Као што смо и пре истицали, вера хришћана у Христа, који је Истина и Живот света, није резултат идеолошких или психолошких убеђења, него је она егзистенцијални догађај – живо искуство заједнице са овом Истином и Животом у васкрсном искуству Цркве. Овај опит је доступан „када се сва Црква сабира заједно“ („на једно место“, 1 Кор. 14,23), што ће рећи на Светој Евхаристији као месту Истине пројављене као сабрање, као заједничарење у светом Причешћу.

Као православни Хришћани ми и данас подвижнички настојимо да ову Истину живимо у сред једне индивидуалистичке културе која прокламује вредности супротне нашим веровањима. Ипак, у Евхаристији ми пројављујемо *заједништво* и обликујемо Тело које је више од збира појединаца. Као Тело Христово ми смо више од збира делова. Ова Тајна и чин јединства свих верних и све творевине кроз Личност Христову јамчи бесмртност. Управо зато „за нас вера није у речима него у остварењима“; она није ствар теорије него плод учешћа у литургијском заједништву.

Према томе, драги у Господу, ваше учешће, како данас на овом петнаестом скупу о Епархијским данима и свако евхаристијско сабрање у вашој Парохији, јесте остварење, предокус и потврдно објављивање јединства Царства Божијега.

Saint Maximus the Confessor

Mystagogy

IN WHICH ARE EXPLAINED THE SYMBOLISM OF CERTAIN RITES
PERFORMED IN THE DIVINE SYNAXIS¹⁾



How and in what manner holy Church is all image and figure o/God.

Now that blessed old man used to say that at the first level of contemplation Holy Church bears the imprint and image of God since it has the same activity as he does by imitation and in figure. For God who made and brought into existence all things by his infinite power contains, gathers, and limits them and in his Providence binds both intelligible and sensible beings to himself and to one another. Maintaining about himself as cause, beginning, and end all beings which are by nature distant from one another, he makes them converge in each other by the singular force of their relationship to him as origin. Through this force he leads all beings to a common and unconfused identity of movement and existence, no one being originally in revolt against any other or separated from him by a difference of nature or of movement, but all things combine with all others in an unconfused way by the singular indissoluble relation to

¹⁾ Maximus the Confessor, *Selected Writings* (Classics of Western Spirituality), Paulist Press, 1985.

and protection of the one principle and cause. This reality abolishes and dims all their particular relations considered according to each one's nature, but not by dissolving or destroying them or putting an end to their existence. Rather it does so by transcending them and revealing them, as the whole reveals its parts or as the whole is revealed in its cause by which the same whole and its parts came into being and appearance since they have their whole cause surpassing them in splendor. And just as the sun outshines the stars both in nature and energy so also does it conceal their existence from those who look for their cause. For just as the parts come from the whole, so do effects properly proceed and get known from the cause and hold their particularities still when understood with exclusive reference to the cause and, as was said, according to the singular force of their relationship to it. For being all in all, the God who transcends all in infinite measure will be seen only by those who are pure in understanding when the mind in contemplative recollection of the principles of beings will end up with God as cause, principle, and end of all, the creation and beginning of all things and eternal ground of the circuit of things.

It is in this way that the holy Church of God will be shown to be working for us the same effects as God, in the same way as the image reflects its archetype. For numerous and of almost infinite number are the men, women, and children who are distinct from one another and vastly different by birth and appearance, by nationality and language, by customs and age, by opinions and skills, by manners and habits, by pursuits and studies, and still again by reputation, fortune, characteristics, and connections: All are born into the Church and through it are reborn and recreated in the Spirit. To all in equal measure it gives and bestows one divine form and designation, to be Christ's and to carry his name. In accordance with faith it gives to all a single, simple, whole, and indivisible condition which does not allow us to bring to mind the existence of the myriads of differences among them, even if they do exist, through the universal relationship and union of all things with it. It is through it that absolutely no one at all is in himself separated from the community since everyone converges with all the rest and joins together with them by the one, simple, and indivisible grace and power of faith. "For all," it is said, "had but one heart and one mind." Thus to be and to appear as one body formed of different members is really worthy of Christ himself, our true head, in whom says the divine Apostle, "there is neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither foreigner nor Scythian, neither slave nor freeman, but Christ is everything in all of you." It is he who encloses in himself all beings by the unique, simple, and infinitely wise power of his goodness. As the center of straight lines that radiate from him he does not allow by his unique, simple, and single cause and power that the principles of beings become disjoined at the periphery but rather he circumscribes their extension in a circle and brings back to himself the distinctive elements of beings which he himself brought into existence. The purpose of this is so that the creations and products of the one God be in no way strangers and enemies to one another by having no reason or center for which they might show each other any friendly or peaceful sentiment or identity, and not run the risk of having their being separated from God to dissolve into non being.

Thus, as has been said, the holy Church of God is an image of God because it realizes the same union of the faithful with God. As different as they are by language, places, and customs, they are made one by it through faith. God realizes this union among the natures of things without confusing them but in lessening and bringing together their distinction, as was shown, in a relationship and union with himself as cause, principle, and end.

[...]

Of what the first entrance of the holy synaxis and the ceremonies which follow it are symbols

After the concise exposition of the views expressed by the blessed old man concerning holy Church, our discourse can proceed by making an even briefer interpretation, as we can, of the holy, synaxis. According to his teaching, then, the first entrance of the bishop into the holy Church for the sacred synaxis is a figure and Image of the first appearance in the flesh of Jesus Christ the son of God and our Savior in this world. By



Ἄρχὴ σοφίας Φόβος Κυρίου

it he freed human nature which had been enslaved by corruption betrayed through its own fault to death because of sin, tyrannically dominated by the devil. He redeemed all its debt as if he were liable even though he was not liable but sinless, and brought us back again to the original grace of his kingdom by giving himself as a ransom for us. And in exchange for our destructive passions he gives us his life-giving Passion as a salutary cure which saves the whole world. After this appearance, his ascension into heaven and return to the heavenly throne are symbolically figured in the bishop's entrance into the sanctuary and ascent to the priestly throne.

What is the meaning of the entrance of the people into the holy church of God

The venerable old man used to say that the entrance of the people into the church with the bishop represents the conversion of the unfaithful from faithlessness to faith and from sin and error to the recognition of God as well as the passage of the faithful from vice and ignorance to virtue and knowledge. For entrance into the church signifies not only the conversion of infidels to the true and only God but also the amendment of each one of us who believe but who yet violate the Lord's commandments under the influence of a loose and indecent life. Indeed, when any person is a murderer, or adulterer, robber, haughty, boastful, insolent, ambitious, greedy, slanderous, resentful, inclined to outbursts and anger, a drunkard, and in a word - lest I weary my discourse by enumerating all kinds of vice - when someone is entangled in any kind of vice but should cease voluntarily to be held by its attention and deliberately to act according to it and changes his life for the

better by preferring virtue to vice, such a person can be properly and truly considered and spoken of as entering with Christ our God and High Priest into virtue, which is the church understood figuratively.

What is symbolized by the divine kiss

The spiritual kiss which is extended to all prefigures and portrays the concord, unanimity, and identity of views which we shall all have among ourselves in faith and love at the time of the revelation of the ineffable blessings to come. In this situation those who are worthy will receive intimate familiarity with the Word of God. For the mouth is a symbol of the Word, precisely through whom all those who share in reason as reasonable beings are united to the first and unique Word who is the cause of every word and meaning.

What is symbolized by the divine symbol of faith

The profession by all of the divine symbol of faith signifies the mystical thanksgiving to endure through all eternity, for the marvelous principles and modes by which we were saved by God's all-wise Providence on our behalf. Through it those who are worthy are confirmed as grateful for the divine favors, for otherwise they would have no other way of returning anything at all for the numberless divine blessings toward them.

What is symbolized by the doxology of the Trisagion

The triple exclamation of holiness which all the faithful people proclaim in the divine hymn represents the union and the equality of honor to be manifested in the future with the incorporeal and intelligent powers. In this state human nature, in harmony with the powers on high through the identity of an inflexible eternal movement around God, will be taught to sing and to proclaim holy with a triple holiness the single Godhead in three Persons.

Of what the holy prayer "Our Father" is a symbol

The most holy and venerable invocation of our great and blessed God the Father is a symbol of the personal and real adoption to be bestowed through the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit. In accordance with it, once every human particularity is overcome and disclosed by the coming of grace, all the saints will be and be called sons of God to the extent that from that moment they will have radiantly and gloriously brightened themselves through the virtues with the divine beauty of goodness.

What is signified by the conclusion of the mystical service when the hymns are sung, that is, "One is Holy," and so forth

The profession "One is Holy" and what follows, which is voiced by all the people at the end of the mystical service, represents the gathering and union beyond reason and understanding which will take place between those who have been mystically and wisely initiated by God and the mysterious oneness of the divine simplicity in the incorruptible age of the spiritual world. There they behold the light of the invisible and ineffable glory and become themselves together with the angels on high open to the blessed purity. After this, as the climax of everything, comes the distribution of the sacrament, which transforms into itself and renders similar to the causal good by grace and participation those who worthily share in it. To them is there lacking nothing of this good that is possible and attainable for men, so that they also can be and be called gods by adoption through grace because all of God entirely fills them and leaves no part of them empty of his presence.

What mysteries the enduring grace of the Holy Spirit effects and brings to completion through the rites accomplished in the holy synaxis in the faithful and those gathered in the church out of faith

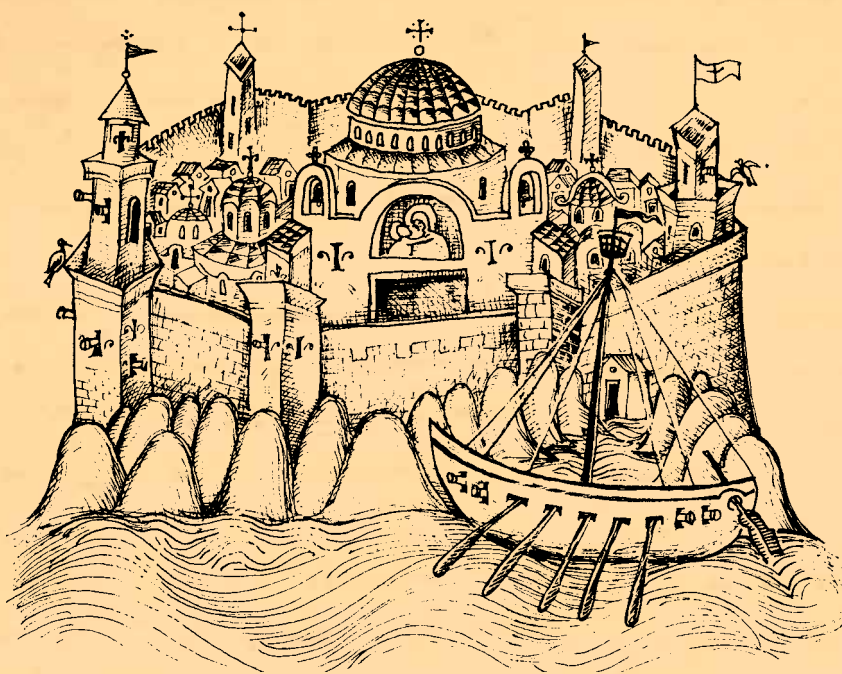
This, indeed, is why the blessed old man believed that every Christian should be exhorted—and he never failed to do this—to frequent God's holy church and never to abandon the holy synaxis accomplished therein because of the holy angels who remain there and who take note each time people enter and *present* them-

selves to God, and they make supplications for them; likewise because of the grace of the Holy Spirit which is always invisibly present, but in a special way at the time of the holy synaxis. This grace transforms and changes each person who is found there and in fact remolds him in proportion to what is more divine in him and leads him to what is revealed through the mysteries which are celebrated, even if he does not himself feel this because he is still among those who are children in Christ, unable to see either into the depths of the reality or the grace operating in it, which is revealed through each of the divine symbols of salvation being accomplished, and which proceeds according to the order and progression from preliminaries to the end of everything.

Thus we see effected in the first entrance the rejection of unbelief, the increase of faith, the lessening of vice, the bestowal of virtue, the disappearance of ignorance, and the development of knowledge. By the hearing of the divine words there is effected the firm and unchangeable habits and dispositions of the realities just mentioned, that is, of faith, virtue, and knowledge. Through the divine chants which follow there is effected the deliberate consent of the soul to virtue as well as the spiritual delight and enjoyment that these arouse in it. By the sacred reading of the holy Gospel there is brought about the end of earthly thinking as of the world of sense. Then by the closing of doors which follows there is effected the passage and transfer of the soul in its disposition from this corruptible world to the intelligible world, whereby having closed its senses like doors it renders them cleansed of the idols of sin. By the entrance into the holy mysteries we see the more perfect and mystical and new teaching and knowledge of God's dispensation toward us. By the divine kiss there is seen the identity of concord and oneness and love of all with everyone and of each one with himself first and then with God. By the profession of the symbol of faith there is seen the fitting thanks for the marvelous ways of our salvation. By the Trisagion there comes about the union with the holy angels and elevation to the same honor, as well as the ceaseless and harmonious persistency in the sanctifying glorification of God. By the prayer through which we are made worthy to call God our Father we receive the truest adoption in the grace of the Holy Spirit. By the "One is holy" and what follows, we have the grace and familiarity which unites us to God himself. By holy communion of the spotless and life-giving mysteries we are given fellowship and identity with him by participation in likeness, by which man is deemed worthy from man to become God. For we believe that in this present life we already have a share in these gifts of the Holy Spirit through the love that is in faith, and in the future age after we have kept the commandments to the best of our ability we believe that we shall have a share in them in very truth in their concrete reality according to the steadfast hope of our faith and the solid and unchangeable promise to which God has committed himself. Then we shall pass from the grace which is in faith to the grace of vision, when our God and Savior Jesus Christ will indeed transform us into himself by taking away from us the marks of corruption and will bestow on us the original mysteries which have been represented for us through sensible symbols here below. To make it easier to remember, if you wish, let us recapitulate thus the meaning of what has been said by running over it briefly.

Thus the holy church, as we said, is the figure and image of God inasmuch as through it he effects in his infinite power and wisdom an unconfused unity from the various essences of beings, attaching them to himself as a creator at their highest point, and this operates according to the grace of faith for the faithful, joining them all to each other in one form according to a single grace and calling of faith, the active and virtuous ones in a single identity of will, the contemplative and gnostic ones in an unbroken and undivided concord as well. It is a figure of both the spiritual and sensible world, with the sanctuary as symbol of the intelligible world and the nave as symbol of the world of sense.

It is as well an image of man inasmuch as it represents the soul by the sanctuary and suggests the body by the nave. Also it is a figure and image of the soul considered in itself because by the sanctuary it bears the glory of the contemplative element and by the nave the ornament of the active part. The first entrance of the holy synaxis which is celebrated in the church signifies in general the first appearance of Christ our God, and in particular the conversion of those who are being led by him and with him from unbelief to faith and from vice to virtue and also from ignorance to knowledge. The readings which take place after it signify in gen-



eral the divine wishes and intentions in accordance with which everyone should conform and conduct himself, and in particular the teaching and progress in the faith of those who are believers, and the firm disposition of virtue of those who are active in accordance with which, by submitting themselves to the divine law of the commandments, they set themselves bravely and unshakenly against the devil's wiles and escape his adversary works; finally it signifies the contemplative habits of those who have knowledge, in accordance with which, by bringing together as much as possible the spiritual principles of sensible realities and of Providence in what concerns them, they are borne without error to the truth.

The divine melodies of the chants indicate the divine delight and enjoyment which comes about in the souls of all. By it they are mystically strengthened in forgetting their past labors for virtue and are renewed in the vigorous desire of the divine and wholesome benefits still to be attained .

The holy Gospel is in general a symbol of the fulfillment of this world; in particular it indicates the complete disappearance of the ancient error in those who have believed; in the active, the mortification and the end of the law and thinking according to the flesh; and in those who have knowledge, the gathering and ascent from the numerous and various principles toward the most comprehensive principle, once the most detailed and varied natural contemplation has been reached and crossed .

The descent of the bishop from the throne and the dismissal of the catechumens signifies in general the second coming from heaven of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ and the separation of sinners from the saints and the just retribution rendered to each. In particular it means the perfect assurance of believers in faith which is produced by the Word of God become invisibly present to them, whereby every thought which still limps in some way regarding faith is dismissed from them as are the catechumens. Thus for the active ones there results perfect detachment by which every passionate and unenlightened thought departs from the soul, and for those with knowledge the comprehensive science of whatever is known by which all images of material things are chased away from the soul.

The closing of the doors and the entrance into the holy mysteries and the divine kiss and the recitation of the symbol of faith mean in general the passing away of sensible things and the appearance of spiritual realities and the new teaching of the divine mystery involving us and the future concord, unanimity, love, and identity of everyone with each other and with God, as well as the thanksgiving for the manner of our salvation. In a particular way it means the progress of the faithful from simple faith to learning in dogmas, initiation, accord, and piety.

The closing of the doors indicates the first thing, the entrance into the holy actions the second, the kiss the third, the recitation of the creed the fourth. For those at the active stage it means the transfer from activity to contemplation of those who have closed their senses and who have become outside the flesh and the world by the rejection of activities for their own sake, and the ascent from the mode of the commandments to their principle. and the connatural kinship and union of these commandments in their proper principles with the powers of the soul and the habit which is adapted to theological thanksgiving. For those who have knowledge, it involves the passing of natural contemplation to the simple understanding according to which they no longer pursue the divine and ineffable Word by sensation or anything that appears and the union with the soul of its powers and the simplicity which takes in under one form by the intellect the principle of Providence.

The unceasing and sanctifying doxology by the holy angels in the Trisagion signifies, in general, the equality in the way of life and conduct and the harmony in the divine praising which will take place in the age to come by both heavenly and earthly powers, when the human body now rendered immortal by the resurrection will no longer weigh down the soul by corruption and will not itself be weighed down but will take on, by the change into incorruption, potency and aptitude to receive God's coming. In particular it signifies, for the faithful, the theological rivalry with the angels in faith; for the active ones, it symbolizes the splendor of life equal to the angels, so far as this is possible for men, and the persistence in the theological hymnology; for those who have knowledge, endless thoughts, hymns, and movements concerning the Godhead which are equal to the angels, so far as humanly possible. The blessed invocation of the great God and Father and the acclamation of the "One is holy" and what follows and the partaking of the holy and life-giving mysteries signify the adoption and union, as well as the familiarity and divine likeness and deification which will come about through the goodness of our God in every way on all the worthy, whereby God himself will be "all in all" alike to those who are saved as a pattern of beauty resplendent as a cause in those who are resplendent along with him in grace by virtue and knowledge.

He used to call faithful, virtuous, and knowing the beginners, the proficient, and the perfect, that is, slaves, mercenaries, and sons, the three classes of the saved. The slaves are the faithful who execute the Lord's commandments out of fear of threats and who willingly work for those who are obeyed. Mercenaries are those who out of a desire for promised benefits bear with patience "the burden and heat of the day," that is, the affliction innate in and yoked to the present life from the condemnation of our first parents, and the temptations from it on behalf of virtue, and who by free choice of will wisely exchange life for life, the present one for the future. Finally, sons are the ones who out of neither fear of threats nor desire of promised things but rather out of character and habit of the voluntary inclination and disposition of the soul toward the good never become separated from God, as that son to whom it was said, "Son, you are always with me, and ev-



everything I have is yours.”... They have become as much as possible by deification in grace what God is and is believed by nature and by cause.

Let us, then, not stray from the holy Church of God which comprehends in the sacred order of the divine symbols which are celebrated, such great mysteries of our salvation. Through them, in making each of us who conducts himself worthily as best he can in Christ, it brings to light the grace of adoption which was given through holy baptism in the Holy Spirit and which makes us perfect in Christ. Instead, let us with all our strength and zeal render ourselves worthy of the divine gifts in pleasing God by good works not being occupied as are “the pagans who know not God,” with the passion of concupiscence,” but as the holy Apostle says, “putting to death our members which are rooted in earth: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness which is idolatry, from which comes God’s wrath on the sons of disobedience, and all wrath, animosity, foul language, and lying, and to sum up, putting aside the old man which is corrupted by the lusts of illusion with his past deeds and lusts, let us walk in a manner worthy of God who has called us to his kingdom and his glory, having clothed ourselves with heartfelt compassion, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another in love and forgiving one another if one has a complaint against the other just as Christ has forgiven us, and over all these let us clothe ourselves with love and peace, the bond of perfection, to which we have been called in one body, in shore, the new man who is constantly renewed in full knowledge according to the image of the one who created him.” For if we lived in this way we would be able to arrive at the goal of the divine promises with a good hope and to be filled “with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, ...being fruitful and increasing in the knowledge of the Lord, strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory for edification and long-suffering with joy, giving thanks to the Father for having made us worthy to share the inheritance of the saints in the light.”... The clear proof of this grace is the voluntary disposition of good will toward those akin to us whereby the man who needs our help in any way becomes as much as possible our friend as God is and we do not leave him abandoned and forsaken but rather that with fitting zeal we show him in action the disposition which is alive in us with respect to God and our neighbor. For a work is proof of a disposition. Now nothing is either so fitting for justification or so apt for divinization, if I can speak thus, and nearness to God as mercy offered with pleasure and joy from the soul to those who stand in need. For if the Word has shown that the one who is in need of having good done to him is God for as long, he tells us, as you did it for one of these least ones, you did it for me - on God’s very word, then, he will much more show that the one who can do good and who does it is truly God by grace and participation because he has taken on in happy imitation the energy and characteristic of his own doing good. And if the poor man is God, it is because of God’s condescension in becoming poor for us and in taking upon himself by his own suffering the sufferings of each one and “until the end of time,” always suffering mystically out of goodness in proportion to each one’s suffering. All the more reason, then, will that one be God who by loving men in imitation of God heals by himself in divine fashion the hurts of those who suffer and who shows that he has in his disposition, safeguarding all proportion, the same power of saving Providence that God has.

Who, then, is so slow and lazy with regard to virtue as not to desire divinity when one can acquire it at such small cost and so readily and easily? For a firm and secure protection of these things and an easy way to salvation outside of which none of these benefits will be kept truly without harm by the one who has them is the personal attention to our actions whereby in learning to regard and consider what concerns us alone we free ourselves from the hollow hurt caused by others. For if we learn to see and examine ourselves alone we will never interfere in another’s concerns whatever they might be because we acknowledge God as the only wise and just judge who judges wisely and justly all things that exist according to the principle of their being not according to the manner of their appearance. Men might also make a judgment by looking vaguely at appearances but the truth and meaning of existing things are not at all to be found there. God, on the other hand, who looks at the soul’s hidden motivation and its unseen desire and the principle of these by which the soul is drawn, and its goal, that is, the foreseen end of every action, judges rightly, as was said, all the actions of men. And if we are zealous in succeeding in this and stay within our limited compass without

becoming involved in external things we shall not permit the eye, ear, or tongue either to see, hear, or speak at all, if possible, what is the business of others, or at least in getting involved with compassion rather than with passion, we allow ourselves to see, hear, and speak them for our profit and only insofar as it seems good to the divine Word who controls them. For nothing slips more easily toward sin than these organs when they are not disciplined by reason, and on the other hand nothing is more apt to salvation when it commands, controls, and leads them toward where it ought and chooses to go.

Therefore, let us to the best of our ability nor be careless in obeying God who calls us to eternal life and to a blessed end through the observance of his divine and saving commandments “to receive mercy and find grace as an aid in time of need.” “For grace,” says the divine Apostle, “is with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility,” that is, those who love our Lord with the incorruptibility of virtue and the pure and sincere dignity of life, or to speak more clearly, those who love the Lord by doing his will and by not transgressing any of his commands.

[...]



The Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States of America and Canada: 25 Years of Maturing

Most of us take for granted the fact that we have four dioceses which make up the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada. Yet that is not a fact which should be taken for granted. The establishment of three dioceses in place of the single Serbian Orthodox Diocese of the United States and Canada in 1963 was a gigantic step forward for the Church, and a natural result of its process of growth and maturing.

When the old single diocese was first founded in the 1920's, that, too, was a sign of growth and maturity. Before that time, the Serbian Orthodox parishes in North America had largely been on their own, a very strange situation indeed for an Orthodox parish. There had been little or no understanding of the traditional ecclesiastical structure of the Orthodox Church by many of the founders of these parishes, compounded by the fact that there was no Serbian Orthodox bishop present or available. If a bishop was needed (say, for the consecration of a church), often the Russian Orthodox bishop was called upon. Otherwise, there was little contact with any hierarchy. A parochialism set in which was often jealously guarded by the local congregation. However, it gradually became apparent, especially after the Russian Revolution threw the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Mission in North America into confusion and crippled its effectiveness, that there



Mardarije

AMERICAN-CANADIAN BISHOP
MARDARIJE



Memorial Plaque in the mine where many Serbs lost their life

was a need for a local Serbian Orthodox bishop in America. At that stage in its development, the Serbian Orthodox Church in America could only contemplate one diocese, and that diocese served the Church in the best way it could for a number of years, beginning with the appointment of Bishop Mardarije of blessed memory.

One diocese was better than none. But with the rapid growth and development of the Church after World War II, it became apparent that one diocese and one bishop was not enough to serve the ever-expanding needs of the Serbian Orthodox faithful in America and Canada. In the Orthodox Church, bishops have traditionally been close to their flocks. A bishop is ideally not simply an administrator of a large geographical territory, but he is also a pastor, teacher, and spiritual leader, actively involved in the life of the parishes under his omophorion. There was not way that a single bishop could provide this kind of pastoral care to such a huge and far-flung diocese. It was for this reason that Bishop Dionisije of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of America and Canada suggested to the Holy Assembly of Bishops that he be given assistance with the consecration of three new bishops from the ranks of his clergy: Archimandrite Dr. Firmilian (Ocokoljic), Archimandrite Gregory (Udicki) of Youngwood, Pennsylvania, and Fr. Stefan Lastavica of Windsor, Ontario.

25 years ago, in 1963, the Holy Assembly of Bishops elected these three as bishops of three new dioceses created from the territory of the old single diocese. That this action was coupled with the suspension and ultimate deposition of Bishop Dionisije, which brought on a tragic split among the Serbian Orthodox in America, should not cloud the basic importance of this silver anniversary. The establishment of the three new dioceses was a prerequisite for the further growth and development of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada along the lines of traditional Orthodox ecclesiastical life and the establishment of effective programs which transcended the limits of the local parish.

Bishop Dr. Firmilian, who became the bishop of the new Midwestern Diocese, had been Bishop Dionisije's Episcopal Deputy. As the seat of the diocese in Libertyville was closed to him, he worked from Chicago at Holy Resurrection Cathedral. It fell to him to not only set up the new diocese, but also to play a

leading role in the unfortunate litigation which followed the schism. Either task would have been demanding, but taking on both was truly a tremendous undertaking. Nevertheless, the diocese was organized despite the very difficult circumstances, and has continued to grow and improve to the present day. The diocesan see once again was established at St. Sava Monastery in Libertyville in 1979, where a beautiful bishop's residence was completed two years ago. The original St. Sava Monastery Church was enlarged and renovated, and the monastery has also become the site of the new branch of the Theological Faculty of Belgrade. Since becoming ill several years ago, Bishop Firmilian has been assisted in his duties by Bishop Irinej of Nis and, for the past two years, by Bishop Dr. Sava of Sumadija, who is being assisted by vicar Bishop Mitrophan. The Midwest Diocese is the only one of the three dioceses founded in 1963 still headed by its original bishop.

The Western Diocese received as its founding hierarch Bishop Gregory. The parishes of the western diocese, widely separated by the great distances of the American West, had a special need for a diocesan bishop close to them, who would be able to address their needs and concerns and bind them into a body. New parishes have been founded and many established parishes have constructed new buildings. Bishop Gregory chose St. Steven's Cathedral in Alhambra, California, near Los Angeles, as his see. Since his death in 1985, Bishop Irinej of Nis and then Bishop Dr. Sava of Sumadija have served as administrators. The diocese is still widowed. Nevertheless, signs of growth and development continue, such as the founding last year of the Diocesan Federation of Circles of Serbian Sisters.

The Eastern American and Canadian Diocese was headed at the beginning by Bishop Stefan. In the brief time allotted him as bishop before his untimely death in 1966, Bishop Stefan was able to organize the diocese. In 1967 Bishop Dr. Sava, then vicar bishop to the Patriarch, was elected to fill the vacant Eastern Diocese. Under his firm leadership the diocese grew and prospered. Property was purchased in Richfield, Ohio for a diocesan center and monastery. A diocesan newspaper, the *Path of Orthodoxy*, (subsequently the newspaper serving the entire North American Serbian Orthodox Church) was established, and a wide variety of educational and financial programs was put into place. Missionary work helped establish new parishes, particularly in Canada and the South. In 1974 a mansion in Sewickley, Pennsylvania was purchased to provide the room the bishop's residence and diocesan see required. Bishop Sava was called to leave the diocese in 1977, when he was elected bishop of Sumadija in Yugoslavia. Replacing him in 1978 was Bishop Christopher (Kovacevich), who had served as parish priest in Johnstown and Pittsburgh before going to the South Chicago parish, where he was active in the affairs of the Midwestern Diocese. Progress has continued under his archpastorship.

In 1984 the Canadian part of the diocese was formed into a new diocese. This new Canadian diocese has had to meet the same challenges in laying down a sound spiritual and financial basis as did the other dioceses before it, but its life and growth has been an encouragement to all. With Bishop Georgije at its head, the Canadian Diocese continues to experience an active building campaign on the parish level, and diocesan programs are being put into place.

With the formation of these dioceses has also come the formation of Diocesan Federations of Circles of Serbian Sisters. These Diocesan Federations



Archimandrite Sebastian (Dabovich)



Hieromonk Jakov (Odžić), hierodeacon Damjan (Grujić), archimandrite Sebastian, poet Proka Jovkić and Priest Paja Radosavljević

have played a vital role in the lives of the respective dioceses, and the same advantages of closer proximity and flexibility which have fostered the growth of the dioceses has also helped these auxiliaries work more effectively together than they could as separate parish groups.

The story of the past 25 years has been one of continued growth and development on all levels of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America and Canada. This growth is apparent not only in matters of new churches and other parish properties, and not only in the financial resources of the dioceses and parishes, but also, and even more importantly, in the ongoing process of spiritual growth and maturity of the faithful of our Church. Our educational programs have advanced immeasurably. Our transition from being a church of immigrants to a church of natives, while not always easy or without its problems, is taking its natural course.

In short, the history of the new dioceses has been one of a process of *maturing*. As we look back over a quarter of a century of life as three, and then four, dioceses, we are struck by the greater maturity in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters we see. Parishes which once considered themselves “independent” now understand their relationship to their bishop and diocese. There is a greater awareness of the Christian life and what it means to be a Serbian Orthodox Christian. Each diocese, by being more local, is better able to find solutions to the particular challenges it faces in its own area, and to muster the cooperation of its parishes. Even while this is so, the dioceses are not isolated from one another, but are able to work together on a national scale through the Episcopal Council, the Central Council, the triannual Church Assembly (*Sabor*). Much of the growth and improvement we see has been aided immeasurably by the establishment of the several dioceses. Truly, the past 25 years have been able to establish a firm foundation upon which the future can be built.

(From 1988 Calendar of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada)

Fr. Rade Merick

Archimandrite Vasileios Gontikakis

Hymn of Entry



Introduction

Unity in the Orthodox Church is to be understood not as a mere administrative arrangement and a human achievement, but as a manifestation of grace and as the fulness of the new life which renews the earth-born and the whole of their world.

Theology does not have a philosophy of its own, nor spirituality a mentality of its own, nor church administration a system of its own, nor hagiography its own artistic school. All these emerge from the same font of liturgical experience. They all function together in a trinitarian way, singing the thrice-holy hymn in their own languages. “Everything begins to speak with strange dogmas, strange words and the strange teachings of the Holy Trinity.”¹⁾

Nothing in the Church is arbitrary, or isolated, or alien, or mechanically added. Nothing has a law of its own, its own “will” in the sense of rebellion. Nothing enters into it that is alien in nature, understanding or attitude. Everything is illumined by the grace of the Trinity. Each part lives with the rest in an organic unity and is embodied in the whole.

There is one spiritual law, which has power over both heavenly and earthly things. All things flow and proceed from the knowledge of the Holy Trinity. All things emerge from the font which is the life of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit: from baptism in the death of Jesus. “Life has sprung up from the grave,” and it continues to spring up. After passing through death, all things have a different mode of existence. It can be said that the same echo of the Trinity rises ceaselessly from all things, from the lowest function of life to the angelic choirs who utter the thrice-holy hymn.²⁾

¹⁾ Verses at Lauds and at Sunday evening Vespers, Pentecost.

²⁾ From the Oktoekhos, the liturgical book containing the hymns of the eight ecclesiastical tones or modes.



When man obediently submits to the laws of the trinitarian mode of activity and opens himself completely to this perfectly harmonious concord, he is carried on the wings of the freedom of the Spirit which lead him out of the confines of the created world into the spacious breadth of Paradise, and restore him to his proper position of honor.

So when an Orthodox is asked about the question of unity, his mind turns, not to something human and closed, but to something infinite and divine. His whole being vibrates with the triumphal cry offered up unceasingly by the Church of the risen Christ, “Death is taken captive by death.” The unity of the Church is organized, lived and revealed following the death which leads to eternal life. The unity of the Church has the dimensions of freedom and the constitution of the “new life.”

This death, which defeats death and leads to eternal life

- to true unity and interpenetration with the divine
- is incarnate in the whole body of the Church and in the following manifestations:
- in its **theology**, by the apophatic knowledge which is a Golgotha for the intelligence.
- in its **organization**, by the fact of its conciliar, “trinitarian” character.
- in the **Divine Liturgy**, by its offering: “Bringing before Thee Thine of Thine own, in all and for all.”
- in the **icon**, by its pictorial revelation of the ethos of the Liturgy.
- in **spirituality**, by its search for humility, which means the sacrifice of everything and a painful “self-emptying,” as distinct from the mere acquisition of virtues.

Thus, through the cross of man, the crucifixion of the individual will, joy comes into all the world of the Church. The grace that dwells above and that unites all things into an organic whole, moves, acts and is revealed.

The painful problem is this: how can contemporary man fulfil his liturgical nature? How can we bridge the gap which separates the agony and thirst of modern man from the abundance of the new life and the creative power to be found in the Fathers? Or, to put it another way, how can we do away with the gap which separates theology from life? When this is achieved, then new streams will water our thirsty land, and the sap of our deep-rooted Orthodox tradition will regenerate the shoots of our courage and our life. Then we shall appreciate the single, unique and universal quality of Orthodoxy, which sums up everything in itself. We shall appreciate that there is no basis for comparison with anything preceding or subsequent. Orthodoxy conceals within it all that has gone before, from before the ages, and all that will come to be subsequently, without end.

All things are found to be new and strange in appearance, because the Lord is “He who is and was and is to come”(Rev. 1:4). All things have been tested and proved; there remains standing no idol made by hands or thoughts, because God is known as “the One, everything and no one.”³⁾ Here alone is God recognized as the giver of unity. Here alone does man find his whole self, saved in soul and body.

The pages which follow are not put forward as a solution to the problem of Church unity, but as small beginnings and ways of ascent which may help some people to enter more consciously into the Church, where “that dread mystery of the unity beyond reason and speech is enacted.”⁴⁾ Anyone who has reached this point will understand by himself what answer must be given both to the problem of the union of the churches and to “ecumenism,” which first occasioned the writing of this work.

There is something else which must be said before the end of this introduction. When you are concerned with matters like these, it is not permissible to bring the discussion down to your own level; other people want to hear the word of God, not your views. And to rise in your entirety to the height of a theological discussion of holy things, defiled as you are, is dangerous and unattainable. So you realize that writing this sort of work is always a cross. May these pages be accepted, therefore, as a poor man’s mite given to his brethren; and may they be at the same time a request for their prayers. For it is only on the brethren, the “saints,” the Church of the first-born, that we can lean for support. This is where our hope of salvation is to be found.



³⁾ St Gregory the Theologian, *Dogmatic Poems* 29; P-G. 37:508A.

⁴⁾ St Maximus the Confessor.



АРХИЕПИСКОП БЕОГРАДСКИ

И
МИТРОПОЛИТ СРБИЈЕ

АЕБр. 74

15. септембра 1916. год.

Грамота

Целећи патриотски и пастирски рад оца јеромонаха Даци Јоакима Бједо-ва, српског свештеника у Мексици (Лен-сивенија), како у цркви тако и у националним установама, о чему смо добили свачиња уверена од наших представника у Америци, а имајући у виду и то, да је од војених власти Краљевине Србије почасљован уредним местом у војсци да послужи као војни свештеник-доброволац, — одлучили смо да, у име призната неговних заслуга, оца јеромонаха Јоакима произведемо у чин архимандрита. Чин произвођета извршили смо 14. септембра 1916. године у крфској српској цркви, храму Св. Архиепископа Михаила. Од тога дана отац Јоаким ступа у сва права која припадају архимандритском чину у нашој светој православној цркви.

Ову грамоту с произвођењем у архимандритски чин дајемо оцу Даци Јоакиму на употребу, са жељом: да и у свом новом чину усрдно и корисно дела на добру светој цркви и српској народа.

Дано у вароши Крфцу, на осмрвљу Крфцу, 15. септембра 1916. године, АЕБр. 74.

Секретар митрополитски
Др. С. Јововић



Архиепископ Београдски
и Митрополит Србије,
Димитрије

The Way Into the Kingdom of Heaven

by Saint Innocent of Alaska

We were created to live on earth unlike animals who die and disappear with time, but with the **high purpose to live with God** –not for a hundred years or so–but **for eternity!**

Every individual instinctively strives for happiness. This desire has been implanted in our nature by the Creator Himself, and therefore it is not sinful. But it is important to understand that in this temporary life it is impossible to find full happiness, because that comes from God and cannot be attained without Him. Only He, who is the ultimate Good and the source of all good, can quench our thirst for happiness.

Material things can never wholly satisfy us. Indeed, we know from experience that every item we have desired has pleased us only for a short while. Then it became boring, and we started to desire something else. This process of satisfaction and boredom then repeated itself many times. The most striking example of unquenchable thirst for happiness was Solomon, the famous King of Israel, who lived around 1000 B.C. He was so rich that all the household utensils in his palaces were made of pure gold. He was so wise that kings and famous people from far away lands came to hear him. He was so famous that his foes trembled at the mere mention of his name. He could easily satisfy any of his wishes, and it seemed that there was no pleasure that he did not possess or could not obtain. But with all of this, Solomon could not find total happiness to the end of his life. He described his many years of searching for happiness and his continual disappointments in the book of Ecclesiastes, which he began with the following phrase: *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity* (Ecc. 1:2).

Innumerable other wise people who were also successful in life came to the same conclusion. It seems that in the depth of our subconscious something reminds us that we are just wanderers on this earth and that our true happiness is not here but there, in that other and better world known as Paradise or the Heavenly Kingdom. Let man own the whole world and everything that is in it, yet all this will interest him for no more than a short period, while the immortal soul, thirsting for personal communication with God, will remain unsatisfied.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth in order to **return to us** our lost capacity to spend eternity in the blissful presence of God. He revealed to people that all their evil lies in sin and that no one through their own efforts can overcome the evil within themselves and attain communion with God. Sin, ingrained in our nature since the fall, stands between us and God like a high wall. If the Son of God had not descended to us through His mercy for us, had not taken on our human nature, and had not by His death conquered sin, all mankind would have perished for ever! Now, thanks to Him, those who wish to cleanse themselves from evil can do so and return to God and obtain eternal bliss in the Kingdom of Heaven.





