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CONCERNING FREQUENT COMMUNION OF THE IMMACULATE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST

Truly, truly, I say to you,
Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man,
And drink his blood, you have no life in you.
He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood,
has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.
For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.
He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood,
abides in me, and I in him.

John 6:53-56

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COVER: Clergy and Delegates who participated at the 2017 Episcopate Congress on August 31-September 3 at Vatra Romaneasca, Grass Lake, Michigan. Photo Credit: J.E. Lazar

ARCHBISHOP NATHANIEL'S ADDRESS TO THE EPISCOPATE CONGRESS 2017

How Quickly the History of our Diocese is Forgotten!

Reverend Clergy,
Honorable Delegates,
Guests:

Christ is among us!

When the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu fell at the end of 1989, the Episcopate immediately began to think of ways to help the people of Romania, our people, as far as was in our poor power. We founded "Help for Romania" which later became the Department of Christian Assistance; and by the grace of God, over the years, we were able to facilitate the sending of over 85 million dollars of relief to the land of our spiritual and cultural heritage.

85 million dollars! What other group of people – promoters of Țara și Neamul [Country and Nation], patriots, propagandists, protesters – which of them did as much for their brothers and sisters?

But there are those who would have you believe we hate Romania -- that we forgot where we came from – shame on them!

When it came time to distribute all that aid, we knew that just as the hierarchy in Romania knew nothing of our needs and problems here, we also knew nothing of the needs and problems over there. So we turned to the leaders of the Church of Romania and entrusted them with the task of determining where and to whom aid should go.

But there are those who would have you believe we hate Romania -- that we forgot where we came from – shame on them!

When we visited Romania on numerous occasions, we served together with our brother bishops in Romania; we ordained priests for the Romanian Church, and we even officiated the Divine Liturgy in the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest.

But there are those who would have you believe we are un-canonical, that we hate Romania -- that we forgot where we came from – shame on them!

We did all these things for one simple reason: we are the Church. We do these things, because we love Christ – and loving Christ, we cannot do anything but love those who were created in His image and likeness. That is the vision that drives us – the greatest commandment of our Lord. That is what it means to be the Bride of Christ, who sacrificed Himself for us, even though we didn't deserve it.

Over the past fifteen years, we have strayed from that original vision of the Church as the Bride of Christ in the world. Slowly, step-by-step, we began to think only about ourselves. Our Episcopate became

the focus of intrigue, of conflict and conspiracies, of bitterness. Talk of graft, corruption and misbehavior became the new normal. Certain individuals, with special "axes to grind", incited conflict between so-called "true Romanians" and the rest of the faithful of our diocese. Gradually, the age-old ideals of love for all, of care for our fellow man and of service to our Lord and God and Savior were replaced by discord and struggles over property and power.

Today, I am here to tell you that those days are over.

The days of politics and intrigue are gone. The days of living and acting as the Church of Christ have returned. In this Diocese, there are no Romanians, Americans or Canadians, no "real Orthodox" or "converts"; but all are one in Jesus Christ, to paraphrase St. Paul.

To be sure, we will fight to protect the patrimony of this Episcopate. We will not permit disobedience and schism – heresy, in fact – to chip away at the lifeblood of the Body of Christ. We will assert and defend the Church against her enemies by every possible means. But we will never forget that our mission is to bring salvation to the world and ourselves. That is the charge against which we will be judged on that Great Day of Our Lord.

Our Lord said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples – if you have love for each other." When the pagans saw the first Christians, they said: "See how they love one another!"

We know that we live in a pagan world today, where the Gospel is forgotten and the Church is ridiculed. And that, beloved, is nobody's fault but our own. So today, I call on Orthodox Christians of true faith and true worship – let us love one another, and let us say "Brother" even to those who hate us; and let us join together in the proper work of the Church.

Today, in order to re-establish the peace and good order of our Episcopate, I have reinstated the Deaneries of our Episcopate:

Quebec and the Maritime Provinces

Ontario

Western Canada and the Pacific Northwest

California and the Southwest

The South

The Midwest

Michigan

Ohio and Western Pennsylvania

The Northeast

The Southeast

I will charge the Deans to lead their Deaneries by fulfilling the requirements of Article Sections of the

Episcopate By-Laws, as follows:

ARTICLE V THE DEANERIES

Section 1

The Episcopate Council, subject to ratification by the Episcopate Congress, may group the Parishes into Deaneries to function as administrative units of the Episcopate.

