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**MISSION & MINISTRY**

**Building up the household of faith**

# The quest to be truly Orthodox and truly American

**Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky**

**D**uring the week after Pentecost 2010, the Orthodox churches in America entered a new stage in their common life. Acting as the Exarch of Ecumenical Patriarch

Bartholomew, Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America convened the Episcopal Assembly for North America, as mandated by the conference of Patriarchates and Autocephalous Churches held in Chambésy, Switzerland, at Pentecost 2009.

By all accounts, the Assembly succeeded in laying the foundation for a more coherent and collaborative ordering of Orthodox life and mission in America.

Bishop Basil [Antioch] and Archbishop Antony [Constantinople/Ukrainian] were elected Secretary and Treasurer, respectively, of the Assembly, joining Archbishop Demetrios, Chairman, and Archbishops Philip [Antioch] and Justinian [Moscow], Vice Chairmen, in the Executive Committee. The agencies and commissions of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas [SCOBA] were affirmed by the Assembly as efficient expressions of the common mission of the Orthodox Churches. Committees of the Assembly are in process of formation. It was proposed by consensus, and in consultation with hierarchs from Mexico and Canada, that the bishops in Canada form their own Episcopal Assembly, and that the bishops in Mexico join the Episcopal Assembly of South [Latin] America. Finally, it is anticipated that the entire Episcopal Assembly process will lead to canonical solutions to the problems of the so-called diaspora, in this way preparing for the convening of a Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Churches.

The successful beginning does not tell us very much about the road ahead. Obstacles are sure to emerge, while challenges with no easy solutions remain.

One such challenge is the place of the Orthodox Church in America in the Episcopal Assembly.

One-third of the Orthodox Churches recognize the

autocephaly of the OCA. One-third are determined to reject this status. One-third take a neutral position. All the bishops of the OCA were full participants of the Episcopal Assembly, equal in this way to all the other canonical bishops. On the other hand, the OCA as a church was not seen at this time as a

participating church.

It is difficult to describe the situation of the OCA in the Assembly as anything other than humiliating. This is so even though the Chairman and others did everything possible to avoid any words or actions that would be heard or felt as humiliating. The only adequate Christian response to humiliation is found in humility. And this was the

response and attitude in

which the OCA hierarchs were grounded. By this means they preserved dignity – their own dignity and the dignity of the OCA, as well as the dignity of the Assembly. By this, they contributed to the successful and hopeful outcome of the Assembly.

Another challenge ahead will be the question of movement towards the transformation of the Episcopal Assembly into a real Synod of Bishops for a united church. Will the experience of the Episcopal Assembly create such a deep sense of mutual trust and common mission that jurisdictional divisions within the Assembly will become relatively unimportant, and the common Orthodox identity in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church will become the priority?

Even the achievement of such love and unity will not be enough if we as Orthodox Christians fail to encounter and engage America – American society and American culture. It is possible to be united and yet self-satisfied and isolated. It is not enough to put “our” Orthodox house in order if this is an end in itself.

We are called to put our house in order to be true and adequate witnesses to Jesus Christ, to the Good News of Christ, and to the joy of Christ’s Resurrection. And to accomplish this in America, Father Alexander Schmemmann told us many years ago that our Church is called to be truly Orthodox and truly American. ■



**Archbishop Demetrios opens the Episcopal Assembly.**

PHOTO: D. PANAGOS

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## IMPORTANT NOTE TO OUR READERS

**In light of current financial realities facing the Orthodox Church in America, the last two issues of The Orthodox Church only appeared on-line at [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org). With this issue, printing has resumed, although finances do not permit the mailing of copies to individual homes, as had been done for over four decades. The current budget allows for the printing and bulk distribution of approximately 9,500 copies, rather than the former 26,000 individually mailed copies. Every parish will receive a packet of copies in bulk for distribution locally. The number of copies a given parish receives may not correspond to its actual membership.**

## Sons of Disobedience

And you He made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

**Ephesians 2:1-2**

**E**vil incidents become our daily “breaking news.” Recently, in a typical high school, two male and three female students had carried on a series of harassments on a fellow student who had moved into the area from Ireland, thinking that in America her dreams of a bright future would be fulfilled. The gang taunted and teased her, calling her all sorts of vulgarities and telling her she should kill herself. She did. She hung herself in her closet. The mother of another teenage girl sent messages to her daughter’s “friend” as if from a young man enamored of the girl, leading her on through e-mails, and then abruptly informing her that the supposed love affair was over. The despondent young lady committed suicide.

Elsewhere, two Arab-Americans visited Taliban members and converted to their anti-American cause. Returning to the US, they plotted to blow themselves up in the New York City subway, causing havoc by murdering fellow passengers.

Are all of the above evil persons? If not, then what motivated them to plot or to commit wicked, harmful, and hateful acts upon innocent victims?

As Christians, we believe that all human beings are conceived and created in the image of God – without exception. None are created *evil* – indeed, nothing that exists is evil *by nature*, since God is the only Creator of all that exists. In that God never had, never would, and never will create evil, what is the source of evil?

A very early influential body of works, *Corpus Aeropagiticum*, written under the pseudonym Dionysius the Aeropagite, deals with the problem of evil. He explains that God created everything to be in communion with Himself, and if that is done, humans will share the blissful blessings of peace, harmony, and beauty that God planned for us. It is a reciprocal relationship. It means that as we learn to reach out beyond our own idea of those virtues and open ourselves to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we will develop an appetite for all that is best within and for us. God is always presenting all that is good and beneficial, the very meaning of “blessing.” We might argue with Dionysius that it’s not really the answer to evil – let’s not be naïve. There is an obvious fact that evil is a factor impinging on our own lives, invading our world and society, and posing obstacles to our lives in Christ.

Look at Saint Paul’s words to the Ephesians. Writing to Christian converts, he reminds them that they were “made alive, though... once dead through the trespasses and sins once walked.” Evil is the free choice to *ignore* the inner promptings of God’s Spirit in our souls, preferring instead the spiritual cancer of demonic possession. Satan acts as a parasite on the human soul, hiding in anonymity by coaxing the person caught in sinfulness that he or she is doing something worthwhile and fulfilling, whereas the sin is destroying his or her soul. Evil, then, does not exist in itself, only in another, and it clings to the bearer with the same tenacity that the demons did who had invaded and possessed the poor insane creature of Gadara, when they argued with Christ that He was being “cruel” to dispossess them “before the time.”

Evil can only destroy, tear down, divide, and torment. It cannot create. It depends on preying upon what God creates in order to survive, and ironically it knows that it will survive because God never reacts to evil by imitating Satan in destruction or obliteration. The prince of the air about whom Saint Paul writes is also created by God, therefore possessing – somehow – something good, regardless of how perverted he and his ilk have become. How much more can we say of the human beings who have been victims of satanic devices to ensnare their souls and turn them into agents of wickedness? ■

## The world becoming Church

### An Orthodox vision of mission

Priest Richard Rene

**A**s a mission parish undertakes a formal outreach to the local community, the faithful naturally find themselves grappling with the meaning of Orthodox Christian mission. The Lord commands us to “go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” [Matthew 28:19-20]. What vision and practical principles will guide us – whether we are members of a newly planted mission or a long-established parish – as we go about fulfilling this Great Commission?

According to Church teaching, God entered creation to make it a part of Who He is. He literally immersed the cosmos in Himself, so that, as Saint Paul says, “He has put all things under His feet and has made Him the head over all things for the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills *all in all*” [Ephesians 1:22-23]. Through the Incarnation, God’s Spirit and Being is “everywhere present, filling all things.” Although fully revealed and proclaimed in the Church’s sacramental life, His Presence can be found in all places and in every person, though concealed and obscured to varying degrees.

Imagine the Church as a great bonfire, and her members the living coals that fuel it. The bonfire is visible and its dimensions are clearly definable. However, not all the coals are accounted for. Scattered in all directions outside the bonfire are countless embers, alive and glowing, but hidden on the earth. These are the human souls outside the Church whom Christ has recreated through the Incarnation, but whose new identity as members of Christ’s Body is as yet obscured in the life of this world.

In this vision, the ultimate goal of mission is to extend the nature of the Church *outward*. To use the bonfire analogy: the scattered and buried embers must be fanned and kindled until they burst into flame and the world itself becomes a bonfire. That is where we come in. Our mission is to inspire the world to burn brightly with its true life, the life of Christ’s Body. It is a vision of the world attaining its true identity by *becoming* Church.

In the short term, this may or may not mean that people will actually convert to Orthodox Christianity. It is possible, according to the Gospel, for one to grow in a churchly spirit, to become Christ-like according to the Orthodox tradition, without changing one’s church membership – or even becoming a

Christian – at all. We may recall the incident in Saint Mark’s Gospel in which Saint John the Theologian tells Jesus, “‘Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us.’ But Jesus said, ‘Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in My name will be able soon after to speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is for us’” [Mark 9:38-40].

Of course, we still hope and pray that those outside of the Church will come into full sacramental communion with us. Indeed, we will encourage anyone who is interested to be received into the Church at the appropriate time. Still, the *primary* task of our evangelism is not to devise strategies to change a person’s church membership. That is a matter of God’s providence, His mysterious working in the various complex personal circumstances that combine to bring people to the Orthodox Christian faith. Our efforts must take a different focus: to bear to others the fire of divine love that we have received in the sacraments, and to inspire the same life that lies buried in the lives of those outside the Church. The tangible results of our efforts, including conversion to the faith, are up to God.

This means two things for us.

First, we must immerse ourselves in the full sacramental life we have received – the life of personal and communal prayer and asceticism – in order to ensure that we are truly filled with the fire of God’s grace. After all, how can we spark the Presence of God if we are not ourselves in the process of absorbing His consuming fire, especially through quiet prayer and weekly participation in the Eucharist?

Secondly, we must actively seek contact with, serve, and love others, primarily through our actions. As the desert Father Poemen once said, “When asked a question, answer; otherwise, keep silent.” If we are truly bearers of God’s divine fire, our deeds of love will inspire love in those around us. Christ within us will beget Christ in our neighbors. The churchly spirit of our lives will fan to life the churchly spirit waiting to be born in the world.

Coupled with these individual acts of love, we can also implement planned outreach ministries as a community. These, of course, should not be ends in themselves, like an advertising campaign whose results are measured by increased sales. Rather, ministries such as publications, talks, open houses, festivals, and so on are simply contexts to spark personal relationships, and the true evangelism of loving action and service.

In all our missionary efforts, our attitude should demonstrate an utter lack of expectation. Whether or not the people whom we encounter ultimately choose to embrace the faith should never be a criterion for judging our missionary efforts. The Gospel vision of “the world becoming Church” tells us that as long as we fulfill our call to partake of the sacramental fire of God’s grace, and to kindle that fire for our neighbors, God Himself will in the fullness of time gather His scattered people into one Body – His Body filling the whole universe with His love and life – forever. ■

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## Mission and ministry: Putting our words into action

**M**ission – and virtually every other ministry – has a single goal: to proclaim the message of the Good News of God’s Kingdom to everyone who would embrace it and to incorporate them into the life of that Kingdom, here and now. Mission must also concern itself with serving others in their distress and providing for their essential needs in this world, as a foretaste of the life of the world to come. Mission involves revealing and announcing the message of God’s love and presence in the world by manifesting the sacrificial love that gives and expects nothing in return. The light of God must be allowed to illuminate *through us*, and God’s goodness must be allowed to season life *by our ministry*. To make disciples, to baptize, and to teach is God’s command, and it is an integral part of mission.