Holy Assembly of Bishops, 1921 (which founded American-Canadian Diocese).

First row from left: Metropolitan Gavriilo of Montenegro-Sea coast, Vasilije of Banja Luka and Antonije of Kiev (as guest), Patriarch Dimitrije, Miron Bishop of Pakrac, Petar Bishop of Dabar-Bosnia and Maksimilijan, Vicar-Bishop.

Second row, Bishop: Kirilo of Boka Kotor, Georgije Bishop of Temišvar, Ilarion Metropolitan of Vršac, Ilarion of Upper Karlovac, and Jefrem of Žiča.

Third row: Josif Bishop of Bitolj, Irinej of Timok, Mihailo of Raška-Prizren, Varnava Metropolit of Skoplje, Serafim Bishop of Zletovo-Strumica and Georgije of Budim.

The Path into the Kingdom of Heaven

The road into the Kingdom of Heaven was made by the Lord Jesus Christ, and He was the first one who travelled it. The Bible teaches that only he who follows Jesus can reach His Kingdom. But how can one follow Him? Hear what our Savior says about this: *Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me* (Mark 8:34).

The words *whoever desires* mean that Christ does not compel anyone to follow Him. He has no need of the unwilling ones, but He desires that each person **freely** follow Him. Consequently, only those who willingly choose the Savior's path reach the Kingdom of Heaven.

Christian! Your salvation or perdition is entirely in your own hands. In His unspeakable wisdom and love, the Lord has given you freedom to chose what you wish, and He does not force you to do anything against your will. Therefore, if you truly wish to follow Jesus Christ, He will show you the way into the Kingdom of Heaven and will help you along each step. If you do not wish to follow Him, it is your decision. But take care not to disdain the grace of God! Pitying you, Jesus Christ knocks for a long time at the door of your heart, waiting for your decision to save yourself.

That is why it is extremely important to nourish in ourselves the desire and resolve to follow the path of salvation. To make this desire grow in us and strengthen our resolve, we must learn where the path Christ showed us leads and how to follow it. Therefore, brethren, if you wish to attain the Kingdom of Heaven, follow the path which Jesus Christ took, and He, the all-merciful one, will help you every step of the way.

The road into the Kingdom of Heaven was made by the Lord Jesus Christ, and He was the first one who travelled it. The Bible teaches that only he who follows Jesus can reach His Kingdom. But how can one follow Him? Hear what our Savior says about this: *Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me* (Mark 8:34).

If you bear your cross with perseverance and seek comfort only from Him, then He, through His mercy, will not abandon you but will touch your heart and will impart to you the **gifts of the Holy Spirit**. It is then that you will feel an indescribable delight, a wonderful inner peace and joy such as you have never experienced before, and at the same time you will feel an influx of spiritual strength; prayer will become easier and your faith stronger. Then your heart will be kindled with love of God and all people. All these are gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Communion is a source for receiving the Holy Spirit. Regarding it, Jesus Christ said: *He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood, abides in Me, and I in him. (He) has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day* (Jn. 6:54-56). When Christians partake of Holy Communion they unite inexplicably with Jesus Christ and start partaking of His divine life. Therefore, you must go to Communion with faith, having cleansed your soul by repentance, with a realization of your unworthiness, and with the hope of God's mercy. Since God is one and indivisible, when Christians accept Jesus Christ into their heart, they accept the Holy Spirit and the Heavenly Father at the same time and thus become a living temple of God.

As witnessed in the Acts of the Apostles and other ancient Christian writings, the faithful of the first centuries took Communion every Sunday, which then was called the **Lord's day**. Undoubtedly, because of this constant communion with Jesus Christ, they were as "*of one heart and one soul*" (Acts 4:32). My God, what a difference there is between them and us. How many among us seldom partake of Holy Communion, sometimes avoiding it for years!

So, for the sake of your salvation, partake of Communion as often as possible. The Body and Blood of Christ is a true cure for many spiritual and bodily infirmities. And who among us is perfectly healthy? Who would not want to receive helpful relief? The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the nourishment which sustains us on the path to the Kingdom of Heaven. Is it possible to complete a long and difficult journey without sustenance? The Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is the holiness bestowed on us by Jesus Christ Himself for our sanctification. Who would refuse to be a partaker of such holiness? Therefore, do not be lazy in stepping up to the Chalice of Life, but approach it with faith and fear of God.



Serbian Patriarch Dimitrije



Archimandrite Mardarije with Clergy and people in Libertyville, 1913

To this it is necessary to add that if we somehow fall into sin and thereby distance ourselves from the Holy Spirit, we should not despair and think that we have irrevocably lost all blessings, but let us quickly prostrate ourselves before God with deep repentance and prayer, and the All-merciful Holy Spirit will again return to us.

Without faith in Jesus Christ no one can return to God and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. No one, even though he believe in Jesus Christ, can regard himself to be His disciple and share His glory in Heaven if he does not act as Jesus Christ did. And no one is able to follow Jesus Christ if he does not receive help from the Holy Spirit.

We should remember that the path into the Kingdom of Heaven that has been opened to us by Jesus Christ **is the only one**, and there never was and never will be another path that leads to salvation. At times this path may appear difficult, but, again, you should remind yourself that this is the **only one** that leads toward your objective. At other times the Christian will encounter such consolations and delights on this path as cannot be found in any worldly thing. The Lord Jesus Christ assists us on this path. He gives us the Holy Spirit, He sends His angel to protect us, He provides instructors and leaders, and even He Himself takes us by the hand and leads us to salvation.

If the path into the Kingdom of Heaven seems difficult, then consider how incomparably more dreadful are the eternal torments in fiery Gehenna. If the path toward heavenly bliss seems difficult, compare it with the path toward earthly happiness, and you will see that the path toward earthly happiness is not really easier at all. Just observe how much people toil to amass earthly things, how many disappointments, fights, sleepless nights and deprivations they bear. Or remind yourself of how much effort and expenses it takes to achieve some meaningless and fleeting pleasure! And for what? Instead of the expected happiness, you are left with disappointment and weariness. When you carefully examine the heart of the matter, it becomes evident that people stay away from the Heavenly Kingdom not because the path to it is more difficult than the other paths of this world, but because it appears that way to them. Besides, the devil, an experienced and crafty deceiver, misleads people into believing that the path to salvation is difficult and the paths to perdition are easy, and he often succeeds in this.

So, my brethren, in order to avoid eternal perdition, let us definitely concern ourselves with our future. We know that beyond the grave there awaits one of the following two outcomes: either the Heavenly Kingdom or everlasting perdition in hell. There is no middle state, only everlasting bliss or everlasting torment.

As there exist only two conditions past the grave, so there exist only two paths in this life. The one that seems wide and easy is taken by the majority. The other that seems narrow and thorny is taken by few. Those who follow the narrow path will be a hundredfold more happy than those who do not.

Brethren, if any of you who walk the wide path should suddenly die, what will happen to you? To whom shall you turn? To the Lord? You refuse to listen to Him now, so you must expect He will refuse to listen to you then. Now He is your merciful Father; then He will be your righteous judge. Who will defend you against His righteous rage? Ah! How frightful it is to fall into the hands of the living God! Therefore, concern yourselves now with the salvation of your soul while you still have time!

Work for your salvation while it is still daylight, for the night will come in which there will be no chance to change anything. Strive for the Heavenly Kingdom while you can still walk. Walk even a little bit, even if by crawling, but do it in the right direction. Then in eternity you will truly rejoice for every step you have taken!

May the All-merciful Lord help us all in this! Glory and thanksgiving be to Him throughout the ages of ages. Amen.



St. Sava Church in Libertyville during construction



*Hierodeacon
Mardarije
(Uskoković)*



*Archimandrite
Mardarije
(Uskoković)*

Sunday of Orthodoxy

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Rejoicing today in the triumph of Orthodoxy on this first Sunday of Lent, we joyfully commemorate three events: one event belonging to the past; one event to the present; and one event which still belongs to the future.

Whenever we have any feast or joy in the Church, we Orthodox first of all look back — for in our present life we depend on what happened in the past. We depend first of all, of course, on the first and the ultimate triumph -- that of Christ Himself. Our faith is rooted in that strange defeat which became the most glorious victory — the defeat of a man nailed to the cross, who rose again from the dead, who is the Lord and the Master of the world. This is the first triumph of Orthodoxy. This is the content of all our commemorations and of all our joy. This man selected and chose twelve men, gave them power to preach about that defeat and that victory, and sent them to the whole world saying preach and baptize, build up the Church, announce the Kingdom of God. And you know, my brothers and sisters, how those twelve men — very simple men indeed, simple fishermen — went out and preached. The world hated them, the Roman Empire persecuted them, and they were covered with blood. But that blood was another victory. The Church grew, the Church covered the universe with the true faith. After 300 years of the most unequal conflict between the powerful Roman Empire and the powerless Christian Church, the Roman Empire accepted Christ as Lord and Master. That was the second triumph of Orthodoxy. The Roman Empire recognized the one whom it crucified and those whom it persecuted as the bearers of truth, and their teaching as the teaching of life eternal. The Church triumphed. But then the second period of troubles began.

The following centuries saw many attempts to distort the faith, to adjust it to human needs, to fill it with human content. In each generation there were those who could not accept that message of the cross and resurrection and life eternal. They tried to change it, and those changes we call heresies. Again there were persecutions. Again, Orthodox bishops, monks and laymen defended their faith and were condemned and went into exile and were covered with blood. And after five centuries of those conflicts and persecutions and discussions, the day came which we commemorate today, the day of the final victory of Orthodoxy as the true faith over all the heresies. It happened on the first Sunday of Lent in the year 843 in Constantinople. After almost 100 years of persecution directed against the worship of the holy icons, the Church finally proclaimed that the truth had been defined, that the truth was fully in the possession of the Church. And since then all Orthodox people, wherever they live, have gathered on this Sunday to proclaim before the world their faith in that truth, their belief that their Church is truly apostolic, truly Orthodox, truly universal. This is the event of the past that we commemorate today.



Michael Pupin

But let us ask ourselves one question: Do all the triumphs of Orthodoxy, all the victories, belong to the past? Looking at the present today, we sometimes feel that our only consolation is to remember the past. *Then* Orthodoxy was glorious, *then* the Orthodox Church was powerful, *then* it dominated. But what about the present? My dear friends, if the triumph of Orthodoxy belongs to the past only, if there is nothing else for us to do but commemorate, to repeat to ourselves how glorious was the past, then Orthodoxy is dead. But we are here tonight to witness to the fact that Orthodoxy not only is not dead but also that it is

once more and forever celebrating its own triumph — the triumph of Orthodoxy. We don't have to fight heresies among ourselves, but we have other things that once more challenge our Orthodox faith.

Today, gathered here together, Orthodox of various national backgrounds, we proclaim and we glorify first of all our unity in Orthodoxy. This is the triumph of Orthodoxy in the present. This is a most wonderful event: that all of us, with all our differences, with all our limitations, with all our weaknesses, can come together and say we belong to that Orthodox faith, that we are one in Christ and in Orthodoxy. We are living very far from the traditional centers of Orthodoxy. We call ourselves Eastern Orthodox, and yet we are here in the West, so far from those glorious cities which were centers of the Orthodox faith for centuries — Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Moscow. How far are those cities. And yet, don't we have the feeling that something of a miracle has happened, that God has sent us here, far into the West, not just in order to settle here, to increase our income, to build up a community. He also has sent us as apostles of Orthodoxy, so that this faith, which historically was limited to the East, now is becoming a faith which is truly and completely universal.

This is a thrilling moment in the history of Orthodoxy. That is why it is so important for us to be here tonight and to understand, to realize, to have that vision of what is going on. People were crossing the ocean, coming here, not thinking so much about their faith as about themselves, about their lives, about their future. They were usually poor people, they had a difficult life, and they built those little Orthodox churches everywhere in America not for other people but for themselves, just to remember their homes, to perpetuate their tradition. They didn't think of the future. And yet this is what happened: the Orthodox Church was sent here through and with those poor men. The truth itself, the fullness of the apostolic faith -- all this came here, and here we are now, filling this hall and proclaiming this apostolic faith — the faith that has strengthened the universe. And this leads us to the event which still belongs to the future.

If today we can only proclaim, if we can only pray for that coming triumph of Orthodoxy in this country and in the world, our Orthodox faith forces us to believe that it is not by accident but by divine providence that the Orthodox faith today has reached all countries, all cities, all continents of the universe. After that historic weakness of our religion, after the persecutions by the Roman Empire, by the Turks, by the godless atheists, after all the troubles that we had to go through, today a new day begins. Something new is going to happen. And it is this future of Orthodoxy that we have to rejoice about today.

We can already have a vision of that future when, in the West, a strong American Orthodox Church comes into existence. We can see how this faith, which for such a long time was an alien faith here, will become truly and completely universal in the sense that we will answer the questions of all men, and also all their questions. For if we believe in that word: "Orthodoxy," "the true faith"; if for one moment we try to understand what it means: the true, the full Christianity, as it has been proclaimed by Christ and His disciples; if our Church has preserved for all ages the message of the apostles and of the fathers and of the saints in its purest form, then, my dear friends, here is the answer to the questions and to the problems and to the sufferings of our world. You know that our world today is so complex. It is changing all the time. And the more it changes, the more people fear, the more they



*Students of the Seminary in Orebić
(Mladen Trbunović is first from the right)*



St. Sava Church in Jackson, CA

are frightened by the future, the more they are preoccupied by what will happen to them. And this is where Orthodoxy must answer their problem; this is where Orthodoxy must accept the challenge of modern civilization and reveal to men of all nations, to all men in the whole world, that it has remained the force of God left in history for the transformation, for the deification, for the transfiguration of human life.

The past, the present, the future: At the beginning, one lonely man on the cross — the complete defeat. And if at that time we had been there with all our human calculations, we probably would have said: “That’s the end. Nothing else will happen.” The twelve left Him. There was no one, no one to hope. The world was in darkness. Everything seemed finished. And you know what happened three days later. Three days later He appeared. He appeared to His disciples, and their hearts were burning within them because they knew that He was the risen Lord. And since then, in every generation, there have been people with burning hearts, people who have felt that this victory of Christ had to be carried again and again into this world, to be proclaimed in order to win new human souls and to be the transforming force in history.

Today this responsibility belongs to us. We feel that we are weak. We feel that we are limited, we are divided, we are still separated in so many groups, we have so many obstacles to overcome. But today, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, we close our eyes for a second and we rejoice in that unity which is already here: priests of various national churches praying together, people of all backgrounds uniting in prayer for the triumph of Orthodoxy. We are already in a triumph, and may God help us keep that triumph in our hearts,

so that we never give up hope in that future event in the history of orthodoxy when Orthodoxy will become the victory which eternally overcomes all the obstacles, because that victory is the victory of Christ Himself.

As we approach the most important moment of the Eucharist, the priest says, "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess..." What is the condition of the real triumph of Orthodoxy? What is the way leading to the real, the final, the ultimate victory of our faith? The answer comes from the Gospel. The answer comes from Christ Himself and from the whole tradition of Orthodoxy. It is *love*. Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess . . . confess our faith, our Orthodoxy. Let us, from now on, feel responsible for each other. Let us understand that even if we are divided in small parishes, in small dioceses, we first of all belong to one another. We belong together, to Christ, to His Body, to the Church. Let us feel responsible for each other, and let us love one another. Let us put above everything else the interests of Orthodoxy in this country. Let us understand that each one of us today has to be the apostle of Orthodoxy in a country which is not yet Orthodox, in a society which is asking us: "What do you believe?" "What is your faith?" And let us, above everything else, keep the memory, keep the experience, keep the taste of that unity which we are anticipating tonight.

At the end of the first century — when the Church was still a very small group, a very small minority, in a society which was definitely anti-Christian when the persecution was beginning — St. John the Divine, the beloved disciple of Christ, wrote these words: "And this is the victory, our faith, this is the victory." There was no victory at that time, and yet he knew that in his faith he had the victory that can be applied to us today. We have the promise of Christ, that the gates of hell will *never* prevail against the Church. We have the promise of Christ that if we have faith, all things are possible. We have the promise of the Holy Spirit, that He will fill all that which is weak, that He will help us at the moment when we need help. In other words, we have all the possibilities, we have everything that we need, and therefore the victory is ours. It is not a human victory which can be defined in terms of money, of human success, of human achievements. What we are preaching tonight, what we are proclaiming tonight, what we are praying for tonight, is the victory of Christ in me, in us, in all of you in the Orthodox Church in America. And that victory of Christ in us, of the one who for us was crucified and rose again from the dead, that victory will be the victory of His Church.

Today is the triumph of Orthodoxy, and a hymn sung today states solemnly and simply: "This is the Apostolic faith, this is the Orthodox faith, this is the faith of the Fathers, this is the faith that is the foundation of the world." My dear brothers and sisters, this is also our own faith. We are chosen. We are elected. We are the happy few that can say of our faith, "apostolic," "universal," "the faith of our fathers," "Orthodoxy," "the truth." Having this wonderful treasure, let us preserve it, let us keep it, and let us also use it in such a way that this treasure becomes the victory of Christ in us and in His Church. Amen.

Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann



First Serbian Orthodox Church in Milwaukee, WI

Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States of America

World headquarters: The Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America is a US-based autonomous church body in the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate headquartered in Belgrade, Serbia.

US headquarters: Saint Sava Monastery
32377 N. Milwaukee Avenue, P.O. Box 519, Libertyville, IL 60048.
Holy Resurrection Cathedral Telephone: (773) 693-3367

Website: www.serborth.org

Administrative structure: There are 3 dioceses in the United States: The diocese of New Gracanica and Midwestern America, with its headquarters at the New Gracanica Monastery in Third Lake, Illinois; the Eastern American Diocese, with its headquarters in Mars, Pennsylvania; and the Western American Diocese, with its headquarters in Alhambra-Los Angeles, California.

The present Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America has its origins in the immigration of Serbs who came from the regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Dalmatia, Montenegro and the Balkans in the middle to late 19th century. A large immigration of Serbs followed from the Ottoman ruled Kosovo and Metohija region between the years 1890-1915.

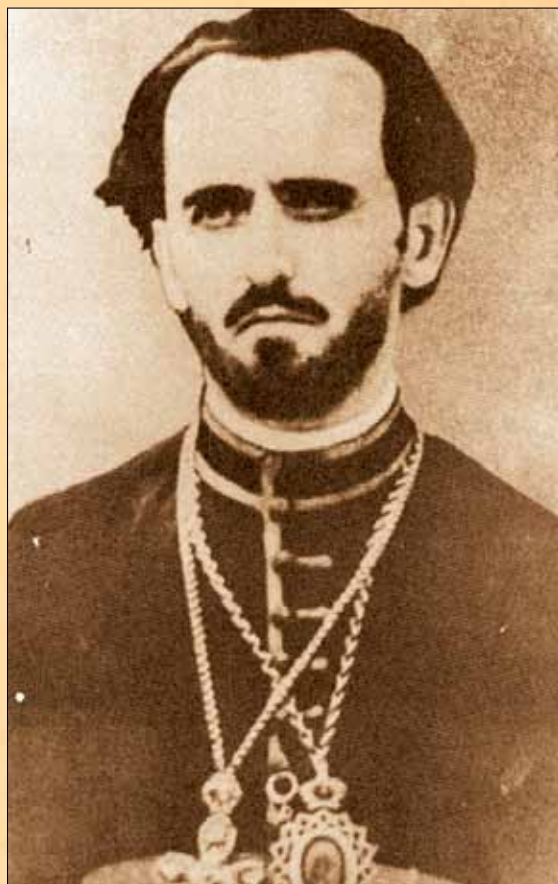
Atop a hill in the mining town of Jackson, California in the Sierra Foothills, the first distinctly Serbian parish was established by Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovic, the first US-born Orthodox priest and missionary. Consecrated in 1894, the Saint Sava Church in Jackson is believed to be the oldest Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA. Soon after, other communities were founded in California and the steel centers of Western Pennsylvania and the Greater Chicago area.

Major “personalities” who contributed significantly to the history of each Church were: Sebastian Dabovich, known as the “English preacher” of the San Francisco Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox North American mission; the prominent theologian Saint Nicholia (Velimirovic) placed in the calendar of saints in 2003, who for his eloquent preaching is often referred to as “the New Chrysostom;” and Bishop Mardarije (Uskokovic) who was appointed as administrator of the Serbian parishes by the Russian North American Metropolis.



St. George the Great Martyr Church in Pittsburgh

Originally, Serbian Orthodox parishes in America were under the supervision of the multi-ethnic Russian Orthodox American Metropolia, led by the Russian Archbishop in New York. In 1921, however, in the wake of the Communist revolution in Russia, they were chartered as a diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church and placed under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate in Belgrade. In 1927, Bishop Mardarije became the first resident ruling bishop of the new Serbian diocese of America and Canada. Among his most remarkable accomplishments was the adoption of the first Church Constitution (1927) and the founding of the Saint Sava Monastery in Libertyville, Illinois, which became the See of the diocese and the center of spiritual life and place of pilgrimage for the Serbian Orthodox community in America. The Saint Sava Monastery Church and cemetery is where such prominent Serbians as Bishop Mardarije (Uskokovic), Bishop Nicholai (Velimirovic), King Peter II Karadjordjevic (King of Yugoslavia who reigned from 1934- 1945 and died in exile), and the famous poet Jovan Ducich were laid to rest.



Bishop Mardarije

Similarly to other Eastern European communities in the United States, the Orthodox Serbians in America were deeply affected by the political changes in their homeland, Yugoslavia, where a Communist government took over in the wake of WWII. Bishop Dionisije (Milivojevic) was the bishop of the American-Canadian Diocese who guided the diocese at the beginning of the Second World War and afterwards for nearly two decades. After the war, much was done to strengthen the Serbian Orthodox Church in America. During this time, the philanthropic Federation of Circles of Serbian Sisters was formed, and the first Orthodox Christian children's summer camp was established at the Saint Sava Monastery in Libertyville, Illinois. Property in Shadeland, Pennsylvania was purchase as an estate of 1400 acres, where a Charity Home and another children's camp were established. The diocese also purchased more land in Jackson California, where a third summer camp was formed. These summer camps continue today to provide year round opportunities for Christian Education and recreation for children and youth.

In 1963, the Holy Assembly of Bishops in Serbia formed 3 new dioceses from the territory of one single diocese in the USA and elected three new ruling hierarchs. This action was coupled with the suspension and ultimate deposition of Bishop Dionisije Milivojevic, which brought on a tragic division among the Serbian Orthodox in America, lasting some 30 years. Subsequently, in 1992, the proclamation of Eucharistic unity became the first step in the reunification of the Serbian Orthodox Church organization in North America. This was followed in 2009 restructuring into five dioceses (today there are four), making up the one autonomous administration of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America.

The Orthodox Serbian community in the USA continues to grow both through the influx of new members who embraced Orthodoxy from other faith communities as well as new waves of Serbian immigration from the former Yugoslavia. Today, the Serbian Orthodox Church in America has over 120 parishes, 12 monasteries, and a theological school at its headquarters at the Saint Sava Monastery in Libertyville, Illinois. Many of these churches stand as breathtaking representations of Serbo-Byzantine architecture which in-

clude unique characteristic elements from the Middle Ages. They are monuments to the timeless qualities of the Serbian Orthodox Church and noteworthy cultural contributions of the Serbian people's ancestry.

An example impressive architectural replica of the old Grachanica of Kosovo is the New Grachanica Monastery in Third Lake, Illinois. The Grachanica of Kosovo, the famous church that was continually destroyed and rebuilt, is an example of the powerful Serbian spirit that with the Church as its guide, carried itself from an age of struggle in Serbia, which now finds its expression in an age of peace in America.

The centralized ministries of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America include the development of Serbian Liturgical Music in the English language. The main characteristic of Serbian Orthodox chant is that it bears many elements of folk melodies. Many of these melodies are now sung in the English language and are being used in worship by other Orthodox communities as well.

There are still other ongoing efforts for Orthodox witness. Among them Sebastian Press, established in 2007 which has published over 10 theological works by such noteworthy Serbian theologians as Saint Justin Popovic, Saint Nicholai Velimirovic, and Atanasije Jevtic in the English language.

Further Information:

The best study of the early history of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America available in English is *History of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America and Canada, 1891-1941* by the late Bishop Sava (Vukovic) of Sumadija. (Kragujevac, Serbia; Kalenic Press, 1998)



Dormition of the All-Holy Mother of God church Kolma, CA

Church in America and Its Future

Saint Nikolai Velimirovich

A homily on the Sunday of Orthodoxy

I feel greatly honored in being called to speak to you on this day, the Sunday of Orthodoxy. For this day is indeed our pan-Orthodox Thanksgiving Day, because on this day for the last thousand years we have been giving thanks to Almighty God for the spiritual victories He granted to the holy Fathers of our Church and, through them, to us.

When I mention the Fathers of the Church, I am thinking first of all of the Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, the first of which was held in A.D. 325 and the last in 787. These Seven Councils represent the seven greatest spiritual battles in the history of Christendom. Like seven pillars of light (the light being Christ), they have illumined the path of our Church through the ages. They remind us of the Biblical words, *Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars* (Prov. 9:1). They fought against all the apostasies, heresies, pagan teachings and practices, against nebulous oriental occultism and pretentious philosophic theories contrary to Christ's revelations.

The seventh of these Councils, which we specially celebrate today, confirmed the canons and regulations of the preceding six and added new ones. Therefore, Orthodox churches the world over are today offering thanks to God for having granted to Christendom those spiritual giants in the first thousand years, when all Christendom was united in one Church.

Besides those Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils, we remember today all the other luminaries of early Church history, which no storm of succeeding events could extinguish. Some of them were great theologians, teachers, and preachers; others were extraordinary ascetics; still others were wonder-working intercessors, or wise leaders and organizers of Christian communities, or successful missionaries, or glorious martyrs for Christ, both male and female. By their words and deeds, by their wisdom and life examples, they continue to edify and assist us in following Christ. All that they taught and wrote is part of what we call the Sacred Tradition of the Church. They represent a precious treasure in our Church, which is God's family. And therefore we are lifting our hearts with thanks to God for this precious treasure. Yes, this is our pan-Orthodox Thanksgiving Day.

The examples and experiences of these holy men and women are like precious stones left to posterity as their loving legacy. What are these precious stones? They are as many as the number of Christian virtues, but I will discuss here just three of the most essential for our modern times. They are: spiritual vision, moral discipline, and competition in doing good.

Spiritual Vision

Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed to mankind an invisible world incomparably greater than the visible. The spiritual horizon which He opened to men was a much greater wonder than the physical horizon of distant galaxies discovered by modern telescopes. He spoke not like other teachers and philosophers—by hypotheses and theories and

Personally, I have a deep admiration for these old Orthodox generations in America, both for those who passed away in the Faith, and for those who are still living by their faith. They have been a spiritual and constructive component of the New World's humanity. I dare say that in their own way they have been heroic generations no less than other national groups, now blended into one great American nation. In their modesty these humble people never expected a poet to laud them or a historian to describe them.



Hieromonk dr Nikolaj (Velimirović)

probabilities, but by authority of an eyewitness who descended from that great heavenly world in order to draw us to it. He called that world the Kingdom of Heaven. It was the most staggering and gladdening announcement since the creation of the world. It wiped away the tears of mothers for their dead children, and the tears of children for their deceased parents. “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad,” He said to the mournful world. “Open your spiritual eyes and behold a glorious Kingdom beyond, in which the King is your real Father. And if you cannot easily open your inner sight, look through Me; I am your telescope. Believe me and follow me. Rejoice, and again I say, Rejoice!”

An English lady happened to be present at a Serbian funeral service and heard Orthodox priests chanting repeatedly: “Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.” She was shaken and asked, “Is it proper to sing a song of joy over a dead person?” “For us, death is not evil,” I answered, “sin alone is evil.”

Many times I asked holy monks on Mount Athos—Greeks, Serbs, Russians, Romanians: “What is the best means to keep a person from sinning?” Their usual answer was: “The constant vision of the heavenly world.” A Greek elder on Karoulia said, “You must exercise in spiritual vision every day until the other world is clearly opened to you.”

It is no wonder that many Protestants call our Orthodox Church transcendent. Through all centuries

and generations we have been taught to strive toward the realization and visualization of the other world.

In many of our church hymns, saints and martyrs are glorified because they “gave up the cheap for the precious,” or “the mortal for the immortal,” or “the transitory for the eternal.” Their motive for such a choice was the spiritual vision of the Kingdom of Heaven as our true fatherland, as the real goal of our travelling and toiling in this physical world of mere symbols and shadows.

Moral Discipline

Now, since we acquire that spiritual vision of the Kingdom of Heaven by hard spiritual training and exercises, the question arises: How can we make ourselves worthy of that Kingdom? For the end of our physical life is very near and we have to decide quickly, lest it be too late. The answer is: by moral discipline.

What is moral discipline? It is the “narrow path” that leads to eternal life and bliss. It is clearly described and prescribed in the Gospel, and more particularly in the apostolic epistles, and it is exemplified in the lives of holy men and women, some of whom are mentioned in our calendar, and myriads upon myriads of whom are written in Heaven’s Book of Life.

Moral discipline is the way to perfection. And nothing less than perfection is our ideal, according to Christ’s exhortation: *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect* (Matt. 5:48). To accomplish this tremendous task, our holy ancestors who loved the living Christ courageously climbed up the ladder of perfection, step by step. The steps were: incessant prayer, meditation, obedience, humility, meekness, self-restraint, weeping, watchfulness, forgiveness, repentance, sacrificing everything—even their own body. They trained themselves to abstain not only from every evil deed and word, but from every

negative thought. They lived in this world as if they were not of this world. They used things of this world as if they were not using them. They considered themselves to be not citizens of this world but merely visitors.

They vigilantly controlled the inner circle of their souls...observ[ing] every movement of their mind and heart. Thereby they became the greatest psychologists in the world. If you want to know the human soul, read the records of the great spiritual fathers such as Saints Macarius of Egypt, John Chrysostom, Isaac of Syria, and other ascetic fathers. And you will see how impoverished our modern psychology is by comparison. Externally they lived as the most destitute, yet in terms of spiritual wealth, in truth and virtue, they were the richest people. The whole world was not worthy of them. Truly are they called “barefoot aristocrats”.

Today we are remembering these spiritual aristocrats, who by superhuman efforts and God’s grace reached perfection. And we are offering our thanks to Christ for presenting us with this brilliant gallery of beautiful and perfect souls in order that we and our children might emulate them. Therefore, we call this day our Orthodox Thanksgiving Day.

Competition in Doing Good

I come finally to the third point, the third jewel that adorned those of our ancestors whom we are celebrating today. That is the new competition or the competition in doing good. Whereas spiritual vision and moral disciplined have individual bearing, the competition in doing good concerns society. It is the highest social virtue.

Alas, the last of these old Orthodox generations is rapidly passing away. Their sons and grandsons, and their daughters and granddaughters are now coming to the field. And this new generation is American born. They speak good English but little or no Greek, Serbian, Russian, Romanian, Syrian or Albanian. And no wonder: They attend American schools, many of them served in the US military, they have grown in conformity with the American standard of living, their hearts are not divided between two countries. They are naturally Americans, and they intend to remain American. Accordingly, they have some demands respecting the Church of their fathers.



Nikolaj, Bishop of Žiča in the old church in Lackawanna, 1952

Christ proclaims this virtue throughout His Gospel. In essence this teaching is: Give more than you are expected to give, and do more than you are expected to do. The world has been revolutionized by this marvelous doctrine. But the Author of this doctrine was crucified because the world was intoxicated by the old competition in doing evil. When a man was striving by every possible means to get rich, his neighbor tried to get richer. If a Roman patrician had a thousand slaves, another patrician tried to have two thousand. If a



St. George the Great Martyr Church in Duluth, Minnesota

pharaoh became famous by some conquest, his successor desired greater fame by greater conquests. While Emperor Caligula was very cruel, Nero tried to be yet more cruel.

The new competition in doing good was as different from the old as traveling in darkness is from traveling in sunshine. Our holy ancestors understood the doctrine of the new competition as the highest social virtue, and they trained themselves in that virtue most strenuously all their life long.

Imagine how marvelously changed this awful world would be if you and I entered this competition of doing good. For instance, if every day we eagerly tried to be more pious than some other pious people, more forbearing, more merciful, more peaceful, more sympathetic, more constructive, more forgiving, more loving than others. And all this not for pride's sake but for Christ's sake. Verily it would solve all the crucial social, political, and economic problems in every Christian country, and it would mightily help Christian missions among non-Christian peoples and nations.

We are glorifying the Lord God because our Orthodox forefathers pointed out and exercised this social ideal of a new competition in doing good and because they showed us a glorious personal example to follow. Therefore, in all Orthodox countries and in the diaspora, this day is considered our common Thanksgiving Day.

Orthodoxy in America

Let us now turn our gaze from the East to the far West, i.e., to America.

About 150 years ago Orthodox people of every nationality began to come to this New World, first daring individuals, then small groups, until in our days they have reached, by immigration and by birth, a number equal at least to the number of Episcopalians in the United States.

The first settlers were very simple people, hard workers, farmers. They were just the kind of people who were authentic bearers of that threefold Christian ideal, i.e., of spiritual vision, of moral discipline and of competition in doing good. This was the backbone of their souls, inherited from their fathers in the old countries. They lived up to it as much as they could in this country under changed circumstances. And that was, and still is, their greatest contribution to building American civilization, along with their other contributions of sweat and blood—of sweat in mines and factories, and of blood on America's battlefields.

They never got rich in this rich country, for they had to divide their modest earnings into three parts: one part for their subsistence and the education of their children, a second part they sent to their families in the old country, and the third they gave to church, school, insurance, and charities.



Varnava, Bishop of Hvosno

For the dignity of man—in other words, the superior value of man—has real and eternal meaning only if you know and acknowledge the Kingdom of Heaven as the true fatherland of all men, from which we originated and to which we are returning as children of one common Father, Who is in heaven. And freedom is most useful, joyful, and sacred if you exercise moral discipline over yourself and practice competition in doing good. These are the fundamentals upon which you can build your individual and communal happiness. And you have received these fundamentals as a glorious heritage, never to part with. By practicing this spiritual heritage in your daily life, you will become an adornment to America. And through you all Americans will come to know and appreciate our ancient Church of the East and her spiritual heroes, whom we are praising today.

They built churches and called priests from the old country.... They preserved their religious traditions. They cultivated the ancient virtues. They delighted in their national music and songs, in their national costumes and dramatic performances. Personally, I have a deep admiration for these old Orthodox generations in America, both for those who passed away in the Faith, and for those who are still living by their faith. They have been a spiritual and constructive component of the New World's humanity. I dare say that in their own way they have been heroic generations no less than other national groups, now blended into one great American nation. In their modesty these humble people never expected a poet to laud them or a historian to describe them.

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They want English to replace national languages in church services. They desire to hear sermons in English. This is a legitimate desire. Our wise priests of every national Orthodox Church in this country are already preaching in both English and in their respective national tongue. They are in a difficult position at present, for they have on one hand to be considerate of the elderly (elderly generations of Moms and Pops) who do not understand English well, and on the other hand they are willing to respond to the desire and need of the younger generations. In this matter I think evolution is better than revolution, for the Church is the mother of both the old and the young.

The time may not be far off when there will be a united Orthodox Church in America, which will include all the present Eastern national Churches in this country, a Church with one central administrative authority. I see a tendency toward such an end in each of our now individual Churches. ... And when by God's Providence the time is ripe for the accomplishment of such a unity, I dare not doubt that the venerable heads of all our Orthodox Churches in Europe, Asia, and Africa, always led by the Holy Spirit, will give their blessing for the organization of a new and autonomous sister Church in America.

And now let me make an appeal to all our American Orthodox youth.

America is your cradle and your earthly motherland. It is a wonderful God's country, and you are expected to be wonderful God's people in this country. Remember that our greatest contribution to America is of a spiritual and moral nature. And that is precisely what America needs today. That is what every Christian country today needs most of all—in boundless measure. For all nations, especially the Christians nowadays traveling as if in a wilderness of confusion created by senseless materialism and its blind daughter atheism. I offer this to what leading American men and women are saying: "The only hope for us and for the world is to return to religion." Again I say: "Our hope is in the Church." You ought to listen to these words, too, and to ponder them. We live in very tragic times, which are made more tragic by easy-going and self-indulgent people who have never read the story of Sodom, of Laish, or of Capernaum.

If I am correct in my observations, the greatest struggle of America these days is the struggle for the priority and superiority of spiritual and moral values over techniques and technological lordship: in other words, for predominance of the spiritual over the material, of goodness over cleverness. The Serbs often say of a clever man: "He is clever as the devil." They never say: "He is good as the devil."

America is constantly sounding the sympathetic watchwords: "dignity of man" and "liberty of men and nations." But the deepest meaning of these watchwords can be found in the sacred teaching of Him without Whom we can do nothing. That meaning is found most explicitly in the threefold program of our Orthodox Church: spiritual vision, moral discipline, and competition in doing good.

For the dignity of man—in other words, the superior value of man—has real and eternal meaning only if you know and acknowledge the Kingdom of Heaven as the true fatherland of all men, from which we originated and to which we are returning as children of one common Father, Who is in heaven. And freedom is most useful, joyful, and sacred if you exercise moral discipline over yourself and practice competition in doing good.

These are the fundamentals upon which you can build your individual and communal happiness. And you have received these fundamentals as a glorious heritage, never to part with. By practicing this spiritual heritage in your daily life, you will become an adornment to America. And through you all Americans will come to know and appreciate our ancient Church of the East and her spiritual heroes, whom we are praising today.



First Festival of the Serbian Singing Federation in Akron, Ohio 1936

ЦРКВЕНО ЗВОНО

БРОЈ 1.

ГЕРИ, ИНДИАНА, АПРИЛ, 1921.

ГОДИНА 1.

THE CHURCH BELL

Published by the Serbian Orthodox Churches and Parishes in U. S. of America

Number 1.

Gary, Ind., April, 1921.

Year I.

Поједини број 10 центи.

Single copy 10 cents.

УСКРШЊИ



ПОЗДРАВ

ПРАВОСЛАВНОГ ЕПИСКОПА ОХРИДСКОГ

НИКОЛАЈА

СРПСКОМ ПРАВОСЛАВНОМ СВЕШТЕНСТВУ И НАРОДУ
У АМЕРИЦИ.

ХРИСТОС ВОСКРЕСЕ,

драга моја браћо. Поздрављам вас овим поздравом, којим се цео православни свет од сто и педесет милиона живих душа, од Мисира до Петрограда и од Јадрана до Владивостока, радосно поздравља на дан Светога Васкресења Христова.

Још као деца у земљи где сте рођени и где вас је сунце Божје први пут огрејало, ви сте слушали овај поздрав где се хори по равницама и планинама наше земље:

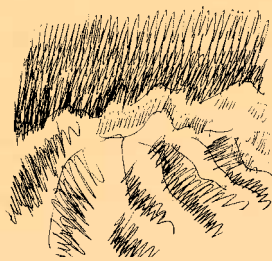
ХРИСТОС ВОСКРЕСЕ, браћо!

и

ВАИСТИНУ ВОСКРЕСЕ!

И још од времена првих српских хришћанских кнежева Часлава и Мутимира и светога краља Владимира и од ире великога цара и светитеља Немање и Светога Саве, па за пет стотина година, до Светога Цара Лазара и Косова, овај се поздрав пролама кроз слободну земљу из грла слободног и културног народа. Па је тај поздрав био замукао за других пет стотина година, у време робовања под Турцима и страшног народног страдања и борбе "за крст часни и слободу златну". У време ових других пет стотина година радосни

First Festival of the Serbian Singing Federation in Akron, Ohio 1936



In Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of St. Innocent of Alaska

By Fr. Sebastian Dabovich

An address delivered on August 27, 1897, in the presence of the Right Reverend Bishop Nicholas, Bishop of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, together with the members and friends of the Orthodox Church and Parish School of St. Sergius, at the Episcopal Residence in San Francisco.

AS I stand here in the midst of this gathering, I picture in my mind another company, greater than this, filling the spacious halls of a more magnificent structure in the capital city of the Russian Empire—Matushka Moskva (dear mother Moscow). My imagination reaches still farther out, and I behold another throng of busy citizens together with young Seminarians and prayer fully inclined Christians, away off in Siberia, in the city of Irkoutsk. Methinks I hear them speak the very name of him whom they have come to honor, *Innocentius*. My whole being thrills with a veneration at the sound of that name. My heart is filled with gladness when I think of the pure joy and reasonable pride of the country folk in rural Anginskoe of the Province of Irkoutsk—the native home of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Innocent.

Yet all these multitudes and territorial distance are but a part of the whole, celebrating a great event. Look you, the tribes of Kamchatka with the Yakout race sing of him, while the Aleut and the Alaskan Indians gratefully commemorate their teacher on this day—the one hundredth anniversary of his birth. While the great Orthodox Missionary Society in Russia, which to-day upholds our prosperous Church in Japan and in other parts of the world, is paying honor to the sacred memory of its founder, we too bless this one hundredth birthday of our first Bishop in America—the same Innocentius, Metropolitan of Moscow.

This great Missionary, who passed away from this visible world eighteen years ago, and rests with his remains in the holy Troitse Sergiev Monastery, still dwells in the loving hearts of the different peoples of his spiritual charge. I understand and feel the special privilege which I enjoy to-night, and for which I most heartily thank thee, Gracious Bishop and Most Reverend Father in God. Deeply feeling the love of our Archpastors, I become bold and venture to look into the unseen, where I behold the spiritual eyes of our first hard-working Missionary, with kindly light beaming upon this gathering and approving of the feeble words of your son (to the Bishop), and your brother (to the Clergy), and your pastor (to the Congregation)—one of the first born of the young American Orthodox Church!



Fr Sebastian

John Veniaminov, indeed, was a great man. As one of the first priests in Alaska, he labored for fifteen long years in several parts of that vast region, making his home, principally, first in Ounalashka and then in Sitka. In those pioneer days of Alaska an Aleutian baidarka or small canoe made of the skin of a walrus was the only means he had for his constant locomotion, and not seldom for his voyages of a longer course. It often happened that, in a mean, wet climate, his only comfort for whole months would be found in an earthen dug-out. I will not detain you by repeating; you will soon hear, and also read for yourselves, of his life, and then you will know how in the Providence of God the Reverend Father John became to be known by the name of Innocent, and how he returned to Alaska—as the first bishop there, and likewise our first bishop in America! Brief accounts of his life are now printed in English, as well as in Russian and other languages, and may be had for nothing, comparatively.

There are several people in this city who have personally seen him, and remember well the wholesome instructions of their gentle pastor—Bishop Innocent, later the Metropolitan of Moscow. Besides the elder

brethren and the elder sisters among you, some of the people mentioned are also fathers in their community. Our present Bishop and beloved Father in God was at one time under the spiritual rule of the Most Reverend Innocentius, and that was during his student life in the Academy of Moscow, when Innocent was the Bishop of the Church of God in that Province.

I have strong reasons for maintaining my assertion that this Missionary Priest, John Veniaminov, also landed on our shores here, and—how I love to dwell on the thought!—he bestowed God’s blessing upon our beautiful California. It was in the fall of 1838 that this God-fearing worker left Sitkha in a sailing vessel—to voyage down the whole length of the great Pacific, and make his way around Cape Horn to Europe and St. Petersburg. At that time the government of Alaska, following the wise counsel of Baranov (another great man), obtained and held land in California, where it had a flourishing colony in the part now known as Sonoma county. Baranov was well aware of the worth of Alaska, but he needed California as a storehouse of grain for the Great North with its many resources and grand coast. The globe-circumnavigating vessels, coming from the north, certainly must have anchored in California waters, in order to take on supplies and make a final preparation before setting sail to round the Cape for Europe. And so it is possible that our dear Missionary may have even offered the Divine Liturgy in the chapel at Fort Ross, and also baptized the Indians in Russian River. I do not attempt to speculate on the idea that our apostle trod the sands where now our splendid city of San Francisco is built. For memory’s sake I simply ask: Is there not a history attached to Russian Hill in San Francisco?

A most remarkable man was this Russian priest from Siberia. He was a mechanic, navigator, school-teacher, administrator, and a preacher of the Gospel. A poor orphaned boy, too young to earn his own bread, must depend upon the charity of poor relatives and even strangers for his very existence. From a little town in the heart of Siberia he finds his way into the city of Irkoutsk, where he becomes a pastor, beloved by his devoted people. Then he goes, as he thought, to give up himself with his entire strength and knowledge to the simple Aleuts, *who sat in darkness* in the distant islands of the ocean. It was he, as he afterwards sat in the councils of the Most Holy Governing Synod of our Church, who moved the proposition that the Orthodox Bishop in America should transfer his residence from Sitkha to San Francisco.

God selected the priest, John Veniaminov, to bear the light of Orthodox Christianity from *the East to the West*, from Asia to America! And nobly did the Great Russian Church prove herself worthy of the apostolic power of *rightly dividing the Word of Truth* by carrying out the work in all its detail. She faithfully keeps the apostles’ will as expressed in these words: *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor; especially they who labor in the word and teaching*; she elevates her Missionary to a high post. In his new office as an archpastor, the M. Rev. Innocent created two more dioceses in Eastern Siberia, besides the church of Alaska. He was ever sailing over the ocean, or driving in reindeer and dog sledges over a country thousands of miles in extent, everywhere baptizing the natives, for whom he has introduced the use of letters, and translated the Gospel into their native tongues.

It has been, and still is, the habit of some who are unfriendly to the Orthodox Church to speak of her as a dead church. Such a daring charge could be uttered for three reasons, and they are these: Such persons are either determined upon a certain course of public policy, with no respect for the truth, or they are not inclined to think well of Eastern Christians, whom it would be inconvenient to recognize as brethren while enjoying personal comfort through social connections; but if it be not that, it is then because of a light head and total ignorance of the facts in universal history. In modern times the Russian Church has proved, in more instances than one, that she is alive with the missionary spirit. May we condemn the Slavonic Orthodox Church in the Balkan States, and in Austria, simply because she is struggling for her existence in spite of the aggressive intrusion on her own ground of the brethren of the Society of Jesus? Nor is the influx of American Sectarian preachers in Arabia and in Palestine, a reason which could justify any one in saying that

the Church of Christ in those parts is dead! In these days we know something of what enslavement to the Turk involves. And what, in common justice, to say nothing of Christian charity, have we a right to expect from those groaning under such bondage? Have we the conscience to ask that they should make converts, when now for five hundred years they have been struggling, as in a bloody sweat, to keep Christianity alive under Moslem tyranny? And, in that time, how many martyrs of every age and condition have shed a halo around the Oriental Church? Not less than a hundred martyrs of these later days are commemorated in the services of the Church, and countless are the unnamed ones, who have suffered for the faith, in these five hundred years of slavery. In 1821, Gregory, Patriarch of Constantinople, was hung at the door of his cathedral, on Easter Day. Many other prelates and prominent ecclesiastics were put to death in Adrianople, Cyprus, the Ionian Islands, in Anatolia and Mount Athos. And yet, none apostatized from the faith of Christ. Are not such martyrdoms the best way of making converts? It was thus that, in the first three (and more) centuries of our era, the Church was founded in those lands by the apostles and their immediate successors. How can it be said that, among people who could so die for the faith, there was no real spiritual life? Has not the Greek Church shown by her deeds the steadfastness of her faith?

But it is not our purpose to lecture on history. Nor is it that out of mere curiosity we are here. Let us now look to the duty we have before us this hour. We are gathered here to show our gratitude to our benefactor, and also in a becoming way to honor the memory of our dear Archpastor, Metropolitan Innocentius. *Remembering him who has had the rule over us and our fathers—the Christians of this Diocese; remembering him who had spoken unto us the Word of God, let us now, according to the Divine commandment, consider his end, so that we may be able the better to follow the example of strong faith, which he gave us throughout his whole life. Although he was much weakened in his last days by old age and sickness, yet the venerable prelate retained his mind clear up to the last, and truly his course on earth was appropriately crowned with a bright Christian end. Tell them, he said, as he was about to sleep, that no eulogies be pronounced at my funeral, they only contain praise. Let them rather preach a sermon, it may be instructive; and here is the text for it: The ways of man are ordered by the Lord.*





Савремени еклисиолошки подсетник о Дијаспори¹⁾

Поводом тзв. „Америчког раскола“

Дијаспора је поодавно један од најсложенијих проблема читавог Православља, и зато је с разлогом стављена на дневни ред будућег Васељенског Сабора Православне Цркве. Да одмах буде јасно: Дијаспора, као и код Јевреја у Светом Писму, није по себи неко зло. Она је била неизбежност и изазов за Израил Божији, *сџари* и *нови*, тј. за Цркву. Ако ништа друго, Дијаспора све нас, као заједницу Народа Божијег у историји, подсећа на *йуџнички* и *крсни* статус Цркве у овом свету и веку: „у свету смо, али нисмо од овога света“, у Дому смо Божијем, али је *Домосџрој* (*Икономија*) још у току; Царство Божије је већ присутно, али смо још на *йуџу* ка Царству, ка Небеској Отаџбини.

Дијаспора је пред Православну Цркву поставила два битна проблема: питање провере исправности нашег *схваџања Цркве*, оног које се у последњим вековима код многих од нас усталило, и питање *мисије Цркве у свџу*. Најпре, Дијаспора нас је подсетила, и на свој начин присилила, да не заборавимо битну *мисију* Православља у савременом свету, а то је могуће само уз излажење из наших уских националних оквира у којима нам прети опасност изолације. Дијаспора је била и још увек остаје *мисионарско џодручје Православља*. Посебно је Америка (САД) још увек мисионарски простор. Српски црквени живот у САД једва да има 100 година од свог настанка. Ово самим тим значи да на америчку црквену стварност и остала подручја Дијаспоре треба гледати још увек као на *мисионарске џросџоре* Цркве и тако с њима *економисаџи* (=примењивати црквену икономију).

Друго, Дијаспора је пред све Аутокефалне Православне Цркве ставила један битан проблем православне *Еклисиологије* (=богословља о Цркви=*Црквословља*), на који смо, изгледа, под утицајем новије светске и националне *џолиџичке* историје, почели заборављати. Наиме, основни принцип организације древне Цркве Истока – а на Истоку је Црква и рођена и са Истока се Јеванђеље раширило по свету, како је подсећао још Свети Василије и Оци II Васељенског Сабора – био одувек *џеоџрафски*; не национални и државни, него просторни, *џомесни*. Када ми, пак, у последњих пар векова, чујемо реч „*Помесна Црква*“, ми обично под тим мислимо „*национална Црква*“ (или чак, како злобно кажу извесни римокатолички теолози: „*државна Црква*“). У древној, пак, Цркви то је значило, и само то: *Црква доџичној месџа* – града, области, земље, без обзира на нацију, расу или боју верних који у том месту живе.

Овакво схватање имало је две важне последице. Најпре је из тога произашао један од темељних и неизменљивих Канона древне Цркве, кога је формулисао I Васељенски Сабор у 8. Правилу: „*У једном џраду не моџу биџи два Еџискоја*“, него *само један* (видети и 35. Апостолско и 16. Прводругог Сабора). Тај *један* Епископ у *једном* граду (обично и са околином, али је околина могла имати и своје самосталне Епископе – *Хоро-еџискоје*) био је Епископ *свих верника* тога града, без обзира на етнички и други састав (отуда се Епископ првобитно звао не по граду, него по грађанима: „Епископ *Анџиохијаца*“ итд., па је то касније постепено прешло у „Епископ *Анџиохије*“ или „*Анџиохијски*“).

¹⁾ Из необјављеног, само за Синодске Оце Архијереје намењеног, а за превазилажење тзв. „Америчког раскола“ написаног, текста Архимандрита Атанасија Јевтића: „*Исџорија и анализа Америчкој раскола и џредлози за њеџово џревазилажење*“, завршеног фебруара 1990. године. Изводи су бирани из првог дела текста по основном критеријуму ове књиге, и изостављени неки други моменти. Данас, када је српски Амерички раскол Литургијски превазиђен, овај текст може бити објављен. – Прим. изд.



St. Demetrius church in Akron, Ohio

лошко (=догматско) правило древне Католичанске (=Саборне) Православне Цркве: да локалне Цркве нису стриктно омеђене „самосталним“ или „аутокефалним“ Црквама, чије би оне биле само „јединице“ (тј. делови зависни и потчињени), него је свака Епархија (=Епископална Црква) сматрана *јуном Црквом Божијом* (и свака такође називана *Католичанском* – в. Св. *Иџаије* и *Мартиријум* Св. Поликарпа), али то истовремено није значило да је она изолована, „самостална“ или „осамастаљена“, „аутокефална“, него је била у непрекидној вези, у *узајамнозависној* литургијској заједници, у *евхаристијском ојшћењу* са другим Црквама. Свака Епископска Црква је тако била истовремено и *неојшћена* другој и опет *зависна* од свих осталих истих таквих Епископоцентричних Православних Цркава.

Организационе целине, као што су системи: Митрополитски, Патријарашки, Аутокефални, никада нису могли ићи на штету и окрњење целовитости и пуноће (*католичанскости*) сваке Епископске, Помесне али *Католичанске* Цркве, која је зато била увек *само једна* у једном месту и простору. Прожимање пак двеју или више Епископских Цркава у истом граду или истој области био би еклисиолошки нон-сенс, јер би то било порицање да је Црква Божија *Једна* и јединствена.

Јединство свих Епископоцентричних Цркава било је јединство у Једноме Христу, Једноме Духу, једној вери и благодати, једном непрекинутом *евхаристијском литургијском ојшћењу*, које је у себе укључивало сва остала јединства, очувавајући целовитост и пуноћу сваке Епископске Цркве у сваком месту. Ето зашто је *Епископоцентрична структура* у Православној Цркви била и остала неповредива и непроменљива кроз све епохе историје Цркве, а сви организацијски *системи* у које су се повезивале Епископске Цркве (Митрополитски, Патријарашки, Аутокефални) били су променљиве трајности и састава. Епископоцентрична структура Православне Цркве је Евхаристијска, догматска и непроменљива, а остале организационе структуре су историјски настале и променљиве су.

Када је касније, на IV Васељенском Сабору (Канон 17) усвојено Правило: „да политичким (=државним) и јавним облицима организације следи и поредак Црквених *јарикаја*“ (тј. организовање нових *Епископија*), то је опет значило само *локалну, помесну* организацију Цркава, углавном коинцидентну административној подели грађанско-државних територија (нарочито при настанку нових

Из овога проистиче и друго темељно правило древне Цркве: да Епископа бирају и хиротонису сви Епископи дотичне околине, покрајине, а када се постепено развио Митрополитски, и у наставку Патријарашки систем организације Цркве, онда је то бивало и уз сагласност Митрополита (Патријарха) те области (Канон 4. I Васељенског Сабора). Права Патријарха и Патријаршија одавде су произашла, али никад нису укинула свагдашњу темељну важност горњег правила (отуда при распаду Патријаршија, као нпр. наше Пећке у 18. веку, одмах ступа на снагу локална, помесна организација суседних Епископа).

Из свега овога истовремено произилази и основно еклисио-

градова, формирању нових државно-управних јединица или пак и нових држава). То опет није био национални, него *територијални* принцип организовања црквене администрације (управе), па се тако дошло и до тзв. „националних“ Цркава, тј. Црква организоване у веће управне целине на територији *националних држава*. Ово опет није безусловно значило да су у ту Цркву улазили само верни једне (највеће) нације, него сви православни хришћани те државне територије. (Када је Српска Православна Црква после I Светског рата допустила Руској емиграцији да има своју самосталну црквену организацију на терену Српске Патријаршије, то је било само привремено, икономичко решење, а оно је имало свој преседан у 7. веку: кад је Кипарски Епископат, због најезде Варвара, пребегло са народом у пределе Мале Азије, на терен Цариградске Патријаршије, па је то било дозвољено 39. Трулским Каноном, само док се Кипар не ослободи).

Овај принцип *коинциденције* (географског поклапања) државно-политичке и црквене административне организације (који и није увек важио, нпр. за Пећску Патријаршију под Макаријем Соколовићем и Арсенијем Чарнојевићем) у задња два-три века, на жалост, претворен је најчешће у принцип строго „националне“ организације Цркве, што су олако прихватиле скоро све новије Аутокефалне Цркве, а Цариградска и остале старе Патријаршије *нису никада* (мада се Цариградска у 20. веку колебала, па је сматрала да сви Грци у Дијаспори припадају њој, али и не само Грци!, док је Александријска остала једна за целу Африку, толеришући привремено појаву руских, српских и др. парохија, али не и присуство других Епископа осим својих; а Антиохијска се такође почела колебати између географског и националног принципа, док је Јерусалимска остала чисто територијална).

Дијаспора, и посебно Америка, је све Православне Цркве привремено избацила из тог древног поретка-предања никад не прекинутог и не порекнутог, јер неотуђиво је и непроменљиво *јавило* црквене организације по *географском* принципу – и све Православне Цркве су, по Црквеној *економији*, прећутно прихватиле то стање измешаности више црквених јурисдикција на истом терену и чак више Епископа у истом граду (тако у САД имамо близу 20 православних јурисдикција, а само у Њујорку око 10 православних Епископа, који се најчешће хиротонишу изван територије Њујорка, обично преко океана!). Овај, у правом смислу, канонски *хаос* у Дијаспори прихваћен је од Православних Цркава само *привремено*, због *мисионарског карактера* тих подручја, и тај свеpravославни *консензус* треба поштовати.

Не треба, међутим, то стање овековечивати и сматрати за нормално да свака Православна Црква, као аутокефална (а та „аутокефалност“ јој је дошла по „националном“ принципу), има законите претензије на „васељенску јурисдикцију“ над својим верницима по свету на основу њихове „националне припадности“. Оваква каква је, православна Дијаспора је прихваћена *привремено* као мисионарско подручје и у мисионарске сврхе, и зато све Православне Цркве на њу примењују широку црквену *економију*, али су све Цркве свесне да то стање није нормално и не сме остати вечито. Наравно, није појава „националних Цркава“ била по себи неко зло, али кад оне остају у оквирима поклапања државно-националне и црквене организационе управе (администрације), тј. кад се не поклапају границе Цркве и државе, али никада оваква аутокефална организација не сме да потисне и замени собом првобитну Еклисиологију о Епископоцентричним Помесним Црквама. Другим речима, постојеће аутокефалне Цркве не смеју заступати неку „националну Еклисиологију“, какве у Православљу нема, нити може бити, као што нема ни „националне вере“, нити „националне Цркве“, јер би се тада Црква одрекла своје универзалне мисије и свог идентитета: да је свака локална Епископална Црква „Једна, Света, Саборна (Католичанска) и Апостолска“ и да са свима Епископалним Православним Црквама у свету опет чини „Једну, Свету, Саборну и Апостолску Цркву“ Христову.

У Дијаспори, какво је сада стање, прети опасност да се древна *Евхаристијско-Епископална* Еклисиологија замени неком новијом („национал-аутокефалном“) и зато сви истински и трезвени православни Епископи-теолози говоре о потреби да се вратимо на *свештопредањску* Еклисиологију, па је зато и стављена Дијаспора као тема на дневни ред будућег Васељенског Сабора Православља, на којем ће, уверени смо, доћи до организовања Православне Цркве у Дијаспори по *помесном* прин-

ципу: „један Епископ у једном граду“ (а ако је град велики, онда се дели на центар и више периферија, као нпр. данас Атина, али само један Епископ може имати звање *Атинској* или *Њујоршкој*, а те Епископије градских предграђа или периферија се не смеју прожимати).²⁾

Све што смо до сада рекли има везе са Српском Дијаспором. Пре свега, то нам указује на сасвим нормалну примену широке *црквене икономије* и на њу с циљем превазилажења нашег раскола.

Српска Православна Епархија у САД и Канади постоји од 1921. године (дотле је била под јурисдикцијом Руске Цркве, најстарије на тлу Америке). Први Епископ, администратор, био је Епископ Николај Охридски, који је и предложио изабраног 1925.г. првог Епископа Америчко-канадске Епархије, Мардарија Ускоковића, човека који је много радио и урадио, али и многе горчине поднео од тамошње српске црквене Дијаспоре. То је ваљда неизбежна судбина свих мисионара и апостолских радника. Године 1927. одржан је I Црквено-народни Сабор и донет нацрт *Устава* Америчко-канадске Епархије. Свети Архијерејски Сабор у Београду је 1928.г. одобрио „административну организацију“ Америчко-Канадске Епархије (АКЕ) и коначно је 24/11. маја 1939. одобрио *Устав* ове Епархије – једини посебни Устав једне Епархије у Српској Православној Цркви, чиме је већ наглашена посебна ситуација наше Дијаспоре.

Са православног еклисиолошког гледишта одмах се може констатовати да овај *Устав* АКЕ, макар и признат од Архијерејског Сабора, већ је садржавао извесне еклисиолошке проблеме, који у Дијаспори ни до данас нису успешно решени. Да се усудимо да приметимо, са истог гореизложеног основа православне Еклисиологије и канонског Предања, да ни Устав СПЦ, донет 1931. и ревидиран 1947.г. и до данас дорађиван, као и слични Устави осталих Православних Цркава данас, никако не могу собом да замене или потисну еклисиолошку и канонску традицију Православља, јер чак ни сами *Св. Канони* не исцрпљују пуно канонско-еклисиолошко Предање Цркве. Једноставно зато што су сви ти *Устави*, текстови пре свега административно-правни, световно-јуридички, а живо биће Цркве, као Богочовечански организам, не може се ни сместити ни ограничити *јравним* системом (свеједно колико усавршавањем), јер Црква није ентитет правног поретка, него благодатног. Ово још не значи да *јравно*, тачније *канонско*, нема места у Цркви и црквеном поретку и управи, него само значи да никада Црква и Црквени живот и њено руковођење људи ка спасењу не може се свести само на *јравни* ниво и на *јуридички* менталитет. Зато су *Св. Канони* тако широки, чак „непрецизни“, јер су снисходљиво-икономични, и увек су у поседу слободног располагања пастирско-социолошке самосвести Цркве Бога Спаситеља, а никад изнад Цркве и њене благодатно-спасоносне мисије.

У српском расколу у САД, нарочито око суђења Епископу Дионисију, на површину ће избити скоро неизбежни сукоб између *Св. Канона* и *Устава* (и Устава Америчко-канадске Епархије и Устава СПЦ), јер су по среди две различите ствари: *канонско-еклисиолошки*, и *јуридичко-законски* приступ животу Цркве и економисању спасења њених чланова. Тај сукоб у модерном законодавству – и световном и тзв. „позитивно-црквеном“ – углавном увек испада на штету *Св. канона*, док је Византија и Средњевековна Србија то избегавала јасним уздизањем канона *изнад* позитивног законодавства

²⁾ Једна Аутокефална Православна Црква за целу Америку, тј. САД, јесте неминовност будућности, ако желимо да Православље тамо остане и да се православни верни тамо „хране са њиве, а не из саксија“, како је говорио Свети Владика Николај. Ово опет не значи да је оправдано једнострано оформљење руске Митрополије у „Православну Цркву Америке“, без свеправославне сагласности и заједништва свих Православних Цркава у САД (чак ни Московска Патријаршија није успоставила права те Цркве, којој је једносмерно дала „аутокефалију“, а задржала је тамо неке парохије и има свог Епископа у САД). Видовити ВЛАДИКА НИКОЛАЈ је негде пред смрт (†марта 1956) предвиђао и писао и говорио: „Можда није далеко време када ће у Америци бити створена једна Православна Црква Америке, у којој ће се ујединити сви православни народи Америке. То ће бити јединствена Православна Црква са једним центром и седиштем црквене власти у Америци. Примећујем и сада код појединих православних народа, овде, такву тежњу и такво расположење... Када, Божјим Промислом, дође и сазри време за остварење јединства, биће то радост многих. Не сумњам да ће великодостојници и поглавари наших Цркава, Европе, Азије и Африке, руковођени мудрошћу Светога Духа, показати љубав и разумевање, дајући сагласност и благослов за успостављање једне нове сестринске Цркве у Америци“. Што се тиче Срба, додаје Епископ Николај, „ми Срби желимо да то (стварање једне аутокефалне Цркве у САД) гурнемо што даље у будућност... Али СПЦ треба да је далековидна, и да мисли о будућности свога народа у овој земљи. Зато јој је потребно више Епископа (у САД) са интензивним мисионарским и пастирским радом“ (Николајево писмо Епископу Дионисију од 27. 8. 1951, као и писма другим лицима тог времена, затим његов говор на VII Црквено-народном Сабору у Либертивилу 1952, и његов чланак у Сабрана Дела, књ. XIII, стр. 578, Химелстир 1986).



Dr Gavriilo, Serbian Patriarch



Dr Damaskin, American-Canadian Bishop

(сходно 13. Новели Јустинијановој и Номоканону Св. Фотија, што је затим прешло и у *Крмчију* Светога Саве).

Овај свој *Устави* Америчко-канадска Епархија је, пре и после расцепа, стално хтела да ревидира, а то је и учинила 1978. и 1981.г., док су четири новонастале Епархије Српске Патријаршије у Дијаспори свој *Устави* ревидирале 1980-81.г. (потврђен од АС 20.5.1982). Међутим, проблеми у тим Уставима су у мноме остали нерешени, еклисиолошки непревазиђени. Један од главних проблема је то што су ти Устави ипак остајали пре свега *конзисторијско-йравни* текстови, који се само површински „позивају“ на Каноне, док су Св. Канони савим друге, *црквене*, пастирско-соотириолошке природе и назначења. Свети Канони су управо израз победе благодати над законом, а сви ови Устави су вештачка „замена“ за *канонско* Црквословље.³⁾

Кључни проблем у овим Уставима јесте „место *лаикâ* у Цркви“ (није добро рећи „мирјана“ или „световњака“, јер тај речник је новијег датума и није еклисиолошки оправдан, па зато треба рећи: *верникâ* или *лаикâ*=чланова *Лаоса=Народа* Божијег). Сви Устави у Православној Цркви углавном деле и поларизују две врсте тела – „црквено-јерархијска“ и „црквено-самоуправна“ – те на тај начин

³⁾ Канон 2. VII Васељенског Сабора каже да сваки Епископ треба *добро* и *йажљиво* (=са *исйраживањем*) да познаје Св. Каноне, но исто тако „и Св. Јеванђеље, и Божанску књигу Апостола, и сво Свето Писмо... јер *суиштина наше јерархије јесу боийредане речи*, тј. истинско познавање Божанских Писама“. Исти Сабор у 1. Канону вели да „свештенослужитељима су правила канонских одредаба (буквално: распоређења) – *сведочансйва* и *исйрављења Госйодња*“, тј. сведочанства о спасоносној љубави Божијој према човеку и целебна исправљења (=лекови) „за лечење душа и исцељење страсти“, како вели 2. Правило Трулског Сабора. – Према овим местима, и многим другима код Св. Отаца канонистâ, Свети Канони су, по својој еклисиолошкој садржини и намени, не сувопарне законске „регуле“, мртво слово умртвљујућег „закона“, него благодатна упутства, или „закон Духа живота у Христу“ (Рм.8,2), правила и норме *новоï живоийа* и понашања у Цркви као Телу Христа Спаса (ср. Гал.6,14-16), оног живота који започевши траје Божанским снисхођењем и спасоносним покајањем, тј. применом Богочовечанске *икономије* ради спасења људи. Однос *Канонâ* и *законâ* Свети Јаков описује у 2,13 (речима): „*Милосй* слави победу над *судом*“.

двоје Епископа и „Епархијска тела“, „Црквено(школске) општине“ и „парохије“. Ова подела, која је из Дијаспоре ушла и у СПЦ, понекад поприма трагичне размере, и зато у нашој Цркви већ пар векова имамо познате проблеме „аутономаштва“, „самоуправе“ и слично (Трст, Беч, Карловачка Митрополија, Америка). Канонски и еклисиолошки је та подела на „чланове Црквене општине“ и „парохијане“ бесмислена, као што је и бесмислено и „најмљивање (конкурсом) и отпуштање“ пароха, или такозвани „стални“ и „привремени“ пароси, итд. На тој и таквој основи неизбежни су сукоби Архиепископа и „Епархијских тела“, и Пароха и „самоуправне Црквене општине“. Ова питања нису решена ни у АКЕ, пре и после поделе, ни у новоствореним Епархијама СПЦ у Дијаспори. Натезања и чак разна манипулисања ту су мање-више свуда присутна. Све то, на крају, само негује један нездрав и неправославан дух, који се поларизује између папског „клерикализма“ и протестантског „лаицизма“.

(...)

Треба ипак признати да у самој тој тежњи црквеног народа, па и његових „телâ“, за активним учешћем у животу и раду своје Цркве, очувана је једна изразито православна истина: да је Црква Божија *Црква свеî народа*, свих верујућих у Христа, и да *црквени народ* има темељну, неодоумљиву улогу у бићу и делању своје Цркве. То је у православној црквеној традицији одувек био безусловни услов сваког правог, истински православног и саборног живота и рада, организације и управљања у Цркви.⁴⁾

Према Еклисиологији Апостола Павла и свих Светих Отаца: Црква је *Тело* (живи организам) и зато има свој *йоредак*, али је то првенствено животно-органички, тј. *канонски* поредак, већ према Гал.6,16 и 1Кор.14,40: „све да вам буде *благодобро* и *йо йорейку*“. Из таквог поимања бића, *орјанизма* (=из којег организма даље извире и *орјанизација*) Цркве произилази сав *лиџурџиско-канонски* (коме даље служи сав *црквено-йравни*) *йоредак* Цркве, по којем Цркву сачињавају *Ейиској-клир-народ* (како стално говоримо, и то још разрађеније, у Великој јектенији: „За Преосвећеног Епископа, часно свештенство и ђаконство, за сав клир и народ“), где је очигледно да Епископ није *клирик*, него *йлава* организма Цркве (а познато је да нити има главе без тела ни тела без главе, осим код мртвог исеченог леша).

Ово значи да су сви и све у Цркви међусобно повезани и условљени, зато што је Црква *орјанизам* и што је тај организам *сѣрукѣуриран*, благодатно јерархијски организован. Зато је рекао Св. Кирил Александријски, у свом 1. Канону: „Свака од црквених ствари, када се правилно чини *йо добром канонском йорейку*, не причињава нам никакав неред, и ослобађа нас од било какве погрде, и доноси нам похвале од здравомислећих људи“. А његов велики претходник, Св. Дионисије Велики (Архиепископ Александријски из 3. века) рекао је управо против раздора, сукоба и раскола у Цркви, следеће: „Човек треба радије да претрпи свако друго зло само да не поцепа Цркву Божију; и славније је оно мучеништво које човек претрпи да не би поцепао Цркву, него мучеништво које претрпи да не принесе жртву идолима. Јер оно прво мучеништво веће је од овога: овде се страда за једну (своју) душу, а тамо се страда за корист целе Цркве“ (*Писмо* Св. Дионисија Еп. Новату).

Но раскол у Цркви обично не чини народ, него га најчешће стварају управо свештеници или Епископи. И то не само онда када поведу један део своје пастве у отцепљење од остале Цркве, него и онда када се не понашају *саборно*, када заборављају да и Епископи нису *изнад* Цркве (или *йароси* изнад парохије), или сами *умесѣо* целе Цркве, него увек *унуѣар* Цркве и *са* Црквом, „у љубави са свима светима“, како вели Апостол Павле (Еф.3,18), подразумевајући под „светима“ *све верне*, тј. *целину* Цркве.

⁴⁾ Подсетићемо само на неке моменте овакве Еклисиологије, заступљене нпр. код изразитог Јерарха *канонисѣе* али и *Архийасѣира* Цркве Христа Богочовека, Св. Василија Великог. У *Писму 230*. градоуправитељима (=верницима) града Никопоља, он пише: „*Одлуке и расйоређења о Црквама доносе они којима су Цркве йовере* (=Ейискоји), али *оне дивају йриваѣане* и *йоѣврѣиване од сѣране народа*“ (од *ѣла верујућих*, како су то рекли и Источни Патријарси 1848.г.). Даље Св. Василије као темељ овакве *инѣеракѣје* унутар једног организма Цркве Христове поставља *љубав* и *заједништво свих у Хрѣѣу* (*Писма 227* и *229*) и завршава горњу поуку Никопољским верницима (којима су Епископи били преместили Епископа и послали им другога): „Тако је оно што је зависило од богољубивих Епископа учињено, а преостало се односи на вас, ако усхтеднете с вољом прихватити датог вам Епископа... и пројавити сложну и сагласну љубав према њему... чиме ће се пројавити и ваша искрена љубав према Богу“.



Bishop Damaskin with the clergy in Chicago, 1935

На ову *целовитост* (=каѿоличанскост) Цркве увек су се обазирали, поштовали је и од ње зависили сви Сабори Цркве: Архијерејски, Помесни и Васељенски, који су увек били не *изнад* и не *уместо* Цркве, него увек *унутар* Цркве, увек подлежући познатој свецрквеној *рецејцији* својих саборских одлука, тј. њиховом *усвајању* и *прихватању* од свег живог и одговорног организма Цркве Божије. (Православно богословље о Цркви одавно тврди, нарочито у савременом екуменском дијалогу: да без овог принципа *рецејције*, тј. свецрквеног прихватања и *усвајања*, донетих одлука, скоро је немогуће не избећи папство, макар и као „колективно папство“).

Све ово треба имати у виду када је реч о нашој црквеној Дијаспори, коју чим пре треба реорганизовати на оваквим изворним еклисиолошко-литургијским, древноканонским темељима, где ће бити на снази истовремено и црквени *јерархијски ѿредак*, али и оно што се лоше назива „самоуправа“ народа Божијег, јер нико у Цркви нема *самоураву*, него влада *Христѿуурава*, Светотројична *саборност*, пуно пре свега *лиѿурѿјско* учешће народа Божијег у *заједништву* Духа Светога (2Кор.13,13), и његово право *рецејције*, али и једно и друго увек и само у функцији *лиѿурѿјској јединству* у Христу као Слави Цркви, пастирско-благодатног *заједништву* у Светоме Духу.

Поменути *Устави* који су на снази, само су формално покушали да изразе ту узајамну повезаност и условљеност свих у Цркви, *свеѿа клира* и *народа окуљених око Еѿискоѿа*, па зато говоре о тзв. „представништву“ клира и народа у „црквено-управним телима“, али таква концепција и поставка најчешће заборавља да свештеник у *црквеној заједници* (парохији, општини) није ту „представник клира“, него духовни *оѿац* литургијске заједнице верних, али такав који, као што не може сам да служи Литургију без учешћа верника, тако исто не може сам ни да решава остала питања заједнице (општине) без учешћа лаика (=верника), нити исто тако могу они сами без њега. Још мање је ово могуће без Епископа, који није „представник“ клира, него *глава* Цркве, *економ* (управитељ) *блаѿо-*

дaйи (1Петр.4,10; 1Сол.4,1), „економ тајни Божијих“, Духом Светим управитељ и координатор и Христов пастир свих, без кога нема Цркве ни било какве „самоуправе“.

Без овакве реорганизације црквене Дијаспоре, скоро да и нема битне разлике између стања у АКЕ, пре и после раскола, и у осталим Епархијама СПЦ у САД и Канади. Другим, речима, треба тежиште црквеног живота и уређења пренети са *йравној* поретка на *лийуртијско-канонски* поредак (што није само уско названи „јерархијски“ поредак, него много више и шире од тога), па ће се онда видети како у *йелу* Цркве има много *служби, функција, улоја*, али су све оне у служби изграђивања верних, изграђивања заједнице свих у Христу Светим Духом, изграђивања спасења свију у вери и љубави Једнога Христа.

На крају овог увода о *Дијаспори*, мислим да је у нашој црквеној подели најважније успоставити *лийуртијско јединство*, међусобно евхаристијско општење обе стране. Амерички раскол још није повредио догматску, па ни канонску природу црквеног бића наше Дијаспоре (према 1. канону Св. Василија наша црквена подела у Дијаспори је пре *йарасинајоја*, него *раскол*). Оно што је повређено да се још залечити применом истински спасоносне, црквено-пастирске *икономије*. Јер свака рана тражи одговарајући лек, а већа рана већи и ефикаснији лек, па и ова наша црквена рана може и треба бити залечена применом широког *црквеној домоспороја*, црквене *икономије* (о којој ћемо говорити на крају овог текста). Али, приликом коначног преуређења организације наше црквене Дијаспоре, којом приликом ће највероватније бити потребно реорганизовати многе парохије и неке Епархије, онда треба поставити на истински канонским основама црквено уређење Дијаспоре.



Church of St. Sava Monastery in Libertyville, IL

The Church: A Pillar which Gathers the Serbian Faithful

AN OVERVIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SERBIAN DIASPORA AND THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

To effectively consign to writing a word on the history of the Serbian Diaspora, from the first Serbian immigrants to the final emigrant waves, is in fact to note the efforts and endeavours of a people, of individuals and their communities, who through their common union and common experience desire to create, and often recreate, stabilise and develop a new life; one which will retain for posterity the essential elements of their former lives and experiences, as for their generation so also for succeeding generations.

Our first Serbian immigrants sought after the creation of a new life and a new home in every sense of the word: a place to give birth, to raise children and provide them with an adequate education – such, that would emphasis the new as much as preserve from forgetfulness the old. They built churches and monasteries, common homes in which they could maintain their ancestral faith and secure places of worship, becoming a part of sacred history. Following which they provided church and language schools and folkloric groups, to insure the continuity of their traditional religious and cultural heritage, thereby maintaining their identity. Equally as important, they established retirement settlements to secure a dignified life for the elderly and cemeteries as a final resting place in anticipation of the Age to Come.

The contemporary history of the Serbian Diaspora is relatively new and begins at the inception of the 19th century. All of these new lands represent a sharp contrast which, compared to old war torn and ideologically burdened regions, is reflected in the vitality and youthful energy of the newer nations. Our Serbian history in the Diaspora is one which is intrinsically woven into the very fabric of these fledgling nations, equally as in the “comfortable” historic fabric of the Serbian nation and the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is the pillar of Serbian life in the Dispersion.