If one actually has a personal experience of the illumination, beauty, and goodness of God, then surely he or she will want to let others know about it. If one has truly tasted the peace, joy, and love of the Kingdom, then he or she will want to share it with others. Awakening the interest of others to the message and person of Jesus Christ is thus essential to mission. Leading others to see and experience God personally is a ministry required of *every* member of the Church. This is why Jesus said, “Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father, Who is in Heaven. On that day they will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many other mighty works in Your name?’ and then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers!’” [Matthew 7:22f].

Mission involves more than making God known by word of mouth. It involves living a life of character and behavior that truly reflects the reality of the divine nature. In all relationships, our personal and communal life must reveal the divine in all our actions and thoughts. This is done by serving others as if we were serving Christ Himself, by providing for others’ basic needs in the world and alleviating human suffering in whatever way we can – without any ulterior motive, coercion, or condition. We must manifest the sacrificial love that gives and expects nothing in return. Such love alone is divine, and such love

alone seasons human life with a divine ingredient that is otherwise mission in the world. The Church grows in this way because God’s love is growing and being manifested in the world.

While we are commanded to make disciples, we must never forget the nature of true discipleship. Who is the disciple? Is it he or she who is merely incorporated into the social fabric of a parish community? Or is it he or she who is, in addition, imbued with God’s love? Disciples are not made simply by adding their names to a list or by designating them as “members in good standing.” Disciples are made from those who assimilate and become the essence of God’s love. Christ defined the disciples as those who love as He loved, with a love that gives itself even unto death. Such love is a state of being and not merely an occasional good deed or an isolated act of charity.

Furthermore, mission must never reduce God, salvation, and truth to a “packaged commodity” that can be commercialized – that is, advertised and sold in the marketplace as any other product. As Saint Paul said, “We are not... peddlers of God’s word” [2 Corinthians 2:17], who huckster and sell without any reservations. Rather, in all honesty, we call others to a deep, organic, spiritual, and ontological relationship with God and renewal in His Spirit. Mission demands telling the hard facts just as Jesus told them: “The gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to eternal life, and those who find it are few.” People should not be fooled for Jesus; they should be told what it is really all about. If the real message is rejected, then the mission is ended. “Shake off the dust from your feet as you leave,” said Jesus. If they refuse to listen and accept the reality that is being communicated, they forfeit the gift. If they cannot receive the peace and love of God into their own personal lives and being, then it is difficult to see how such people can be true members of the Church.

Like the rich man, everyone wants to know how to gain eternal life. But when they are told, they become very saddened and walk away. They refuse to work at it because they find it too difficult. It is the greatest illusion to think that we are all seeking God and are really interested in attaining eternal life just because we are members of the Church. We are not!

People come to the Church motivated by all kinds of reasons – club affiliation, social or athletic activities, “religious insurance,” ethnic interests, marriage, baptism, burial, whatever – and they leave just as readily, being motivated by some minor whim, displeasure, or other reason. Christ did not come into the world and die for that. His mission – a mission for which He literally gave His life – was to manifest the nature of God and to bring mankind to God in a deep inner way, enabling us thereby to change our way of life – first in terms of our own personal state of being, and then in terms of our relationships with other human beings and all of creation. This is why the Church exists. This is why the Church, when it ceases to be missionary, ceases to be the Church, the Body of Christ, the very presence of the Kingdom of God in the world – the Kingdom that, while yet to be fully revealed, is already fully present to all who would embrace and share it. ■

**Members of a new mission parish** root their ministry in worship.



# Christ's ministry, our ministry

As this issue of *TOC* goes to press, hundreds of faithful at the OCA's first major ministry conference in years are learning how the Lord is calling them – and everyone – to minister

Denise Jillions

**T**he mandate for Christian ministry is one and the same as the mandate for mission: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” [Matthew 28:19-20]. Christ Himself, then, is the model for His followers’ ministry, based at once on His life, example, and teaching.

**Doing God's will.** The first principle guiding Christian ministry is summed up in Saint Paul's words to the Colossians [3:3]: “For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” The Christian dies to the self and lives in Christ, no longer seeking to do his or her own will, but to be the instrument by which the will of God will be done on earth. Whatever type of ministry we offer within the Church, we are to do it, not for our own satisfaction, but for the glory of God, living His life in this world while sharing in His ministry to the world.

We are appointed – we could even say *ordained* – inasmuch as each one of us has been set apart through Chrismation to be stewards and ministers of God's grace and truth. As Saint Peter says, we are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, [called to] declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light” [1 Peter 2:9]. Christ's desire is to save the world through us, His Church and His People, by dying to ourselves and becoming the vessels of His love and mercy to those around us. This is the ministry of the Church to the world, and each of us participates in it in our own particular way.

**Serving others.** The second point to be learned is found in Christ's parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25. In no uncertain terms Christ identifies Himself with the suffering, the sick, the imprisoned, the naked, and the hungry. He regards as true disciples those who minister to Him by ministering to “the least of these, My brethren.” When asked, “Lord, when did we see Thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did minister to Thee?” He answers, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to me.”

One cannot serve God in the abstract. Above all, serving God means seeing Christ in the other, responding to the other out of love and reverence for Christ. The stark clarity of the story always amazes me. According to Christ, we will not be asked whether we went to church on Sunday, whether we fasted, or whether we served on the parish council or put in time at the annual festival. In no way do I mean that these are unimportant, but they sidestep the crux of Christ's saving message – that He loves the person, saves the person, and dies for the person that He calls our neighbor, the brother or sister next to us. Clearly, if we wish to serve Him, we must address ourselves to the needs of our neighbor; Christ is not content to hear us say, “But Lord, I wrote a check for the needy and asked our priest to visit the sick.”

**Unique ministries.** This brings me to my third point, the distinction between the priestly and lay ministries. The clergy have a unique ministry, one for which they have received special grace through the laying on of hands. The priest presents Christ, and his vocation is none other than to lead the world toward salvation and away from deception and evil.

But what is a head without its body, as Saint Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 12? The active ministry of the laity complements the priest's ministry. Similar to the relationship between the male and the female in Christ, there is no competition, contradiction, duplication, or value judgment implied in making this distinction between the priestly and lay ministries. All too often we hear people say, “That's what we pay the priest to do; it's *his* job!” Wrong! *His* job is to lead, to present Christ, to keep reminding his flock of the Christian vision of life and death, to guide them to see Christ working in their daily lives, to push back the boundaries of the chaos by extending the love of Christ to those both inside and outside of the parish community.

It is lay men and women, however, who work to realize the victory of Christ over death and sin and evil in a particular place – in their neighborhoods, workplaces, families, schools, PTAs, polling places, and whatever circumstances they find themselves. Specifically, their work is to visit the sick, to minister to the bereaved or discouraged, to counsel the alcoholic, to welcome the stranger, to fight oppression and poverty in all its material and spiritual forms, to see and serve Christ daily. This is the type of ministry that glorifies God the Father.

**Being and Doing.** My fourth point is that ministry has just as much to do with *who* we are as *what* we do. Any Christian work, in order to be truly in the service of Christ, is grounded in faith, prayer, and love. In fact, prayer itself is an active ministry. This is what distinguishes Christian service and ministry from secular social work. When we advocate lay ministry, we are not advocating the frenetic, often self-serving activity of do-gooders who feel justified by their sacrifice of time as the pharisee felt justified by his adherence to the law.

We must resist the temptation to equate sanctity with religious observance, or faith with involvement, or salvation with good works alone. It is not only the morsel of bread we give that nourishes the hungry man – “man does not live by bread alone,” and man is more than his stomach – but it is the love of Christ manifested by the act of feeding that man which indeed nourishes his weary soul and may bring him to repentance and salvation.



**Ministry isn't just for adults!** *There are countless ways children and teens can minister. Church school students at St. Christina Mission, Fremont, CA – the parish recently completed an OCA Planting Grant – collect and distribute gifts annually for Raphael House, a San Francisco homeless shelter, and students families at St. Herman's Seminary, Kodiak, AK.*

## Six principles for Christian ministry

- 1** As Christians, we are dead to the world and we live in Christ. Our entire life and activity must be dedicated to accomplishing His mission to save the world by our becoming the instruments of His love and power.
- 2** We serve Christ by serving one another, particularly those among us who are needy and suffering, because He Himself identifies Himself with the poor and the oppressed.
- 3** The laity have a special and distinct ministry that complements the ordained ministry by extending the love of Christ to all those with whom we come into contact in the course of our daily lives and in our families.
- 4** This goal is not realized only by doing good works – putting our faith into action – but also by living according to our faith, so that through our lives the light of Christ is apparent to those in darkness.
- 5** We are richly endowed by God with talents and gifts that fulfill different functions, much as the human body. Every Christian is called to invest his or her unique talents to bear fruit for the glory of God.
- 6** Men and women together are responsible for the ministry of the laity and complement one another in the use of their special gifts. Ministry is not driven by a spirit of competition or “equal rights,” but by mutual love and commitment to building up the Church.

We do not believe that if it were possible to eradicate poverty on this earth, the result would be the Kingdom of God. It is extremely important to remember that while we do the works of mercy that Christ commanded to us to do, our primary vocation is to proclaim that, while His Kingdom is not *of* this world, we are indeed called to testify *in* this world. In concrete terms, for example, the mother who is raising a child to know and love God is serving Christ, only by *what* she is doing – the precise number of Bible stories she teaches her child is quite unimportant – but *how* she manifests Christ in her daily interactions with her child, so that the child, in knowing and loving his mother, learns to recognize and love Christ. Sometimes the most profound and meaningful lay ministries are done anonymously, quietly, and over the period of a lifetime.

**A diversity of talents.** And this leads me to my fifth point in terms of our understanding of Christian ministry – that God, in His mercy, has endowed each of us with different gifts, calling us to serve Him in different ways. One result of this is that we are “members of one another.” We need each other, just as all the parts of the human body need each other if they are to perform their unique functions properly [Romans 12:4-8].

God has given us a great diversity of gifts for a good reason, and it is crucial to understand the tremendous scope of responsibilities and ministries that, working in harmony, make the Church whole, complete, and lacking in nothing. “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them,” Saint Paul wrote in Romans 12:6. He goes on to observe that it is not so much what particular work we do that is important, but in what spirit we offer ourselves to God and to one another – “he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” Whatever our unique talents and gifts, we are called to invest them for the glory of God, as good and faithful stewards.

The laity is the Church’s “natural resource,” waiting to be tapped. But the community that persists in limiting the role of the laity in the Church’s ministries, viewing everything as “the priest’s job,” will slowly die through passivity and inertia. Once we change our vision of the Church’s mission, the possibilities for ministry are endless, and the entire body of the Church will not only function properly but, as Saint Paul writes, upbuild itself in love.

**Complimentary roles.** A sixth element of lay ministry is that both men and women share the task in a complementary manner. Although Saint Paul is frequently accused of limiting the role that women can play in the Church, he in fact was ministered to by women throughout his apostolate and thanked God for them, in full recognition of their significant role in the life of the early church. By understanding the cultural context of his ministry and discerning the principles behind his injunctions, we can say without hesitation that, when we speak of the ministry of the laity, there is no distinction between what men and women are called to do. Christian ministry is not characterized by a spirit of competition, much less and “equal rights,” but by mutual love and concern for building up the body of Christ. ■

**Denise Jillions** is a member of Annunciation Cathedral, Ottawa, ON, Canada, to which her husband, Father John, is attached.

## First steps

### OCA hierarchs participate in North America's first Episcopal Assembly since Chambésy

**W**ith little fanfare, 60-plus Orthodox Christian hierarchs from across North America gathered at New York City's Helmsley Park Lane Hotel May 26-28, 2010. While the event was not the first to bring together the continent's hierarchs – earlier gatherings had been held in Ligonier, PA in 1994, followed by similar meetings in Washington, DC and Chicago – it was the first to be held in direct response to the decision of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference held in Chambésy, Switzerland in June 2009. One year earlier, the extraordinary Synaxis of the Heads of the Autocephalous Churches, convened by His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, had mandated that 12 Episcopal Assemblies should be convened around the world in regions without a single Orthodox Christian presence. In this context, the New York Assembly was a first.

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, and the diocesan bishops and auxiliaries of the Orthodox Church in America were among the 60-plus hierarchs who participated in the Assembly, which was chaired by His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

In his opening address, Archbishop Demetrios described the Assembly as “a temporary, not a permanent institution. It is simply preparatory to facilitate the process of an ecumenical council (in the future) that will decide the final form of the existence of the Church in a particular country.”

He further explained that the Assembly will meet annually in the ongoing effort to “prepare a plan for dealing with anomalies, such as more than one bishop in a given locale, and other things that interfere with the life of the Church” and “to project a unified witness of the faith.

“We strive for unity because the Lord asked of us to be one, but diversity and differentiation are not to be feared,” Archbishop Demetrios continued. “They are gifts that are to be used for the glory of God. Our unity cannot exist to destroy such differentiation; rather, our unity is meant to flourish as a result of our natural diversity, be it linguistic, cultural or ethnic.

“Is this not exactly the condition of our universal Orthodoxy today?” he asked. “Of course, problems related to unity, or to differentiation, or to both, always existed in the Church, starting already in the time of the Apostles, as the Book of the Acts of the Apostles testifies. This is a valid observation for us today.

“We come together to face the problems that have arisen in our region, where the Orthodox Faith has flourished for

generations,” Archbishop Demetrios continued before reflecting on various issues facing Orthodox Christianity in North and Central America and elsewhere around the world. “As we have grown and established ourselves, situations have been created that need our attention and our wisdom.”

Archbishop Demetrios went on to review the work of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference held in Chambésy, Switzerland in June 2009 in response to the extraordinary Synaxis of the Heads of the Autocephalous Churches convened earlier by His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Also addressing the Assembly were its first vice-chair, His Eminence, Metropolitan Philip of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, who delivered a fiery speech calling for, among other things, the relocation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the US, and its second vice-chair, His Eminence, Archbishop Justinian of the Russian Orthodox Church, Administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA.

His Eminence, Archbishop Nicolae of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas, opened the Assembly's second day by offering a comprehensive account of the five-decade legacy of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas [SCOBA].

“Among the most important issues we will need to decide in these days is how to absorb the great work of SCOBA,” said Archbishop Nicolae after recounting SCOBA's history and the accomplishments of its agencies – the Orthodox Christian Education Commission, International Orthodox Christian Charities, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, and others. “The many ministries of SCOBA over 50 years have truly been a blessing for the entire Church... [and] have strengthened our unity in Christ our Lord... have contributed to the advancement of our Church throughout the world. This is truly a precious inheritance that provides us with a firm foundation for our future work. I urge us to not only endorse it, but to embrace what is being offered to us as a precious inheritance.”

The Assembly closed on May 28 with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy by the Rev. Dr. Frank Marangos, Dean, at Holy Trinity Archdiocesan Cathedral, at which Metropolitan Jonah and the OCA hierarchs communed. A closing statement revealing the essence of the Assembly discussions – the full text appears on page 11 of this issue – was then released.

While the long-term effects of the Episcopal Assembly have yet to be realized, the very fact that over 60 hierarchs met to discuss long-standing issues, as Metropolitan Jonah observed, is “not to be undervalued.” ■

## InDepth

- READ the text of Archbishop Demetrios' address at [www.goarch.org/news/addressassembly](http://www.goarch.org/news/addressassembly).
- READ the text of Metropolitan Philip's address at [www.antiochian.org/node/23042](http://www.antiochian.org/node/23042).
- READ the text of Archbishop Justinian's address at [www.eadiocese.org/News/2010/05/abpjustaddress.en.htm](http://www.eadiocese.org/News/2010/05/abpjustaddress.en.htm).
- READ the text of Archbishop Nicolae's address at [www.romarch.org/news.php?id=2253](http://www.romarch.org/news.php?id=2253).





PHOTO: D. PANAGOS

## The Episcopal Assembly, and Beyond

The Episcopal Assembly has come and gone. Many people put enormous amounts of hope in it, but wonder what exactly happened at it. Given the fact that there was little or no secular coverage, and minimal coverage – or even comments – from the participants following the Assembly, it seems like little was accomplished.

### Metropolitan Jonah

Perhaps the greatest and most important aspect of the Episcopal Assembly, not to be undervalued, was that it brought together most of North America's Orthodox bishops to meet and begin to speak to one another, in a constructive way. Certain organizational issues were discussed, such as dividing the North American Assembly to three separate assemblies – Latin America, the US, and Canada. Committees were discussed, and volunteered for. The ministries of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas were discussed, and the Assembly recognized itself as SCOBA's successor. There was a common recognition of the need for coordination in many pastoral areas – sharing lists of disciplined clergy, the status of parishes and clergy, and so forth – and the need to create and finance an office to handle such work. A statement was issued.

But some of the glaring underlying issues were not discussed, despite an undercurrent in the Assembly, such as the position of the Orthodox Church in America and the nonrecognition of its autocephaly by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and allied Churches; the multiplication of bishops with the same See, by both the Greek and Antiochian Archdioceses and the OCA; the plurality of

jurisdictions; and so forth. The contentious issues were not given voice, as perhaps it is too early to publicly address such issues before mutual trust is established.

As His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, who chaired the Assembly, put it, "this Assembly is not a small claims court." In fact, His Eminence was masterful in avoiding any contentiousness, and kept the meeting moving in a very deliberate way. He deserves an immense amount of credit for keeping things together and moving, in a most gracious, constructive and refined manner. Of course, we also have to be grateful to him for keeping the OCA at the table, despite some powerful objections.

Perhaps the most important issue is what was *not* addressed – the vision for the future – which remains the central question. Save for the one committee tasked with preparing a plan for unity, to be presented to the upcoming Pan-Orthodox Council (whenever that is to occur), the range of vision present in the room could be characterized as, on one end, a new context of pastoral cooperation on pressing matters, to a unified Church (on the other end [of the room]). While we would all agree that we need to cooperate – and indeed there are many common issues – what is most divisive is precisely the question of where to go from

**Assembly to 10**

## Assembly from 9

here, and how to get there.

**Different models of unity.** It was most apparent that there are also two or three very different models of how a unified Church could be organized, if current organization is any context for such speculation. About half the bishops in the room were subject to the Ecumenical Patriarchate: the Greeks, Ukrainians, Carpatho-Russians, and the EP Albanian bishop. This constitutes a model of unity, already existing among those jurisdictions, where each of the various groups has a relatively autonomous local Synod, but is directly under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In fact, the Greek Archdiocese's Metropolitans each sit in rotation directly on the Synod of Constantinople. The non-Greek EP bishops are titular, with real flocks but without American Sees. On the Assembly's Executive Committee, all these bishops would be represented by the Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch. How much actual interaction and coordination exists, I am not sure, other than that they do not form an American Synod together.

The second model present in the room was that of the OCA: a fully united, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural autocephalous local Synod, conscious of being the Church *in* America, with a mission to all people within our territorial boundaries. The OCA has already been granted autocephaly – complete independence from its mother Russian Church; it would be necessary also for each of the other jurisdictions to be released from and by their Mother Churches to join into such a unity. In the OCA, there is a single Synod with its Primate, the Metropolitan, who is the reference point for the unity of the whole.

A third “model,” if it can be so called, is the status quo: a loose cooperation of exarchates from Old World Churches, mainly concerned with consolidating and serving “their own” people. This was what SCOBA tried to consolidate, to no end.

The first two models are quite distinct. The first considers the Ecumenical Patriarch is the point of unity, though there remains a degree of jurisdictional autonomy. In the OCA model, the Metropolitan and united Synod within the territorial boundaries of North America are the point of unity. With the first, the canonical identity of the Church is derived from its relationship to the Patriarchate in Constantinople; with the second, the canonical status may originally have come from the mission sent by the mother Church, but it is now rooted in the reality of the Local Church and its local Synod. The first model preserves separate identities for each jurisdiction; the OCA model demands deeper integration and cooperation. With the first model, all major decisions are made in Constantinople, including the election of bishops; with the OCA model, all decisions are made locally and on a conciliar basis with the participation of the clergy and laity.

Another major issue is the nature of the OCA's autocephaly. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, while recognizing the canonicity of the OCA and its hierarchy, refuses to recognize its autocephaly. For this reason, the EP chose to exclude the OCA from the Executive Committee, though it recognized and seated our bishops as canonical hierarchs. While this makes no sense to us, we accepted it, as we believed it is better to attend in humility than to boycott the gathering. We also hope that this will be corrected in the future.



**Metropolitan Jonah, OCA bishops at Episcopal Assembly.**

Underlying the nonrecognition by the EP of our autocephaly are several major issues, all related. The first is that they did not grant it, nor did they accept Moscow's right to grant it. Second, they have a substantial presence here, parallel to the OCA; that presence, the Greek Archdiocese, is their largest constituency, and it does not work to have another jurisdiction on the territory of an autocephalous Church. Third, when autocephaly is granted, it is normally to a Church that embraces all Orthodox Christians in a given territory; the OCA's autocephaly was given only to one jurisdiction among others – regardless of the fact of the OCA's seniority in North America, which should have been the canonical basis for all other Churches. If they were to recognize the OCA's autocephaly, they would be forced canonically to release their jurisdictions to the Local Autocephalous Church. In short, the situation is very complex.

The Chambésy meetings, which set the protocols for the Episcopal Assemblies, have also now set protocols for the granting of autonomy and autocephaly. Autonomy can be granted simply by a mother Church to one of her archdioceses, with the other Churches being informed of such action. Autocephaly, however, is proposed by a mother Church to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which then gains the consensus of all the other Patriarchates for it. The Tomos given is then an ecumenical document, signed by all the Churches. This establishes the new autocephalous Church as universally recognized, so that all the Churches would relate to it as an autocephalous Church, and it would have a universally accepted place in the diptychs – the ordering of the Churches. This protocol makes sense; however, it is not retroactive. Were it retroactive, the OCA would be in a situation of having been proposed to the universal Church, and in the process of reception. Currently, five Churches accept the OCA's autocephaly; five reject it, and four are noncommittal. What is not defined is the status of such a Church while in process of acceptance.

**Where do we go from here?** It is clear that the faithful of the OCA want Orthodox unity – a united Synod of Bishops in America making its own decisions and guiding the life of the Church in America. We want to elect our own bishops and metropolitan, and we want conciliar clergy and lay participation. We also believe that many other Orthodox Christians in America share this same vision of the Church. As the OCA, we are not about to surrender our autocephaly, because it is an essential part of our identity; but we will merge it into another, larger autocephalous structure, when that time comes.

We hope that this Assembly could lead to a “Pro-Synod,” in which all bishops come together and act as a single Synod, dealing with issues and problems that arise, perhaps even assigning bishops to areas where there are none, addressing overlapping jurisdictions, and building the foundations for a fully autocephalous Synod. In the meantime, each Church would retain its relationship to its mother Church. Its Primate would sit on the Executive Council of this Pro-Synod, but also represent it to its mother Church, and its mother Church to the American Pro-Synod. This is rather “out of the box” thinking, but that is what our anomalous situation demands. When the time is right, each American exarchate would be given independence from its mother Church, a single Tomos of autocephaly would be issued from all the mother Churches, and a Primate elected and universally recognized. The OCA would fully participate in such a structure.