The Serbian community on the North American Continent was initiated with the first arrivals from the Austro-Hungarian Empire; while on the Fifth Continent, as well as in Europe, the majority began with the arrival of the first emigrants following World War II. It began with Serbs who were tired and worn, some of them even entirely devastated, searching for a new home and a new, more secure future. Their task was, and remains for us today: how, as with all Diaspora communities, to accept the culture and traditions of their new homeland, without forgetting or betraying those of their Fatherland which many have left behind, never again to return?

Our history, which among the Serbs of the Dispersion continues with generations which were born in the Diaspora, thereafter enriched with a newer, more educated, economic emigration through the phenomenon of „*gastarbeiters*“, i.e. “temporary foreign workers” and again renewed with the arrival of expellees from war ravaged regions, is one grateful for its new chance at life and filled with inspiration for that which until recent were only unimaginable opportunities. This is the history of our people and our Church which has entered into a new nation and a new era. Inherent is that vital link, precisely that

which our “fathers of the Diaspora” recognised in their hearts: that faith can endure without freedom; while freedom cannot survive without faith.

Through the Church we are transported beyond time and history in the presence of the “Eternal Now”. This is a new reality, something which is at the same time vastly familiar, yet one which is constantly moving and progressing, changing and developing. Our history is therefore not a stagnant history, rather one which is exuberant and is constantly vivified. The Lord has elected where to plant His Vineyard, through which He will continue to bestow upon us His inheritance and prosperity for the good estate of His Holy Church. For He is the Lord of time and seasons, the Author of History and histories, both in History and beyond all histories, sacred and profane.

Bishop Irinej of Australia and New Zealand



Bishop Maxim, Bishop Longin, Metropolitan Christopher, Bishop Mitrofan and Bishop Georgije



Enthronement Homily of His Holiness Serbian Patriarch, Kyr Irinej – The Patriarchate of Pech October 3, 2010

By the Providence of God and as graciously deigned by the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, I have been elected and today presented in the Sacred Throne of the Serbian Patriarchs. Having been led into the Throne which was established by the first autocephalous Serbian Archbishop and Enlightener Saint Sava, I am fully cognisant of my weaknesses and unworthiness for such an exalted calling.

The administrative enthronement of my humility was effected immediately following the election, on 23 January of this same year in the Cathedral Church of Belgrade. Today follows the conclusive, official and traditional enthronement in this ancient See of the Serbian Archbishops and Patriarchs, in the Church of the Holy Apostles in this Holy Laura of Pech.

For seven and a half centuries, this all-Serbian and pan-Orthodox sanctuary continuously protects under its shelter the Throne into which are ushered and from which the successors of Saint Sava guide the ark of Christ's Church within the borders of their canonical jurisdiction. They guide the ark to which the Serbian people have tied their history, their being and their fate. On the tempestuous sea of life, this ark and its passengers, have been ensued by winds and storms, thunder and lightning, have sailed by many Scylla and Charybdis, guided by Him, who „has built His Church against which not even the gates of Hades will prevail” (Matt 16:18). Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and unto the ages, the Lord of my glorious predecessors on this Throne, by Whose Divine might and wisdom they have guided His Church and His faithful people, will not, I trust and believe, as their successor, lacking in much and unworthy of this enormous honour, strip of His Grace in the steering of His Church.



Today, I have been solemnly ushered into and elevated onto the most exalted Throne of the Serbian Patriarchs, to a height upon which it is impossible to survive without the help and support of God. I know that this service requires great sacrifice and superhuman efforts, however I also know and confess that the mighty and all-mighty Grace of God which as a gift of God is gifted to us in our human weakness. By it we are summoned from non-existence into being, by it we live, move and are. By it we are summoned to this exceptionally responsible degree of apostolic service to God, the Church and the people of God.

In addition to being elevated unto the undeserved Grace of God,

which heals every infirmity and completes that which is lacking, I anticipate the heavenly assistance of even our Holy Serbian Archbishops and Patriarchs who glorified God and whom God glorified with unfading glory in His Heavenly Kingdom, especially those whose relics repose in this glorious Sanctuary.

Their pilgrimage and prayers before the Face of God are a powerful spiritual might and mighty fortitude in undertaking this joyful cross-bearing service in the mystery of salvation.

Spiritual and moral assistance and support of every kind I anticipate from Our Christ-loving brother hierarchs, as well as the prayers of the plentitude of the Church - the clergy, monastics and faithful people - that in prayerful communion and conciliarity, with our God-given powers, Christ's Bride, the Ark of our Salvation, the Holy Church, we may adorn with the bright virtues of the Gospel and a life in Christ.

Today, I am ushered into the Throne of the Serbian Patriarchs which had, and today has, a great role in the history of our Church and our people. On it were seated holy persons, shining with virtuous lives, and by word and deed witnessing and heralding the salvific truth of the Gospel. They were and forever remain Christ's servants and the apostolic servants of their people.

The Throne of the Patriarchate of Pech was and remains the soul of the Serbian people. It has spiritually unified the Serbian people, as well as its regions which have been brought into existence through numerous exoduses, of which the most famous are those in the years 1690 and in 1737. In the titles of the first hierarchs and hierarchs of newly-incepted Serbian regional Churches following the closing of the Patriarchate of Pech in 1766, there is visible and impressionable acknowledgement that they belong to the Throne of Pech. In such the Church in Montenegro for the entire time of its existence remained faithful to the Throne of Pech, considering themselves guardians, and their Metropolitans as "Exarchs of the Throne of Pech".

Similarly, the Bishops of Dalmatia have titled themselves as „Metropolitans of Kosovo and Exarchs of the Throne of Pech". In so doing they expressed and confirmed the bond of Krajina-Dalmatian Serbs to their Kosovo cradle and canonical bond to the Patriarchate of Pech.

This awareness has most certainly dominated the life and entire history of the Serbian Patriarchs in Srem's Karlovac.

Joseph Rajachich, elected Patriarch at the Karlovac May Assembly of 1848 and his successors, never severed the spiritual tie to the Throne of Pech, considering themselves to be successors to the Patriarchs of Pech.



With the restoration of the Patriarchate of Pech in 1920 and the election of Metropolitan Dimitrije of Serbia as the first Patriarch of the restored Patriarchate, the view was held that the Patriarch-elect must continue the history of the Patriarchate of Pech there where it was forcibly severed. As a sign and confirmation of the restoration of the Patriarchate of Pech the new Patriarch was enthroned in Pech in 1924 and from then to this present day, Serbian Patriarchs are enthroned in the Patriarchate of Pech. Thereby, we are convinced, the same will hold true in the times which are to come.

From the very beginning of the existence of the Patriarchate of Pech, its Primates as the Holy Apostles before them sowed the seeds of Christ's knowledge on the field of the souls of the people and shared alike with their people both good and evil and were truly spiritual leaders of the people. In times of peace and prosperity of the people, they built churches and monasteries and embellished the same with holy images; wrote and transcribed books, taught and enlightened the people in the spirit and truth of the Gospel, inspiring in them the love of Christ and the love of the people to which they belong, glorifying the Name of God, as in monastic habitations, so also in villages and cities and in the home of the people.

In the days of the suffering of the people, they strengthened the faith and poured forth hope in the mercy of God, hope that the Lord will not abandon them and that the day of liberation will soon be at hand.

When difficult circumstances ensued in which the people were left without their leaders, princes and elders, they placed themselves at the head of their people, wisely leading them, endeavouring that the people save their faith, language and rich spiritual inheritance.

With gratefulness to their Church and its wise Christ-loving and patriotic spiritual leaders, our people survived five centuries of Ottoman enslavement, preserved their soul, their faith, religious and moral values, as well as the awareness of their national identity.

The time and circumstances of my being led into the Throne of the Serbian Patriarchs is, in so many ways, similar to the time and circumstances in which the Serbian Church with its people had experienced and survived difficult and fateful days in its history. Let us remind ourselves of the recent time of general suffering, practically in all territories where our people live. The consequences of that suffering are still visible and





present: destroyed churches and monasteries, burned homes of the people, persons expelled from their centuries-old hearths, and in great part, dispersed throughout the world.

All that has been said is, sadly, still visible on the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. We cannot, but mention the gaping wound on the body of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian people, here in Kosovo and Metohija, in this truly “dread place of judgment”. Today we are visiting and bowing before this sanctuary in our most sacred Serbian land, the cradle of our history, spirituality, Christian, Orthodox culture of the Serbian people. A land drenched in the martyred blood of the Kosovo martyrs and new-martyrs. Here in the territory of our greatest sanctuaries, among which is the sanctuary in which we find ourselves, in which are preserved the holy relics of our Archbishops and Patriarchs and the graves of prayerful intercessors and those who spiritually laboured, and before the sacred and miraculous icon of the Most Holy Mother of God.

In close proximity is the resplendent Dechani Monastery, the epitome of our architectural and

iconographic art of the 14th century, with the incorruptible relics of its Holy Benefactor, King Stephen of Dechani. And slightly further is the Ljevish Theotokos in Prizren, the Imperial City, with its ten preserved medieval churches, the Monastery of the Holy Archangels, the greatest foundation of the Emperor Dushan, and the glorious Prizren Seminary. We cannot omit the most beautiful Grachanica, the glorious Banjska, foundations of King Milutin. We cannot, omit to mention the great sanctuary of Devich and the one thousand and three hundred remaining churches and monasteries in this blessed Serbian land. In the most recent past, many of the churches and monasteries were burned, destroyed, and vandalised, as well as the homes of our Serbian people who have abided here for centuries and left the indelible mark of their existence and creativity.

Kosovo and Metohija are today without hundreds of thousands of expelled Serbian people. All traces of their spiritual historical roots are being eradicated.

There are still tens of thousands of refugees from this sacred land. They, remain turned toward their aged bosom, and with tearful eyes and painful hearts, anticipate the day and possibility in which they can return to their, albeit destroyed and burned, homes. Only the few and most brave have succeeded to return to their hearths.

From this sacred place, in this joyous-yet painful moment, we forward our anguished cry to the powerful factors of this world in whose hands lie the fate of Kosovo and Metohija, praying to the Lord that they sin not against their souls by bringing forth decisions regarding the status of this Serbian southern territory by which the Serbian people will be stripped of their centuries-old right to their Homeland, their homes and properties, the graves of their ancestors and their sanctuaries.

The Serbian people do not have any other mediator state save Serbia of which Kosovo and Metohija have been for centuries an integral part. Here, there is ample living space and place for the cohabitation of Serbs, Albanians and other peoples. These two peoples have lived together for centuries. Why cannot they do the same today?

Therefore, appealing in this solemn moment with love and respect not only for the Serbian Orthodox people of Kosovo and Metohija but also for the honourable Albanian people and all local inhabitants, we invite them to peace and unity, always predicated upon Divine and human justice.

Let us pray to the Lord, to the God-pleasing of Pech, and the Holy Kosovo Martyrs, all the saints of our people and all those who are God-pleasing that in this land peace, unity and love among the peoples will prevail, and that the wounds of all inflicted by hatred and wickedness will be healed.

We appeal to the honourable episcopate, the clergy, the monastics and faithful people of our local Church of Saint Sava, praying to Christ our Lord that He will strengthen in all of us true faith and faithfulness to justice and Divine truth and the unity of the Church of God, directing us on the path of Salvation, to spiritual and every other form of regeneration.

With love and gratitude for this concelebration and prayerful participation I greet all of those here gathered from throughout the world, the Primates and representatives of the Orthodox Churches of God. Your presence, beloved Fathers and brothers, and participation in this solemn rite of our local Church, testify to the indivisible unity and fellowship of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. As the First Hierarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, I will endeavour with all my strength, together with my brother Hierarchs and faithful people, to confirm and advance the unity of the Church of God, as well as the evangelical mission of our Orthodox Church among all the peoples of the world.

We also rejoice and in gratitude, greet the brotherly presence of the high delegations of Christian Churches present in this Cathedral Church of the Holy Apostles - the Roman Catholic Church, the Churches of the Reformed Tradition and the Anglican Church. This apostolic temple and apostolic rite invite all of us who confess the Only-begotten Son of God, the God-Man Christ, to the renewal of the apostolic faith in us and the love among us, and toward the fulfilling of Christ's prayer to our Heavenly Father: "That they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they may be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21).

With respect and gratitude for their presence and friendship I greet, also, the honourable heads and high representatives of the Islamic Community of Serbia, as well as the high representatives of the Jewish Community of Serbia.

We greet also those representatives of our State here present headed by the President of the Republic of Serbia Mr. Boris Tadic, the representatives of Orthodox and neighbouring states, as well as the representatives of the International Community and the Diplomatic Corps. I greet also His Royal Highness, the descendant of the great Leader Karageorge and King Peter I Karageorgevich, the liberator of Kosovo and unifier of the Serbian people.

Upon you, the people of God, gathered here in this great Church of the Archbishops and Patriarchs of Pech, all the people of God and Saint Sava in the Fatherland and throughout the Dispersion, as well as upon all people of God and Christians and to all persons and peoples of good will, I bestow our Patriarchal blessings: peace to you and the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit unto ages of ages. Amen!



Communique from the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church

HELD IN BELGRADE MAY 16-27, 2011

The regular meeting of the Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church took place at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade May 16-27, under the presidency of His Holiness Serbian Patriarch Irinej. Participating in the Assembly were all the diocesan hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as of the autonomous Archbishopric of Ochrid headed by His Beatitude Archbishop of Ochrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, Jovan.

The Assembly began its work with the joint serving of the hierarchical Divine Liturgy in the Holy Archangel Michael Cathedral in Belgrade, led by Serbian Patriarch Irinej, and served the Invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth and wisdom, in Whom the Church lives and always works, especially in the assemblies of its bishops. Then the president of the Assembly, His Holiness the Patriarch, in his opening statement to the Assembly indicated some of the current questions of the life and mission of the Church in these times, times of difficult trials for us and for the world, but also times of hope and spiritual action.

During this year's Assembly the joint celebration of the Liturgy took place twice—on the feast of the transfer of the relics of our Holy Father Nicholas on May 9/22 in Sremski Karlovci on the patronal feast of the completely renovated Cathedral church of St. Nicholas, and in Belgrade's church of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark on the feast of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius, Enlighteners and Teachers of the Slavs, on May 11/24. The most important decision of the Assembly concerns the liturgical life of the Church — the establishment of the feast of the wonderworking Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos kept at the Patriarchate of Pec, to be celebrated every year on the day after the feast of the Ascension of our Lord. From this time this feast loses its local and takes on an all-church character. Beginning with its most important liturgical aspect, the Assembly concerned itself with the upcoming celebration of the 1700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan (313-2013) in Nis, the birthplace of St. Constantine the Great, on the local, pan-Orthodox, and all-Christian levels. The Assembly also sent a letter to His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew about the earliest possible calling of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church — naturally, after all necessary preparations, with deep accountability and in the spirit of complete faithfulness to the holy ecumenical and local councils of the past.

Having heard the report of the Holy Synod on its activities in the period just ended and the reports of the diocesan hierarchs, the Assembly made appropriate decisions.



At the meeting of the central body for the completion of the Church of St. Sava on Vracar, the Assembly welcomed with warm thanks the brotherly willingness of the Russian Orthodox Church and the great Russian state to help with the interior appointments of the church, and after the meeting a memorial service was held for the founders, benefactors and donors of the church.

The reorganization and restructuring of certain dioceses in Serbia, in Europe and in America and Australia was carried out, and most episcopal vacancies were filled, although some dioceses continue to be guided by bishop administrators. As bishop of the vacant see of the Diocese of Nis was elected the heretofore vicar bishop to the Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands and elder of Monastery Ostrog, the Bishop of Dioclia Dr. Jovan, and as bishop of the newly created Diocese of Krusevac Hierodeacon Dr. David (Perovic), assistant professor at the Theological Faculty of Belgrade University. The administrator of the newly formed Diocese of Austria and Switzerland with its see in Vienna will be the Bishop of Backa Dr. Irinej, and Metropolitan Dr. Amphilohije of Montenegro and the Coastlands will serve as administrator of the newly created Diocese of Buenos Aires, which will be comprised of all the congregations and missionary parishes in South and Central America. Elected as vicar bishops to His Holiness the Patriarch were Protosyngel Jovan (Culibrk) with the title Bishop of Diplja, and Archmandrite Andrej (Cilerdzic) with the title Bishop of Remezija. Likewise, the Assembly asked Bishop Grigorije of Zahum-Hercegovina to assist Metropolitan Nikolaj of Dabro-Bosnia in carrying out his archpastoral duties as his deputy.

On the American continent, as the result of restructuring, the Diocese of New Gracanica-Midwest America was created, while the Metropolitanate of Libertyville-Chicago ceases to exist. The Assembly

decided that St. Sava Monastery in Libertyville, near Chicago, will attain the status of a stavropigial institution, that is, a monastery directly under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Patriarch. New York-Washington was designated as the new see of the Eastern American Diocese. The revised Statute of the Canadian Diocese was approved, as was the Constitution of the Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand.

The creation of new dioceses from the Archdiocese of Belgrade-Karlovci was for the present postponed. Likewise, while aware of the obvious pastoral reasons for the reestablishment of the ancient Diocese of Ras, absorbed by the Diocese of Prizren during the difficult time of the Turkish enslavement, and that the permanent presence of a bishop in the Ras region would strengthen the visible and active presence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in that part of Serbia, the Assembly temporarily postponed the resolution of this question until all necessary conditions are met.

With the aim of ensuring the most effective organization of church life, the Assembly enlarged the existing Assembly commission for the revision of the Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

As it does every year, the Assembly gave full attention to church education in general and church schooling in particular. The Orthodox Theological Faculty of Belgrade University has been entrusted with a very important mission—the translation of the works of the holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church from the original languages and their publication with accompanying scholarly introductions and commentaries. Further, the Assembly expects the advancement of cooperation between the Serbian Orthodox Church's institutions of higher learning. Protopresbyter Professor Jovan Petkovic was elected the new dean of the Seminary in Karlovci, and it was decided to resume the work of the Prizren seminary in Prizren itself, while part of its activities will continue in Nis. The Assembly recommended steps for the advancement of the educational system in the seminaries of the Serbian Orthodox Church and steps for the introduction of theology into the educational system of Serbia on Serbian territory, and recommended the establishment of Orthodox high schools and other schools which would work under the jurisdiction of the Church, wherever that is possible.

The Assembly welcomed the return of religious services to the Serbian Army, as well as the decision of the Constitutional Court of Serbia on the constitutionality of the law on the return of illegally seized properties of the Church and religious organizations. In this regard, the Assembly awaits and seeks the implementation of the provisions of this law, which has not yet been implemented even though it is valid and obligatory, which is unacceptable.

The Assembly welcomes the decision of the Serbian state authorities to return the Church's metrical books, which were confiscated after the Second World War, and hopes for the return also of bequests and donor funds which have not yet been returned. Expecting and seeking the complete return of expropriated church property, the Assembly also supports the return to all organizations and foundations of properties illegally confiscated from them. The Assembly regrets that the neighboring Republic of Hungary refuses to return the former church building in Budapest's Baca Street to the Diocese of Budim.

Similarly, the Assembly regrets that there has occurred a deep crisis in relations between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the oldest Christian Church, and the Romanian Orthodox Church, because of the uncanonical activities of the latter in the Holy Land. Sadly, neither does the hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church respect the canonical order and jurisdiction of the sister Churches in other places. In our case, the Assembly is grateful to the Romanian Orthodox Church for its good relationship towards the Serbian Orthodox Church's Diocese of Temisvar and for the support it offers to its administrator, clergy and monastics, which reciprocates the Serbian Orthodox Church's stance of brotherly love towards the Romanians in Serbian Banat, but at the same time it expresses its regret and energetic protest

concerning the uncanonical intrusion of certain bishops and clergy from Romania in the territory of two dioceses in eastern Serbia, without the approval of the ruling bishops from the Serbian Orthodox Church. If the noncanonical and unbrotherly actions of these individuals do not end, the Assembly and Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church will take all canonical and legal steps to stop them, to protect the established canonical order, and to prevent the disturbance of the sacred inter-Orthodox unity, whoever may be the instigator and organizer of the activities which endanger that unity.

The Assembly also deeply regrets that the government of the Republic of Macedonia, despite criticism by international organizations for its violation of religious freedom and human rights, continues to persecute the canonical Archbishop of Ochrid Jovan and refuses to legally register the Archdiocese of Ochrid, an autonomous Orthodox Church which is in full union with all Orthodox Churches throughout the world. The Assembly Fathers most strongly condemn the recent violent incident against a bishop, monastic clergy and faithful of the Ochrid Archdiocese, and that during the celebration of a liturgical service, in Kavadarci, instigated and directed by a local schismatic bishop according to his own public admission. Those who have such an unchurch-like mentality, not only because they desire no dialogue to heal the wounds of schism but because they aggravate those wounds, heap injustice upon injustice, bringing great spiritual harm to the misled faithful and provoking both God's longsuffering and human patience. The ill-begotten are already judged, as the wise popular saying goes.

The Assembly gave special attention and consideration to serious difficulties faced by the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Coastlands and other dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. Examples are: threats that the church of the Holy Trinity on mountain Rumija will be destroyed; the demolishing of Saint Alexander Nevsky and the Most Holy Lady Theotokos churches on Saint Stefan; the unlawful intention to usurp churches in Cipur and Krusevac; a statement from the highest state official by which the right of the Serbian Orthodox Church to lawfully exist and function in Montenegro is denied along with its right to real property; the publicly expressed ambitions of certain Montenegrin politicians to administer church affairs and through pressure, and even through open physical threats, to manipulate the identity and organization of the Orthodox Church in Montenegro with the open wish to make the Church an instrument of their own political aims; the program determination of the Montenegrin party in power, the Democratic (!) Socialist Party, to aggressively shape the church life of Orthodox Christians in Montenegro (fortunately, not disturbing other churches and religious communities). All this represents the endangerment of essential human rights and religious freedom, an active denial of the secular character of the Montenegrin state and a rejection of the democratic principles of the separation between the Church and state, as well as an open reintroduction of a long ago overcome social categorization, the category of second class citizenship based on religious and ethnic identity. Therefore the Assembly demands that the state officials of Montenegro respect their constitution and the rights of every church and religious organization, and consequently the rights of Serbian Orthodox Church, guaranteed by the domestic and international laws. It would indeed be a huge embarrassment and shame to go to Brussels, Strasburg and Washington in order to secure these rights and justice.

The Assembly is also concerned because of the difficulties that the Republika Srpska, and consequently the Serbian Orthodox Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are facing. The Assembly is convinced that citizens of the Republika Srpska, like citizens in other modern democratic states in general have rights to plebiscitary expression on questions that they hold important as this right is a clear if not the only example of democracy. The Assembly also asks the domestic political structures and foreign relevant factors and policy making centers to respect the Dayton agreement and in doing so, to continue building a comprehensive peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A particular concern weighing on the souls of the Assembly members is the non-existence (and that after so many years) of conditions for the return of expelled refugees from Kosovo and Metohija, a new endangerment of Serbian property and homes, and the lack of conditions for rebuilding more than one hundred destroyed churches. The Assembly reminds the domestic and international public that any dialogue about Kosovo and Metohija that would lead to the violation of the Constitution of Serbia and the violation of the United Nations' resolution 1244 would represent a direct undermining of the United Nations' Charter and international order established after World War II. The wrong resolutions would not be resolutions at all; rather they would become long-standing and possibly permanent: instability, adversities and chaos in Serbia, especially in her south region and in southeast Europe in general.

The concern and sadness of the Assembly members is made even greater by the fact that among the Serbian people there are more deaths than births. This indicates a deep moral, family and even religious crisis despite, the fact that the majority of our people consider themselves Orthodox Christians. As a result, the Assembly appeals to the conscience of parents, teachers, state officials and all those who may have impact on the state of society and the dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church and their local parishes to recommend the establishment of funds for assistance to families with three or more children, to take preventative and pastoral-therapeutic measures in fighting against immorality, pornography, drugs and all other spiritual illnesses which directly and indirectly harm man and the future of our nation and many other nations.

The newly elected Synod members are: His Grace Vasilije, Bishop of Srem, His Grace Irinej, Bishop of Backa, His Grace Jovan, Bishop of Sumadija and His Grace Joanikije, Bishop of Budim-Niksic.



14th Annual Diocesan Days Gathering in the West

It was a weekend of spiritual and social activities for all ages with the host bishop His Grace Maxim, guest speakers, clergy, monastics and faithful from all of the parishes and monasteries throughout Western Diocese.



It's Labor Day weekend and all roads lead to Jackson, California. All the faithful of the Western diocese know this and a family trip to this small mining town southeast of Sacramento has become a tradition. In the last few years Jackson's population has grown to a little over four thousand. Founded in 1848, Jackson became home to the oldest Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America, St. Sava church built in 1894. It was here that the earthly remains of the Apostle of the American land, Fr. Sebastian Dabovich (1863-1940), were laid to rest during the eleventh Diocesan days celebration in 2007.

The theme for the 2010 Diocesan Days gathering was "The Church and the Challenges of Contemporary Life" taken from the Gospel as described in Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:37-41 and Luke 8:23-25. Reflecting on this Gospel story we see that the effect of Christ's powerful command was to calm the storm on the sea, but also to calm his disciples' fears. By taking care of the troubling circumstances of life Christ was able to take away their fears and build their faith in Him.

This becomes the powerful thrust of this passage to all subsequent believers who are tossed about by the challenges of contemporary life. Even though there are so many things in life that threaten our lives and cause us to fear, the more we grow in communion with the Lord and know His power, the less we will be afraid. Our prayer for deliverance from our troubles will be less and less out of fear and desperation and more out of confidence and trust in God's providence and care over His Church, the Ship, of which we are members.



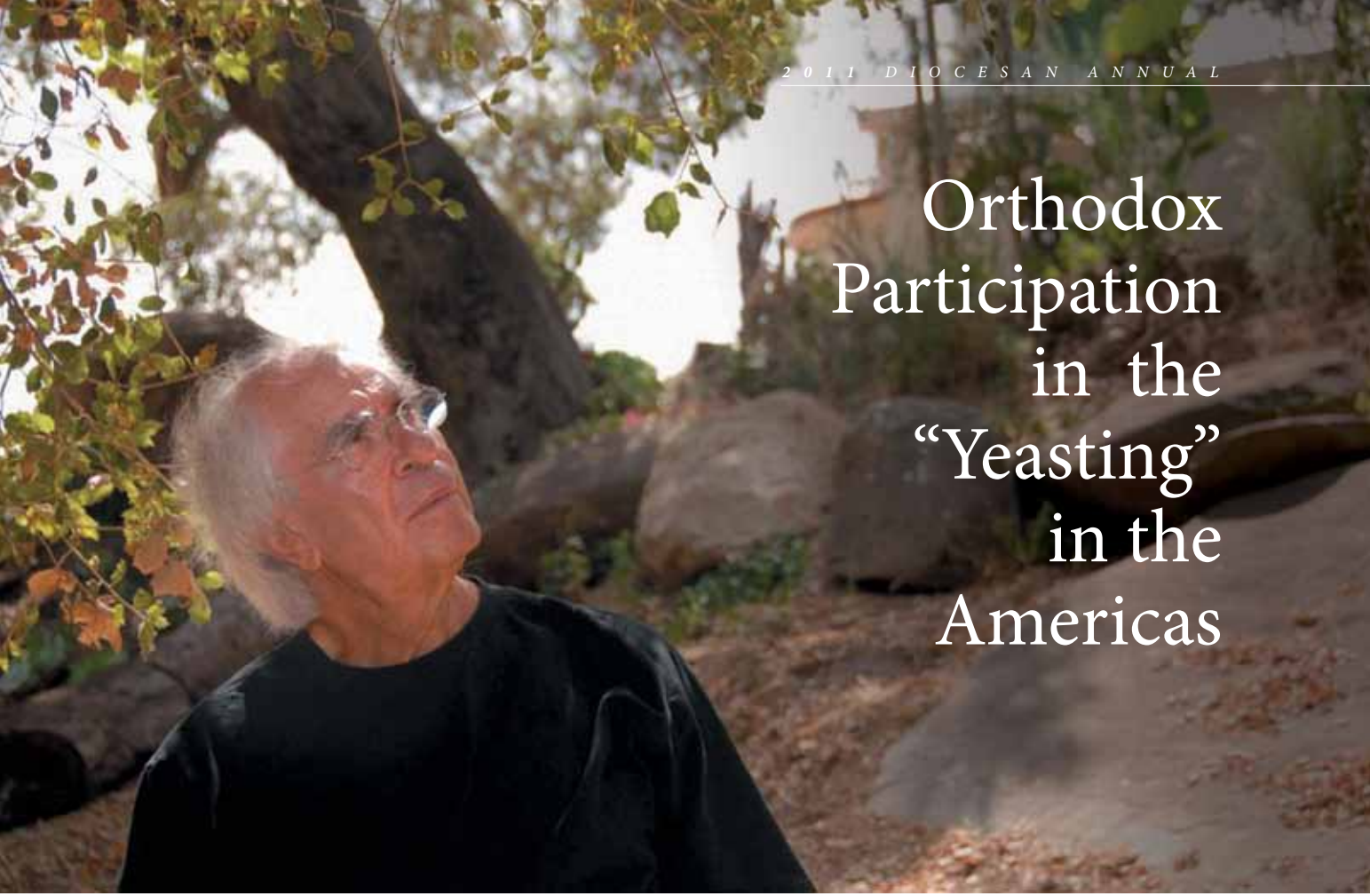


A powerful image of the Church as a ship: the people of God gathered in communion with God on board a ship with Christ as the Master of the vessel, was depicted beginning with the clergy meeting on Friday, September 3, and continuing with a presentation by Professor Nenad Milosevic, a students' choir, guests from the School of Theology in Belgrade, Serbia who spoke on marriage as sacrament (mystery) in the Orthodox Church. The theme continued to be reflected upon in a interactive discussion with Metropolitan Nikitas of Dardanelles who is also a dean of Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute, and in his main address on Sunday. It concluded with a presentation by Fr. Dr. Andrew Cuneo from St. Seraphim of Sarov OCA parish, Santa Rosa, CA.

The Gospel story of Christ calming the sea storm is the image taken to describe the Orthodox Church as a ship. Its keel represents the Orthodox Faith in the Holy Trinity. Its beams and planks stand for the dogmas and traditions of the Faith. Its mast represents the Cross, while its sail and rigging represent Hope and Love. The Master of the vessel is our Lord Jesus Christ, whose hand is on the rudder. The mates and sailors are the Apostles, and the successors of the Apostles, and all clergymen, and teachers. The passengers on the ship comprise all Orthodox Christians. The sea symbolizes present life. A gentle and zephyr-like breeze signifies whiffs and graces of the Holy Spirit wafting the vessel on its course to the salvation. Winds, on the other hand, are temptations baffling it.

The fourteenth gathering of the clergy and the faithful in the west this Labor Day weekend has strengthened this growing and vibrant diocese. We wish many years to His Grace Bishop Maxim and the faithful of his diocese and Assured that Christ's hand is always on the helm of the ship, His Church, the faithful and guests returned home readying themselves for a prayerful beginning of the new ecclesiastical and school year.





Orthodox Participation in the “Yeasting” in the Americas

Christos Yannaras Visits the Western American Diocese

In the month of September our Western Diocese had the honor of hosting one of the most renowned Orthodox theologians and philosophers of our time, Professor Dr. Christos Yannaras from Athens, Greece.

Dr. Yannaras, who is the author of more than 30 books and Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the Pantheon University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens, “has been for several decades one of the most prolific, original, and contemporary Orthodox writers in Greece...[and] perhaps one of the most significant Christian philosophers in Europe,” according to Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury.

“It is my wish that Orthodoxy participates in the yeasting which is underway in the Americas in order to give impetus to a contemporary and creative Orthodox self-awareness.”

With this profound introductory statement and genuine wish from Dr. Yannaras, we would like to offer a synopsis of this two-week journey of fellowship, educative guidance and spiritual enhancement that took place in America.

Professor Yannaras’ visit in the USA began in New York on Sunday, September 12, 2010.

On the Feast of the Holy Cross (n.c.), an academic convocation was held at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York, one of the most renowned and highly acclaimed Orthodox institutions for higher learning both in America and abroad, for the purpose of honoring Dr. Yannaras, bestowing upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity *honoris causa*.

This great event was marked with joy and celebration, as a large audience had the opportunity to hear Professor Yannaras speak on the theme: “The Trinitarian God as a Causal Principle of Existential Freedom.” In a host of other lectures given throughout his visit, the professor was able to contribute his own perspective to some of the more pressing issues of our times.

The previous night, his initial address took place in Astoria, New York where he met with the local Greek community with whom he shared his views on the critical subject: “Political crisis in Greece, or something deeper.” Professor Yannaras expressed his concerns over the economic crisis in his homeland, emphasizing that the current situation with the economy should not be thought of as merely the result of some abuse or misuse



at an economic level, but in fact is a much deeper issue harboring profound implications.

That same evening he met also with the Serbian Theological Faculty choir, an octet led by their Professor of Liturgics, Dr. Nenad Milosevic, who were visiting St. Vladimir’s on their performance tour. In a friendly and warm exchange, Professor Yannaras offered an inspiring reflection on the subject of living a true life in the Church, addressing both the parameters of participation and theological criteria which are at work in such a life - whether they be paradigms from the past, or, direct involvement and first-hand experience within a Eucharistic community. Of course, emphasis was placed on the latter, yet he expressed also the importance of history in the life of the Church, including its great biographical examples and its ascetic tradition.

In the drawn out moments spent on the road, the professor would often express his fascination at the accelerated linguistic transmission, which had taken place both in the modern world and especially on the American continent. In singing the *katavasias* of the Meeting of our Lord, for example, the professor would stop and ask questions regarding its contemporary translation into Serbian and English, as the words, are often times difficult, if not impossible to translate. Amounting to something like, “The sun which once shone on dry land, mother of the deep...” one would have to first consider the scriptural reference to the sea as a metaphor for womb (as seen in Job 38:8, Gen 7:11, and Exodus 19:4). And while this is often a confused point in many contemporary translations of liturgical texts, the cheery professor enjoyed the technicalities of this discussion to the fullest.

Leaving New York, where Bishop Maxim and Professor Yannaras also visited St. Sava’s Cathedral (SOC), they traveled across the country to San Francisco, where Professor Yannaras’ visit to the Western American Diocese began.

Meeting with both Serbian and Greek communities on the West Coast, Professor Yannaras delivered two important lectures.

In the first (titled “What could be a contribution of Orthodox witness in the contemporary world, especially in its ecumenical dimension?”), he critically pointed to the popular, narrow interpretations of Hellenism and dismissed its historical reduction to some exclusive Greek component, stressing meanwhile the importance of understanding the term in the widest sense of the word. The Greek community was especially thrilled with his visit and touched by his profound address.

On the occasion of a special event commemorating the blessing and unveiling of a new sculpture of Saint Nikolai Velimirovic, the Serbian community in the Bay Area had the opportunity to hear both greeting words and inspiring commentaries on yet another topic: “What does it mean to be Orthodox, and to belong to a specific church community?”



And in yet another lecture, local clergy from the Bay Area were given the honor of interacting intimately with the professor on the Gospel theme: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

On the Day of our Lord, Sunday, September 19, the Divine Liturgy was served at the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos (SOC) in Orange County, followed by a great fellowship and agape luncheon. A lively discussion ensued, which pondered on “The Life of the Christian in the Church,” and was accompanied by an illuminating presentation by the professor. The local Greek community also extended its kind invitation to Professor Yannaras and offered him their hospitality for an evening, being especially delighted to hear his wise reflections.

The main lecture and banquet honoring Professor Yannaras took place at the great hall of SaintStephen’s Cathedral in Alhambra, California on the evening of Tuesday, September 21. At this spectacular event, the audience was able to hear a specially prepared lecture titled: “Boundaries of the Church and what it means for the Church to have boundaries.” This theme was presented wonderfully and was accompanied by an array of comments and questions which honored our guest, who responded with edifying words and with great attention and care. Great fulfillment was felt on behalf of all those present, as the very act of discussing these essential and relevant subjects paves the way by which we further our ecclesiological awareness.

It should be noted that Professor Yannaras in the company of his host, Bishop Maxim, took some time to tour the important cultural landmarks and places of significance within the greater Los Angeles area. During the sightseeing he made several insightful references regarding American culture and the evident modernism which characterized its cosmopolitan cities along with its residents. Apart from simply acknowledging its dynamic fortitude and prevalence, he also emphasized certain points that would be clarified later in his visit to Chicago.

In San Diego, Professor Yannaras was warmly greeted by number of Serbian clergy with whom he exchanged thoughts on a variety of relevant issues and shared interests, all of which highly benefited their

pastoral efforts and achievements. The Serbian priests of Southern California expressed their gratitude for this unforgettable opportunity, and for the edifying theological exchange which motivated them to progress in the day-to-day life of their parishes.

Following this detour, Bishop Maxim, together with his clergy, brought his honorable guest to Escondido, to the Monastery of the Meeting of our Lord (Sretenje) which is progressing nicely in the construction of the planed facilities and beautified grounds. Welcomed by amazing scenery and rich, colorful landscape, Bishop Maxim shared his visionary plans of this special place with his guest, who was delighted to learn of the history and development of this monastery. One additional reason for the professor’s visit to the West Coast included his participation in some filming that took place on the monastery premises. Namely, he was

to be featured in part of an educational DVD series - a project that the Western American Diocese envisioned and undertook recently. The filming of the series began with an episode on the theme, “The Symbol of Faith,” which was conducted by a team of professionals and lead by the very capable film director, Ivan Andrijanic, who also happens to be a very respected parishioner of St. Stephen’s Cathedral.

A one-hour documentary episode was filmed with a backdrop of sun drenched palm, olive and fruit trees, preserved natural beauties of all kinds, and the incredible flora and fauna that the monastery naturally offers.





This particular episode had as its subject matter: “The real existence of the Holy Trinity as a tropos of the existence of creation, in freedom and in love.” Professor Yannaras offered outstanding thoughts which will be made available upon the completion of this great project.

On Thursday, the travelers arrived in Phoenix, Arizona where they met with several Serbian priests who gathered for their annual conference and to hear Professor Yannaras speak on the theme from Scripture: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

The next destinations in the professor’s itinerary included a visit to the two great Orthodox monasteries of Arizona. Bishop

Maxim first took Professor Yannaras to Saint Anthony’s Greek Orthodox Monastery, an interesting place in the Sonoran Desert. They admiring the elaborate system of seven chapels and main church (katholikon), gardens, stone pathways and gazebos with Spanish fountains, citrus orchards and olive trees scattered throughout the monastery grounds.

After this visit, Bishop Maxim and Professor Yannaras hit the road in order to reach the St. Paisius Serbian Orthodox Monastery, situated in the High Sonoran Desert at the base of Mount Graham. Abbess Michaela with all the sisters welcomed their host, His Grace, Bishop Maxim, and his guest, offering them the hospitality and serenity characteristic of both the monastery and the desert.