In the meantime, we are who we are. We know ourselves to be the heir of the Russian Mission of 1794, the work of Saint Innocent and Saint Tikhon, Saint Raphael and the blessed Sebastian Dabovich, Saint Alexis Toth and Saint Iakov of Sitka, Saint Nikolai Velimirovich and Saint John of San Francisco. We are maturing as a local Church in America, with seminaries and monasteries, hundreds of churches, and a tradition of Orthodoxy already ten or more generations deep. More than half our laity – and most of our priests and bishops – are converts to

the Faith. We come from dozens of ethnic origins, and all races. We are truly a local indigenous Church, the fruit of the original Mission as well as the immigration and return of Uniates to Orthodox Christianity. And we received the gift of autocephaly and are striving to live up to it.

Our mission is to openly embrace all others, to bring the light of Faith and the Good News of repentance and forgiveness to all those around us, to baptize them into the Orthodox Church, and to share with them our incorporation into the Body of Christ. We must embrace our fellow Orthodox Christians, leaving aside all that divides us, and finding the “unity of the Faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit” that unites us in profound intimacy.

Practically, we can share many things between our parishes, across all jurisdictional lines. Youth groups and activities are a major opportunity. Clergy Brotherhoods can become effectively pro-deaneries or pro-dioceses. We can share health and pension programs, insurance plans, and other such things. We can cooperate in the support of monasteries, seminaries and charitable works, which transcend jurisdiction.

But most of all, our task is to focus on the one thing needful: the Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the task He has given us to actualize our unity: “That they may be one, as we are one; I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be perfectly one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent me” [John 17:21]. ■

## Statement of the North American Episcopal Assembly

May 28, 2010

**W**e glorify the name of the Triune God for gathering us at this first Episcopal Assembly of this region in New York City on May 26-28, 2010 in response to the decisions of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference held at the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy, Switzerland, from June 6-12, 2009, at the invitation of His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Gathered together in the joy of the Feast of Pentecost, we humbly recognize our calling, in our unworthiness, to serve as instruments and disciples of the Paraclete, who “holds together the whole institution of the Church” [Hymn of Vespers of Pentecost].

We honor and express gratitude to the Primates and Representatives of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches who assembled at the Ecumenical Patriarchate from October 10-12, 2008 to affirm their “unswerving position and obligation to safeguard the unity of the Orthodox Church” [Chambésy Rules of Operation, Article 5.1a] and emphasized their will and “desire for the swift healing of every canonical anomaly that has arisen from historical circumstances and pastoral requirements” [Message of the Primates 13.1-2].

We call to mind those who envisioned this unity in this region and strove to transcend the canonical irregularities resulting for many reasons, including geographically overlapping jurisdictions. For, just as the Lord in the Divine Eucharist is “broken and

distributed, but not divided” [Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom], so also His Body comprises many members, while constituting His One Church.

We are grateful for the gift of the doctrinal and liturgical unity that we already share, and we are inspired by our leaders, the Heads of all the Orthodox Churches throughout the world, who proposed that which we painfully yearn for in this region, i.e., the “swift healing of every canonical anomaly” [Message of the Primates 13.2]. We are also grateful that they established a fundamental process toward a canonical direction and resolution.

We are thankful to almighty God for the growth of Orthodoxy, for the preservation of our traditions, and for the influence of our communities in this region. This is indeed a miracle and a mystery.

During our gathering, and in accordance with the rules of operation of Episcopal Assemblies promulgated by the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference, we established:

1. A registry of canonical bishops [Article 6.1].
2. A committee to determine the canonical status of local communities in the region that have no reference to the Most Holy Autocephalous Churches [Article 6.2].
3. A registry of canonical clergy [Article 6.3].
4. Committees to undertake the work of the Assembly, among others including liturgical, pastoral, financial, educational, ecumenical, and legal issues [Articles 11 and 12].
5. A committee to plan for the organization of the Orthodox of the region on a canonical basis [Article 5.1].

**Assembly Statement to 22**

## 40 years of autocephaly

“Forty years Thou didst sustain them  
in the wilderness, and they lacked  
nothing” [Nehemiah 9:21]

**Archpriest Alexander Garklavs**

**H**appy Anniversary! Do these words inspire joy or provoke despair? Do they acknowledge achievements and optimistic plans for the future, or do they express regrets that the “best of times” are over? If nothing else, anniversaries produce a surge of sharp and poignant emotions. Like birthdays, they remind us of history’s unique moments, compel us to reflect on collective and personal successes, and challenge us to admit that what is past can never be repeated.

Church anniversaries involve the lives of many people. They can be occasions for taking a serious and closer look at a parish’s history, perhaps even uncovering facts that have been long forgotten. The stories about former priests and founders and the challenges that they overcame can revitalize a parish stuck in passivity. Much can be learned from a sympathetic consideration of past struggles and the lessons of fortitude can strengthen resolve during present trials.

The observance of anniversaries requires creative planning, extended preparation, and attention to detail. This can be a difficult undertaking. Those who become directly involved in working on Church anniversaries will often find that the process is a sacrificial labor of love. There are invitations to hierarchs and dignitaries, preparations for liturgical services, special rehearsals for singers and altar servers, collections of funds and material for commemorative books, the planning and execution of the anniversary banquet, choosing appropriate and entertaining speakers, and a host of other details. There is always one more thing to consider, one more person’s opinion to take into account, one less day to prepare, and several less hours to sleep as the celebration approaches. And yet, when it’s over, when the music is stops, when the laughter and applause fade away, there is that warm and blissful feeling of contentment. In the end, Church anniversaries are celebrations of blessed memories, faith and friendship, and the joyful recognition of being part of something wholesome and comforting.

The Church anniversary is also a time for looking forward. We think about where we came from, where we are, and where we are going. History would be meaningless if we did not learn

something from it, and lessons learned make it possible to discern prospects for the future. Church anniversaries become the propitious moment for introspection and renewal; occasions for pastors and parishioners alike to be reinvigorated, proactive and creative; and a perfect motive to break out of stale routine. They are “special moments” that can motivate communities to embark on programs of youth and adult education, Bible study and reading, as well as new endeavors in community outreach projects. A Church anniversary can be an excellent occasion to invite neighbors to visit or to hold open houses.

Anniversaries are not always commemorated with spectacle. Sometimes they pass by, almost unnoticed. On the other hand, anniversaries can be symbolic moments of something extraordinary. The celebration of the Millennium of Christianity in Russia in 1988, for example, turned out to be the precursor to the phenomenal resurrection of the Orthodox Church in Russia after over 70 years of persecution and repression. Fifty years earlier, at the 950th Anniversary of the Baptism of Rus’, the North American Russian Orthodox *Metropolia* celebrated the establishment of two seminaries, Saint Tikhon’s and Saint Vladimir’s. Many of us will remember the celebration of the Bicentennial of Orthodox Christianity in North America in 1994, when Russian Patriarch Aleksy II visited several cities and landmarks with much fanfare.

**For the Orthodox Church in America**, 2010 marks a special anniversary – the 40th of the granting of autocephaly. In 1970, the Russian Orthodox Church granted to its canonical daughter – the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of North America, the *Metropolia* – that status of ecclesiastical self-governance, known by the technical term *autocephaly*. The process leading up to this was long, complicated and arduous. Many meetings took place and many hours were spent in intense discussion. The actual agreement on autocephaly was reached by representatives from Russia and the Metropolia at the Chancery in Syosset on March 31, 1970. The official document granting autocephaly, the *Tomos*, was presented to a delegation of what was soon to be renamed the Orthodox Church in America, in Moscow on May 18, 1970.

**Metropolitan Pimen** presents *Tomos of Autocephaly* to *Bishop Theodosius of Alaska* in 1970.



The autocephaly given to the Orthodox Church in America has not been recognized by all of the other 14 autocephalous Orthodox Churches. As a result, for varied reasons, a controversy surrounds the status of our Church. Hence, the 40th Anniversary of the OCA's autocephaly will not be a universal celebration. Still, 40 years is a symbolic passage of time, and we should pause to reflect on it.

Whatever questions exist regarding the "canonical legitimacy" of the Orthodox Church in America's autocephaly, it is recognized as an authentic, established Orthodox Christian Church. It has direct ties to the first Orthodox missionaries in North America who began their evangelical ministry in 1794. And the Church has grown, changed, and adapted to the place and culture into which God has planted it. While this process began before 1970, the Orthodox Church in America can be characterized for earnestly, seriously and deliberately maintaining its identity as a sacramental, spiritual, liturgical and canonical Church, while at the same time developing a Church consciousness that "lives in harmony" within the North American context – a context which, of course, has no ties to the Orthodox Christian tradition or ethos. That process of engagement between Orthodox Christianity and North American modernity is by no means over. Nor is it a simple task. Perhaps it is now, especially at the juncture of 40 years of autocephaly, that we in the Orthodox Church in America have been acutely aware of lapses and mistakes. Miscalculations and misfortunes have tempered some of the presumptuous rhetoric of the past. But there have been many significant achievements.

**“What the Orthodox Church in America received 40 years ago is only the precursor; the ultimate autocephaly would unite all of the Orthodox Churches in North America into a single, canonical and administratively organized Church.”**

For 40 years, our seminaries have been expanding, building new facilities, developing new programs, and producing hundreds of priests, deacons, choir directors, theologians, Church workers, and educated lay persons. We have seen the expansion of monasticism. There has been a growth in the number of missions and parishes across the continent. The Church's departments have been consistent in sponsoring conferences, producing educational materials and resources, training Church school teachers, preparing liturgical music and translations, and coordinating social and outreach ministries. Youth work at camps and on campuses has been consistent and well received.

Perhaps the most significant, yet most difficult, issue to assess is the manner in which the Orthodox Church in America has been articulating principles of ecclesiastical governance in an egalitarian culture built on principles of democracy. Without diminishing hierarchical structure and canonical order, the Orthodox Church in America alone has adopted resolutions from the 1917-1918 Moscow Church Council which regulated the

theology of conciliarity with canonical norms. The process in North America was a true synergy between theological elucidation and pastoral pragmatism. While the Moscow Council's carefully and intelligently produced principles could not be implemented in Russia because of the Communist Revolution, they found fertile ground in the New World, where they were actually needed to define the life of parish, diocesan and central Church administrations.

The last 40 years have taught us that the process of clarifying the methods and practices of church governance is truly complex. Spiritual sobriety, collective reasoning, trial and error, an admission of failure when it occurs, education, use of proven business and organizational models – and above all, a good deal of prayer and fasting – are all necessary for the development of stable administrative structures. The way forward will require all hierarchs, all clergy, and all people, to work diligently "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" [Ephesians 4:3]. To these ends, the Orthodox Church in America has steadily plodded. It has been a slow journey, fraught with missteps, but progress has occurred.