In the morning hours after the Divine Liturgy, at the monastery trapeza, the ascetic community and their guests listened intently to the words of wisdom offered by Professor Yannaras, who explored the essential topic: “The Holy Trinity in our life.” It was another very fruitful discussion lined with several edifying questions, such as: How should young Christians in the Church come to understand ascetic efforts like podvig, fasting, and prayer? The professor’s response was that these things should be understood as a sacrifice for something which is by nature priceless, making analogy of a man that in order to reach some goal or worldly treasure, would renounce many things; and so in this sense, podvig should be understood as yearning after the unspeakable and irreplaceable joy, which for us Christians, is found in the God-man Christ and his Holy Church.

On Saturday, September 25, Professor Yannaras arrived in Chicago, which would be his last stop in this wonderful journey of fellowship and theological exchange in America.

In the morning, Bishop Maxim and Professor Yannaras went on a short tour of the downtown area of Chicago, followed by a visit to the Greek Metropolis where they were greeted by Metropolitan Iakovos and spent over an hour in brotherly conversation.

The afternoon and evening was spent with the faithful flock of the Holy Resurrection Cathedral in a beautiful Vespers service, followed by an engaging and relevant lecture on the topic: “What do we Orthodox have to offer American society today?” The audience, which consisted of a number of both Greek and Serbian-Americans, had a uniquely Pan-Orthodox character; several members from ROCOR and the OCA

had been in attendance as well. The lecture was even recorded by a local, Greek television station, “The Hellenic Heartbeat,” and was to be televised at a later date.

In his address, Professor Yannaras emphasized the importance of a Eucharistic ecclesiology as our primary path of witnessing the Orthodox faith to others. He relied heavily on the model of the Russian Diaspora, who in the beginning of the 20 th century, in the wake of the Revolution, immigrated into Western Europe and essentially evangelized the West - a grand missionary feat which would become highly respected throughout the Christian world. The point was made that Orthodoxy must find a way to reach this (our) particular form of society, which has become entrenched in a culture of individualism. Our trust in the Church’s invitation to transcend and transform our natural limitations is essential for our path to salvation. The professor also clarified for the audience a major difference between the concepts of love and eros . One of the key terminological distinctions consists in the fact that eros specifically preserves an ecstatic character, marked by inclusiveness and sharing, and involves the extension of oneself. The alternative, modern-day conceptions of love, however, have lost this intrinsic component.

The professor’s intriguing presentation elicited many questions, which he kindly answered and addressed in the second half of the discussion. The next day, following the Divine Liturgy, at a banquet for the occasion of the consecration of the frescos in the Cathedral, Professor Yannaras expressed his deep gratitude for the hospitality and love that was shared with him during his short stay. In his warm delivery, he shared many beneficial words of instruction regarding our current circumstances, inspiring all to build up and to keep on building.

As a final point in this journey, the Feast of the Holy Cross (o.c.), was to be celebrated at St. Sava’s Serbian Orthodox Monastery in Libertyville , Illinois . The celebration continued after the Liturgy in the classrooms of the St. Sava Theological Faculty, with nearly all the students and some professors in attendance. Two presentations were delivered at that time, with topics that enriched and inspired the students to reflect on an interesting discussion. Bishop Maxim executed a flawless translation of the professor’s talk and the whole experience was very receptive and admirable. The first lecture was titled: “Boundaries of the Church.” Addressing the students, the Professor reminded them of the role of language and its task to define and delineate the boundaries of reality, marking both its range of meaning and its limitations. He reiterated the well-known references regarding what the Church is, but he also pointed out what the Church should not be.

Simply to say, she (the Church) is not an ideology, and she is not a religion. The Church must be a way of being: a Eucharistic Supper! Professor Yannaras’ kindness did not stop there. He was featured as a guest lecturer in a class on canon law, where he continued to teach on the meaning and purpose of canon law in the Church.

That same evening our dear guest departed for Greece, leaving all those who met him filled with a sense of joy and gratitude for a unique and rich experience that will always be remembered!



San Gabriel Parish celebrated 100th Anniversary



The first weekend in October of 2010 will be remembered by St. Sava parish in San Gabriel, CA, for many years to come. Their parish, the first Orthodox parish established in southern California, marked one hundred years of parish life that weekend.

The History of St. Sava in Los Angeles, the first church

The parish has two churches, St. Sava Church of Los Angeles and the St. Sava Church of San Gabriel. Its beginning is just as striking. In May of 1903 the Serbian Benevolent society was organized with plans of establishing opportunities for cultural and religious enrichment of their members. When tragedy struck this group of Serbian immigrants their focus in accomplishing these goals seemed to have reached pinnacle. Milo Bulaich, along with two brothers, Mihailo and Djordje Kovacevich, drowned while working at the San Pedro shipyard. They were buried at the cemetery on Evergreen. Soon after, the pioneers began discussing how to buy a piece of land which could be consecrated as a Serbian cemetery. The land was purchased and in the year 1908 it was consecrated by the first American born Serbian Orthodox priest, Fr. Sebastian Dabovich, whose earthly remains are laid to rest at St. Sava church in Jackson, California, in 2007.

St. Sava church in Jackson was also consecrated by Fr. Sebastian in 1894, which makes this church the oldest Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America. Fr. Sebastian consecrated also the church two years later. In 1909 the special committee was formed to oversee the building of the church on the cemetery lands and the building of the first Orthodox church in Southern California was underway. The records indicate that in the year 1910 some two thousand Serbian faithful settled around the newly erected and now consecrated church. This first church is stands and the Liturgy there is served on Saturdays.

The History of St. Sava in San Gabriel, the second church

The history of St. Sava parish second church begins in 1956 with the generous donation of land by Charles S. Barzut and of course the hard labor of love offered by the rest of the parish. Almost twenty years later, in October of 1984 the newly built church was consecrated by His Grace Bishop Gregory. Today, St. Sava parish has a beautiful church adorned with mosaic icons of saints and feast days, social hall and all the San Gabriel Parish celebrates 100th

Anniversary Above: His Grace Bishop Maxim served along with His Grace Bishop Joseph of Antiochian Western Diocese and His Grace Bishop Benjamin of Orthodox Church of America, Fr. Petar Jovanovic, the host priest and visiting clergy on Saturday, October 2nd.

Right: Faithful and hierarch gather to celebrate at the gala grand banquet on Sunday, October 3rd. families, their zeal for Orthodox faith and unequivocal dedication to Serbian heritage and culture. St. Sava church of Los Angeles was the place where the Saturday Liturgy was served.

His Grace Bishop Maxim served along with His Grace Bishop Joseph of Antiochian Western Diocese and His Grace Bishop Benjamin of Orthodox Church of America, Fr. Petar Jovanovic, the host priest, and many other local and visiting clergy. A short greeting followed the Liturgy and then, the lunch at the pavilion of the supporting buildings for the ministry of this vibrant Serbian Orthodox parish.

The Centennial Celebration

Parishioners and friends gathered at St. Sava's on Friday for Vespers and Lenten dinner on Friday, October 1 for the beginning of the centennial celebration. It was an evening of reminiscing stories about the founding of the Serbian United Benevolent Society.

This small church is situated almost in the middle of the cemetery surrounded by trees. If it wasn't for occasional police sirens one could easily be fooled for a village church somewhere in Sumadija region.

Sunday Liturgy was served at the church in San Gabriel. The matins begin at nine o'clock in the morning followed by Hierarchical Liturgy. His Grace Bishop Maxim gave a sermon immediately following the Gospel reading. He called his listeners to rely on God's wisdom and sustenance in their true love – sacrificial love ready to serve without asking anything in return. Such love was demonstrated by the pioneers and it needs to be passed on to new generations of the faithful.



Following the Liturgy the guests proceeded to the social hall for the grand gala banquet. Jasminka Chenich-Gabrie led the program, introduced the speakers, the Hierarchs and honored guests. Entertainment was provided by acclaimed artist and musician Bilja Krstic and Orchestra Bistrik who for this occasion came from Belgrade, Serbia.

The president of the Church Board, Jelena Milinovich-Seferovich and Fr. Petar in their greetings expressed thanks to God for 100 years of fruitful ministry at St. Sava.

Regardless of the challenges presented in the past, there was always a clear vision of how to advance toward a better future.

Fr. Petar's pastoral message for the occasion was to stay committed to the Orthodox faith; committed to the Kingdom of God which starts with the beginning of Divine Liturgy. He quoted Metropolitan Anthony Bloom: "History and eternity are one eschatologically and eucharistically. Liturgy is a school for spirituality; it is a situation and encounter with God and the world in God."

St. Sava parish looks at the future

Fr. Petar, the parish priest at St. Sava, having served the parish for over thirty years, prayerfully looks into the future and with confidence in God, leads his flock into the Kingdom of God.

It is important, he says, for St. Sava parish to also preserve the cultural tradition and heritage accumulated for centuries by the rich Serbian history molded by the Orthodox faith. Nothing would be more tragic for the Orthodox people than the loss of their rich tradition. The feeling of that cultural tradition and heritage was everpresent in the souls of our first immigrants who built St Sava Church of Los Angeles.

Generations of people at St. Sava have been deeply conscious of and attached to the history of the Serbian Church. Fr. Petar and his flock entrusted to his care are well aware that have the obligation to carry on this spirit – the spirit of sacrificial love, safeguarding the tradition by passing it on to new generations of the faithful called to fulfill God's will in their everyday life. Many years to all the faithful people, benefactors and leaders of St. Sava Church!

The Truth of the Gospel in the Life of the Church and of the Christians in the Church

Bishop Athanasije in His Second Visit to North America

By the Grace of God, we had another wonderful visit this autumn season of 2010. At the invitation of the organizers of a Festschrift event honoring the 40 years of academic achievements by Fr. Paul Tarazi, one of the most renowned Biblicists in the Orthodox world, His Grace, retired Bishop of Zahum and Hercegovina, Dr Atanasije Jevtic came to the United States. This great event was held at St. George Antiochian Church in New Jersey with Bishop Athanasije as a keynote speaker. Among nearly 50 participants, His Grace Bishop Maxim of the Western Diocese, SOC was also invited to contribute with his presentation at the gathering. The Festschrift papers are being published by Peter Lang Inc. and will be available in the near future. The daylong symposium honoring Fr. Paul with a celebration banquet was a memorable experience, filled with wonderful academic exchange and brotherly fellowship. Using this as an opportunity, Bishop Maxim extended his hospitality to Bishop Athanasije by organizing visits to many parishes throughout America.

During his stay on the East Coast, Vladika Athanasije, accompanied by Fr. Dimitrije from Tvrdos Monastery, together with Vladika Maxim, visited St. Sava Cathedral, St. Vladimir's Seminary, and Princeton University in the New York area. Also, due to its close proximity, they paid a visit to the famous Byzantine Library in Washington, DC – Dumbarton Oaks Library and explored some of the rich inventory that this facility has to offer.

With the blessing of Bishop Mitrophan of the Eastern Diocese, SOC, Bishop Athanasije served the Holy Liturgy on Sunday, October 24, 2010 at St. Sava Cathedral with Fr. Djokan and Fr. Vladislav and the faithful flock. Bishop Maxim was the visiting hierarch in Florida, on the occasion of the celebration of St. Petka, the parish Slava.

While in the New York area, they were able to visit St. Vladimir's Seminary and meet with colleagues and students in a friendly and close exchange and fellowship. They also made a short trip to Princeton University sightseeing this renowned academic institution and meeting with the Serbian family Visnjic, which has both of its children working on their doctorates at the university.



Nicely concluding the first part of their journey in the USA, they went on a two-day trip to Washington DC, where most of the time was spent at the Dumbarton Oaks Library, researching the valuable Byzantine manuscripts. There were also interesting encounters during this visit. Accidentally, during a tour of the Library, they met a Serbian student of the History of Art from Belgrade.

During a short coffee break, Bishops Atanasije and Maxim had a nice dialogue with Dr Paul McPartlan, a professor at Catholic University of America. In the Library's Garden, they enjoyed unseasonably, beautiful weather, called Indian Summer (Miholjsko Leto) and talked about various theological topics, establishing useful bridges in understanding matters of East and West.

On Thursday, October 28, 2010, His Graces, Bishop Atanasije and Bishop Maxim, as well as Fr. Dimitrije arrived in Chicago, the largest Serbian community in the States. Upon a warm welcome at the airport, our dear guests went to Saint Sava's monastery in Libertyville where they were greeted by professors and students of theological school and some visitors.

After a common lunch in warm and friendly spirits, Bishop Atanasije addressed all present with pastoral and divinely inspired words that will be memorable to all who are seeking the living word of the spiritual wisdom from our Fathers. In his authentic way, he talked about many different things, pointing out for example, the importance of careful and subtle work and attention toward raising children. This awesome responsibility and sacrificial love is at the center of the care for our youth. Our faculty professors as educators of our future clergymen had a unique opportunity to learn from one of the best teachers in the Orthodox Church. Bishop Atanasije's tireless and selfless labor in the Lord's vineyard, throughout decades of written and oral word alike, is on the forefront of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis today.

His Graces Bishop Atanasije and Bishop Maxim, along with faculty students and professors, held a small pomen to Metropolitan Christopher of blessed memory, at his grave on the monastery grounds.

In the afternoon and evening hours, Bishop Maxim invited His Grace Bishop Atanasije to conduct a class in canon law for the faculty students.

On Friday, October 29, 2010, on the occasion of the Feast-day – Holy Martyr Longinus the Centurion, which is Bishop Longin's name day – both hierarchs and Fr. Dimitrije went to New Gracanica Monastery where they served Divine Liturgy with Bishop Longin of the Diocese of New Gracanica Midwestern America and Bishop Peter of ROCOR, many priests and deacons and the faithful flock. In his sermon, Bishop Ata-





nasije offered inspiring words of evangelical wisdom, reflecting upon the Gospel's story of the awakening birth of the faith of the Roman centurion Longinus. After the service, an agape meal was served for all present. With brotherly love and respect, the visiting bishops and all the clergy and faithful wished Bishop Longin many good and healthy years ahead (Mnogaja ljeta)



Later that day, Bishop Atanasije spent some time visiting ailed prota Milan Savic in the hospital. In the company of his children and dear bishop friend, Prota Savic expressed great joy for this visit and fellowship.

As a part of advanced planning, Bishop Atanasije held his public lecture that was hosted by Holy Resurrection Cathedral in Chicago on October 29 at 7:00 PM.

Many people, including some theological scholars and priests, came from all over the Chicago area, to hear Vladika speak on the theme: "From Revelation to the Heavenly Kingdom: The Truths of the Gospel in the Life of the Church and of the Christians in the Church".



In this remarkable presentation, Vladika spoke about the most important ecclesial themes for Christians in the Church, illustrating them with examples from everyday life in all aspects, from modern culture and economy to science, bioethics, philosophy and other religions. It was a great blessing to experience such a multilayered, profound reflection on our life in Christ and our path to salvation.

There is a recorded video of the whole presentation and it is available on the official website of the Western American Diocese, SOC at: www.westsrb-dio.org



This well received lecture in Chicago concluded this part of the trip on the East Coast and Midwest, and marked the beginning of the West Coast tour.

Bishop Maxim, Vladika Atanasije, and Fr. Dimitrije spent Saturday, October 30 and Sunday, October 31 in Southern California, in the San Diego and San Marcos parishes, celebrating a parish Slava and enjoying pastoral visits with the faithful flock, which was happy to see Vladika Atanasije again, 3 years after his last visit.

During their stay in Southern California, they all visited Sretenje Monastery in Escondido, where Vladika held a small moleban in the monastery chapel.

All recorded audio files and a photo gallery are available at: www.westsrbdio.org

In the next several days, after some rest from the travels, the Bishops and newly arrived guests from Belgrade, Fr. Vladan Perisic and Popadija Gordana, went on a day-long cruise to Catalina Island (<http://catalina.com/>)

On Tuesday, November 2nd, Vladika Atanasije addressed parishioners from St. Steven's Cathedral in Alhambra. In an inspiring lecture on "From Revelation to the Heavenly Kingdom," everyone who attended were enlightened by his fatherly wisdom and deep knowledge of our Tradition, but also with his unique way of relaying crucial points of our ecclesial life in the most dynamic and convincing fashion.

In the next five days, the whole group went on a long journey to northern California, visiting San Francisco and the Bay area. They also went to Platina, home of the Saint Herman Monastery, spending time with the monastics and faithful people there.

On November 5, 2010, the St. Herman of Alaska Serbian Orthodox Monastery in Platina, California, had the honor of welcoming His Grace Bishop Maxim of Western America, His Grace Bishop Atanasije (Retired Bishop of Zahum and Hercegovina), Rev. Dr. Vladan Perisic (Professor of Patrology, former Dean of the Theological Faculty, University of Belgrade, Serbia), Popadija Gordana Perisic, and Hieromonk Dimitrije of TvrDOS Monastery, Hercegovina. The visitors arrived in the evening to the ringing of bells, and were escorted to the candlelit church of the forested monastery. At the meal, His Grace Bishop Atanasije shared with the monastic brothers his rich experience in the Orthodox Church, speaking of the witness of the Faith in such traditional Orthodox lands as Georgia, as well as in missionary territories such as Japan, Uganda, Kenya, and South Africa. When asked about his spiritual father, St. Justin of Celije, Bishop Atanasije began to relate stories from the Saint's life. He spoke much about St. Justin's balanced view of ecumenism. St. Justin, he said, was against "the ecumenism of Geneva and Rome;" however, the Saint affirmed that the Orthodox Church is truly ecumenical in that it is for *all* the peoples of the world; it is open to dialogue with everyone as it shares the true Faith given to the Apostles and offers salvation to all. This true ecumenism was termed "the-anthropocentric ecumenism" by St. Justin.

The next morning the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Maxim with Bishop Atanasije concelebrating, along with Priest Vladan, Hieromonk Dimitrije, and the monastery's clergy Hieromonk Damascene and Hierodeacon Paisius (the monastery's superior, Abbot Hilarion, was visiting the brotherhood's monks and nuns in Alaska at the time). Bishop Maxim gave an edifying sermon in which he spoke of the mutual indwelling—*perichoresis*—of the Persons of the Holy Trinity as an image of the communion of love that Orthodox Christians should have among themselves, with each giving and extending oneself to the other.

At the meal following the Liturgy, Bishop Atanasije spoke to the assembled monks, the nuns from nearby St. Xenia Skete, and pil-





grims. Responding to a question from one of the nuns, he discussed at length the relationship between work and prayer. Prayer in church and in the cells, he said, is the soul of the monastery, while everything else (various forms of work and activity) are the body. One cannot exist without the other. Again Bishop Atanasije related endearing stories about his abba, St. Justin.

The visit of the Bishops Maxim and Atanasije, together with the other guests from Serbia, brought much joy and inspiration to the brothers and sisters of the northern Californian monasteries of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Because Bishop Atanasije has built close ties with Orthodox Christians throughout the world, he carries with him a sense of the true ecumenicity of the Orthodox Church which St. Justin talked about. And because of his spiritual upbringing under St. Justin, he carries with him a powerful sense that Orthodoxy is not static formalism but true life and movement—a life lived in the light of the God-man, and a constant procession toward His Heavenly Kingdom.

His Graces Bishop Atanasije, and Bishop Maxim the went to Arizona, visiting the Greek Orthodox Monastery, St. Anthony's, and the Serbian Orthodox Monastery, St. Paisius', in Safford.

During those visits, they met with elder Ephraim and the monastics in a brotherly fellowship and Christ-loving spirit, conversing on various topics.

In Safford, both Vladikas were greeted by the St. Paisius community, spending a wonderful time together, serving the Liturgy in the newly built church and talking with Abbess Michaila and the nuns about the spiritual journey of the ascetic life of the Christians. Home-schooled children that live at the monastery gladdened the bishops by singing spiritual songs and joyfully sharing their school experience with them.

The blessed visit of His Grace Bishop Atanasije was most amazing and an inspiring event that overjoyed so many, and will be remembered and engraved in our hearts eternally!

May our Lord, the Savior grants him many years! Mnogaja ljeta dragi Vladiko I Oce!

Our deepest gratitude belongs to Bishop Maxim who was instrumental in facilitating this journey, and feeding those who are hungry and thirsty for the living word.

Second Annual Pan-Orthodox Clergy Retreat Dunlap, California

”Physical Heal Thyself” (Luke 4:23) Orthodox Steps of Spiritual Transformation

On December 7-9, clergy from all over the west gathered for their second annual retreat at the Holy Monastery of the Theotokos, the Life Giving Spring, in Dunlap, California. Led by four bishops, His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos [Greek Archdiocese]; His Grace, Bishop Joseph [Antiochian Archdiocese]; His Grace, Bishop Benjamin [OCA]; and His Grace, Bishop Maxim [Serbian Patriarchate], clergy of all jurisdictions enjoyed the beautiful facilities of the St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center, listened to speakers, and worshipped together. Clergy came back to their parishes refreshed and edified by the



teaching on the topic “Physician Heal Thyself—Orthodox steps of spiritual transformation” with Retreat Master Archimandrite Meletios (Webber), Abbot of the St. John the Wonderworker Monastery in Manton, CA.



Annual Assembly in San Francisco

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1)

Indeed, as our great prophet of God the king and psalmist David, who was above all a penitent man (*metanoia*), announced and proclaimed with these words, it is truly wonderful, joyful, and pleasant to our God when brothers come together in fraternal love. To carry out these words, to fulfill and accomplish them “here and now,” brother priests and priest-monks of the God-preserved Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church, fellow workers in the field of our Lord,



have gathered in Eucharistic synaxis and joy around our Lord Jesus Christ, our Teacher and Inspirer. Yet we also gather around His living icon in the “synaxis of saints” in this region and this diocese, by His great mercy, the Bishop of the Western American Diocese His Grace Dr. Maxim, our spiritual father, under whose leadership we stand striving to attain the everlasting Heavenly Kingdom.

This Synaxis, the annual diocesan assembly, which was made possible through the love, hospitality, and efforts of Fr. Djurica Gordic, his parish board, and parishioners at the St. John the Prophet and Baptist Temple in San Francisco, was attended by members of EUO as well as by elected delegates of all the congregation church-school boards in this diocese.

As His Grace Bishop Dr. Maxim pointed out in His introductory speech, there are many temptations and difficulties we have in striving for the “here and now” at a given historical moment, in this region, surrounded by a post-modernist society and by those of other denominations. Yet, to proclaim and announce the Joyful News (Evangelion) and to introduce and preserve as many souls as we can within the Church, the



Ark of Salvation, which solely and courageously withstands the storms and elements of this world, and outside which there is no salvation (*“Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus”*), we are joyful for being graced with the blessings of peace and oneness of mind, loving one another and unanimously confessing and following our Lord Jesus Christ and thus fulfilling the Liturgical commandment: “Let us love one another so that with one mind we may confess!” (The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom)



Since the annual Diocesan Assembly was held on February 17 and 18, in the first preparation week for the Great Lent — a week in which we sing “Open unto us the doors of repentance, O Life-giver...” — of great significance was the presence of a well-known and respected contemporary theologian (St. Symeon the New Theologian warns us that this word should not be carelessly used and lightly understood, saying: “The theologian is one who has passed the way of purifying the heart to illuminating the mind”), Archimandrite Dr. Meletios Webber, abbot of the St. John the Wonderworker Monastery in Manton, California — a calm, humble, and very simple monk, who in addition to his great academic knowledge and experience (he received his Masters degree in Theology from Oxford University and the Thessalonica School of Theology and also holds an E.D.D. (doctorate) in Psychotherapy from the University of Montana) has accumulated a vast spiritual and pastoral experience. This distinguished guest and lecturer very intimately shared with all the participants his thoughts and reflections on the subject of “Therapy and Eucharist — the Church as a Place of Freedom and Love.”

In understanding the Church as a spiritual hospital, one is inclined, as Fr. Meletios noted, to conclude that the priest has a therapeutic role to play at this hospital, even the role of healer himself. This, however, is a misconception. Just as in everyday life when we go to the doctor because of an illness, it is not he who heals us but rather his knowledge and properly prescribed medication, so that is how we as priests need to understand our role — that we are here not to treat and save people, but rather to LISTEN, revealing the true symptoms pointing to the Real Medicine and to salvation from disease in our Lord Who alone is “Lex Immortality — The Medicine of Immortality” (St. Ignatius the God-bearer). So the priest is not there to judge parishioners or to provide analysis as worldly physicians do: diagnosis — prognosis — medication; that way we would direct all our attention to the symptoms and their removal while the disease itself would remain. The priest is there to encourage the sick one to fight, to bring them in proximity of God, to the closeness of Christ, where they would eventually understand that in HIM and only in Him lies the hidden cure for our weaknesses and deficiencies (this great truth is wonderfully proclaimed to us in the ordination prayer, which we should often recall: “Divine grace that heals the weakness and supplements the deficiencies...”). In such enthusiasm, standing in the presence of God, our minds cease to wander, to roam in the past and future,

freeing the captured heart to freely recognize God, because He can only be recognized, identified, and reached by the heart. One of the Church fathers advises us in the same manner: “What cannot be reached (GOD), becomes accessible only if you do not reach for it.” So only by accepting that we are powerless, small, and weak we can get results. Our forefather Abraham had a similar experience when, during the appearance of God in the form



of three angels, he cried out: “I would speak out but dust and ashes I am!” St. Basil the Great tells us that our hearts are waiting for us every day to give and reveal them to the Lord, cleaning the mirror of the heart by prayer and virtue, revealing the Prototype. Just like him in our day, well-known for his ascetic and saintly life, Elder Paisios from Mount Athos would often say that despite all the worlds and galaxies that He has power over and that serve Him, God is looking at this small planet of ours on which He has blessed us to live and is focusing on a small, poor man, burdened by heavy sins, carefully but with hope expecting him to open his small, wounded, and unclean heart so that He Who is Boundless and Uncircumscribed might enter and settle in it, bringing peace and healing.

Therefore it really is necessary to point out and emphasize the need for the Holy Mysteries of Confession and Holy Communion (these two Sacraments of the Church are linked essentially but not chronologically). They are needed not so that through confession and prayer we might become worthy of Holy Communion but rather to make us realize how unworthy we are and to wake us up from a “sinful dream.” Sometimes in order to achieve this, and that a sleepy and sinful man might awake, the priest must apply epitimia (penance), but always with the awareness that it is a medication and not a punishment, as many people wrongly think of it. The priest is not a teacher who dispenses lessons or punishment, because that would put him in the role of judge. The priest is one who has experienced the disease and is struggling with it. Our Bishop Maxim sharing with all present his thoughts on this subject has said: “The priest is a patient from the adjacent bed, but also an icon of Christ that is looming over the bed!”

After this beautiful and instructive lecture of Archimandrite Meletios Webber, which caused great interest and many pastoral and God-seeking questions, we proceeded to a dinner of love. Continuing its business, the Assembly dealt with current issues relevant to the work and life of our diocese and its parishes, as well as the submission of reports of various diocesan bodies.

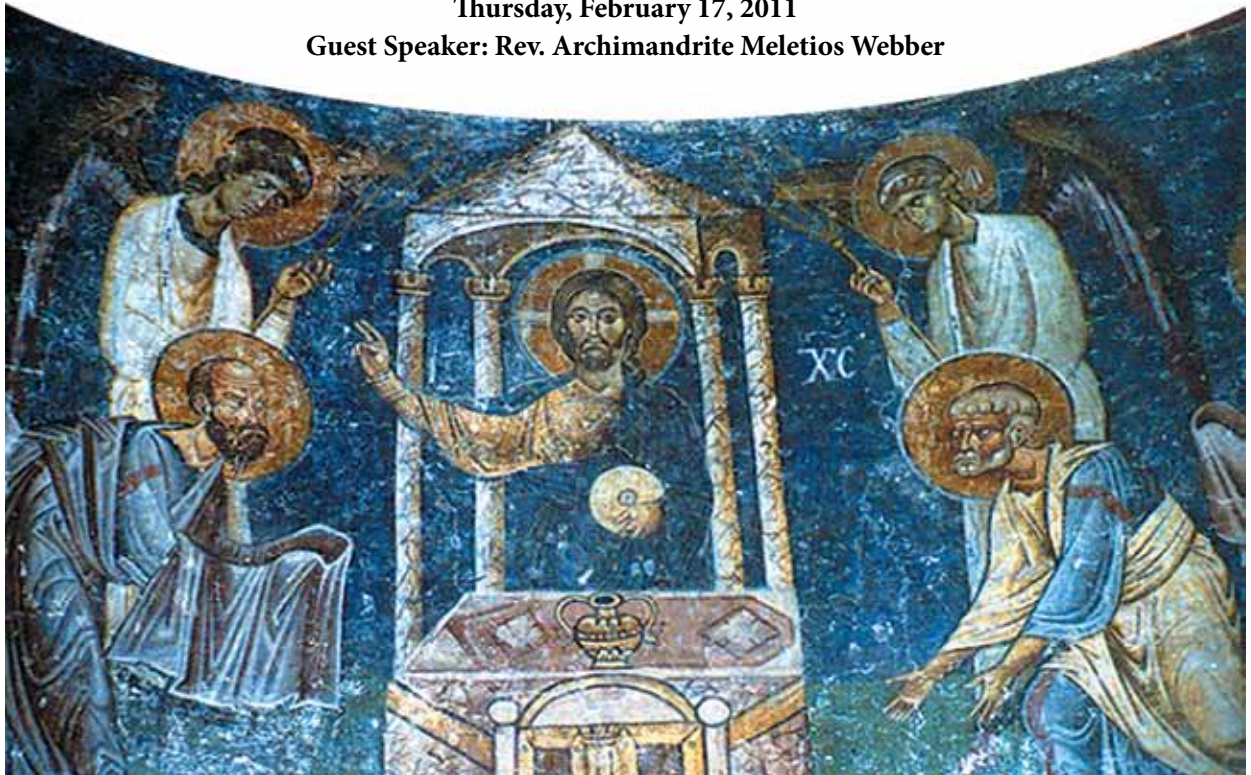
At the end of this fruitful, brotherly, joyful gathering in love, we invoked God’s mercy and grace for our God-preserved Western American Diocese, besought refreshment from the Holy Spirit for His Grace our father and bishop Maxim, and prayed for strength and courage for our priests and monks, as well as to all Orthodox and pious people who walk in the path of salvation striving to conquer the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus, we cried out with one mouth, one mind, and one heart:

MANY YEARS!!!

Annual Diocesan Assembly Clergy Seminar

Thursday, February 17, 2011

Guest Speaker: Rev. Archimandrite Meletios Webber



On Thursday, February 17, 2011, the clergy of the Western American Diocese gathered with His Grace, Bishop Maxim, for the clergy seminar that immediately preceded the Annual Assembly, hosted by St. John the Baptist Serbian Orthodox Church in San Francisco. The seminars have provided valuable opportunities for pastoral growth through thoughtful presentations by a variety of guest speakers from year to year. This was again the case, as Reverend Archimandrite Meletios Webber, Abbot of the Monastery of Saint John the Wonderworker in Manton, CA, accepted the invitation to speak on this occasion.

Archimandrite Meletios is of Scottish background, born in London, England. He received his Masters in Theology from Oxford University and the Thessaloniki School of Theology in Greece, and also holds an E.D.D. (Doctorate) in Psychotherapy from the University of Montana in Missoula. He is the author of two published books: *Steps of Transformation: An Orthodox Priest Explores the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous* (Conciliar Press, 2003), and *Bread And Water, Wine And Oil: An Orthodox Christian Experience Of God* (Conciliar Press, 2007).

Archimandrite Meletios introduced his presentation, “Therapy and Eucharist: The Church As A Place Of Freedom And Love,” as a prequel to the talk he would give to the entire assembly the next day, but tailored to an audience of brother clergy in order to provide an opportunity for pastoral sharing. It began with the notion of healing, as people of God are to understand it: the ability to go towards God’s kingdom at a deeper level, or movement towards God (as opposed to a destination), or a process (as opposed to a place). The place where this movement, process, or therapeutic healing takes place is the Church; and the priest, regularly living life with God, is the therapist.

The question to be anticipated was: ‘what is to be healed?’ The speaker referenced Saints Maximus the Confessor and Evagrius of Pontius in concluding that the division between the mind and the heart is what

needs to be healed, beginning with the tendency for the mind to want to “run the show” based on its access to knowledge, including its knowledge of God. But this is where an important point was made, based on it being a clergy seminar: even the priests are broken, with minds and hearts divided. Eastern Orthodox theology has always stressed *life with God* over *knowledge of God*. Thus, for a priest to be a therapist, as defined above, he first needs to be able to overcome this divide and enter into his heart. In so doing, he can become a *good* therapist, not because he’s “knowledgeable” but because he acknowledges he himself is broken and in need of healing. To quote the speaker: “To share therapy with a parishioner is to have experienced it. We have to know what is wrong with us before we can help others.”

Upon offering the view of ‘priest as therapist,’ Archimandrite Meletios then anticipated a follow-up question: ‘what is expected from therapy?’ He answered that as a therapist in/of the Church, a priest shouldn’t judge a parishioner – both are broken – rather, the priest should pastorally advise and heal from his perspective of living with God. To help develop this ability, the Archimandrite suggested the exercise of sitting in an airport and observing people until being able to do it without making presuppositions about them. He also stressed that the priest being able to first *completely listen* to the parishioner is more important than offering words; the most useful counsel will be the result of effective listening.

Like a toothache is an indicator of corruption in the mouth, sin is a condition of the human experience of brokenness. And like someone takes aspirin to relieve the toothache but delays resolving the larger problem, improperly addressing the sin can actually prevent healing the underlying brokenness and cause more spiritual damage (His Grace, Bishop Maxim later expressed his appreciation for this very effective simile). Archimandrite Meletios cautioned that there are many Church Canons that could be spiritually destructive if a priest blindly applied them as a penance for someone’s confession. At the very least, the priest should consider two questions before applying a penance: 1) Is there a realistic chance it is able to help them *change/repent*? 2) Do they have the spiritual/emotional strength to *want* to change/repent, and thus *try* the penance? This isn’t judging – it’s the priest’s desire for this person to approach the kingdom of heaven in part by being awoken to the importance of meaningful confession – it’s a crucial part of the ministry.

Before taking questions from the assembled clergy, the Archimandrite concluded his prepared remarks with a couple of important points: 1) Historically, the medical sciences in Western society, influenced by humanism, has valued the notion of ‘knowledge as healer,’ whereas Eastern Orthodox theology, especially concerning the priest as therapist, has understood ‘God as healer.’ 2) The experience of the saints of the Church has been that as they got closer to God, they were called to offer more to those around them (Luke 12: 48).



The clergy questions reflected their interest and desire to better serve their parishes and when Archimandrite Meletios was asked to elaborate more on confession and penance, he offered the following two points: 1) If a penance is given without pastoral consideration for the person’s salvation, what is the point? Rather, a penance should offer the person an opportunity for a great effort *and an achievable result*, so they will be encouraged to continue on and really change/repent for the sake of their salvation. 2) Timing is crucial for the priest who truly wishes to heal and reveal salvation through confession. For example, if someone confesses consciously considering a sinful act, then the priest would react with a more ‘legalistic’ flavor, citing Scripture and the historical teaching of the Church in an attempt to deter the person from a destructive path away from imitating Christ. However, when someone confesses already committing the sin, it’s too late to deter and the priest should then work pastorally and encourage the repentance the person has initiated through their coming to confession.

Archimandrite Meletios Webber concluded his well-received clergy seminar by noting that, “Saint Ignatius of Antioch said the Logos emerges from the silence of the Father. And while the mind is now needed to communicate, the ‘language’ of the Kingdom comes from the heart in silence.”

Sunday of Orthodoxy

Canonical Bishops in the West Coast Celebrate the Sunday of Orthodoxy at Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral

For the fourth straight year, and with great joy and anticipation, four Orthodox Christian hierarchs of the West Coast gathered to celebrate the restoration of the holy icons on the first Sunday of Great Lent, known also as the Sunday of Orthodoxy. They have now taken the annual celebration to all four of their Los Angeles-area cathedrals, enabling their clergy and laity to meet one another



and partake of the same chalice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though these cathedrals and their sister parishes are neighbors to one another, the Sunday of Orthodoxy gives their people a chance to go beyond their backyards and normal routines to see the fullness of the Faith in each other's faces.

His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN and Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral (Orthodox Church in America) welcomed almost two dozen clergy and hundreds of faithful for the renewal of the tradition in 2011. He rejoined his brothers—His Eminence, Metropolitan GERASIMOS (Greek Orthodox Christian Metropolis of San Francisco); His Grace, Bishop JOSEPH (Antiochian Diocese of Los Angeles and the West); and His Grace, Bishop MAXIM (Serbian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Western America)—in a unified celebration that took us beyond our different cultures, languages and local practices. The heavenly choir consisted of singers and chanters from parishes across southern California.

Vladyka BENJAMIN offered the homily, and, even though the gathering has heard several insights into the meaning of the Sunday of Orthodoxy, he presented a fresh perspective that manifests the depth of the Orthodox Faith. This day marks not just a restoration of the icons in the Church dating back to the eighth and ninth centuries, but humanity's restoration to the perfection in which God had originally created it.

"When Orthodox Christians were challenged by the iconoclasts to remove the sacred images from their churches, they understood this to be an assault on our understanding of Christ's saving work," Vladyka said. "They understood the rejection of icons to be a rejection of God's adoption of what we are, a refusal to believe that God loves us so much that He came to take upon Himself Adam's flesh, to die Adam's death, to go where Adam was in Sheol and to fill the darkness of death with the radiance of His divine life. Our Orthodox fathers saw the hatred of the holy icons to be a rejection of Christ's saving passion, His restoration of His image within the creatures He has loved from before the ages."

Following Holy Communion, all the bishops, clergy and faithful processed around the exterior of the church, bearing their icons of Jesus Christ, His Mother and His Saints. It reminds us that our Savior and His



holy people are present with us on every step of our Lenten Journey, guiding us and strengthening us, like Vladyka BENJAMIN put it, as we cleanse “our inner self so that the inner beauty with which we were created can be seen, so that Christ can walk about in the creation He loves through us.” At each stop, the deacons and priests offered petitions for the continued well-being of the Orthodox Faith, and each bishop sprinkled the faithful with holy water.

After the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy concluded, Sayidna JOSEPH reflected on this glorious day. “We celebrate the Sunday of Orthodoxy every year with no mention of any specific saint of the day because this Sunday is unique,” His Grace said. “We celebrate this “doxological” day with icons to reaffirm all Orthodox doctrines and dogmas. Therefore, we send the message that the Orthodox doctrines are the same over the centuries and forever, because they contain the truth of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Synodicon says: “This is the Faith of the Apostles; this is the Faith of the Fathers; this is the Faith of the Orthodox; this is the Faith which has established the universe!”

When everyone returned inside the church, Dhespota GERASIMOS thanked Vladyka BENJAMIN and the entire Holy Virgin Mary community for their hospitality and kindness. His Eminence reminded the faithful that “the Triumph of Orthodoxy is not in the procession, but in the restoration of icons and humanity to God. The Holy Spirit unified us today, so this must become the reality every day of our lives. The icon—the image of God—must shine within us 24-7.”

The community then hosted everyone to a Lenten luncheon in the cathedral hall and throughout the grounds. They had another chance to dine and dwell in unity with each other, following the first banquet around the chalice of our Lord. After a glorious morning, everyone went to their homes with a renewed sense of purpose for the remainder of Great Lent, as well as anticipation for the next Sunday of Orthodoxy celebration in 2012.



WESTERN DIOCESE ANNUAL LENTEN CLERGY RETREAT**March 22 & 23, 2011****Christ the Savior Serbian Orthodox Church****Arcadia, California**

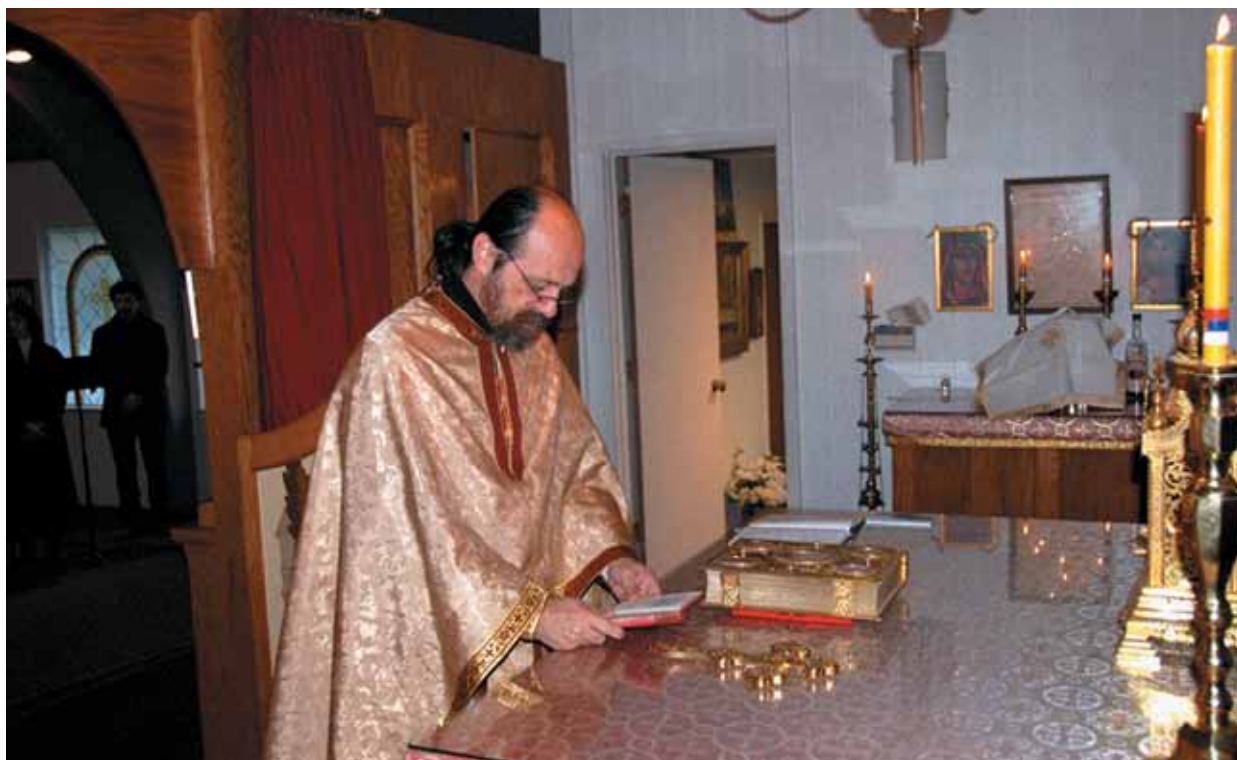
Progressive Revelation

by Vladan Perišić

It is well-observed that if it is possible at all to speak of God, it is only because God has spoken of Himself. That is the reason why it is of utmost importance to investigate what exactly God has said of Himself. To do this, we shall leave out a very important question – how we know that God has spoken at all – and concentrate only on the ways we believe God has spoken to man, or on the ways God has revealed Himself.

God has not revealed Himself all of the sudden, but in progressive stages. God's first revelation or manifestation is the created order of the world of nature. That is why "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps 19,1). This revelation is intended for all people regardless of race or religion. The very Old Testament testifies that many nations (different from Israel) knew and revered the true God. This was confirmed by the New Testament in which it was shown that God never abandoned the other nations (although He preferred Israel), and that He was always approachable for them, because He "left not Himself without testimony, doing good from heaven" (Acts, 14.17). If they could not know Him, than it would not be fair to blame them for not glorifying Him as God. But they could know Him at least through the rhythms of nature (e.g. regularity of rain and harvest) as the One who "gives rains and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Ibidem).





God, however, has not revealed Himself only in the visible world. He revealed Himself through the moral conscience as well: “For when the Gentiles who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law, these, having not the law, are a law to themselves: who show the work of the Lord written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them” (Epistle to the Romans, 2.14-15). So, parallel to the “physical” there is also “moral” revelation. Moreover, inside the “moral” revelation there are two different types: 1) tablets given to Moses on Sinai, and 2) tablets written in human hearts. It seems that God first spoke to all men through cosmos and conscience, and only then to Moses and other prophets. So, the revelation to all humanity (written in human hearts) is older than that to Moses and Israel (written in stone and permanent). This first revelation is of a lesser degree than the one which followed but what is important is it was the revelation of the same God. The same God who revealed Himself through the regularity of the courses of the stars as through the natural hierophanies, revealed Himself also to Moses.

As was already explained by Jesus Christ, the new revelation does not destroy, but perfects the previous one. Just as Christ did not destroy the Old Testament Law, but fulfilled it, so the Old Testament Law did not destroy the cosmic religion, but fulfilled it. Of course, every next revelation is more perfect than the previous one. Also, in the cosmic religion God manifests Himself through permanent patterns of the natural cycles, while in the biblical religion He manifests Himself in the uniqueness of historical events. So, cosmic religion shows itself as the first phase in the history of salvation in which God has revealed Himself through creation and providence (i.e. maintenance of created beings). In the next phase of God’s revelation He is known through the single intervention in human history. This is the biblical revelation in which each of these divine acts is but a progressive stage in the general divine plan of salvation. We know who God is through His unique acts in our history. But to recognize that the one concrete act is divine, God’s revelation (or His inspiration) to an individual human mind is needed.

Apart from revealing Himself in cosmos and conscience, God first spoke through the Prophets of Israel. Afterwards, He spoke through Jesus Christ. And finally He spoke through the Church. The idea of God at the level of cosmic religion is known through creation, whereas the idea of God in biblical religion is known through the covenant (which is the most important way of God’s acting in the Bible). The idea of covenant implies that God made a bond between Himself and His chosen people Israel. For God this commitment is



unconditional, which means that whatever the sins of men might be, they could never untie this bond which God tied once forever. Men can withdraw from this bond, but God will not. This is why He is true God.

When today we say that something is “true”, we imply that something in the world corresponds to our thought. This is the original ancient Greek concept of truth. The Hebrew concept of truth (*emet*) is different. It implies the solidity of something from which one receives support (e.g. the pillar on which a building rests, or the support that a child receives when resting in his mother’s arms). So, in relation to God, truth-*emet* means

that we can lean on Him with all our weight. That God is truth means that He is reliable, that we can rely on Him. Therefore, the means of access to truth is no longer reason (as in the Greek-European mind), but faith. Only by faith, i.e. believing in God, or trusting Him can we lean on Him (and not by reason, i.e. not by having the evidence of Him). That is why the symbol of the true God in the Bible is a rock (as the unshakable firmness of the Word of God). Man expresses the recognition of this reliability of the Word of God by saying amen, which is like saying: “He is reliable, and I can lean on Him, so I can believe in Him”. God’s faithfulness to what He promised to man is as firm as a rock, so that man unreservedly can believe His Word.

God revealed Himself in the most perfect way in Jesus Christ. Because this revelation is the expression of God’s fullness, there can be no further revelation of God. The Old Testament revealed God making a covenant with Israel and drawing it away from idols. The New Testament revealed God in the flesh making a covenant with the New Israel made from all the nations. The Time of the Church revealed God making a covenant with every baptised individual who enters the Church. This is God’s progressive revelation. Likewise, “The Old Covenant proclaimed the Father openly [but primarily as the all-transcendent Father] and the Son more obscurely [only hinting at the person of the Son, presumably through prophecies of the coming Redeemer]. The New [Testament] manifested the Son [directly in the person of Jesus] and suggested the deity of the Spirit [presumably by Jesus’ promise of the other Comforter and vague references to the Spirit in Acts and Paul’s letters]. Now [in The Age of the Church, the eschatological period of salvation history that began with Jesus’ ascension to the Father and giving of the Spirit at Pentecost] the Spirit itself dwells among us and provides us with a clearer demonstration of itself [i.e. reveals itself to Christians directly]. For it was not safe to proclaim the Son clearly when the Divinity of the Father was not yet acknowledged; or to burden us further (if I can put it somewhat boldly) with the Holy Spirit when the Divinity of the Son had not yet been received” (Gregory of Nazianz, Oration 31.26). Therefore, according to Gregory the Theologian (as well as Origen, Epiphanius, etc.) there is a gradual revelation of the Trinity in the history of salvation.

In this gradual unveiling of the ineffable Trinity God moves His people from idols to the Law (in the Old Testament), from Law to the Gospel (in the New Testament), and finally from this perishable life to His future everlasting Kingdom. Each of these progressive phases is preparatory for the next one, because God economically reveals Himself according to the ability of His people to receive it, but at the same time He does not leave the increasing of this ability to chance, but by illuminating the human mind He educates mankind and so makes it able to receive His revelation more and more.

Finding God's Peace

*A reflection given by Abbess Michaila at the 2011
Diocesan Women's Lenten Retreat, St. Paisius Monastery*

Finding Peace in Christ: Today a terrible unrest disquiets us. Indeed, because of the busyness of post-modern life, we sometimes find ourselves living in a kind of emptiness which we then spend most of our time trying to fill with various consolations—good food, good drink, and other material comforts and distractions. Our preoccupation with earthly things can leave little time to care for our souls. The result is a life of anxiety concerning how we will make ends meet, how we will get ahead, how we will plan our next vacation, etc. etc.

Our Lord, however, told us not to be anxious about anything. To Martha He said: *Martha, Martha, thou art troubled and anxious about many things, but Mary has chosen the better part* (Lk. 10:41-42). Here, the Lord is not commanding that we all be Marys. Rather, He is exhorting us to be present with Him in the midst of all our daily labors; for if we are present with Him, we will be at peace, and our labors will be unto our salvation.

The Lord's charge that we not be anxious is also not a cold, legalistic directive heaped upon us as something to be carried out on our own. No. The Lord offers Himself to us to comfort us, to heal our wounds, and to bring us peace in any situation. He gives His peace to us through His complete and unfailing love for us, just like a parent's love brings comfort and peace to a child troubled.





We see this quite clearly in the Gospel. At the Mystical Supper, the Lord says to His disciples: *If you love Me, you will keep My words; and My father will love you, and We will come to you and make Our abode with you... and the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name shall teach you all things* (Jn. 14:23-26). A few minutes later, prior to His betrayal at Gethsemane, the Lord says: *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be*

troubled, neither let it be afraid (Jn. 14:27). And after His Resurrection, the Lord again bestows the gift of peace upon His disciples, saying: *Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you* (Jn. 20:21).

The Lord's peace truly surpasses all understanding. When He is near us, our suffering, loneliness, emptiness, fear, doubt and anxiety vanish; our hearts become full. This is the peace of a heart that has responded to God's love. This is a foretaste of the life to come when we will see Him face to face in eternity. As St. Paul writes: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the mind of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him* (I Cor. 2:9).

Love: A Prerequisite to Finding Peace in Christ: In the words of the Russian Archimandrite Raphael, "God created time as a preparation for eternity... Time is a state of preparing, of choice. It is a crossroads where the ultimate question of existence is decided: is one *with* God or *without* Him? Time is the possibility of change, of the formation of one's individual identity, the attaining or loss of the likeness of God, the acquisition of that which will come to light in eternity."

But what does it mean to "choose God," to be "one with God," to attain "the likeness of God." It means choosing to share in His deep and abiding love; it means choosing to love Him and thus all humanity which He has created in His own image and likeness. To love God but not one's neighbor is not to love God at all; and to love one's neighbor but not to love God is to reject the personal love that God has extended to us all. Indeed, peace flows only from a heart that has chosen God and has thereby chosen—in the *here* and *now*—to love: to love the person in front of us *now*, to love despite the circumstance we find ourselves in *now*, to choose to respond to God's love and spend time with God *now*.

In this regard, it is no surprise that the first two commandments given to us by Christ are commandments to love. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets* (Matt. 22:37-40).

Similarly, when we are told about the coming judgment, Christ again speaks of love: *When the Son of man shall come in His glory... before Him shall be gathered the nations: ... He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, in-*



herit the kingdom prepared for you... For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: Naked and ye clothed Me: I was sick and ye visited Me: I was in prison and ye came unto Me... Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me (Matt. 25:31-40).

At bottom, the question for all of us will be “Did you love Me?” “Did you respond to My love by loving?” “Did you prepare for eternity by responding to My call to love?” There is a certain urgency and immediacy to these questions, for how we live *today* determines how we will live in *eternity*. In other words, if one has not lived by love, one will not experience God’s eternal love—not because God will deprive us of love, but because we will have deprived ourselves of love.

Deciding how and whether to respond to God’s call to love often leads to inner struggle. It is a comfort, however, that heroic acts are not required. Rather, it is in the midst of our ordinary, daily lives that God offers opportunities to love. When we so respond, the present time turns into our eternal salvation. Thus, although

we may think much about our future salvation, the most important time is the present. It is in the *present* that we must find God. It is in the *present* that we must love one another.

The Mystery of the Present Moment: Since the present moment is the only place where we can meet God, we must learn to live in the here and now and not in past memories or regrets, or in future fantasies. To be in the present with God and others requires great effort; for as we all know, it is easier for our minds to oscillate continuously between the past and the future than it is to remain fully attentive in the present. When we begin to realize that we can meet God only in the here and now, we stop waiting for special moments which may never come, and instead begin to find God in the ordinary.

But how exactly do we live in the present moment—in the sacred present where we can find true communion with God and others? This is a difficult question, particularly in our post-modern times where, in many ways, we live too much in the present with our cell phones, I-phones, blackberries, and computers keeping us “connected” at every moment of the day.

This, however, I submit to you is not truly living in the present. It is, more often than not, living in a sense of urgency and immediacy where we fool ourselves into believing that we are living in the here and now just because we are busy sharing information or responding to or sending messages. Such urgency and sense of importance, however, are often delusions. For how many emails are truly urgent and important? How much information on Facebook is truly important and not just trivial amusement? We deem such information urgent and important mostly because we have been granted the ability to post and read, send and respond, immediately. Immediacy of communication, however, does equate to urgency or importance. To illustrate the point, how many of us have been late for an important meeting or family obligation because we were responding to an email or reading a posting, not because the email or posting was particularly important, but because it “demanded” our attention by virtue of its having popped up in our email box and because we



were able to access it immediately. Slowly and insidiously, this deluded sense of urgency and importance robs us of experiencing the present moment with others and even with God. In this way, communion is broken. In this way, isolation begins. In this way, instant gratification and a hyper-focus on meeting our own needs takes primary place. In this way, our capacity for real love—sacrificial love—is compromised and crippled.

If one has any doubts as to the above, let us ask ourselves the following.

First, how many of us rob ourselves of experiencing the fullness of the present moment with others (and hence with God) because we are constantly parallel processing or using our handheld devices as default time fillers? More specifically, how many of us have checked email, played video games, or pulled up the latest CNN news while speaking with a friend or colleague on the phone? How many of us have checked email or Facebook postings while attending a child's school or sporting event? How many of us have witnessed children, or even adults, reach immediately for their handheld devices or make a beeline for the computer upon coming home or, alternatively, upon returning to a hotel while on vacation, instead of engaging in conversation with one another about how our day went, what we experienced or saw during that day of vacation, etc.? Indeed, our penchant for parallel processing even robs us of being directly present with God in prayer because we can find ourselves thinking about what emails await us and what emails we must respond to even as we are seeking to commune with God. It's as if we cannot stay in one contemplative spot too long, but rather are awaiting the next distraction and interesting thing to happen. This is not living in the present, awaiting the Lord. It is living in a superficial state of distraction, always anticipating what the future will bring—what email or posting we *will* make, what email or posting we *will* get, what email or posting we *will* read, what video game we *will* play, etc. etc.

Second, how many of us have intentionally or unintentionally isolated ourselves—thereby shutting others out—by being glued to our screens? We can stick in our ear buds, turn on our favorite song, tune out whomever we want, and tune into whatever fantasy we desire, getting lost in ourselves rather than having to be present with another. Indeed, attending to individualized entertainment or gratification through technological media (even if it is only the instant gratification of texting trivialities to a cyber acquaintance) has become a socially acceptable way to shut out others.

Third, how many of us have spent hours picking the music we would like for our I-pod, or the screen saver we would like for our computer, or the computer cover we would like for our new Dell, or the type of computing device we would prefer? It's a veritable smorgasbord of choice. Of course, choice is not necessarily bad, but the temptation of self-indulgence that technology makes so easy is potentially quite dangerous. Technology has facilitated and perfected the art of individualized entertainment. Even minivans now come equipped with video screens for each seat so that each child can watch what he or she wants, thus obviating



the need to work out difficulties and conflicts or to interact with our children. This hyper-focus on individual choice slowly leads to a hyper-focus on self, and hence to a false sense of self-importance. This is exacerbated by the fact that we now have Facebook in which people can post the most inane details about themselves, along with their own musings, their own accomplishments, indeed, their own digital face in

a myriad of photos. All this can become a form of idolatry of self.

Facebook is particularly interesting, because the idolatry of self is, ironically, in the name of social networking—i.e., creating community with others. And yet, although we have more avenues for social networking today than at any other point in history, we are told that loneliness and depression are on the rise. We have more casual contacts, but fewer deeper relationships. We “know” more people, but know fewer people well. We have more opportunities to meet people, and yet seem less often to enter deeply into the mystery of Christ with another person. As someone recently remarked, “technology offers the illusion of companionship without the demands of intimacy; and communication without emotional risk, while actually making people feel lonelier and more overwhelmed.”

Regrettably, for all the good that technology has brought us, it has led to a habit of distraction, a renewed penchant for instant gratification, a focus on the self, isolation from others, and the belief that a greater number of human contacts can substitute for meaningful relationships. All these things undermine our capacity for real love—i.e., sacrificial love where we give of ourselves for the sake of others.

Sacrificial Love: Sacrificial love, of course, begins first with our sacrificing ourselves to and for the Lord. On a practical level, this means emptying our minds and hearts of everything else for some portion of every day so that we can enter into His presence. To do this, we have to leave the press of daily cares and give God our undivided attention. It is actually a rare person who accomplishes even five totally dedicated minutes of morning and evening prayer without fail, every day, without multi-tasking. It is a rare person who attends Divine Liturgy undistracted. However, this is what we must strive to do—namely, give God our undivided attention if we are truly to know Him.

Sacrificial love also entails sacrificing oneself for others. As mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and daughters, many of you have labored all your lives in humble service to others. Many of you have done it in the most ordinary ways. Many of you may not have even been cognizant of your sacrifice. Remember that when the Lord tells of the Last Judgment, those who had pleased the Lord had not even perceived that it was unto the Lord that they had given themselves. *Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me* (Matt. 25:37-40). In other words, God is so hidden in daily life that we sometimes don’t even see Him. This should confirm for us that it is in the ordinary, not the





glorious, that we find opportunities to love and sacrifice.

Even amongst monastics, it is in the ordinary that one finds God, sacrifices for God, and learns to love. Elder Paisios the Athonite wrote: “The goal for each of us is to think of the other person, to see the other person as a brother and to feel his pain. It is this very pain that moves God and brings about the miracle. A generous heart and self-denial are what drive us. Without this force, we are tormented.” As Met. Anthony Bloom explains: “Every human meeting is a situation in which we are called either to receive Christ or to be Christ’s messenger to the person whom we

are meeting.” Thus, we do not have to wait for a momentous occasion to sacrifice ourselves. We do not have to wait for a momentous occasion to pray or go to church. We can love and sacrifice in the *here and now*, in the situation in which we find ourselves in *now*, with respect to the person who is in front of us *now*. When we sacrifice ourselves for others, we mystically participate in Christ’s sacrifice for us. As St. Cyril of Alexandria said: “One can only enter into the presence of God in the state of sacrifice; of voluntary death to oneself.”

In this way, we make a choice now, within the confines of the time that has been given to us, to live in love in eternity. We make a choice in what the Greeks called *chronos* (chronological time) in order that we may enter into *kairos* (the appointed time). We escape the tyranny of our calendars, appointments, dates, clocks, etc, by making a choice now, which then propels us into eternity.

The Divine Liturgy: This eternal time (*kairos*) is experienced most directly in the Divine Liturgy where we experience and participate in the most radical act of love and sacrifice that the world has known. I say “experience” and “participate in” because the Eucharistic Liturgy is not a mere passive remembrance of a past act—namely, Christ’s sacrifice for us. Rather, it is where the whole Passion and Resurrection of our Lord is actualized and made present for us in the here and now. This is accomplished mystically through the operation of the Holy Spirit and through our active participation in the paschal or saving act of our Lord. I say “active,” because we, in turn, offer ourselves to God. “Thine own, of Thine own, we offer unto Thee in all and for all.” As Archimandrite Zacharias explains: This is where the celebrant on behalf of all the people says, “All that Thou hast ever given us is Thine. We offer it back to Thee, because Thou hast made all things new for our sake.... We offer our temporal life with all its concerns, and in exchange, God gives us His divine Life which is eternal; we exchange time for eternity. We put all our life and hope, our gratitude and repentance—the entire content of our heart and prayer—into the gifts of the bread and wine which we bring as an offering to God.... We offer our sacrifice ‘in and for all’ in the light of all that Christ has done for us; and God, Who is always faithful to His promises, is well pleased with the sacrifice of the faithful who form His Body and His Church.” As members of the Body, we must also offer ourselves to each other in peace and love. Only then is our sacrificial love complete.

Let us spend the time that remains fulfilling God’s commandment to love Him as God and in the person of our neighbor, so that when this brief life ends we will hear the longed for words, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you* (Matt. 25:34). May we thus acquire His peace now and forever!

The Ministry of the Circle of Serbian Sisters of the Western American Diocese



The Diocesan Kolo Sestara was established on December 6, 1986. Through the hard work and efforts of the sisters, the organization has flourished to the present day.

Some of the principle goals of the Diocesan Kolo Srpskih Sestara include the following:

- To volunteer its efforts for the glory of God, for the Holy Serbian Orthodox Church, for the benefit of the people, and ultimately for the salvation of its members.
- To spread the faith and create awareness amongst the church parishes and members of the SOC in the Western American Diocese.
- In keeping with the example set by the Myrrh-bearing Women, to spread the word of Orthodoxy and to care for the sick, the suffering and the poor.
- As sisters and mothers, to nurture our children (by bringing them up in the Orthodox faith and Tradition) and to contribute to the Diocesan Summer Camp.
- To develop and advance friendships and understanding among local parish Kolos, as well as with members of the Diocesan Kolo,
- Executive Board Members, and the Diocesan Bishop under whose administration the Kolo exists.
- To organize special events and other Diocesan related activities for the Bishop, including the social commitments of the Diocese as requested by the Bishop, i.e., luncheons, holidays, receptions, etc.
- To work diligently for the accomplishments set forth as our mission.

It is our hope that our love of God, combined with hard work and unity in accomplishing the ministry of the Circle of the Serbian Sisters of the Western American Diocese, will strengthen our faith on our path to salvation. Who amongst us, at the dread judgment seat of Christ, would not want to hear those most cherished words from our Lord: “Well done, my good and faithful servant!”

We thank His Grace Bishop Maxim for his guidance and prayers, as a shepherd of our God-saving Diocese!

2011 Message of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America

May 27, 2011

Christ is Risen!

“Glory to the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-giving, and Undivided Trinity.”

By the grace of God, we forty-five Hierarchs gathered in Chicago IL, on May 25-27, 2011, for the second meeting of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America. Several Hierarchs were prevented from attending due to personal illness, while our Serbian brothers, participating at a prolonged assembly of bishops meeting in Belgrade, were also unable to attend. All of us experienced what the Psalmist joyfully declares, “how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!” (Ps. 132.1)

We draw inspiration from this resurrectional liturgical period, within which we have assembled, standing at the midpoint between the light of Pascha and the grace of Pentecost, the crossroad between the possibility of new life and the reality of renewed communion, the merging of the melody of unity and the beauty of diversity.

We call to mind our brother Hierarchs who have fallen asleep in the Lord during the past year: Metropolitan Christopher of Libertyville and Chicago (Serbian Diocese), Metropolitan Nicholas of Amissos (Carpatho-Russian Diocese), and Metropolitan Epiphanius of Bryoula (Ecumenical Patriarchate). May their memory be eternal!

In our deliberations as Orthodox Hierarchs, we manifested a spirit of conciliarity, expressing our commitment to proceed on all matters in collegial and collaborative manner reflective of the unity that characterizes the various jurisdictions of the Orthodox Church within our regional Assembly. In this respect, we once again affirm our desire and willingness to work toward “the swift healing of every canonical anomaly that has arisen from historical circumstances and pastoral requirements” (2008 Message of the Primate 13.1-2), following the decisions of the representatives of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches regarding the “unswerving position and obligation to safeguard the unity of the Orthodox Church” (2009 Chambésy,





SERBIAN PATRIARCH

May 24, 2011
B E L G R A D E

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America
Chairman of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America

Your Eminence, Beloved Brother in the Lord,

CHRIST IS RISEN!

We greet You with Paschal joy in the Name of the Risen Lord and pray that this Paschal period may be filled with Resurrectional gladness.

Kindly receive the heartfelt expression of Our fervent prayerful regards on this, the eve of the Second Convening of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America, beginning on May 25, 2011 in Chicago, Illinois. We pray for the success of its deliberations and that the assembled hierarchs reap the rich spiritual fruits of the descent of the Holy Spirit the Comforter and that the same come upon all Orthodox Christians in North and Central America and indeed, throughout the world. We also pray that Your cherished Eminence will be abundantly blessed to continue in Your wise and capable leading of this Sacred Assembly.

This ecclesiological important Assembly, given its task to accomplish fuller unity, cooperation and catholicity on your territory of the Diaspora, is of decisive importance for the mission, evangelization and future ecclesiological formation of the American Continent. For this reason, our most Holy Serbian Orthodox Church encouraged its four active canonical bishops in North America: His Grace Georgije of Canada, His Grace Mitrophan of the Eastern American Diocese, His Grace Longin of the New Gračanica—Midwestern American Diocese and His Grace Maxim of the Western American Diocese, to take part in this new Pentecostal work which is of historical significance. We are pleased that His Grace Bishop Maxim took an active role in the Secretariat of your Assembly, as coordinator to the Committees.

However, due to prolonged duration of the ongoing Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, convening here in Belgrade, which is presently deliberating on many urgent issues of paramount importance for our Church, We have asked our four active canonical bishops, to remain on for a few more days, in anticipation that they will arrive on the second day of your Sacred Assembly.

On behalf of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and of above-mentioned Serbian Bishops from North America, We fraternally ask Your understanding for their late arrival.

Greeting You and all the brother Hierarchs, We extend, once again, Our best wishes for the work of the Assembly.

With brotherly love and esteem in Christ,

+IRINEJ

Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch



Rules of Operation, Article 5.1a) and the promotion of “common action to address the pastoral needs of Orthodox living in our region” (2009 Chambésy, Decision 2c).

In accordance with our determination and decision during the 1st Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops (May 26-28, 2010), we focused and acted upon our understanding that we are successors of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA), assuming its agencies and ministries. Therefore, among the items on the agenda was the work of the Assembly’s 13 committees, its Secretariat, and its 14 agencies and endorsed organizations.

We offer thanks to God for the positive spirit of cooperation that prevailed during the sessions of the Assembly. We are pleased to report to our faithful what the committees of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops reported to their brother Hierarchs. The work of these committees will constitute the principal service of the Assembly, meeting frequently and regularly in order – with the participation also of lay members – to materialize the remarkable unity of the Orthodox Churches in this region. In this regard, we are inspired by the words of the Risen Lord: As the Father has sent me, I am sending you (John 20.21); and Truly, truly, I say to you: he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do. (John 14.12)

Thus, in addition to official reports by the Chairman, the Vice-Chairmen, the Treasurer, and the Secretary, the responsibilities of the following committees were discussed extensively: Canonical Affairs, Canonical Regional Planning, Church and Society, Clergy Affairs, Ecumenical Affairs, Financial Affairs, Legal Affairs, Liturgy, Military Chaplaincy, Monastic Communities, Pastoral Practice, Theological Education, and Youth. Moreover, the coordinators of the various agencies and endorsed organizations, formerly under the aegis of SCOBA, will convene with respective Hierarchy liaisons in order to determine the criteria of their relationship and establish appropriate channels of communication with the Assembly.

In particular, the Assembly warmly received and unanimously encouraged the creation of a common ministry for our military chaplaincy and our youth.

Our prayers are offered to God at this time for those who have suffered from the extreme weather conditions in the last weeks,

especially and most recently the tornadoes and flooding in Missouri and Oklahoma in the United States, and throughout the region of our Assembly, where epic catastrophe has struck numerous people with death, devastation, and damage. May God grant rest to the souls of the departed and may the gentle breeze of His Spirit grant the victims the strength to rebuild their lives. We fervently encourage our parishes to offer generous material, financial, and spiritual support.

We cannot remain silent in the face of atrocities and persecutions committed against Christian minorities by fundamentalists and extremists, in Palestine and Egypt, especially against the Christians caught up in the upheaval of the Arab Spring, which has unleashed long-oppressed diverse sectarian animosities. In

particular, the Christian communities in Palestine and the Middle East have been drastically reduced and compelled to emigrate as refugees. We urge political leaders throughout the world to stop ignoring the manifestations of intolerance, discrimination and open persecution against all religious communities – Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike – living in contentious regions and countries of the world, notably in Northern Africa and the Middle East.

In light of the designation of June as “internet safety month,” we exhort our priests and parishioners to raise awareness and secure appropriate protection for our children and communities from the many and diverse prevalent dangers, including pornography, cyber-bullying, perils by predators, risks of geotagging, and in particular dissension in the Church. Technology is not sinful; but the abuse of technology is a sin and a crime. We encourage our faithful to disseminate relevant internet safety literature, organize internet safety classes, utilize parental controls, and take rigorous advocacy measures to pressure wireless companies and carriers to mandate protective options.

Finally, we are united in wholeheartedly acknowledging and fervently blessing the tireless ministry of our parish clergy and their families, the honorable presbyters and deacons in the service of Christ, the brothers and sisters of our monastic communities, and all those who do charitable work, those who serve our holy houses of worship, those who labor, teach, and chant, and all the people of God, who await His great and rich mercy.

Truly the Lord is Risen!

Archbishop Demetrios, Chairman	Archbishop Kyrill
Metropolitan Philip, 1st Vice Chairman	Bishop Peter
Archbishop Justinian, 2nd Vice Chairman	Bishop John
Archbishop Antony, Treasurer	Bishop Theodosy
Bishop Basil, Secretary	Bishop George
Metropolitan Iakovos	Bishop Ieronim
Metropolitan Constantine	Bishop Longin
Metropolitan Methodios	Bishop Mitrophan
Metropolitan Athenagoras	Bishop Maxim
Metropolitan Isaiah	Archbishop Nicolae
Metropolitan Alexios	Bishop Ioan Casian
Metropolitan Nicholas	Metropolitan Joseph
Metropolitan Evangelos	Metropolitan Jonah
Bishop Savas	Archbishop Nathaniel
Bishop Andonios	Bishop Nikon
Bishop Ilia	Bishop Tikhon
Bishop Demetrios	Bishop Benjamin
Bishop Daniel	Bishop Alejo
Bishop Antoun	Bishop Melchisedek
Bishop Joseph	Bishop Michael
Bishop Thomas	Bishop Matthias
Bishop Alexander	Bishop Irineu
Metropolitan Hilarion	Bishop Mark
Archbishop Alypy	Bishop Irénée



A Journey Through Time and History on a Pilgrimage to Constantinople, Holy Mountain and Greece

We started our pilgrimage in this most fascinating ancient city, where the East meets the West! Founded by the Emperor Constantine in 230 AD as the “New Rome”, which transferred the center of power from the fading Roman Empire to the vibrant new Byzantine world.

“It’s Istanbul, not Constantinople” as the popular song goes, but it will always be Constantinople, culturally, spiritually and historically for the people of Byzantine Orthodox heritage.

This “Queen of Cities”, which spans the 2 continents of Europe and Africa, is situated on a triangle-shaped peninsula surrounded by the waters of the Golden Horn on the European side and the Sea of Marmora on the African side. The 2 continents are now connected by a bridge that spans the breadth of the city, as well as by the city itself. Istanbul, so-renamed in 1927 by Kemal Ataturk, with a population of 12 million people, covers an area of 100 km (5 sq. miles). As Constantinople, it was the center of Christianity until the siege of 1454, when, on May 29th, it was conquered by the Ottomans, and Islam replaced the Christian Greek culture. However, its Christian heritage has survived over the centuries through the churches and monasteries that were built during the early Christian era.

Our spiritual pilgrimage, under the leadership of His Grace Bishop Maxim and Fr Blasko Paraklis, began with an audience with His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, at the Patriarchate residence. We were honored to be greeted by His All Holiness and treated to a luncheon as his guests. Within the residence compound, there is a locked gate where, in the 1840s, the Patriarch was murdered by a riotous mob, and the gate was then sealed, never to be used again!

On November 30, 2004 the Patriarchate celebrated the historic “Return of the Holy Relics” of the Saints Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom from Rome, where they had reposed in the Vatican for 800 years. The Relics had been taken to Rome after the pillage of Constantinople by the Crusaders. Through a personal meeting between the Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope John Paul II, in the spirit of détente between these two major religions, the Relics were returned and put to rest in the Cathedral of Constantinople, where both Saints had served as Archbishops. The Ecumenical Patriarchate is the highest see and holiest center of the Orthodox Christian Church throughout the world. It is an institution with a history spanning seventeen centuries, during which it retained its see in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul). It constitutes



the center of all the local Orthodox Churches, heading these not by administration but by virtue of its primacy in the ministry of pan-Orthodox unity and the coordination of the activity of the whole of Orthodoxy.

There are 4 renowned sites that are the historic landmarks in Istanbul.

The Hagia Sophia is the fifth largest church in the world! Its ancient Christian name was “The Church of the Wisdom of the Almighty”. It was built during the reign of the Emperor Leo VI, in the year 1500. Apart from its structural grandeur, it is noted architecturally for its “mystic light” quality from the “captured sunlight” in the “checkerboard squares” of clear glass windows in each of its domes. The spherical domes are layered in descending levels, with the largest single dome on top, followed by the next layer of half domes, then a layer of quarter domes and finally a layer of eighth domes, all of them together giving the impression of one huge lighted dome. The total effect of this natural lighting is considered an architectural wonder. The superb frescos, and the marble slabs (mined from the Sea of Marmara, Marble Sea) that line the walls make the Hagia Sophia one of the outstanding artistic and spiritual treasures of the Byzantine culture. Interestingly, the frescos are not merely painted on the surface of the walls, as one would suppose, but, rather, the paint is actually embedded, or infused, in the building material of the walls, be it cement or plaster or stone. This technique has helped preserve the clarity of the frescos over the many centuries, without fading or wearing off.

The Blue Mosque, the cultural jewel of the Islamic world, is copied architecturally from the Hagia Sophia. It gets its name from the striking blue mosaics and tiles that line its walls. It is a functioning mosque, with a cordoned-off section for prayers that is set apart from the crowded “tourist” viewing areas. As in all mosques, tourists must remove their shoes before entering it, in deference to Islamic culture.

The Topkapi Palace is not a palatial building, as the name would imply, but rather an accumulation of buildings that cover a vast park that was originally a “serai”, or camel stop, along the Silk Route through Asia to the Far East. The Sultan made it his government center, residing in one building as his personal residence, while other buildings served various purposes for conducting government business. The Treasury building, now a museum, houses a magnificent collection of jeweled treasures and artifacts. As the government center in its day, approximately 2000 people resided within the grounds.





The Sultan was known for secretly listening, behind a curtain, to discussions by his Ministers that led to the decisions they presented to him, so that he could evaluate for himself the pros and cons that led to the decisions.

The Chora Church, which is 1500 years old, is a jewel of the Early Renaissance, from the 13th century. Its famous mosaics from 1320 are not only an artistic wonder, but also create a spiritual ambiance that is the very essence of Orthodoxy.

There are four islands in the Marmora Sea that are known as the Princes' Islands, where the wealthy Greeks of Constantinople resided during their heyday as the elite of Constantinople. One of the islands became an exile site for deposed rulers, one of whom was Leon Trotsky, who ended his days in exile while living a life of luxury there. We visited a school on Halka Island, which was a renowned Orthodox Theological Seminary built in 1844. It housed 1000 seminary students. Unfortunately, it was destroyed by an earthquake in 1854, but with the financial support of a Serbian patron, Stefanovic, it was rebuilt and functioned as a private school until 1971, when the Turkish government outlawed all private schools, allowing only Moslem schools to function. It then became a monastery, which, today, houses a magnificent library of 60,000 volumes. It also contains the 720 year old icon of the "Mother of God of Sorrows", the oldest icon in existence of the Holy Theotokos. On this island there is also the oldest known

Monastery of the Holy Trinity, which is 25 centuries old. It is now hoped within the Patriarchate that the current Turkish government, with the reelection of Erdogan for a third term as Prime Minister, will ease the Islamic restriction on private schools that will allow the Theological Seminary to function again. We felt the greatest respect for the Orthodox clergy in Istanbul who have kept Orthodoxy alive and flourishing for centuries in the midst of this Ottoman stronghold, where it is still functioning today.

We left this most fascinating city of ancient Byzantium, with its historic Orthodox heritage, its artistic splendors and its old-world charm to continue our pilgrimage to Thessaloniki, in Greek Macedonia.

GREECE: Where Classic Heritage, Christianity and Modern Culture Define Its Place in History **Thessaloniki**

We arrived in Thessaloniki, an equally ancient and historic city of 1.2 million people in Greek Macedonia, where we were met by a group of the local priests whose boundless hospitality and enlightening discussions we enjoyed throughout our visit. The most exciting moment was the Divine Liturgy at St George Church in Panorama.

Thessaloniki has truly ancient roots! It was the site where, in 480 BC, 300 ships were destroyed at the "Canal of Xerxes" during a violent storm. The Apostle Paul preached here, but he was expelled from within the city walls, although he continued to reside and preach



outside its walls. St Demetrius is the Patron Saint of Thessaloniki. He was martyred in the year 305, and the Church of St Demetrius was consecrated in his name. It is the largest church in all of Greece! It has been restored with a variety of mis-matched stone pillars salvaged from various sources, and its frescos, which had been obliterated by the Turks, are in the process of restoration. The “Old City” of Thessaloniki fell to the Turks in the 1430s, coinciding with their expansion of the Ottoman Empire that led to the siege and fall of Constantinople in 1453.

In 1978, with the **Return of the Relics** to Greece from Rome in a negotiated agreement, the Relics of St Demetrius were among those returned, and they are now installed in the church. These relics have been streaming endless quantities of myrrh for more than 800 years, so much so that a round cistern about 4 ft in diameter and 12” in depth was built inside the church to collect and contain the quantities of myrrh, which filled the cistern! During the 8 centuries that the Relics were in Italy the streaming stopped, but it recommenced after the return to Greece.