**What does the future hold** for the Orthodox Church in America? As these words are being written, North America's Orthodox bishops are about to begin an historic Episcopal Assembly in New York City. This gathering may be the fulfillment of the dream that came into being with the granting of autocephaly 40 years ago. The Orthodox Church in America has never denied that an autocephaly much greater than that which was granted in 1970 is our real hope and dream. In this sense,

what the Orthodox Church in America received 40 years ago is only the precursor; the ultimate autocephaly would unite all of the Orthodox Churches in North America into a single, canonical and administratively united Church. How much will be accomplished at the Episcopal Assembly to

actualize this dream has yet to be revealed. Maybe only initial steps will be taken – the creation of study committees, for example, or the willingness to hold regular meetings to discuss the steps required to establish a united North American Autocephalous Church. The precise future of our Orthodox Church in America – as well as that of the other Orthodox jurisdictions – has yet to be determined. "Prayer and fasting" are needed in good measure. Nevertheless, the Orthodox Church in America remains and continues its existence for the time being, as indeed it should. And, as we mark the 40th year of the granting of autocephaly, however quiet and plain the celebration might be, we pray that God will guide "all of us into knowledge of truth," that the process of forming a united Orthodox Church in North America will come to fruition, if not soon, then at least within the realm of possibility in our time. May the Orthodox Church in America, the "holy and beautiful house, where our father's praised God," be strengthened to continue its mission of worshipping and adoring God and helping and loving all people. ■

## A new bishop for NY/NJ Diocese

Former dean of St. Tikhon's Seminary consecrated to the episcopacy

**H**undreds of faithful – including nine bishops, 125 clergy, and 100 seminarians and their families – filled Saints Peter and Paul Church, Jersey City, NJ on Friday and Saturday, May 7-8, 2010 to witness the consecration of Archimandrite Michael [Dahulich], former dean of Saint Tikhon's Seminary, as the new Bishop of New York and New Jersey.

Bishop Michael succeeds His Eminence, the late Archbishop Peter [L'Hullier], who fell asleep in the Lord at the age of 83 in November 2007, over two years after entering retirement.

The consecrating hierarchs included His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah; His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate; His Eminence, Archbishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada; His Grace, Bishop Nikon of Boston and New England and the Albanian Archdiocese; His Grace, Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania; His Grace, Bishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West;

His Grace, Bishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania; and His Grace, Bishop Mark and His Grace, Bishop Thomas of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

In keeping with tradition, Bishop Michael ordained Deacon Danial Doss to the priesthood and Subdeacon Thaddeus Franta, both students at Saint Tikhon's Seminary, to the diaconate.

Over 600 faithful attended the consecration banquet, at which reflections and congratulations were offered by Metropolitan Jonah; Bishop Tikhon; Archimandrite Matthias [Moriak], a seminary classmate of Bishop Michael; Priest Joel Weir, who represented the student body of Saint Tikhon's Seminary; and Protodeacon Peter Skoog, who had served with Bishop Michael when he was a parish priest. Humbled and deeply grateful, Bishop Michael announced that he intended to earmark the gifts he received to revitalize parishes by creating a fund to supplement priests' salaries. He said that his work as bishop is not about himself, but the Church.

Bishop Michael was enthroned during the Divine Liturgy at Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral, New York, NY, on Sunday, May 9. Concelebrating with Metropolitan Jonah and Bishop Michael were His Eminence, Archbishop Justinian of Naro-Fominsk, Administrator of the Patriarchal parishes in the USA; His Grace, Bishop Seraphim, formerly of Sendai, Japan; and Archbishop Nathaniel, Bishop Melchisedek, and Antiochian Bishop Mark. During the Liturgy, Bishop Michael ordained Subdeacon John Diamantis to the diaconate.

Born in Johnson City, NY in August 1950, Bishop Michael is a native son of Saint Michael Church, Binghamton, NY, whose pastor, Protopresbyter Stephen Dutko, served as his inspiration in answering the call to serve as a priest. Shortly after completing his studies at Christ the Saviour Seminary, Johnstown, PA, in 1972, he married the former Deborah Sandak.

**Hierarchs** consecrate Bishop Michael through the laying on of hands.



**Bishop Michael** blesses faithful.



He was ordained to the priesthood by His Grace, Bishop John [Martin] of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese in February 1973, after which he was assigned to Saints Peter and Paul Church, Homer City, PA. Two days later, he and his wife were involved in a car accident. His wife was killed instantly, while he was hospitalized for three months.

Subsequently, he pursued additional studies at Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, PA, and Pittsburgh's Duquesne University, where he earned a doctorate in Theology with a concentration in New Testament studies. He was appointed Prefect of Student Life at Christ the Saviour Seminary, where he taught Scripture and homiletics. He also taught Scripture courses at Duquesne.

He held numerous positions in the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese, including director of religious education, vice-chancellor, and personal secretary to Bishop John and later Bishop [now Metropolitan] Nicholas [Smisko].

In 1985, he began a 16-year pastorate at Holy Ghost Church, Phoenixville, PA. He also served on the Study and Planning and Ecumenical Commissions of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas. In 1998, he was elevated to the rank of protopresbyter.

He accepted the invitation to teach at Saint Tikhon's Seminary in 1993. Eight years later, he was released from the Carpatho-Russian Diocese to the Orthodox Church in America to serve full-time at Saint Tikhon's Seminary, first as administrative dean and, until the time of his consecration to the episcopacy, as dean. He taught courses in Old and New Testaments, Homiletics, Pastoral Theology, and Ethics. During his tenure, he saw the seminary's enrollment double, served on the team that earned national accreditation for the seminary from the Association of Theological Schools in the US and Canada, and helped revise the curriculum for the Master of Divinity program. Concurrently, he served on the Orthodox Church in America's Board of Theological Education, on the national advisory board of the American Bible Society, and as a member and secretary of the Orthodox Theological Society of America.

His writings have appeared in a number of theological journals, magazines, and newspapers, and through the years he has presented numerous academic papers, delivered lectures, and led retreats across the country.

On August 24, 2009, he was selected as a nominee for Bishop of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey by clergy and lay delegates at a Special Diocesan Assembly. One month later, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America elected him to the episcopacy for the Diocese of New York and New Jersey.

He was tonsured as a riasophor monk on October 23, 2009 at Saint Tikhon's Monastery Church by Metropolitan Jonah, who also tonsured him into the Lesser Schema at the Monastery Church on Holy Tuesday, March 30, 2010. The following day he was elevated to the rank of archimandrite.

Bishop Michael's philosophy of life is derived from the writings of Saint Paul the Apostle – to do his best to fight the good fight, and to run the race of salvation, by working as hard as he can, as fast as he can, for as long as he can, until the Lord calls him to pass on the baton to someone else (2 Timothy 4). ■

## Preconciliar Commission announces AAC theme, plans

The Preconciliar Commission, charged with organizing the 16th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America October 31–November 4, 2011, held its first meeting at the Chancery during the first week of June 2010. The Council – the first to be held in the Diocese of the West – will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Bellevue, WA, a Seattle suburb.



His Grace, Bishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West, is the commission's episcopal moderator.

After reviewing the organizational timeline outlined in the *Statute of the Orthodox Church in America*, Archpriest John Pierce, local cochair, reported on the council venue and preliminary work undertaken by local committee members.

Members of the Strategic Planning Committee briefed commission members on the status of their work, including the anticipated presentation of the Plan to dioceses and parishes before the Council, and the integration of the Plan into the Council theme and agenda.

Commission members approved the Council theme – “The Household of Faith,” the closing passage of Galatians 6:1–10. One aspect of the theme will involve “telling our story” of the Church within the context of looking toward the future. Consideration was given to producing a video and companion book detailing the OCA's “story” through the eyes of the dioceses, parishes and individuals. It also was suggested that a booth be available at the Council at which individuals' stories could be recorded. Archpriest Michael Oleksa and Ms. Eleana Silk will explore these and related possibilities.

Other issues discussed included more effective ways to use breakout sessions; the integration of observers into Council proceedings and activities; Council reports and study materials; luncheon forums highlighting the work of the OCA's departments and dioceses and the Strategic Plan; visits to regional sites of special interest, including the historic parish in Wilkinson, WA, which was consecrated by Saint Tikhon; and a pilgrimage to Sitka immediately after the Council closes.

Commission members noted that, due to Seattle's relatively close proximity to Alaska, broad participation on the part of the Alaskan Diocese's faithful will make it possible to fully highlight the OCA's growing cultural diversity.

Other commission members and advisors in attendance were Archpriest Alexander Garklavs, OCA Chancellor; Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, OCA Secretary, who chaired the meeting; Melanie Ringa, OCA Treasurer; Archpriest Myron Manzuk, Council Manager; Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky; Priests Victor Gorodenchuk and John Vitko; and Prof. David Drillock, Peter Ilichuk, Lisa Mikhalevsky, and Valerie Zahirsky. ■

## 2008 independent auditor's report released, posted

The independent audit of the OCA's financial records for the year ending December 31, 2008, conducted by Lambrides, Lamos, Taylor LLP, has been completed and is available in PDF format on the OCA web site at [www.oca.org/PDF/finances/2008-1231-audit.pdf](http://www.oca.org/PDF/finances/2008-1231-audit.pdf).

"The opinion issued is a 'qualified opinion,' as was the case for both the 2007 and 2006 audits," said Melanie Ringa, OCA Treasurer. "There are two qualifications. The first is related to the inadequacy of accounting records for the years prior to 2006, which prevents proper classification of net assets into unrestricted, temporarily restricted, and permanently restricted categories as is required by generally accepted accounting principles. The second qualification relates to the issue of verification of ownership of the Alaska land properties."

These issues, according to Ms. Ringa, are being addressed with the auditors "in the hope that we can provide satisfactory documentation to remove the qualifications by the time the 2010 financial report is issued."

Ms. Ringa also noted that "the financial results for 2008 show total revenues of \$3,099,214.00, operating expenses of \$3,076,085.00, with a net surplus from operations of \$23,129.00. Depreciation and amortization totaled \$59,082.00; investment losses were \$474,565.00 due to the decline in the financial markets; we incurred professional fees for legal, audit, and accounting services totaling \$556,260.00; and the actuarial value of our unitrusts declined by \$192,937.00. The net deficit for the year after these items was \$1,259,715.00.

"Our Statement of Financial Position [Balance Sheet] shows total assets of \$2,580,669.00 with liabilities of \$1,833,375.00 and net assets of \$747,324.00," she concluded.

## 2010 first quarter report posted

Melanie Ringa, OCA Treasurer, released the "Statement of Activities: Unrestricted Accounts [Excluding Depreciation] Actual vs. Budget" for the first quarter of 2010, which ended March 31.

The report is available in PDF format on the OCA web site at [www.oca.org/PDF/finances/2010-q1-financial-report.pdf](http://www.oca.org/PDF/finances/2010-q1-financial-report.pdf).

## Settlement reached

On May 1, 2010, the OCA Metropolitan Council and Holy Synod of Bishops approved settlement of lawsuits between the Church and its former Chancellor, Robert Kondratick, and his wife Elizabeth. According to the terms of the settlement, the OCA will pay \$250,000.00 to the Kondraticks in exchange for mutual releases of liability. The settlement does not constitute an admission of liability by any party.

The settlement was signed and executed on May 21, 2010, by the responsible authorities of the Church.

A statement on the settlement is posted on the OCA web site at [www.oca.org/news/2158](http://www.oca.org/news/2158).

## Holy Synod concludes spring session

Metropolitan Jonah chaired the spring session of the Holy Synod of Bishops at the Chancery March 16-18, 2010.

"Due to the nature of several issues facing the hierarchs, certain sessions were closed," said Fr. Eric Tosi, OCA Secretary. "This included Metropolitan Jonah's opening address."

A key issue was the report of a special committee charged with investigating the financial situation at St. Tikhon's Monastery and Bookstore, South Canaan, PA, according to Fr. Eric.

Fr. Alexander Garklavs, OCA Chancellor, reported on the work of the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct's committee that was blessed by Metropolitan Jonah to conduct investigations as needed. Committee members are in the process of rewriting policies and procedures and expanding the scope of their work to pastoral misconduct. A discussion ensued on policies currently in place and compliance levels. He also reviewed the work of the Chancery staff and departments.

In his report to the hierarchs, Fr. Eric outlined issues related to communications and staffing. He presented plans, approved by the hierarchs, to distribute printed copies of *The Orthodox Church* magazine to parishes in bulk rather than individual mailings. He reviewed the OCA's current membership census and a second census undertaken by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas. He also briefed the hierarchs on preliminary plans for the 16th All-American Council, slated to be convened in the fall of 2011.

Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky, who chairs the Department of External Affairs and Inter-Church Relations, reviewed plans and expectations for the North American Episcopal Assembly in May 2010. He also surveyed relations between the OCA and the Orthodox Sister Churches and issues currently affecting world Orthodoxy.

The OCA Treasurer, Melanie Ringa, presented the 2009 financial report, the 2010 budget as approved by the Metropolitan Council at its spring 2010 session, and the audit report. [Metropolitan Council reports and minutes are posted on the OCA web site at [www.oca.org/news/2109](http://www.oca.org/news/2109).]

"The hierarchs also reviewed and discussed a number of current legal issues in closed session," Fr. Alexander stated. "In depth discussions were conducted with the OCA's general counsel."

In other matters, the members of the Holy Synod

- determined that, "in consideration of the present situation in four dioceses – Alaska, Bulgarian, the Midwest and the South – a *locum tenens* be authorized to ordain and assign clergy in the same manner as a diocesan bishop until such time that a diocesan bishop is elected [for each diocese]."

- reviewed forthcoming Synodal encyclicals.
- reviewed and deliberated on a number of issues involving clergy and approved clergy awards.
- reviewed and approved recommendations made by the Board of Theological Education and the Diaconal Vocation Program.



## **Report of monastery, bookstore investigation now available**

After completing a final review of the Report of the St. Tikhon's Investigation Committee, charged with investigating the financial situation of St. Tikhon's Monastery and Bookstore, South Canaan, PA, the Holy Synod of Bishops has decided to post the committee's summary report on the OCA web site at [www.oca.org/PDF/NEWS/2010/2010-0320-stic-executive-summary.pdf](http://www.oca.org/PDF/NEWS/2010/2010-0320-stic-executive-summary.pdf).

The Office of the OCA Secretary will send an electronic copy of the complete report to those who send a request to [report@oca.org](mailto:report@oca.org). The report is copyrighted and may not be reproduced without permission.

Bishop Nikon of Boston and New England and the Albanian Archdiocese chaired the investigation committee, which also included Frs. Michael Matsko, Mark Sherman, John Steffaro, and Stephen Vernak and Mr. Larry Skvir. Sergei Givotovsky, Esq. a member of the Metropolitan Council's legal committee, served as legal advisor.

## **Seminaries hold commencements**

Five dozen students graduated from the OCA's three seminaries this spring.

Metropolitan Jonah conferred degrees to graduates of Saint Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY on May 22. An honorary doctorate was awarded to Bishop Basil of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. Mr. Albert Foundos, a seminary trustee, delivered the commencement address.

One week later, Metropolitan Jonah presided at commencement exercises at Saint Tikhon's Seminary, South Canaan, PA. An honorary doctorate was awarded to Bishop Joseph of Los Angeles and the West, also of the Antiochian Archdiocese, who delivered the commencement address.

Bishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West presided at commencement exercises at Saint Herman's Seminary, Kodiak, AK, on May 30. Fr. Robert Arida, dean of Boston's Holy Trinity Cathedral and former seminary professor, delivered the commencement address.

On May 15, graduates from Saint Vladimir's and Saint Tikhon's Seminaries visited the OCA Chancery and met with Frs. Alexander Garklavs, Chancellor, and Eric Tosi, Secretary, and other staff members.

## **New STOTS dean assumes duties**

Fr. Alexander Atty will assume duties as dean of St. Tikhon's Seminary, South Canaan, PA on July 1, 2010. He replaces Archimandrite Michael [Dahulich], who was consecrated Bishop of New York and New Jersey in early May.

Fr. Alexander, long time rector of St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church, Louisville, KY, was confirmed as dean by the Holy Synod at its spring session in March. According to Bishop Tikhon, seminary Rector, Fr. Alexander was selected from a field of 10 candidates by a search committee composed of seminary trustees, faculty, and alumni.



## **Faithful venerate Iveron Icon at 106th Pilgrimage to St. Tikhon's Monastery**

Hundreds of Orthodox Christian faithful gathered the weekend of May 28-31, 2010 to take part in the 106th Annual Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk Orthodox Monastery Memorial Day Pilgrimage.

A highlight of this year's pilgrimage was the presence of the miraculous and myrrh-streaming Iveron Icon of the Mother of God. Those who venerated the Icon, which was brought to the monastery from Hawaii, were anointed with the precious myrrh that flows therefrom.

On Monday, May 31, Metropolitan Jonah concelebrated the Liturgy with members of the Holy Synod and visiting hierarchs.

## **Grants available to further the mission of Orthodox Christianity**

Financial support is now available from the Ganister Orthodox Foundation for organizations with innovative approaches to advancing the mission of Orthodoxy in the US.

The deadline for submitting grant applications is July 31, 2010, with recipients announced in the fall of each year.

Founded in 2001, the Ganister Orthodox Foundation is a component of the Williamsport, PA-based First Community Foundation of Pennsylvania.

Preference is given to proposals that address priority needs of the Orthodox Church in America. The selection process weighs leadership experience, clarity of goals, the presence of a stable funding base, and faithfulness to the teachings and ministry of the OCA. Applicants must articulate how their undertaking will have a positive impact on a specific need, without duplicating other programs or projects already serving the Church.

Applicants must be qualifying 501c(3) organizations as described under IRS Section 509(a)(1). Grants will not be considered for endowments, ongoing operational support, annual campaigns or event sponsorships, debt reduction, research grants, or support of individuals.

Applications are available from the First Community Foundation of Pennsylvania, 330 Pine St., Suite 401, Williamsport, PA 17701, and on the Foundation's web site at [www.fcfa.org](http://www.fcfa.org). ■

## Archpriest Milorad Milosevich

**McLean, VA** – Archpriest Milorad Milosevich, retired rector of Saint Luke Church here, fell asleep in the Lord on June 22, 2010. His health had been steadily declining for the past several years.

Born in Bosnia in 1931, Father Milorad entered seminary, where his favorite professor was Father [now Saint] Justin Popovich, until he fled Yugoslavia's political regime, first finding asylum in Greece and then in the US. He graduated from Saint Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY, in 1961, after which he studied at the World Council of Churches' graduate schools in Bossey, Switzerland, and Salonika, Greece.

Married to the former Rose [Ruza] Milasinovic, he was ordained to the priesthood by His Grace, Bishop Dionisije of the Serbian Orthodox Church, after which he was assigned as the first full-time priest at Saint Luke Mission, McLean, VA. Under his leadership, the community purchased land in 1971, on which a church and hall were completed in 1976. In 1981, he and the parish were received into the Orthodox Church in America. For 47 years, he lovingly cared for and instructed his parishioners, celebrating their joys and sorrows. When not serving or teaching, he was often found maintaining the church property or helping in the kitchen. He also served as a Serbo-Croatian language specialist with the US State Department for 24 years. Declining health caused him to retire from active ministry in 2009, but he continued to worship at Saint Luke's.

Father Milorad is survived by his wife, Protinitsa Rose, and by a devoted extended family that includes his sister-in-law, nephews and nieces.

Funeral services were celebrated at Saint Luke Church, with interment at Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Silver Spring, MD.

May Father Milorad's memory be eternal! ■

## Alla Jillions Wheeler

**Huntington Station, NY** – Alla J. Wheeler, 52, wife of Protodeacon Eric Wheeler of Saint Sergius Chapel, Oyster Bay Cove, NY, fell asleep in the Lord at home on June 22, 2010, ending a two year battle with cancer. Her husband, children Jack [John] and Azure [Alexandra], and many family members were at her bedside when she died after weeks of palliative care, much of it given directly by Protodeacon Eric.

Alla had been diagnosed with "Adenocarcinoma of unknown origin" in June 2008. While the disease attacked her liver, bones, and brain, oncologists could not pin down the primary site. After a barrage of treatments, she received a diagnosis of "Carcinomatous Meningitis," an aggressive cancer that spreads through the spinal fluid attacking the central nervous system, on Holy Thursday 2010.

Born April 28, 1958, in Montreal, the third of five children. Alla and her family attended Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral in Montreal and, as the family moved successively, parishes in California, Connecticut and New Jersey. She and her husband were married Holy Trinity Church, Randolph, NJ, after the future Protodeacon Eric's graduation from Saint Vladimir's Seminary in 1980. They relocated to Alaska to run tours at Sitka's Saint Michael Cathedral, before returning to the seminary and subsequently to the OCA Chancery, where Protodeacon Eric held important administrative and leadership positions before and after his ordination in 1986. Since 1999, he has served as Director of Finance at Old Westbury Gardens in Long Island, NY.

Throughout Protodeacon Eric's ministry, Alla was a deep friend, companion and supporter. This was especially so during the difficult days of the OCA's crisis in administration [1999-2008], in which Protodeacon Eric had a crucial role uncovering. While those years were very painful for Alla and led to a sense of alienation from the Church for a period of time, in the last few years she was reconciled to Church life and the family once again became part of the Saint Sergius Chapel, where Archpriest Alexander Garklavs served as pastor and friend. She said at one point, "You peel off all the outer layers of the Church's troubles and failings, and there in the middle is something so good."

Professionally, Alla was a dental hygienist. After years in clinical practice, she completed a Masters in Health Care Administration and was appointed Clinical Instructor of Dental Hygiene at New York University in 2002, and Assistant Professor two years later. She also engaged in diabetes research.

In addition to Protodeacon Eric, Jack and Azure, Alla leaves behind her mother, Alla Jillions, 91; her siblings, Archpriest John Jillions [Denise], Tania Kerno [Ivan], Tamara Carson [Michael], and Andrew Jillions [Kathleen]; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were celebrated at Holy Trinity Church, East Meadow, NY, with interment at Saint Tikhon's Monastery Cemetery, South Canaan, PA.

May Alla's memory be eternal!

## Mary [Masha] Troubetzkoy

**Sea Cliff, NY** – Ms. Mary [Masha] Troubetzkoy fell asleep in the Lord on June 4, 2010 after a brief illness.

Born Princess Maria Sergeevna Troubetzkoy in New York City on July 17, 1938, she attended the Compton School for Girls in Quebec and completed her education in Montreal. In her late 20s, she seriously considered entering the women's monastery in Bussy, France, but at the prompting of the late Metropolitan Ireney and Archbishop Sylvester of Canada, she began working at the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America, then located at Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral in New York City, in 1967. She continued in this capacity after the Chancery was relocated to its present site in Oyster Bay Cove [Syosset], NY in 1974.

In 1977, Masha helped establish Saints Cosmas and Damian Adult Home, Staten Island, NY, where she worked for several years. She later worked at a Wall Street investment firm while volunteering her time to raise funds for various Orthodox Christian charities.

Masha opted for an early retirement to care for her aging father, Serge Troubetzkoy, longtime OCA Archivist. She returned to the OCA Chancery in the late 1990s, deriving enormous satisfaction in continuing her father's archival work and serving as receptionist for nearly a decade. She never hesitated to offer her time and talents in whatever ways she could; she was truly a model of the "wise, faithful steward."

Funeral services were celebrated at Our Lady of Kazan Church, Sea Cliff, NY, with interment at Saint Tikhon's Monastery Cemetery, South Canaan, PA.

May Masha's memory be eternal! ■

## Igumen Nazario [Ipac-Uribe]

**Mexico City, Mexico** – Igumen Nazario [Ipac-Uribe] of the monastic community of the Cathedral of the Ascension here fell asleep in the Lord on May 13, 2010, as a result of cancer.