Thessaloniki is also home to the University of Thessaloniki, which is the largest University in all of Europe, with 90,000 students!

Our gracious hosts of priests took us to see the Serbian Military Cemetery from World War I, where 21,000 soldiers from that conflict are interred. There are 8000 Serbs who rest there, of whom 6000 are buried in graves and 2000 are in crypts in a mausoleum that is housed within a very impressive monument at the entrance to the cemetery. There are also 8000 French soldiers, 3000 Italians and 1500 British buried in this cemetery. His Grace Bishop Maxim conducted a very moving memorial service to honor the fallen Serbs. An elderly Serb war veteran from World War II, who serves as the guardian of the Serb Section, recited some stirring patriotic poems for us. Many military artifacts and old photographs of those buried here adorn the mausoleum as mementos from these heroic soldiers. As we drove away from Thessaloniki to our next destination of Ouranopolis and Mt Athos, we felt an overwhelming sense of both sorrow for their loss and pride for the bravery of our fellow Serbs who, the old guardian of their graves told us, captured an enemy position in one day that the combined Allied forces had been trying, but failed, to take for one month! They earned their place in history with courage and honor!

Ouranopolis and Mt Athos

The quaint seaside town of Ouranopolis is the departure point for the pilgrims who visit the monastic state of Mt Athos, where a visa is required for visitors. The three men in our group, along with His Grace the Bishop and Fr Blasko, set sail the morning after our arrival for a 3-day spiritual sojourn on Mt Athos, while the women enjoyed the amenities of this resort town by browsing, shopping, and enjoying the fine Greek cuisine in seaside restaurants along its shore. We were struck by the fact that the town’s livelihood, tourism, was at an all-time low due to the economic crisis in Greece and, indeed, throughout Europe. Most of the restaurants were totally empty, with their staff giving us hopeful pleading looks to try their establishments as we walked by. We were faced with the daily dilemma of which one to frequent, and feeling so sorry for those we passed by.

The men, who spent the 3 days on Mt Athos, were quite overwhelmed by the experience! There are 20 monasteries, of which 17





are Greek, one is Bulgarian, one Russian, and one Serbian. The first monastery was built in the year 963, and by the 13th century there were 180 monasteries, of which all but 25 were destroyed during the occupation by the Turks in the 15th century. The men visited four monasteries, including the Serbian monastery Hilandar.

The monks and priests at Hilandar were so thrilled to have His Grace Bishop Maxim visit them and serve the Liturgy for the Feast of Great-Martyr Lazar of Kosovo, and they gave him such a welcoming reception. The men of our group were warmly wined and dined and given bottles of wine to take home from Hilandar's vineyards. Needless to say, the Hilandar wines were consumed and enjoyed by all of



us before we left Greece! A remarkable feature at Hilandar is an 800 year old grapevine, growing out of the base of the church, that still bears grapes, with five different varieties of grapes growing on a single vine, an unexplainable phenomenon! The men were impressed with the youthfulness of the monks, who were mostly in their 30s and 40s. There is a total of 1600 monks in the 20 monasteries, a limited controlled number by the Greek government since 2006, so that the Greek monasteries will remain dominant over the "foreign" ones. As monks have died throughout the years, their bones have been exhumed after decomposition, and their skulls are preserved and stored in crypts for posterity. There has been a resurgence of religious faith in Orthodox countries after the fall of Communism, especially so in Russia, with long waiting lists of young men who want to lead a monastic life on Mt Athos. Since 2009 the preponderance of applicants are highly educated as well as profoundly devout young men.

His Grace and the men have visited Monastery Hilandar, Protaton, Iviron, Vatopedi and Simonopetra.





The women took a cruise along the shores of the Mt Athos peninsula, where they saw eight of the monasteries built many centuries ago along its shores, and were awed by the wild and mountainous terrain. We could imagine its appeal to the Holy Mother of God who, when en route by ship with the Apostle Paul to visit Lazarus, was forced to land on Mt Athos during a storm at sea. When the storm abated, she was so impressed with the wild beauty of the terrain that she asked Her Son if she could have it as her personal garden, and so He gave it to her as His gift. To this day, no other women are permitted to set foot in “The Garden of the Virgin” that is Mt Athos. This prohibition of women is called “Avanton”.



In the 5th century the inhabitants of Mt Athos were both Christian and Pagan, but in 885 AD it was declared that only monks can live there. The largest known fragment of the true cross, and a thorn from the Crown of Thorns, are preserved on Mt Athos. In 1990 a group of prominent benefactors from various countries formed the “Society of Friends of Mt Athos” to ensure the continuity of its Christian faith and traditions. Among them are Prince Philip and Prince Charles of Great Britain. The men in our group who had this Mt Athos experience said it was a priceless, unforgettable spiritual affirmation of their Orthodox faith, and certainly one of the most memorable events of their lives!

Ormilia Monastery

Our arrival at the female monastery of Ormilia, where at least a hundred nuns reside, was quite a contrast to the many monasteries we had been visiting. The “woman’s touch” was evident in its manicured lawns, the well-designed flower beds, the quality and presentation of the meals we enjoyed, and the personal attention afforded each of us individually by these very charming nuns who seemed delighted by our visit. They were thrilled to have His Grace the Bishop serve a liturgy for them. It was a beautiful service in which a choir of nuns sang the responses with such hauntingly melodious voices. The nuns of Ormilia are famed throughout Greece for their singing, and we were truly awed by it! They all work skillfully, making the robes





and vestments for priests, and the cloths used on altars, while some paint icons and others make various artifacts for churches. It was a unique experience to visit Ormilina, and we were honored to have been invited there on this pilgrimage tour.

Meteora

Imagine the Grand Canyon lifted out of its below-ground depth and placed on the surface of the earth, where its barren, rocky walls reach up to the sky! Then picture ancient monasteries built atop the very pinnacles of these rocks. The immensity and grandeur of these barren walls of stone defy description, and how the builders of these monasteries carried the building materials up these sheer vertical cliff sides boggles the mind! There were no paths or

steps! The only means of access for centuries was by a rope and basket system to haul people and materials up to the monastery sites. Only quite recently have steps been carved into the stones to replace the “rope and basket” system. We visited four of these monasteries, climbing on foot from the deep valley bottoms, up a thousand steps cut into the rocks, to emerge into a wonderland of frescoed walls and beautiful ancient icons. One of the monasteries had a medieval kitchen, one had a carpenter’s room complete with medieval tools, another had a winery, all evidence of an isolated communal life as lived through centuries by generations of monks. The obvious remoteness and difficult access of these monasteries were for defense from invaders. We



stalwart modern-day pilgrims, however, managed to breach their defenses through sheer physical stamina as we climbed their rocky steps on foot, and were rewarded by the awesome views of the countryside and towns far below us, the beauty of the medieval Byzantine art, and the realization that “we had what it takes” in this day and age of soft living to conquer the heights of Meteora! As one of our group members said, “Meteora defies description, and even photographs do not do it justice. You would have to see it to believe it!”

The Greek Countryside

As we drove away from Meteora to our next destination, Athens airport, where we would depart for the island of Crete, we crossed the breadth of Greece, enjoying the many-faceted countryside where fields of farm crops were ripening in the sun, where majestic mountains stood tall, where quaint villages dotted the landscape. The Greek interior is actually quite mountainous, apart from the coastal shoreline. We stopped en route to view a historic monument that commemorates the very essence of Greek pride whereby the greatly outnumbered Greek warriors of yore repelled an invasion by a massive army of Persian conquerors at the famous “Battle of Thermopyles”. A plaque on the monument reads.

In the year 480 BC, in this sacred place called THERMOPYLES was carried out the most astonishing and unequal battle between few Greeks and a million of Persians. This battle is a landmark in World’s History.

Three hundred Spartans and seven hundred Thespians under the orders of Leonides, king of Sparta, decided to fight against the Persians and win or die defending the freedom of their country. According to the historian Herodotus, the Persian army consisted of about one million seven hundred thousand soldiers who were under the command of king Xerxes.

The Persians asked the defenders to give their arms up, but Leonides replied to them with the heroic phrase COME AND GET THEM. This phrase has been and will always be a bright example for the generations to come of one's doing his duty for his country.

The monument goes on to state that the Greeks laid down on the ground with their shields covering them, playing dead as the Persians rushed over them,. The Greeks then rose up and attacked from the rear. Reason enough for Greek pride indeed!

Crete

What a most delightful way to wrap up this fascinating, educational, enjoyable, faith-affirming pilgrimage through the historical origins of Orthodoxy! We spent our last three days foot-loose and fancy-free on Crete, one of the most charming of the Greek Isles., in the village of Ag Apostoli by Chania, where we just enjoyed sunning ourselves on its pristine sandy beaches, bathing in the crystal clear water of the Aegean Sea, sampling the fine Greek cuisine at a Serbian-owned restaurant on the beach. and just relaxing after all the arduous climbs to mountain-top monasteries we had been experiencing. We loafed and drank our Hilandar wines while sitting poolside at our comfortable hotel. We watched the Wimbledon match on a large screen TV at the Serbian restaurant, delighted to see our Serb compatriot, Novak Djokovich, win the world tennis championship, to the cheers of all the Serb patrons gathered there.

But most of all, we had formed the bonds of friendship and camaraderie with our fellow-travelers, a group of eight 'pilgrims', of whom two were from Salt Lake City, three from San Francisco, one from Escondido, and two from Pittsburgh, PA. We were privileged to have His Grace Bishop Maxim and Fr Blasko Paraklis as our mentors, and spiritual leaders, whose knowledgeable commentaries on the region, its history and Orthodoxy made this tour an unforgettable, memorable experience to be cherished. As one of our group so aptly put it, "You had to be there to appreciate it!"





Alaska Trip 2010

Pilgrims from North America and Russia celebrate 40th Anniversary of Saint Herman's glorification on Spruce Island

Every year pilgrims from around the world together with the natives of Alaska come to commemorate America's first saint, Fr. Herman - the Wonderworker of Alaska. They visit Spruce Island, the place he sanctified by his holy Christian life, and go to venerate his relics on the Island of Kodiak. This year His Grace Maxim, Bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America and Fr. Blasko Paraklis came on their third pilgrimage. On Thursday, the 7th of August they departed from Los Angeles to Anchorage and then flew on to Kodiak Island. Their journey continued by boat as they headed to the Skete of St. Michael on Spruce Island and to St. Nilus Skete. The weather was fine and allowed for some spectacular views of surrounding islands with lush forests and busy puffins fishing alongside seagulls and other birds on the calm waters. The pilgrims already enchanted with the natural beauty of the region were able to find additional delight in their sighting of the majestic and gray humpback whales just a short distance from their boats. The skippers stopped the motors so that they could listen to the noises these big mammals made when resurfacing for air with water gushing out like huge fountains before they disappeared into the depths once again but not before showing off their grand tails. Spruce Island with Mount St. Herman rising above the towering spruce, is located southeast of the Alaskan mainland and in some places is less than a mile from Kodiak Island. From Mount St. Herman one can overlook the Monk's Lagoon, the place where St. Herman lived from 1808 to 1818, and which later became known by this name in remembrance of this holy monk. Besides a life of prayer and strict asceticism, St. Herman was also known for his great love for the natives, especially the orphans whom he took care of. Years later a local native woman by the name of Sophia Vlasova who had been converted by St. Herman, carried on his legacy and continued to oversee the orphanage thirty years after his death. St. Herman sustained himself on the produce of his garden and the coho salmon. He had called this island "New Valaam" as a reminder of his Russian monastery, and since conditions here were similar to Valaam, he grew potatoes, cabbage, carrots, turnips and garlic. Nowadays, horticulturists regard him as the first gardener in Alaska to use kelp as a fertilizer. Bishop Maxim and fr Blasko spent the night at St. Michael Skete, a small Orthodox Christian monastery founded in 1983 with three monks living here cur-

rently, Fr. Martirius, Fr Adrian and Hieromonk Andrew. In addition to their daily cycle of prayers, gardening and fishing during summer, woodcarving, dome building and carpentry, the pilgrims are ferried to and from the islands by Fr. Martirius. St. Nilus Skete lies just off Spruce Island and is dedicated to St. Nilus of Sora. A small community of Orthodox nuns, Mothers Nina and Neila, and Sister Julia, live on this unsullied island of 55 acres of pristine beauty, with rugged cliffs where puffins nest during the summer season, and a dense spruce forest with its moss dangling from the branches and covering the floor like a carpet. It does not take long before one senses a deep peace underlying the physical beauty of the surroundings, interrupted only by the chirping of birds and occasional bells



calling to prayer at the St. Nilus Chapel. The nuns like the monks try to follow St. Herman's example of living off the land, which involves catching enough salmon in summer and preserving it, gardening, gathering berries, mushrooms and other edible plants. The buildings on the island are simple log houses. The sisters are known for their hospitality and can house a limited number of guests at their log house on the west end of the island.

Later that afternoon all the pilgrims were ferried back to Kodiak where they spent the night. On Sunday morning, the 8th of August, Bishop Benjamin and Bishop Maxim served the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Resurrection Cathedral in Kodiak, in the presence of Metropolitan Jonah, Head of the Orthodox Church of America, concelebrated by the visiting Orthodox priests. The pilgrims are able to venerate the relics of St. Herman in this Cathedral, along with his monastic hat and the fifteen-pound chains he wore. A banquet was held at St. Mary's Gym not far from the Church. The parishioners of the Cathedral hosted more than 200 pilgrims for the feast that lasted three days. Their warmth and generosity will be remembered!

On Sunday, August 8, 2010, the pilgrims participated in the festal Divine Liturgy at Holy Resurrection Cathedral in Kodiak led by His Eminence, OCA Metropolitan Jonah, on the Feast of St Jacob Netsvetov, the Enlightener of the Peoples of Alaska. The Divine Liturgy was concelebrated by Archbishop Justinian of Naro-Fominsk and Administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA; Bishop Maxim of Western America of the Serbian Orthodox Church; and Bishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West and Locum Tenens of the Diocese of Alaska. The priestly rank included clergy from the Russian Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the Orthodox Church in America. His Grace, Bishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West in his capacity as Locum Tenens of the Diocese of Alaska warmly welcomed all the pilgrims.

The traditional Saint Yakov Tea followed the Liturgy at the Kodiak Harbor Convention Center. On Sunday evening, Metropolitan Jonah and the visiting hierarchs celebrated the All-Night Vigil in Holy Resurrection Cathedral, with Bishop Benjamin presiding at the Litiya and Archbishop Justinian presiding at the Matins Polyeleos.

On Monday morning the pilgrims were ferried to Spruce Island for the hierarchical Liturgy, which was served in the Sts. Sergius and Herman Church by Metropolitan Jonah, Archbishop Justinian and Bishop Maxim with many priests of different Orthodox parishes from all over the country. On Monday, August 9, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, presided at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in Saints Sergius and Herman of Valaam Chapel on Spruce Island, which marks the original burial site of Saint Herman of Alaska.



The Church is built on the grave of St. Herman and pilgrims can go beneath the Church to venerate the site. Many healings have taken place at his grave. At the Liturgy Bishop Maxim ordained hierodeacon Andrew into priesthood. The Divine Liturgy was followed by a Pannikhida, which was served at the graves of Archimandrite Gerasim and Archpriest Peter. Not from their graves is the cell of Fr. Gerasim, a simple log house, which was restored in the 1990s. Fr. Gerasim (Schmalz), a Russian priest-monk, came to the Island in 1935 and spent three decades as a hermit there. The prophesy of St. Herman who had said that even though much time would pass after his death, his memory would not be forgotten and that a monk similar to him would come and live on Spruce Island one day, was thus fulfilled.

It was at this very site that Saint Herman was glorified exactly 40 years earlier. One of eight missionaries who arrived in Kodiak from Russia in 1794, Saint Herman was widely known and long remembered for the sanctity of his life, his monastic witness, and his defense of the local population, who at that time had faced severe difficulties at the hands of traders in the region.

The hierarchs and clergy were accompanied by hundreds of pilgrims from across North America, who traveled to Spruce Island by boat. A group of pilgrims from Russia, led by Archbishop Justinian and Archimandrite Zacchaeus, OCA Representative to the Moscow Patriarchate and Dean of the OCA's Representation Church of the Great Martyr Catherine, Moscow, also were present, thereby testifying to the universal reverence accorded Saint Herman as "the North Star of Christ's Holy Church."

Pilgrims enjoyed a "banquet on the beach" before returning by boat to Kodiak, where they engaged in fellowship at a festival in Sargent Park.

The faithful from North America and Russia enjoyed and were very grateful for the kind hospitality displayed by the faithful of Holy Resurrection Cathedral and the community of Saint Herman's Orthodox Theological Seminary.

After the memorial service the pilgrims gathered at the beach for a picnic. There was enough time to relax and to gather strength to explore the island a little bit more. Many pilgrims went to St. Herman's Spring to fetch water. This spring is where St. Herman drew drinking water and it became a source of miraculous healing for many diverse ailments after his death.

In the early afternoon Fr. Martirius and Hieromonk Andrew ferried Bishop Maxim and fr Blasko back to the is-



lands, and took those who had the inclination and desire to go fishing on his skiff. On this occasion His Grace caught a sea bass. The fathers held vespers at St. Michael's Skete and the following morning His Grace celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St Nilus Skete. Sisters, brothers and pilgrims from America, Russia, Georgia and Romania chanted during the Divine Liturgy. Sisters managed to prepare a wonderful lunch with the help of some local Orthodox people who also live on Spruce Island. There is a village, Ouzinkie, which is located at the west end of Spruce Island; a community established in the mid-nineteenth century. Some of the families that had lived with St. Herman near Monk's Lagoon later moved to this village, which is presently comprised of mainly Sugpiaq natives.

The afternoon was spent in fishing and kayaking, in relaxing and enjoying the natural surrounding beauty. Some of the pilgrims went in search of salmonberries, elderberries, blueberries and mushrooms. During the summer months there is daylight even until 10 in the evening, so there is much one can do.

The sisters of St. Nilus Skete prepared a beach dinner. Some of the halibut and salmon caught by the pilgrims were cooked over the beach fire with potatoes wrapped in foils. Dinner was delicious and some pilgrims managed to find sticks with which to heat their marshmallows. The sisters entertained with many beautiful songs and were joined by Fr. Blasko and His Grace who introduced some Serbian songs. It was an unforgettable evening of tasty food, song and dance and so much fun.

The weather is of utmost importance when living on these islands for almost every aspect of life here is dictated by the weather conditions. A little bit of wind and rain can make traveling with the small boats very dangerous.

On Friday evening bishop Maxim and fr Blasko were warmly greeted and welcomed by Fr. Paisius De Lucia and his students of the St. Innocent Academy. The Saint Innocent Academy is both a live-in boarding school and a day school for troubled youth at-risk, founded by Fr. Paisius and his wife. They have over



thirty young men and ladies that live in the Academy full-time. The Church or benevolent organizations do not fund this Orthodox Academy, however donations are welcome. Both students and staff make their living as a team, painting, sheet rocking and working construction, and, proceeds are held in common. All staff are volunteers. Our hosts picked us up with their blue painted bus. It had scenes of St. Herman's life on Spruce Island and a pair of a moose's antlers on top of the front of the bus.





One of a kind! The pilgrims were later informed that the whole Academy had crossed the entire United States in one of their travels in this old bus! At the Academy, the guests were served a delicious brunch prepared by the students and Fr. Paisius' wife who is an excellent cook. The Academy has its own chapel and their daily life is tightly interwoven with prayer, study, work and creative recreation. The students almost every day offer performances of song and dance! It is hard to believe that these are not professionals but merely young people who have an incredible talent for music: classic, folklore and religious. All sorts of instruments: violins, guitars, clarinets, banjos, cellos and a piano re-appear and disappear as they sing different tunes in different languages. Everyone was just mesmerized by the beauty, spontaneity and the

sheer joy of these youths as they sang one composition after the other. One could have easily mistaken them for professionals. They share their experiences of performing at various celebrations and schools and other public venues. One such performance involved staging the theatrical play of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which was highly successful and which the Academy later recorded in a DVD presentation of all five acts.

The pilgrims landed in Anchorage late Wednesday evening. There are approximately 50 Serbian Orthodox parishioners who make up the Serbian Orthodox Parish of St. Petar of Korish, which was founded in the 1990s by Bishop Chrysostom, the current Bishop of Zicha. The Serbian parishioners own a piece of property close to downtown Anchorage. There is a common agreement with regard to building a church in the future on this site. However, a lot of help is needed from Serbs living across the country who should take into consideration that there are not that many Serbs who live in Alaska and that the majority of these people are newly re-settled refugees of Krajina from ex-Yugoslavia. For more information, please contact: The Venerable Peter of Korish Serbian Orthodox Mission, Fr. Blasko Paraklis, Administrator, Tel: (949) 830 5480, 24236 Olivera Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691.

On the 14th of August, His Grace celebrated Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of St. Innocent, which belongs to the Orthodox Church of America. Fr. Blasko and several local priests concelebrated. The rest of the day was spent with the Serbian hosts enjoying each other's company over supper and conversation.

As the pilgrimage came to its end for this year, His Grace, Bishop Maxim blessed the hosts, and departed for Portland while Fr. Blasko returned to Los Angeles. On Sunday, the 15th of August, His Grace visits the St. Stephen's Serbian Orthodox Parish.





Saratoga Church Construction Under Way

Fifty years ago, a number of Serbian Orthodox families came together with the hope and dream of building a Serbian Orthodox Church in the heart of Saratoga, California. Many were new immigrants who had recently arrived in this country, trying to create a better life for themselves and their families and, at the same time, have the ability to practice their faith freely. Others were locals of Serbian descent who had been in the Saratoga valley and surrounding South Bay Area for many years. Over the past five decades, many more families joined in and worked side by side in trying to make this dream a reality. Now, after fifty years, that dream is finally becoming reality. With God's blessing and the blessing of our Bishop Maxim, the parishioners of Saint Archangel Michael in Saratoga have embarked on the mission to complete their house of worship that has been in the making for so many years. In some cases, we have three generations of parishioners who have worked diligently to see this temple raised from the ground.

The parishioners, Board and Building Committee together with their parish priest Fr. Slobodan Jovic have worked tirelessly with the neighbors and the local city government (Planning Commission/City Council) to create a Church that retains all characteristics of a true Serbian Orthodox Church, while ensuring that it fits in with the surrounding community.

The ground-breaking ceremony took place on June 29 and the blessing of CornerStone on September 26, 2010. The day of the cornerstone laying began with a procession of priests led into the chapel by His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas of the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute, who represented His Grace our Bishop Maxim who was unable to attend. Following the Divine Liturgy, the parishioners went to the slab of the new Church where a service to bless the cornerstone in the altar was performed. A cocktail reception and festal banquet completed the festivities.





So, construction has begun and with God's help we are progressing quickly. Walls are now at about ten feet high, so the basic shape of the Church is recognizable. Thank God we have sufficient funds to complete the entire exterior of the Church, which includes the domes, bells, windows, roof, crosses and natural stone being shipped from Montenegro. We are reaching out to our brothers and sisters throughout this beautiful Country asking for any financial assistance and help, so that we may complete this glorious building to the glory of God and in honor of our beloved protector St. Archangel Michael.

We still need to raise approximately two million dollars to complete this undertaking and we have no doubt that our Lord will continue to lead us down to the right path to see the completion of this place of worship that will live on for many more generations to follow. We would thankfully accept any donations that our brothers and sisters can afford, with a promise that the names of all donors will be recorded and that our Church will continuously offer prayers for them at every Divine Liturgy. Donations may be forwarded to St. Arch. Michael Serbian Orthodox Church, c/o Building Fund, 18870 Allendale Avenue, Saratoga, CA 95070.

May God bless all our efforts, and may He bless all who will take time to read this article.





Missionary Parishes 2011

As we commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the establishment of the first Serbian Orthodox Diocese in North America and the appointment of its first Bishop, we focus on the missionary work and the legacy of those early pioneers whose hard work and unwavering faith and generosity set the foundation of our Diocese as well as that of other dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church on this continent. While remembering the glorious past, we look to the future of our diocese and of the Orthodox Church in the world. In doing so, we need to consider how diversity and shifting demographics affect all of us, especially here in America. Many people from all over the world move here; most of us in this country come from somewhere else.

This is evidenced by the beautiful mosaic of parishes in our Western American Diocese. Every background and every imaginable story can be found among the faithful in our communities. In some parishes there is no dominant cultural or ethnic group, yet the parish remains stable in a powerful way. At the same time, we have strong ethnic communities composed of immigrants. As we continue to add new families in each parish, a wonderful tapestry is created.

One of the most important ways to reach diverse or ethnic communities is to identify and address the various needs they may have while still maintaining our identity as parishes of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America.

The primary goal of every parish is to preserve and witness our Orthodox Faith. In addition, some of the newly formed parishes, especially those composed primarily of recent immigrants, seek also to maintain their native culture and language. One such missionary parish is St. Lazarus Serbian Orthodox Parish of

Honolulu Hawaii. Last year, this small community increased by a few families who recently moved from the Chicago area. His Grace Bishop Maxim, despite the many administrative tasks required of him as a true shepherd of the flock of Christ, has made an indelible impact on the lives of the faithful by his visits and preaching in Hawaii as well as in each community of the Diocese. Every visit of the Serbian Bishop or of a priest is a true joy for our faithful who live in the beautiful state of Hawaii, far away from their homeland. Only the church through the services and teachings in their mother tongue can bring these immigrants closer to the Kingdom of God and to their homeland.



On Saturday, June 3, His Grace Bishop Maxim together with Fr. Blasko Paraklis served the Divine Liturgy at the Russian Orthodox Church of the Most Holy Theotokos of Iveron and on Sunday on June 4, at Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Honolulu. After the Liturgy on Sunday, all the faithful of the Lazarus parish together with Bishop Maxim and Fr. Blasko went to Alamoana Park where they enjoyed Serbian music and a traditional Serbian picnic. Alamoana Park is a historical place for Serbians in Hawaii. It is at this place in 1990 that the parish was established. On that occasion, Serbians brought icons and other religious and national items which they displayed around a big tree to create a Serbian Orthodox





ambiance. After a short lecture by Diocesan Secretary Fr. Blasko Paraklis, a discussion ensued about the establishment of the mission parish. When Fr. Blasko asked to what Saint they would like to dedicate their parish, the icon of Saint Lazar moved itself and fell on the grass. All the people present accepted this as a sign and decided to dedicate their liturgical community to St. Lazar of Kosovo.

Today about sixty Serbian souls, mainly young people, live in Hawaii. During the last few years, several children, the future of this parish, were born.

Annunciation to the Mother of God Serbian Orthodox Mission – Colorado Springs, Colorado

This parish was officially established and named on March 30, 2009. Considered the satellite parish of St. John the Baptist Serbian Orthodox Parish in Denver, it serves the needs of about thirty-five families living in Colorado Springs and its vicinity. The main reason for forming this parish was that it was very difficult for families to drive seventy-five miles one way to Denver to attend Divine Liturgies; therefore many did not participate in the life of the Church. The priest from Denver advised the Colorado Springs community to petition His Grace Bishop Maxim to give his blessing for them to form a mission parish. Fr. Radovan from Denver now serves the spiritual needs of the Colorado Springs parish. This year the parish celebrated its Slava with a multitude of people present at the Divine Liturgy and at the banquet that followed. Currently services are being held once a month with the exception of summer when services are held once every two months. Parishioners are for now satisfied with frequent visits from Fr. Radovan. Future building projects are yet to be determined. These Serbian immigrants settled in the same city where the famous Serbian inventor and scientist Nikola Tesla spent a few years of his life working in his lab there. During his stay, the entire city of Colorado Springs had free electricity.

In January of this year, Fr. Predrag Bojovic of Salt Lake City became the administrator of **Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Mission in Boise, Idaho**. Fr. Bojovic continues the work of the first missionary priest, Fr. Blasko Paraklis.

Our Diocese is blessed with several American parishes consisting mainly of converts to Orthodoxy who joined our Diocese during the last few years. In Ander-



son, California there is the missionary parish of St. Andrew-Fool for Christ; in Reno, California, St. John the Baptist Mission Parish; in Eugene, Oregon, St. John the Wonderworker Mission Parish; in Dalles, Oregon, The Dormition of the Theotokos Parish; in Seattle, Washington, Holy Protection of the Theotokos Parish. More reports on these parishes will be published in the next issues of Diocesan Annual.

Due to economic and other reasons, we see more immigrants entering this country from Serbia and other parts of former Yugoslavia. We have also experienced a significant increase in the number of American-born catechumens who are coming to Orthodoxy from other faiths. Our focus is on meeting the spiritual needs of all of these groups. As St. Paul says, "Be all things to all people to save some." (Corinthians 9:22) This must be accomplished while we remain fully faithful to both Scriptures and Holy Tradition. We must ask ourselves how to best meet such a challenge and successfully integrate diverse populations into our parish communities.

We need to effectively reach out to the community where God has placed us. We must build upon the missionary vision planted by St. Herman and the first missionaries who arrived in Alaska in 1794. Surely it behooves us to honor their work and to follow their examples. Have we reached out to others as they did? How do we do this? Do we have the courage of St. Herman and the first missionaries?



All people who are seeking the truth must be given the opportunity to find it at our parishes. Our doors must be open to everyone, and we must receive them with open arms welcoming them home to Orthodoxy. By creating parishes that, while diverse, function as a united whole, we all benefit.



St. Sava Children's Summer Camp 2011 – Jackson, CA

During the 2011 summer camp season, we served over 220 campers at St. Sava Mission in Jackson, CA. Our caThe 2011 summer season marked the fiftieth year of camping at St. Sava Mission in Jackson. We served over 220 campers who came from throughout the Western American Diocese, as well as from Connecticut, Wisconsin, British Columbia and Montenegro! Once again, we were able to sponsor nearly one in ten campers with scholarships, funded by our stewards, the Friends of Camp St. Sava. Special thanks are due to the Pavlovich and Salata families of Los Angeles. Dawn Pavlovich and her daughter Krstina who lead a team of volunteers to stage a very enjoyable and profitable anniversary celebration over the Memorial Day weekend.

His Grace Bishop Maxim greeted the campers of the first week and spent the first two days of camp with them. Protostavrophor Dusan Bunjevic directed the clergy during the first week while his son, Paul, worked as the lay director. Protostavrophor Petar Jovanovich guided the second week of camp. He was aided by lay co-directors Krstina Pavlovich and Michael Rhoads. During the third week, Protostavrophor George Gligich





took charge of the instruction with the help of lay codirectors Nick Salata and Adrienne Allen. His Grace returned to the camp during the third week to visit with the campers, accompany them on a field trip, and serve the Divine Liturgy.

We are happy to report that we had a record number of volunteers to staff the camp this season; so many, in fact, that we had to turn some away. We are very grateful to each and every volunteer who gave of his time, talent and treasure to make this season so memorable for the children. We could not run our camp program without the help of these individuals, who often give up their limited annual vacation time or take time off from work with no pay. May God bless them and reward them for their sacrifices.

We continue to make improvements to the camp facility. In March we removed the old vinyl tile flooring in the kitchen and replaced it with an epoxy resin covering. We are extremely grateful to the workers from San Francisco, St. John's Cathedral, who came both to remove all of the cooking equipment and then to reset it. Their volunteerism saved us several thousand dollars in labor costs. Thank you Stan, Dan, Nick, Dusan, Miroslav and the others who helped you.

Finally, we must thank John and Janine Colich from St. Sava, San Gabriel, who made a \$25,000 gift to Camp St. Sava to help us construct a new sports court. With their contribution and \$5,000 from the St. Sava Mission Foundation, we were able to complete this project just in time for this year's camp season. All the campers enjoyed our new basketball court, but I think it was His Grace, Bishop Maxim, who enjoyed playing tennis the most. Hvala lepo! God bless all of you for your donations. Our children will benefit from these gifts for years to come.

Success, it seems, breeds more success. Each week, after the Friday night talent show, I asked the parents who were present if they would consider joining our stewardship program, "The Friends of Camp St. Sava." The response was absolutely overwhelming. During the three weeks of camp we enrolled more than a dozen new families in the program and we also received additional donations from previous donors. Together, they



brought us \$2,000 closer to our 2011 stewardship goal of \$32,000. Again, on behalf of the children, we thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
yours in Christ,
Reverend Stephen Tumbas,
Camp Director
Danica Paul,
Facility Manager



of the Western American Diocese

Newest Releases

Sebastian Press Adds New Titles to its Repertoire

1621 West Garvey Avenue
Alhambra, CA 91803
626 289 9061
626 284 1484 (fax)

E-mail: westdiocese@earthlink.net

In today's electronic age one would think that books would be superseded, but not so according to the recent finding. Great titles are still selling and people are still reading. With books, as with almost everything in today's market, we face many choices. Some people read for entertainment, some to quench the thirst for knowledge, while others read for spiritual growth. The latter readers are certainly aided by the publishing activity of the Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Sebastian Press is the name given to their publishing department that in a short time has added a few new titles.

Energetic and missionary and an astute bishop of this diocese, His Grace Dr. Maxim believes that the written word is one of the ways to reach out to people, to teach them, and bring them closer to Christ.

"As Saint Basil the Great once observed: "Words by their nature fly; therefore, the writer needs letters to catch them before they fly away". We as Orthodox are obliged to record those significant theological and spiritual words and works of our modern times. Our publishing activity aims at the inculturation of the Orthodox ethos and mentality within modernity and vice versa, focusing on existential human needs in the light of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection. We need a successful interpretative transmission of the tradition by Church Fathers which can be achieved through a process of explicating the old concepts into contemporary concepts, among others – through written books", said his Grace Dr. Maxim.

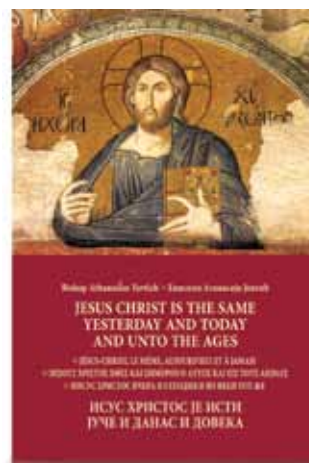
His Grace wants to continue the publishing activity in his Diocese making new titles available to chil-

dren, young adults, families, and all those eager to dive into reflective pastoral and theological thoughts of contemporary theologians and pastors, as well as of those of the Church's antiquity.

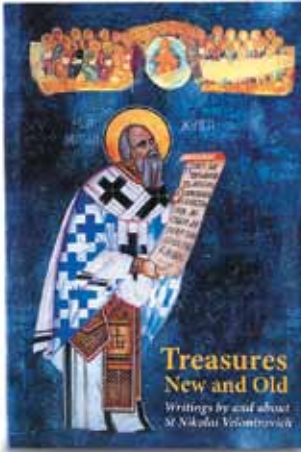
Here we present a few titles of Sebastian Press that can easily be viewed at <http://www.westsrbdio.org/>.

Jesus Christ Is The Same Yesterday Today And Unto the Ages by Bishop Athanasius Yevtich

In this latest and, in every respect, meaningful study, Bishop Athanasius, in the manner of the Holy Fathers, and firmly relying upon the Apostles John and Paul, argues that the Old Testament name of God, "YHWH," a revealed to Moses at Sinai, was translated by both Apostles (both being Hebrews) into the language of the New Testament in a completely original and articulate manner. In this sense, they do not follow the Septuagint, in which the name, "YHWH," appears together with the phrase "the one who is," a word which is, in a certain sense, a philosophical-ontological translation (that term would undoubtedly become significant for the conversion of the Greeks in the Gospels). The two Apostles, rather, translate this in a providential, historical-eschatological, i.e. in a



specifically Christological sense. Thus, John carries the word “YHWH” over with “the One Who Is, Who was and Who is to Come” (Rev. 1:8 & 22...), while for Paul “Jesus Christ is the Same Yesterday, Today and Unto the Ages” (Heb. 13:8).



Treasures New and Old

Writings by and about
St. Nikolai
Velimirovich

Before us is a book about a theologian, a minister, a missionary, a writer, a poet, an apostle, a saint, a man of dialogue: this book is about St. Nikolai Velimirovich, Bishop of Ohrid and Zhicha (1880-

1956), who along with his many other attributes is regarded, with good reason, as an Enlightener of the Americas. The renewed interest in this man and his works has resulted in the materialization of this book for English-speaking readers who wish to become acquainted with this extraordinary person. The collected texts provide an extensive overview of his life, present important testimonies about his personality, and offer essential insights into his theology. The authors penetrate the depths of his thought with remarkable precision and also elucidate his actions. The authors agree that the appearance of Nikolai Velimirovich marks an era of change in the ecclesiastical and theological paradigm as a result of his spirituality, ecclesiastical work, and theological position.

History, Truth, Holiness

by Bishop

Maxim Vasiljevic

Bishop Maxim's first book, described by Fr. John Breck as an “exceptionally important collection of essays” contributing to both the theology of being and also contemporary theological questions, is now available! Chris-



History, Truth, Holiness
Studies in Theological Ontology and Epistemology

История, Правда, Святость
Исследования в Теологической Онтологии и Эпистемологии

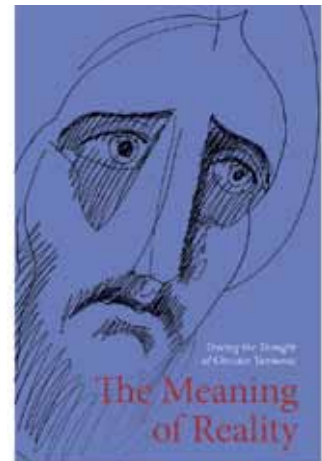
tos Yannaras describes Bishop Maxim as “a theologian who illumines” and Fr. John McGuckin identifies his work as “deeply biblical and patristic, academically learned yet spiritually rich.” The first half of the book collects papers emphasizing theological ontology and epistemology, reminding us how both the mystery of the Holy Trinity and that of the Incarnation demand that we rethink every philosophical supposition; it includes chapters on holiness as otherness, truth and history, and the biochemistry of freedom. The second half of the book features lectures dedicated to the theological questions posed by modern theology, including studies of Orthodox and Roman Catholic ecclesiology, liturgics, and the theology of icons.

The Meaning of Reality

Tracing the
Thought of Christos
Yannaras

This collection of articles traces the thought of Christos Yannaras through his long journey in discovering the meaning of existence, communion, and history. It is a cause of immense joy that no fewer than twenty articles of passionate significance and substance have at present been gathered together in this volume. Yannaras' principal resource for unveiling the meaning of existence and communion is the Trinitarian God as the causal principle of existential freedom. Personal (i.e. self-willed, self-activated, self-conscious) hypostasis should be seen not as an individual entity and an existential identity existing in itself, but as a loving relationship and referential realization, that is to say, as freedom transcending any defining autonomy.

Dr. Yannaras is undoubtedly one of the most significant religious thinkers of our time. His very wide and no less deep education helps him to develop a unique blend of philosophy, theology, and social criticism, and speaks in an original way about the traditional and contemporary issues of human existence, as well as the latest challenges of modern empirical science and political engagement. A detailed



The Meaning
of Reality

knowledge of the writings of the Holy Fathers is always a sure foundation for him amid the labyrinth of modern thought (perplexed with by psychoanalysis, environmental issues, human rights, postmodernism, pluralism, to mention just a few). Insistence on the primacy, uniqueness, and eternal value of human personality prevails in almost all his works and inspires his own vigorous theological and ecumenical engagement based on the Orthodox Eucharistic and ascetic tradition.



Hagia Sophia,
Charalambos P.
Stathakis

Dear reader, as you run like the rest of us along the dizzy main road, stop, stay aside for a while. Let the others be dizzy, and take the secret

underground trail, which will lead you through the dewdrops of the leaves, the crystal smile of the sun, the city's underground galleries, your knowledge, and your feelings, to the doorstep of the Hagia Sophia. Because all dewdrops, all sunrays, and all beauty leads there. That is what you will be told by my friend, the author, whom I am fond of and whom I send you to, Charalambos Stathakis: the doctor, the warm and humane researcher, the scientist devoted to his work and his patients, who has given a series of scientific papers, who, nevertheless, retains a nest of beauty untouched in his heart, which makes him outstanding—even though he is not a specialist in architecture, nor a historian, nor a theologian, nor a Byzantinist—it makes him stand out in all these together and in entirety.

If you let yourself into his relentlessly personal approach to the Hagia Sophia with humble obedience, the light that transforms the building and is transformed in the building will be revealed to you. Watch how he stand sin front of Hagia Sophia, how he walks among her gold lit corners, how he touches her heaven-dropped structures, and how he converses with her history, her legends, the interpretations of architects and theologians—he who is the least of all, but because of this also the first. Follow

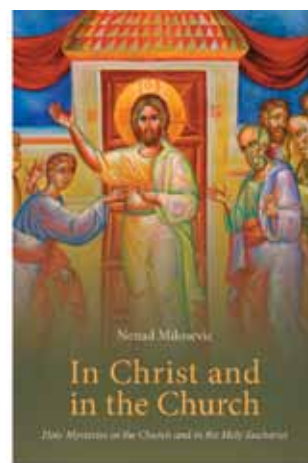
him with discipline on this trail. Work hard to comprehend him. Then return to the beginning to experience it again written in full and in one piece. Study his illustrations with patience. Do not halt on some technical imperfections. Receive what you are given. It comes from a non-specialist and this is why it helps us non-specialists to comprehend the Church, which may be simple in the experience it conveys, but not in its structure and its structural solutions. This is why it is revealed to us gradually by the mystical text and the accompanying illustrations. In this way, reader, you will experience the blessed originality of the author in interpreting architecture and space through light.

Nenad Milosevic,
**In Christ and in the
Church** – Holy Mysteries
in the Church and
in the Holy Eucharist

With the publication of this volume English speaking Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians alike will have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the thought and work of Nenad Milosevic, the eminent liturgical scholar and Professor of Liturgics at the Theological Faculty of the University of Belgrade.

Through his methodical study of the sources (including a considerable number of liturgical manuscripts and texts and a wide range of patristic and other ecclesiastical writings), his careful analysis of the historical evidence, and his judicious interpretation of the liturgical data Professor Milosevic provides his readers with facts and insights to help them broaden their knowledge, deepen their understanding, and heighten their appreciation of the sacramental life of the Church centered—as the title of his work suggests—on the Divine Liturgy, the sacred rite by which the Orthodox Church celebrates the mystery or sacrament of the holy Eucharist.

Professor Milosevic provides us with many wonderful theological insights that enrich our understanding of the sacraments. He also gives us a well-attested history of the origins and the development



of the sacramental rites. This book will become an important manual for the study of the sacraments and the their liturgical rites by pastors, seminarians, catechists, and interested laypeople.



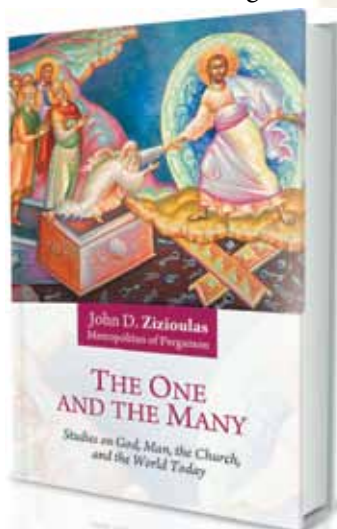
Stamatis' Planner 2012
Planner Illustrated
Sketches by Stamatis Skliris

2011 Annual,
The Way to the Kingdom of God
Commemorative the Ninetieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the first Serbian Diocese for America and Canada (1921-2011).



“The One and the Many” – John D. Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon

This volume offers a collection of Zizioulas articles which have appeared mostly in English, and which present his trinitarian doctrine of God, as well as his theological account of the Church as the place in which freedom and communion are actualized. The title, *The One and the Many*, suggests the idea of a profound relationship that exists between the Persons in the Holy Trinity, between Christ and the Church, between one Catholic Church and many catholic Churches. On each of these levels of com-



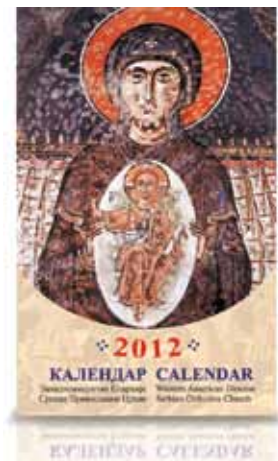
munion, each one is called to receive from one another and indeed to receive one another. And while this is understandable at the Triadological and Christological levels, it raises all sorts of fundamental ecclesiological questions, since the highest point of unity in this context is both the mutual ecclesial-eucharistic recognition and agreement on doctrine and canonical-ecclesiological organization. The book has the Preface written by Bishop Athanasius Yevtich, and an extensive and valuable Introduction (pp. xi-xxi) written by Paul Mc Partlan.

“The title, “The One and the Many” suggests the idea of a profound relationship that exists between the Persons in the Holy Trinity, between Christ and the Church, between one Church and many churches... On each of these levels of communion, each one is called to receive from one another and indeed to receive one another. Trinitarian theology in Metropolitan John’s profound works does justice to the Church by defining it as a unity of the One and the Many at the same time, allowing a full relationship between unity and diversity. The very identity of the Church is relational; it cannot exist without reference to the Holy Trinity.”

- from the Foreword
by Right Rev. Athanasius Yevtich

A New Illustrated, full-color
2012 pocket size
CALENDAR

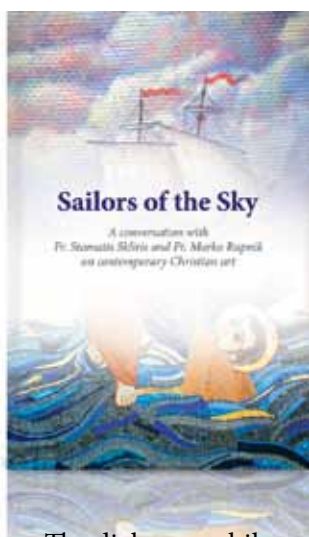
This high quality, bilingual (English and Serbian) pocket size 2012 calendar with exceptional graphic design is profusely illustrated, with daily and special prayers, a directory of the Western American Diocese of the SOC, a schedule of events, and space for personal notes throughout, is indispensable for an organized Christian living.



Sailors of the Sky, by Fr. Radovan Bigovic

A conversation with Fr. Stamatis Skliris and Fr. Marko Rupnik on contemporary Christian art

In these timely conversations led by Fr. Radovan Bigovic, many issues are introduced that enable the contemporary reader to deepen and expand his or her understanding of the role of art in the life of the



Church. Here we find answers to questions on the crisis of contemporary ecclesiastical art in West and East; the impact of Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism and Abstract painting on contemporary ecclesiastical painting; and a consideration of the main distinction between iconography and secular painting.

The dialogue, while resolving some doubts about the difference between iconography, religious painting, and painting in general, reconciles the requirement to obey iconographic canons with the freedom essential to artistic creativity, demonstrating that obedience to the canons is not a threat to the vitality of iconography. Both artists illumine the role of prayer and asceticism in the art of iconography. They also mention crucial differences between iconography in the Orthodox Church and in Roman Catholicism.

How important these distinctions are when exploring the relationship between contemporary theology and art!

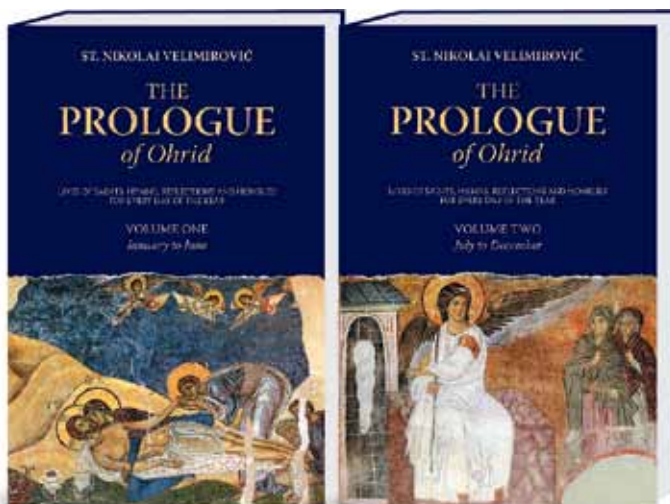
In a time when postmodern “metaphysics” relativizes every concept, these masters still believe that, to some extent,

Post-Modernism adds to the revitalization of Christian art, stimulating questions about “artistic inspiration” and the essential aesthetic categories of Christian painting. Their exceptionally wide, yet nonetheless deep, expertise assists their not-so-everyday connections between theology, art, and modern issues concerning society: “society” taken in its broader meaning as “civilization.” Finally, the entire artistic project of Stamatis and Rupnik has important ecumenical implications that answer a genuine longing for unity in the Christian world.

Prayer Book, is a beautiful pocket-size, full-color book; it contains prayers of Orthodox Christians, lists of Scripture, and brief articles on the prece

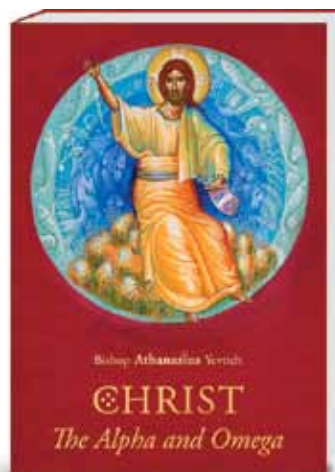


duct in church, and the meaning and practice of prayer. It is adorned with striking icons and illustrations by Fr. Stamatis Skliris, a parish priest in Athens who is a renowned iconographer and a writer and lecturer on Byzantine iconography.

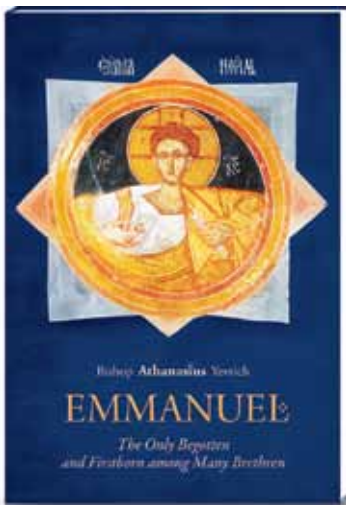


The Prologue of Ohrid, by Saint Nikolai of Zica, is a complete and unabridged English translation of St. Nikolai’s Prologue which has become a much loved spiritual classic for Orthodox Christians worldwide. An inspirational source-book of the Orthodox Faith, it contains within its pages a summation of the Church’s wisdom and Her experience of sanctity through the Grace of Jesus Christ. The lives of Saints, Hymns, Reflections, and Homilies are presented for every day of the year.

Christ, The Alpha and Omega is an anthology of Bishop Athanasius’ articles which have appeared in Serbian, Greek, French, English and Russian. Focusing on themes central to Christian patristic Triadology, Ecclesiology and Anthropology, the book reveals the ultimate purpose of man and the universe, and speaks of how each of us can realize this purpose within the divine-human community of the Orthodox Church. Bishop Athanasius’ (1938) thought combines adherence to the



teaching of the Church Fathers with a vibrant faith and a profound experience of Christ in the Church. He is one of the most renowned and respected theologians in the Orthodox Church today.



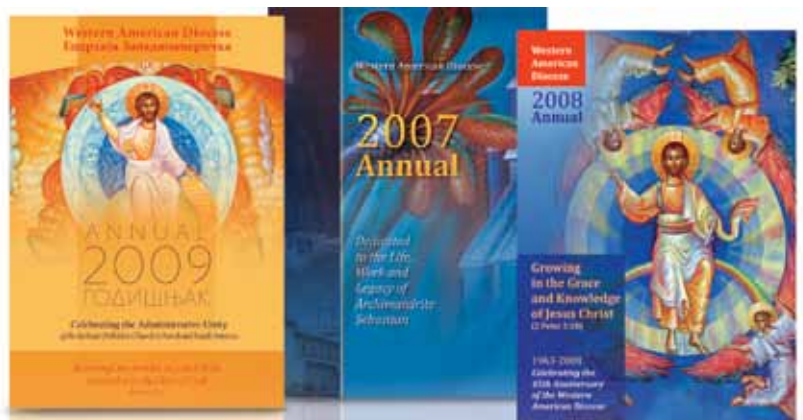
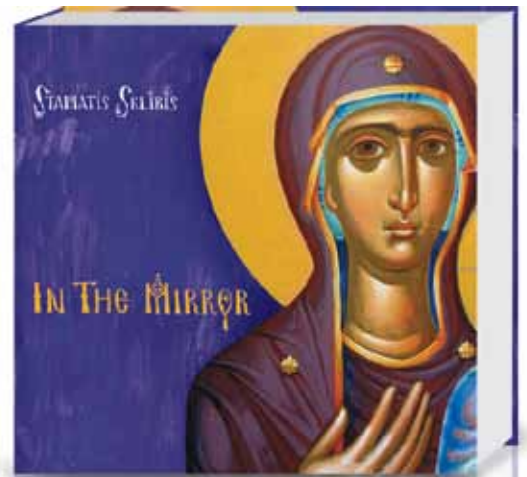
one with Him? Bishop Athanasius examines these and other foundational questions in depth in this volume, drawing from a wealth of Scriptural and patristic sources. In discussing diverse theological subjects, he always returns to his overarching theme: the communion that man can have with God through Jesus Christ the God-man, within Christ's Church and above all in the Holy Eucharist. His exquisite and unique way of engaging the reader in mutual dialogue, with the living Eucharistic experience permeating his every thought, instills in the reader a burning desire for that communion.

In the Mirror, A Collection of Iconographic Essays and Illustrations by Fr. Stamatis Skliris. In the Mirror is an anthology of his articles, now translated into English, in which he combines adherence to the teachings of the Church Fathers with a vibrant expression of faith through the experience of Christ in the Church. The book is adorned with more than 200 of his striking icons and illustrations. Fr Stamatis is one example of an synthetical Neopatristic approach in the arts. He articulates a dialogue with modern art by evaluating the brush strokes of Van Gogh Cézanne, Monet's colors, Matisse's forms, Picasso's Cubism, and Post-modernism. Stamatis reminds us of the times when Church had the ability to shape the culture. He is authentically postmodern, because he employs purely artistic criteria; he does not ready-made solu-

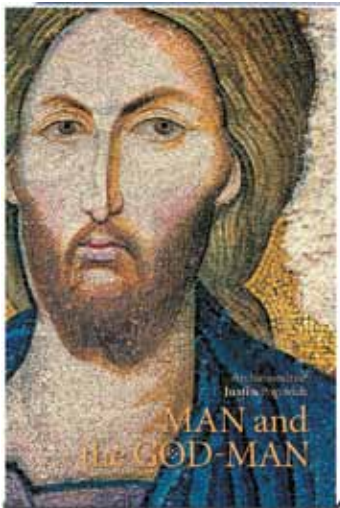
In **Emmanuel**, the second anthology of Bishop Athanasius' articles to appear in English, His Grace explores themes of Orthodox Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Gnoseology. How can we know Who God is? How can we know who we are, as human persons created in His image and likeness? How can we become

tions from the iconographic past; he researches everything anew; a strong experimental sense is at his disposal, and he combines strictly traditional elements with those that are modern; e.g., The Mighty Protectress (Theotokos) is strongly traditional, but Christ has the movement, the colors, and brush deposits of modern, expressionist art. Although he basically employs a dark Byzantine under-painting, adding to it light "accents" (illuminations), he still plays with colors in such an impressionist manner that his work gains a "non-determinism of color"; he leaves sections of his painting uncolored and then treats these sections in an unpredictable manner with an eagerness to play and not to make use of the calligraphy that is usual in iconography.

2009 Annual, Dedicated to the celebration of the Administrative unity of Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America, this Annual highlights the Diocesan Days and the life of the Western American Diocese. It includes the report on 30th anniversary



sary of the Repose of Fr Justin Popovic, as well as numerous articles and relevant writings on missions, ordinations, consecrations, monastic life, new releases in the Western American Diocese, including the directory of parishes and diocesan ministry departments.



Man and the God-Man
by Archimandrite
Justin Popovich

“Father Justin Popovich, pan-orthodox witness to the God-revealed and Christ-given Eternal Truth, whose testimony can be even seen within this collection of his articles – that “the mystery of Truth is not in material things, not in ideas, not in symbols, but in Personhood,

namely the Theanthropic Person of the Lord Christ, Who said: I am the Truth (John 14:6), Truth perfect, never diminished, always one and the same in its complete fullness – yesterday, today, and forever (Heb.13:8).”

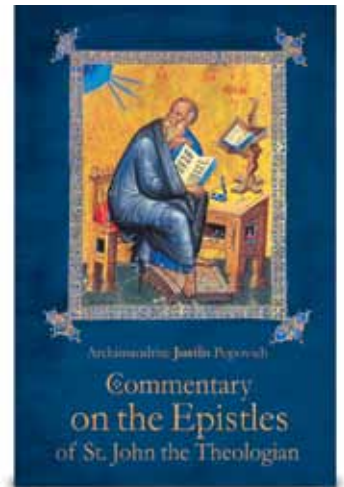
The treasure to be found in this anthology of neopatristic syntheses consists of: “Perfect God and perfect man” – Nativity Epistle, where Fr Justin boldly exclaim that “man is only a true man when he is completely united with God, only and solely in God is man a man, true man, perfect man, a man in whom all the fullness of Godhead lives.”; “The God-man” – The foundation of the Truth of Orthodoxy – Ava Justinian language of love in Christ-centered reflections of Truth; “The Supreme Value and Infallible Criterion” – contemporary philosophical reflections on visible and invisible realities; “Sentenced to Immortality” – a homily on the Resurrection or

Our Lord Jesus Christ; “Humanistic and Theanthropic Culture”-criticism of European anti-Christian culture; “Humanistic and Theanthropic Education” – indicative pondering of consequences of education without God; “The Theory of Knowledge of Saint Isaac the Syrian” – Faith, prayer, love, humility, grace and freedom, the purification of the intellect, mystery of knowledge; “A Deer in a Lost Paradise” – Ava’s renowned poetic essay, a confession, and deepest longing for all-sweetest Jesus...

Commentary on the Epistles of St. John the Theologian by Archimandrite Justin Popovich

This Commentary on the Epistles of St. John the Theologian – published now, three years after the blessed repose of Venerable Fr. Justin (on the Feast of the Annunciation, 1979) – was written by the tireless Messenger of Christ forty years ago, in circumstances similar to those in which Christ’s Holy Evangelist John wrote his sacred Epistles.

The text of this 93-page soft-bound book has been translated from the Serbian by Radomir M. Plavsic. Published by Sebastian Press, Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Contemporary Christian Thought Series, number 5, First Edition.



Western American Diocese

Our Liturgical Wine

At the Annual Diocesan Days celebration in September of 2005, during his inaugural visit to the historic St. Sava Church in Jackson, California, the first Serbian Orthodox Church in the Western hemisphere, His Grace Bishop Maxim tasted some of the renowned Amador County wines and promptly suggested that the Western American Diocese produce its own wine for liturgical use. He stated that this wine should be full-bodied, yet mellow and aromatic and slightly sweet to the taste.

Wine grapes were introduced to this part of the Sierra Nevada Foot-hills (45 miles Southeast of Sacramento and 90 miles Southwest of Lake Tahoe) during the 1850s Gold Rush, when fortune-seeking prospectors brought rootstock with them from their Mediterranean homelands. Some of the vineyards planted during that time have survived to the present day. The region is well known for its French Syrah and Italian Barbera wine grapes and internationally recognized for its Zinfandel. For years, the Zinfandel variety was believed to be native to America; however, recent DNA studies have revealed its origin to be the Dalmatian Coast!

Fr. Stephen Tumbas, parish priest of St. Sava Church in Jackson and a winemaker himself (Tumbas Vineyards, Shenandoah Valley), offered his God-given talents back to our Lord and His Holy Church in an invaluable example of stewardship. Fr. Stephen explained: "Not knowing exactly what would be involved, I agreed to take on the project. The first batch of wine was produced in 2006 from aromatic Black Muscat and Zinfandel grapes that

were harvested late to obtain higher sugar content. The 2007 vintage will be a combination of Syrah and Black Muscat grapes."

Sebastian Wine was first offered at the Divine Liturgy during Diocesan Days in Jackson in September 2007. This soft, sweet and well-perfumed wine has been distributed throughout the Western American Diocese. It is believed that this is the first time in the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America that it is producing its own wine for celebration of the Eucharist.

Sebastian Wine: The Second Vintage

This year's liturgical wine will be slightly different from the last. In response to requests from several priests and parishes, we are adding a little more fruit sugar concentrate to the blend before bottling. This will make the wine sweeter to the taste. We are also changing the base of the blend from Zinfandel to Syrah. We believe that this will make the wine a bit more full-bodied. Finally, our wine will bear a new label created by Fr. Stamatis, the Greek priest and iconographer, whose work can be seen throughout this Annual and on most of the communiqués from the Western American Diocese.

Bottled in July we plan to have the wine ready for distribution by the late fall. Our production total is the same as last year: two sixty-gallon barrels that will yield 120 cases of 375 ml bottles. At the present time, this is sufficient wine for the entire year for our diocese, as well as for a few churches in other dioceses.



This wine is offered to all parishes throughout the country.
If you are interested in a sample, please contact the Diocese office at 626-289-9061
or email westdiocese@earthlink.net

Podcast Ministry



The Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church began broadcasting a Radio Program on Pentecost, June 14, 1997. This program offers spiritual, cultural, and educational information to people of Western Serbian Diocese.

In February of 2009 the Diocesan Assembly made a decision to continue the broadcast of our program only via internet at <http://westsrbdio.org/podcastgen1.2/> on our Diocesan website. We have changed the name of the Radio Program to Podcast, and after the first year of internet broadcasting it appears that the decision was sound. We are pleased to state that now we have a great many listeners from Western Europe, Australia, Canada and Serbia. Many of them have subscribed to our Podcast Program and we encourage you to do so. We are also pleased to say that we have continued the project with the highly acclaimed actress Mirjana Jokovic. Right now we are recording Homilies of Saint Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic, and it is our hope to publish it on a CD in the future.

In addition to our regular format we also broadcast special shows. This year we had a lectures and homilies from our Bishop Maxim, Bishop Atanasije Jeftic, Bishop Irinej of Backa, and Bishop Ignjatije, and Bishop Porfirije. We also broadcasted the lectures of Bishop Justin from Timok. Some of the programs also featured lectures by recognized Orthodox theologian professors of St. Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary, Protopresbyter Paul Nadim Tarazi and Fr Thomas Hopko, to mention a few. After the decision to broadcast programs only over the internet, we are much more focused on diocesan live events: Sunday of Orthodoxy, Diocesan Days, Diocesan Assembly, all kinds of lectures and readings, especially in English. One of the most interesting shows was a lecture given by Hieromonk Damascene, from Saint Herman Monastery, Platina, about our new saints, Justin of Celije, and Simeon of Dajbabe.

We would also like to encourage all of you to contribute with your ideas and suggestions to make this program even more successful and informative for our audience.

If you have any materials for the program, please feel free to forward it to our diocesan e-mail address:

westdiocese@earthlink.net.

Finally, we would like to use this opportunity to thank all of you who supported our radio program.



Holy icons

Theory and Practice

Course Description: Live and learn in theory and practice about the creation of icons, guided by Diocesan iconographers. Diocesan iconographical school is inspired by Byzantine and Serbian medieval fresco painting and by Fr. **Stamatis**, a famous parish priest, iconographer and medical doctor from Athens, Greece, who is well-known throughout Europe for his iconography. Our teachers impart their creative, Patristic knowledge of Icon illustrating to aspiring Iconographers and help them to more fully develop their potential. The intensive course will follow the schedule below.

Course Benefits and Objectives:

- Develop a deep practical knowledge of Byzantine Iconography.
- To be able to paint hand-painted icons and wall-paintings.
- An increased ability to depict faces and vestments.
- Constructing a finished icon from beginning to end.

Application Procedure: Applicants will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, and are strongly encouraged to apply early as space is very limited. Applications will be subject to a selection process which will give special preference to aspiring Iconographers within the local region, and especially within the Western American Serbian Diocese. A \$400 enrollment fee will be required to cover course costs and materials. Once accepted into the program, the fee will be non-refundable. Please make payment to the Western American Serbian Diocese in the form of a check and send to: 2541 Crestline Terrace, Alhambra, California, 91803



Week One

Introducing the basic techniques of iconography (colors, material, styles)

ANY PROPOSAL FOR TEACHING ICON-PAINTING

must avoid the two extremes we mentioned: it must not ignore the dimension of portraiture of the icon, and risk becoming a monophysitic art like that of the Copts, but neither should it be reduced to a mere portrait, having no connection with the freedom of the eternal Kingdom of God. For this reason, the icon-painter must allow himself to experience all the stages that Christian icon-painting went through during its evolution. He has to acquire a timeless view and a criterion of what constitutes Orthodoxy in icon-painting, and he must not confine himself to any one period, trend, technique or school.

It will help him greatly to engage in the thought processes of the first centuries of Christianity, when the first choices were being made and the first crucial steps taken, from the Hellenistic mummy portraits such



as those of Fayum towards the first icons made in encaustic, the majority of which are preserved at the Monastery at Sinai. Next, he should study the exquisite illuminated manuscripts made after the Iconoclastic period, the unrivalled mosaics of the eleventh century, and, finally, the monument of Sopotsani, supremely relevant in this context, in which the classical Greek concept exists alongside advanced Byzantine techniques of illumination, furnishing the contemporary icon-painter with a standard and a criterion for affirming the tangible world and sensible beauty on the one hand, and on the other the eschatological transfiguration and liberation of all things from the limitations of created being. In addition, he should study the whole system of illuminations in icons, that by the fourteenth century had been fully established.

In studying the history of iconography, the painter should also find a criterion that enables him to assess the degree to which considerations of portraiture, along with all the other elements of iconography, entered into each work and period. A perusal of the history of icon-painting using this criterion would help the painter to gain insights which could be very fruitful in his own personal work.

In any case, the contemporary icon-painter should avoid intense formalism of line, and rediscover the fluent, rich, spontaneous color of Byzantine art; moreover, he should gradually introduce into his work the element of portraiture, not in order to be more artistic, but as a way to portray in a genuinely Orthodox fashion the dogma of the Incarnation of the Son of God, that is, God's assuming of a form that, in being tangible and human, is an affirmation of each particular thing that belongs to sensible humanity.

ICONOGRAPHY ACHIEVES REPRESENTATION THROUGH THE DIALECTIC

between two elements. The first is the design of the icon. The icon uses design to depict all the historical elements of a saint's life which express the personal relationship with Christ and his fellow-beings, established during his historical life and earthly existence.

Next, illuminating the saint with the light special to Byzantine painting (which all the other affiliated arts have, to a greater or lesser extent, adopted), endows biological existence, depicted by the design, with all the elements of freedom and release from the limitations of biological existence within created space and time. We must point out here that, in the dialectic between history and the eschaton, in other words, between the created and the uncreated, depicted in the icon, design and light (or created and uncreated), do not participate on an equal basis. As Fr. Florovsky speaks of unequal Christology (in the sense that the one hypostasis of the pre-eternal Son and Word of God assumes, through the Incarnation, human nature and hypostasizes



it, without there being two equal hypostases, one divine and one human, joined in an equal partnership), so too iconography does not combine two ways of being that co-exist as equals, but lays the emphasis firmly on eschatology.

Week Two

Open individual practice

Week Three

How to draw Byzantine proportions successively.

Knowing the elements of the face and body

Drawing and painting facial features and faces

In order to break free from a specific model and to create his own design for the icon he intends to paint, the painter must have a thorough knowledge of the proportions of the human face. The view that the Byzantine icon distorts nature is plainly wrong. The most important works in this tradition have been studied and reveal a profound knowledge of nature, its proportions and its harmonies of color and shape (for example, the naked Christ in the icon of the Baptism at Dafni has the classic proportion of head to body, that is, 1:8, while the combination of colors in the works of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are found in nature).

a) The icon-painter, therefore, can start his design with an oval shape, broader at the top and narrower at the bottom, which is typical of the human face.

b) Next, he divides this into three equal parts, top to bottom: the upper part is the forehead, the middle gives the proportions of the nose, while below is the space between nose and chin.

c) Within this shape he situates the eyes and the mouth, the ears and hair, then the neck, then the rest of the body, always guided by an accurate and profound knowledge of the proportions of the anatomy.

d) It goes without saying that he keeps in mind the vision the Church has of each saint, how the Church conceives the face of Saint Anthony, for example, and in front of him he must have more than one icon of the saint to consult.



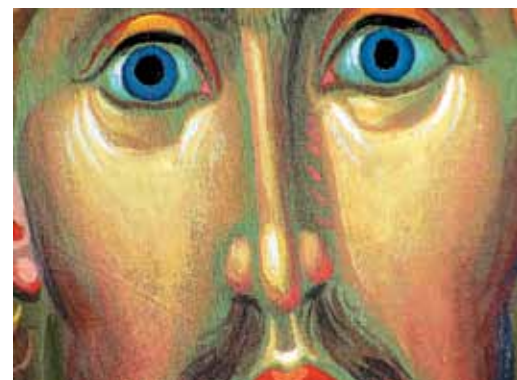
Week Four

Open individual practice.

Week Five

**Illuminating icons with
a Byzantine-style lighting
Studying and applying the function
and purpose of the light
Studying and applying the range
of lighting styles**

At this stage,, the iconographer covers the space between the outline of the face with the Byzantine „proplasmos“ (primer), a relatively dark color, olive-green or brown.



The next step, using dark colors, he draws in the lines of the body, as in the original design. Finally, he illuminates each area with the particular light found in Byzantine painting. The special quality of this light consists in the following:

a) It tends to illuminate the whole face centrally rather than one-sidedly, leaving a narrow border of unpainted primer round the outside which blends with and emphasizes the outline of the face, thereby causing the whole to be more stylized.

b) At the point where the light meets the primer, there is not such a gradual transition from lighter to darker shadings as in the works of the Renaissance, which were painted using the technique of „sfumato“. The transition from one shade to another must be staggered so that the surface covered by each added layer of lighter color is clearly outlined. The illumination, that is, of the face and the other areas must be „quantized“ (to borrow the terminology of modern physics), in the sense that each of the additional layers must be clearly demarcated. As regards the strokes of the brush on the painting, the light must illuminate only those parts of the anatomy that really exist (i.e., the nose, the arches of the eyebrows, the cheekbones, the dome of the forehead, etc.) and the spaces in between should be left in half-light.

c) Shadows, where they exist, tend to be on the periphery, are the same color and shade, are not added afterwards but are part of the darker primer which is put on first and is not covered over, where there are shadows, by the additional lighter layers of paint. The parts of the anatomy are never shadowed; for example, they are never found on the forehead or the cheekbones. These factors constitute crucial and radical differences between Byzantine illumination and Renaissance chiaroscuro, in which shadows are added afterwards in brushstrokes of different color-shadings, delicately graduated and the result of naturally occurring optical phenomena, so that they are allowed to fall on the anatomical features.

d) Finally, areas of most definition are picked out with strong, fine, almost white lines. When the naturalistic design has been illuminated in the particular Byzantine style described, the work takes on a different character, akin to that of Byzantine art. The „quantization“ of light functions impressionistically, giving us the sense that the face in the painting is bright with an intense but naturalistic light.

This figurative technique creates an impressionism of color and light, and also functions expressionistically, since it accentuates and stylizes the outline and some of the inner lines, and gives special emphasis to the area around the eyes, which lends expression to a face.

This technique leads the work out of the sphere of naturalness and gives it the transcendental character of an icon.

At Bishop Maxim's invitation, a renowned iconographer from Athens, George Kordis will be conducting the forthcoming 2 week course at the same Diocesan Iconography School in February of 2012.



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OF THE WESTERN AMERICAN DIOCESE

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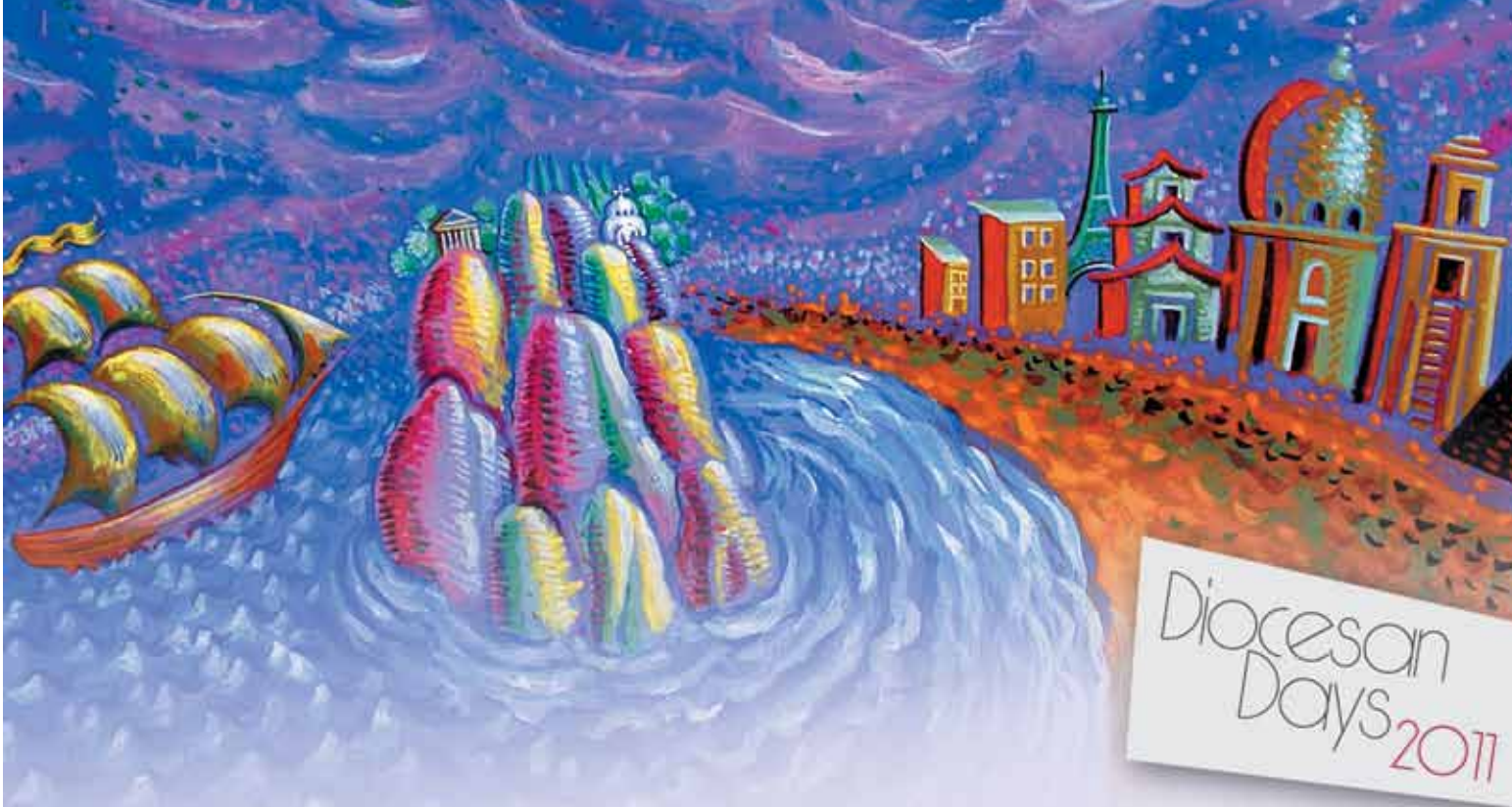
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His Grace, Bishop MAXIM cordially invites you to the

Diocesan Days 2011

Celebrating the 90th Anniversary
of the Diocese of North and South America

15th Annual Diocesan Days Gathering

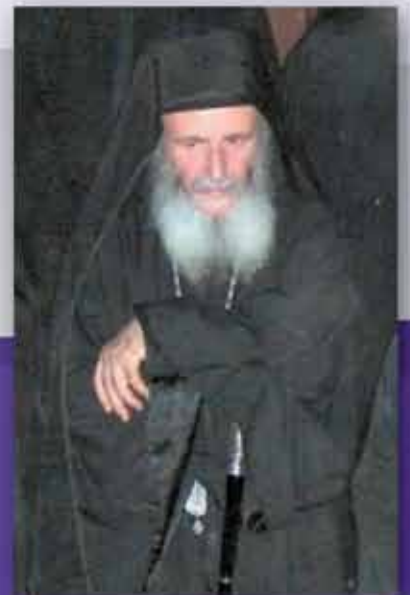
Come and spend a Weekend of spiritual and social activities
for all ages with the Clergy, Monastics and Faithful from
all of the Parishes and Monasteries throughout our Western Diocese.

Place: Saint Steven's Serbian Orthodox Cathedral,
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Date: September 2-4, 2011

Guest Speaker

**ARCHIMANDRITE VASILEIOS
(Gontikakis)**



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*Celebrating the 90th Anniversary
of the Diocese of North and South America
Diocesan Days and Annual Assembly 2011*

Diocesan
Days 2011

*Schedule
for Diocesan Days 2011*

Friday, September 2

- 3:00 p.m. Clergy Symposium and Refreshments
- 4:00 p.m. Annual Diocesan KSS Meeting
- 5:00 p.m. Vespers
- 6:00 p.m. Presentation: "The Holy Mountain"
- 7:00 p.m. Buffet Dinner and Discussion
- 8:30 p.m. Meeting of the Diocesan Council

Saturday, September 3

- 9:30 a.m. Hierarchical Pan-Orthodox Divine Liturgy
- 11:30 a.m. Refreshments and Symposium:
"The Diocese in North America: A Reflection"
- 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 2-5 p.m. Memorial Service at grave of Bishop Gregory
Children's Activity in the park
Teen Iconography presentation and workshop
Festival of Books
- 3:00 p.m. Annual Assembly: Reports and 2012 Budget
- 6:00 p.m. Vespers
- 7:00 p.m. Program
- 8:00 p.m. Dinner Buffet, Fellowship, and Music
- 11:00 p.m. Closing

Sunday, September 4

- 9:00 a.m. Matins
- 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy
- 12:30 p.m. Banquet
- 1:30 p.m. Afternoon Program: Folklore groups
- 3:00 p.m. Music and Fellowship
- 5-7 p.m. Dinner buffet
- 8:00 p.m. Closing