Born in Mexico on June 12, 1940, Father Nazario was initially a Roman Catholic friar. In 1975, he was received into the Orthodox Church in America by His Grace, Bishop Jose [Cortes Olmos]. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1979, and faithfully served at the cathedral parish. For a time he was in charge of Saint George Church, Pharr, TX, and served as abbot of the Monastery of Saint Anthony the Great, Jilotepec, Mexico, under the Patriarchate of Antioch.

May Father Nazario's memory be eternal! ■

## Protodeacon Simeon Kopcha

**Terryville, CT** – Protodeacon Simeon Kopcha fell asleep in the Lord on April 30, 2010.

Born in Terryville on May 3, 1927, Protodeacon Simeon was a lifelong member of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church, at which he served. During World War II he served in the US Navy. In 1951, he married the

## When I was in prison...

### Rediscovering a forgotten ministry

**O**ur life in this world is a fierce and violent spiritual war. As Saint Paul ways, we struggle “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” [Ephesians 6:11-13]. Not only are we participants in this warfare, we are also its prize. We are the crown of God’s creation, created in His image and likeness, the only creature created for the sole purpose of glorifying God by having fellowship with Him. So the devil, being a created being and therefore powerless to attack God directly, attacks God by attacking that which is most dear to Him: *us!* “[Our] adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” [1 Peter 5:8]. His only goal is to destroy and enslave as many of God’s precious children as he can before his time comes to an end, and our role as Christians, as “partakers of the divine nature” [2 Peter 1:4] is to do everything in our power to prevent the devil from snatching one more soul. This is the war in which we find ourselves, and this war is our *raison d’être*: we were created to be in union with God, and we come into union with God by doing His will.

Christ, Who came “to seek and to save that which was lost” [Luke 19:10], desires “all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” [1 Timothy 2:4]. In uniting us to Himself, God has given us the privilege and obligation of participating in His saving work, of fighting in this war against the devil and his angels. Our weapon in this war is Christ Himself. “[For we], being dead in [our] trespasses... He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven [us] all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” [Colossians 2:13-15]. When Christ is present, the demons are utterly defeated. We fight this war, and win it, by bringing the presence of Christ and His saving power to those who are estranged from Him.

**Critical cases.** One of the places of most profound and widespread estrangement from Christ is prison. Prison is a true stronghold of the devil: a place of darkness and violence populated by people who, due to the weakness of their flesh, have not refrained from their sinful behavior, even when facing earthly consequences as dire as imprisonment. If the Church is, as it has aptly been called, the hospital of the soul, prisoners are the critical cases. All of us “have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” [Romans 3:23]. All of us have, like the unjust servant in Matthew 18, been forgiven of a debt we could never repay, and have thereby been saved from the eternal punishment we deserve. We on the outside occupy no moral high ground from which to cast stones at those who are incarcerated, because we are all ensnared in the same mire of sin, in need of the same

salvation. The only difference between those of us on the outside and those who are inside is that those who are inside have largely been abandoned by the outside world, including by those of us who call ourselves Christians. Too often we are like the priest and the Levite who passed by the wounded man without offering help, when we should be imitating the Good Samaritan.

Of course, it is not only prisoners who suffer as a result of their incarceration. The prisoner’s family is often impacted even more negatively by the prisoner’s bad decisions than is the prisoner himself. Each year, hundreds of thousands of families are torn apart by the incarceration of a parent, spouse, or child. These innocents need the love of Christ as desperately as their incarcerated loved ones. This is especially true of the children. Without the loving intervention of Christ in their lives, many of these little ones will internalize the horror of their childhoods and grow up into a life of crime and incarceration.

**Bringing in the sheaves.** The spiritual needs of prisoners and their families are profound and largely unmet. When Jesus evangelized the Samaritan Woman at the well, and told His disciples to do the same to the Samaritans in her town, they probably thought it was strange that the Lord would tell them to proclaim the Gospel to people who were seemingly so different from themselves. Today, the fields of the American penal system are ripe for harvest, and we must begin to labor in that harvest, even though that means entering a world that is totally foreign to most of us.

When describing the Last Judgment in Matthew 25, the Lord specifically mentions five behaviors that manifest a life lived in accordance with His will – feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, taking in strangers, caring for the sick, and ministering to those in prison. Now, the Lord was not saying, “Do these things and you’ll get into heaven.” He was saying that a person who is living a life that is truly filled with the Holy Spirit, who is striving to live a life in accordance with the Gospel and in submission to the will of God, will naturally manifest these behaviors as the love of God that is poured out in his heart overflows to those around him. One day, all of us will stand before the Throne of Judgment. Let us pray that, when that time comes, we can answer that we did, indeed, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, take in the stranger, care for the sick, and minister to those in prison. ■

### InDepth

- **VISIT** the web site of the **Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry** at [www.ocpm-scoba.org](http://www.ocpm-scoba.org) for a wealth of resources.
- **FOR INFORMATION** on initiating a parish-based prison ministry, read ***Reaching Out: Prison Ministry in the Parish*** by Dennis Dunn, a member of the OCA’s St. John the Wonderworker Church, Atlanta, GA, at [www.ocpm-scoba.org](http://www.ocpm-scoba.org).

# The mission field at your front door

Instead of slamming the door on Jehovah's Witnesses, share your faith with them!

Luke Loboda

**K**nowing that the Apostles traveled thousands of miles to spread the Gospel, we could easily become overwhelmed by Christ's command to "make disciples of all nations" [Matthew 28:19]. This is precisely how I felt when two Jehovah's Witnesses appeared at my door a few summers ago. After letting the door bell ring a few times, I decided to step outside my comfort zone, sensing that God had sent them not to convert me, but so that I could proclaim the fullness of the Gospel to them. While it seemed like a daunting task, I believe that a seed was planted in their hearts which only God can nurture over time.

In my experience, Jehovah's Witnesses are genuinely kind people who have adopted false beliefs about Jesus Christ. While they visit with conversion in mind, they are interested in engaging in conversation about faith. Used to having people ignore or close their doors on them, they are appreciative – if somewhat caught off guard – by those who engage them in a respectful manner.

Fundamentally, the Jehovah's Witnesses follow the same heresy that led to the convocation of the First Ecumenical Council – Arianism. While they believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, they hold that He is inferior to God, thereby rejecting the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

It is my hope that the following passages will help encourage others to open their doors and become "evangelizing disciples" – without leaving home or traveling thousands of miles!

● **John 1:1-3.** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

Jehovah's Witnesses claim that the proper translation is "The Word was a god." As the *Orthodox Study Bible* points out, "such a translation is unsupportable, false." Nevertheless, it would be helpful to stress that "with Him [Jesus Christ] *nothing* was made that was made." If that verse is true, then it cannot be possible that God the Father created – "made" – Jesus Christ.

● **Matthew 28:18-19.** "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'"

One of the central tenets of the Jehovah's Witnesses is that the

actual name of God should be used regularly by those who believe in Him. The name of God is revealed to us in the book of Exodus, when God speaks to Moses through the burning bush. The name that God reveals was translated by many Protestant bodies into English as "Jehovah." More accurately, God revealed His name in four letters – YHWH – with vowels, *Yahweh*.

However, the four letters from which *Yahweh* is derived were considered absolutely sacred, and thus they were not rewritten by scribes who translated the Hebrew scriptures into Greek. For this reason, the *Orthodox Study Bible* reads, "Then God said to Moses, 'I AM the Existing One'" [Exodus 3:14].

Because the Jehovah's Witnesses hold the name of God in such high regard, it is absolutely essential to point out that we are commanded by Jesus Christ to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." By grouping the three persons of the Trinity together, our Lord shows that both He and the Holy Spirit are equal to the Father. If they are not divine, then why would baptism be performed in their names?

Christ also uses the name of the Father to refer to Himself. For example, in John 8:58, He tells a crowd, "before Abraham was, I AM." The fact that they took up stones immediately to kill Him for claiming to be God further confirms that He knew He shared the Father's divinity. Similar instances occurred when Christ was arrested in the garden and then questioned. He said, "I AM He," and the soldiers fell to the ground in astonishment at the divine name of God [John 18:5-6]. Later, Christ again says "I AM" when questioned by the chief priests [Mark 14:62]. The high priest immediately tore his garments in protest and accused our Lord of blasphemy.

● **Philippians 2:5-7.** "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery *to be equal with God*, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."

Here the Apostle Paul definitely states that Christ was equal to God the Father – while personally distinct – while taking on the human nature for our salvation.

It is important to mention that the early Christian Church professed Christ's divinity in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and that the same Church determined which early writings would be included in the New Testament. That original Church is the Orthodox Christian Church, which has been guided by the Holy Spirit since the day of Pentecost – while the Jehovah's Witnesses can only trace their existence to the late 1800s.

While it is unlikely that a visiting Jehovah's Witness will convert on the spot – which, of course, is not the point – a thoughtful dialogue will indeed plant seeds, and planting seeds is at the heart of evangelism. God will guide our words, "for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father Who speaks in you" [Matthew 10:20].

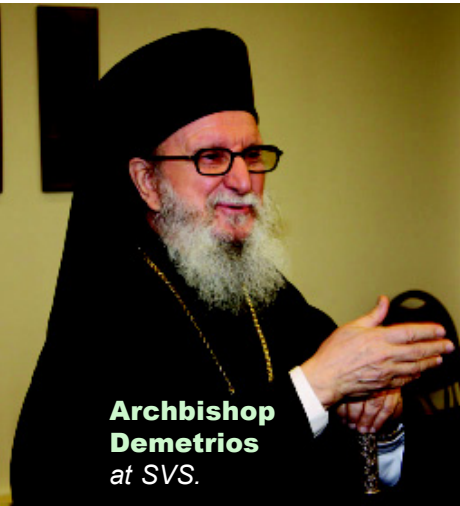
*Other important passages: Genesis 1:26, 18:1-3; John 14:9-11, 20:28; Acts 13:33-35; Hebrews 1:2-4, 1:8-10; 1 John 5:7, 5:20; Revelation 3:14.* ■

**Luke Loboda** is a member of St. Nicholas Church, Mogadore, OH.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Hellenism explored at SVS symposium

A symposium on “Hellenism and Orthodoxy,” held at Saint Vladimir’s Seminary, Crestwood, NY June 10-12, 2010, “generated frank and lively discussion concerning the unity of, and relations between, Orthodox Churches in North America,” according to an account of the event posted on the seminary web site at [www.svots.edu](http://www.svots.edu). “Conference speakers and participants respectfully wrestled with a myriad of sticky points related to the ecclesial structure of Orthodoxy



**Archbishop Demetrios**  
at SVS.

on this continent: the interpretation of Canon 28 of Chalcedon, the definition of *diaspora*, ethnic identity, and especially the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in America.”

In his opening remarks, Dr. Peter C. Bouteneff, Associate Professor in Systematic Theology and symposium organizer, explained the importance of the theme.

“Hellenism is undeniably one of the most significant cultural im-

pulses for the life of the Church since its earliest historical manifestations,” said Dr. Bouteneff. “More than any single culture, it is possible to say that *any and every Christian must somehow deal with Hellenism*, or specifically with the Hellenistic impress on the formation of Christian doctrine and life.”

His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Church in America, delivered the keynote address, titled “Hellenism and Orthodoxy: A Linguistic and Spiritual Journey.” He discussed the meaning of Hellenism as understood in ancient Greece and how it facilitated the acceptance of Christianity in the Roman world. In a second address, titled “Greek Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the Church in the USA,” Archimandrite Elpidophoros [Lambriniadis], Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, outlined the development of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and while offering insights into the Church in America in light of the North American Episcopal Assembly convened in New York City at the end of May. [*The text of his address is available on-line at [www.svots.edu/images/stories/speech\\_lambriniadis.pdf](http://www.svots.edu/images/stories/speech_lambriniadis.pdf).*]

Podcasts of the symposium’s presentations are available on the Orthodox Christian Network at [www.myocn.net](http://www.myocn.net). ■

## RUSSIA

### Russian Church hosts Ecumenical Patriarch

His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, visited Russia as the guest of His Holiness, Patriarch Kirill May 22-31, 2010.

Patriarch Bartholomew presided at services in Moscow and St. Petersburg; visited the Holy Trinity-Saint Sergius Monastery in Sergiev Posad, Moscow’s Saint Daniel Monastery, Valamo Monastery, and prayed at many shrines and churches. He also met with numerous religious and civil leaders, including the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, in the Moscow Kremlin.

The Patriarchs also concelebrated the Liturgy at Moscow’s Christ the Saviour Cathedral on May 24, the Feast of the Holy Spirit which coincided this year with Patriarch Kirill’s namesday. Among the concelebrating hierarchs and clergy representing the sister Orthodox Churches was Archimandrite Zacchaeus, OCA Representative to the Moscow Patriarchate. ■



## BENELUX

### Brussels site of Assembly

The first Episcopal Assembly of Orthodox Hierarchs in the Benelux – Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg – was held on June 23, 2010 in Brussels. Like its North American counterpart held in New York in May, the Assembly was convened in direct response to the decision of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference held in Chambésy, Switzerland in June 2009.

Chaired by His Eminence, Metropolitan Panteleimon of Belgium [Ecumenical Patriarchate], the Assembly also included hierarchs from the Russian, Serbian, and Romanian Churches.

The Benelux is one of 12 regions without a single Orthodox Christian presence in which similar gatherings have been or will be convened. A similar Assembly was held in South America in April 2010. ■

## Assembly Statement from 5

In addition to the above, we agreed that a directory would be created and maintained by the Assembly of all canonical congregations in our region.

We, as the Episcopal Assembly, understand ourselves as being the successors of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas [SCOBA], assuming its agencies, dialogues, and other ministries.

Moreover, at the formal request of the Hierarchs who have jurisdiction in Canada, the Assembly will submit to the Ecumenical Patriarch, in accordance with the rules of operation [Article 13], a request to partition the present region of North and Central America into two distinct regions of the United States and Canada. Additionally, at the request of the Hierarchs who have jurisdiction in Mexico and Central America, the Assembly will likewise request to merge Mexico and Central America with the Assembly of South America.

As Orthodox Hierarchs in this blessed region, we express our resolve to adhere to and adopt the regulations proposed by the Pan-Orthodox Conferences and approved by the Autocephalous

Orthodox Churches, and to do everything in our power by the grace of God to advance actions that facilitate canonical order in our region.

We confess our fidelity to the Apostolic Orthodox faith and pledge to promote “common action to address the pastoral needs of Orthodox living in our region” [Chambésy, Decision 2c]. We call upon our clergy and faithful to join us in these efforts “to safeguard and contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church of the region in its theological, ecclesiological, canonical, spiritual, philanthropic, educational and missionary obligations” [Article 5.1] as we eagerly anticipate the Holy and Great Council.

The Assembly concluded with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Friday, May 28, 2010, at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Cathedral in New York City. During the Liturgy, prayers were offered for the repose of the eleven victims of the current ecological disaster in the Gulf Coast, for the consolation of their families, for all those adversely affected by this catastrophe, as well as for all people living under conditions of war, persecution, violence, and oppression.

Of the sixty-six Hierarchs in the region, the following 55 were present at this Assembly:

Archbishop Demetrios, <i>Chairman</i>	Metropolitan Nicholas	Bishop Demetrios	Bishop Maxim
Metropolitan Philip, <i>Vice Chairman</i>	Metropolitan Alexios	Bishop Daniel	Archbishop Nicolae
Archbishop Justinian, <i>Vice Chairman</i>	Metropolitan Nikitas	Bishop Antoun	Bishop Ioan Casian
Bishop Basil <i>Secretary</i>	Metropolitan Nicholas	Bishop Joseph	Metropolitan Joseph
Archbishop Antony <i>Treasurer</i>	Metropolitan Gerasimos	Bishop Thomas	Metropolitan Jonah
Metropolitan Iakovos	Metropolitan Evangelos	Bishop Mark	Archbishop Nathaniel
Metropolitan Constantine	Metropolitan Paisios	Bishop Alexander	Archbishop Seraphim
Metropolitan Athenagoras	Archbishop Yurij	Metropolitan Hilarion	Bishop Nikon
Metropolitan Methodios	Bishop Christopher	Bishop Iov	Bishop Tikhon
Metropolitan Isaiah	Bishop Vikentios	Bishop Gabriel	Bishop Benjamin
	Bishop Savas	Bishop Peter	Bishop Melchisedek
	Bishop Andonios	Bishop Theodosius	Bishop Alejo
	Bishop Ilia	Bishop George	Bishop Irineu
	Bishop Ilarion	Bishop Ieronim	Bishop Irinee
	Bishop Andriy	Metropolitan Christopher	Bishop Michael

## In Memoriam

### From 18

former Eva Hasko. He served as a member of the parish council, FROC, and choir. In the early 1960s he served as choir director and was instrumental in the transition from Slavonic to English as the parish's primary liturgical language.

In the 1970s, he became an active supporter of Saint Vladimir's Seminary Theological Foundation. He stepped down as choir director after 26 years and undertook studies for the diaconate, to which he was ordained by Bishop Job of Hartford and New England during his parish's 75th anniversary on June 14, 1987. He was elevated to the rank of protodeacon in 1999.

Protodeacon Simeon continued to serve Saint Cyril and Methodius parish, the Connecticut Deanery, and the Diocese of New England until December 2005. In May 2009, he was presented with a Synodal gramota for his many years of dedicated service.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Eva; his brother Louis; daughters Susan Kopcha Davis, Claudia Kopcha Senetcen, and Matushka Melanie Kopcha Koles; son Peter; and eight grandchildren.

Funeral services were held at Saints Cyril and Methodius Church, with interment in the parish cemetery.

May Protodeacon Simeon's memory be eternal! ■

## Preoteasa Marie Scala Ficken

**Fairfax, VA** – Preoteasa Marie Ficken fell asleep in the Lord after suffering a stroke on the evening of Great and Holy Saturday, April 8, 2010, as she was preparing to attend Pascha services.

Born in Regina, SK, Canada on August 11, 1918, she married Theodosie Scala, who became a Romanian Orthodox priest. Together they served parishes in Nebraska, Michigan, and Massachusetts. In 1916, they relocated to Washington, DC, where they established Holy Cross parish, Alexandria, VA. Father Theodosie passed away in 1967. She later married Rudolph W. Ficken, who died in 1992.

As an accomplished musician, director, and composer, she established choirs in several parishes. Her Pan-Orthodox Madrigal Choir performed at the White House, the US Supreme Court, the Kennedy Center, and the National Cathedral, and she was a founder of the “Festival of Choirs” in 1975. On several occasions she conducted as many as 200 singers at the Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers. In 1988, she was recognized by Metropolitan Theodosius for her “dedicated stewardship of time, labor and talent for the Holy Orthodox Church and its people.”

She is survived by two children and their spouses and three grandchildren.

Funeral services were held at Saint Mary Church, Falls Church, VA, with interment at Columbia Gardens Cemetery, Arlington.

May Preoteasa Marie's memory be eternal! ■

# Communities



## Growing the Church in America's heartland

**MOUNDSVILLE, WV** – For decades, SS. Peter and Paul Church in West Virginia's western panhandle served the needs of faithful engaged in the region's booming coal and steel industries. But times changed. The serious decline in the region's industries brought about a corresponding decline in jobs and population. As people moved on, once packed churches became a shadow of their former selves.

In an effort to turn things around, Fr. Michael Zahirsky and his flock are committed to growing the Church, regardless of regional decline. Through their efforts, they welcomed three adults, a teenager, and a four-year-old girl – representing four different families – into the Church through the sacrament of Holy Baptism on Great and Holy Saturday. The "multigenerational baptism" has brought a new sense of commitment to the parish community, proving that Church growth is indeed possible, not only in high-growth regions, but everywhere! ■

## Boston cathedral celebrates 100 years

**BOSTON, MA** – On the weekend of the Great Feast of Pentecost – May 22-23, 2010 – the faithful of Holy Trinity Cathedral here celebrated their patronal feast and centennial.

Present for the celebration were Metropolitan Jonah, Bishop Nikon of Boston and New England and the Albanian Archdiocese, and Bishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, who shared his memories as a former cathedral parishioner. Certificates of recognition were presented to Rosa Romanowski, Mary Hetman, Alice Carter, Nicholas Carter, Paul Andruchow, Stephanie Stroyen, Wanda Maksymowicz, Subdeacon Peter Robert Kotiuga, and Nevine Nassif for their many years of service to the cathedral community.

At the Sunday afternoon centennial banquet, remarks were offered by Bishop Nikon and Father Robert, while

reflections on the cathedral's life were offered by Walter Obleschuk, cathedral choir director, and parishioners Zhanna Stalbo, Katia Arida, and Lillian Lelless.

"In and through the Holy Spirit, the Cathedral extends the ministry of Christ," said Fr. Robert Arida, cathedral dean, in his centennial remarks. "Like our venerable predecessors, we are called to discern the times as we acknowledge, with humility and courage, that we and our successors will face challenges and opportunities never imagined in the past. Guided by the Spirit, nurtured by the Word, and embraced by the Father we will pass on our great legacy to others who will continue to draw the world into the net of salvation." ■

## Holy Trinity Cathedral faithful honored during centennial celebration.



## Chi-Rho award presented at SVS chapel

**CRESTWOOD, NY** – Fr. Steven Belonick, Associate Dean for Student Affairs at St. Vladimir's Seminary, presented the Chi-Rho scouting award to Ethan Mitchell Levine at the seminary's Three Hierarchs Chapel recently.

Ethan is the son of Fr. Sean and Jennifer Levine.

The Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting awards the emblem to Webelo scouts who have taken "significant steps in religious growth."

Also attending the award ceremony was Donna Ragusa, leader of the Boy Scouts of America's St. Eugene's Pack 25, Yonkers, NY, of which Ethan is a member. ■



# The harvest is plenty, the laborers few

In the past decade, your generous gifts to the OCA's annual Mission Appeal have provided Church Planting Grants to over two-dozen fledgling missions – most in regions with little or no Orthodox presence – that have been “harvested” into thriving parishes today. So much more can be done if we respond to one “very basic truth, that the



*Chrismations at Holy Apostles Mission, Mechanicsburg, PA*

Church is essentially mission,” as the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann observed, “that the very roots of her life are in the commandment of Christ: Go, therefore, and teach all nations.”



*Moving into new quarters at St. Christina Mission, Fremont, CA*

**Your gift to the 2010 Mission Appeal  
will help plant the seeds of faith!**

**O**ur Church has been blessed beyond measure with unselfish, dedicated, and humble clergy, ready and willing to plant and serve our mission communities. However, as our Lord needed His disciples, our priests need all of us to support and assist them in fulfilling His timeless commandment to “go and teach and make disciples of all nations.”

The sole purpose of the annual Missions Appeal is to fund the Church Planting Grant program, which enables our missions to have full-time, resident priests. It is clear that

when this happens, missions thrive because priests are able to dedicate themselves fully to sharing and preaching the Gospel.

Since the beginning of the program, we have planted and funded over 30 missions across North America. The program has a proven track record, one that can only happen – and continue to happen – with your support.

May our Lord, Who made the heavens and the earth, bless you with the same Breath of Life that He bestowed on His Apostles on the day of Pentecost as we work together to build up the household of God.

In Christ,  
**+ Metropolitan Jonah**