Section 2

The head of a Deanery shall be a Priest appointed by the Bishop with the knowledge of the Episcopate Council, and he shall have the following duties and authority:

- (a) At the direction of the Bishop, to transmit to the Parishes the directives of the Episcopate and to implement them;
- (b) To organize religious services, and temporary exchange of Priests in the Parishes;
- (c) In the case of a vacancy in a Parish and in consultation with the Bishop's Office [Chancery], to provide for temporary religious services according to usual Orthodox practice and tradition;
- (d) To supervise the religious activities of the Deanery and make a yearly report to the Episcopate;
- (e) To preside over the Peace Court of the Deanery;
- (f) To convene a conference of the Clergy of the Deanery not less than once a year;
- (g) To arrange for confessions of the Clergy and their families;
- (h) To organize spiritual retreats;
- (i) To conduct periodic seminars in pastoral theology and liturgical practices for all the Clergy of the Deanery;
- (j) To call general Deanery meetings consisting of Clergy, Delegates to the Episcopate Congress, Presidents and Officers of the Parish Councils and of the Parish Auxiliaries;
- (k) To coordinate the leadership and active participation of all Parishes in the Deanery in common programs with other Orthodox Christians.

Love for each other means love for all. Our Holy Fathers tell us that God is three persons, because perfect love cannot be embodied in one or two persons. It means that to truly love, we must join together to reach outside ourselves and extend our love to a third party, to someone else. That "someone else" is the world around us.

That is why, in addition to the requirements of the By-Laws, the Deaneries now will be responsible for looking outward, for reaching out to a world and society that suffers greatly. Each Deanery will be required to promote and report, not only on its meetings and organizations, but also on the truly charitable and missionary work of its clergy, parishes and faithful. Our society is starved for the Word of God and for the ministry that the Orthodox Church – the TRUE

Church – is called to offer.

This afternoon, you will hear from a young lady of our Diocese. Her name is Delia Popoviciu. Delia is the daughter of Romanian immigrants and the face of the youngest generation of Orthodox Christian Romanians. Most of her family lives in Romania. She speaks Romanian fluently. She is proud of her heritage. And she lives in America. Delia was selected to represent our Diocese at a Youth Conference of IOCC, the International Orthodox Christian Charities, last June. I urge you to hear her presentation, ask questions and form your own opinions.

The need is dire. All around us, there is despair, poverty, drug addiction, loneliness, mental illness, and spiritual starvation. Our entire society is searching for answers.

How can we let humanity starve all around us, while we hold the secret of life? Who has the answer? We do. We have the one thing that will save the world and us. We have the True Faith. We have seen the True Light. We have received the Heavenly Spirit.

If you believe these things, I invite you: join with your priests, your Deans and your fellow Orthodox Christians, and let us get back to the work that so desperately needs to be done. Let us get back to preaching the Gospel to the whole land. Let us welcome the stranger into our spiritual family. Let us show the world that we are the Light shining in the darkness.

Let us get back to being The Church.

And one day, pagan America will say – "See how they love one another! We want to be like them!" And then and only then, we will have brought salvation to our own house.

To be sure, some will say that our message is fantasy. They will say, as they have over the years, that we have forgotten where we came from. They will say that salvation comes only through the nation – neamul.

To them, I say this: If you believe that the Church is for Țara și Neamul; if you believe that Romanian blood is required for salvation; if you believe that we in America and Canada are merely a diaspora whose real homeland is somewhere in the Old World, then there is a Metropolia for you. If you want to be governed by a Holy Synod of Bishops that has no idea of the realities of your life and your problems here in this land, and where you will count for less than one-half of one percent of their faithful, there is a Metropolia for you.

If that is the Metropolia for you, there is a parish somewhere close to your home that you can join. You will enjoy all the blessings of Țara și Neamul, its politics and its excitements. I pray that you may find happiness there.

As for me and my Episcopate –we shall serve the Lord!

The Address was delivered on September 1, 2017.

THE END OF THE CHURCH YEAR

By Fr. Thomas Hopko

Transcript from the Ancient Faith Ministries Podcast, Speaking the Truth in Love – Compelling Commentary on Christian Belief and Behavior, broadcast on August 23, 2008.

The month of August is the last month of the Church year. The ecclesiastical year begins in September; and so August, therefore, is the last month of the ecclesiastical year. And the month of August is in some ways a very strange month liturgically in the Orthodox Church; it's kind of unusual. It has many features, [there are] many events in that month that it's worthwhile thinking about a little bit, even though we're almost drawing near to the end of the month now.

The first thing that we can think about is that August begins with what is called traditionally in the Orthodox Church the first Feast of the Savior. ... There are three Feasts of the Savior in the month of August: **August 1st** is the **Feast of the Wood of the Cross**, the **Procession of the Holy Cross**. The 6th of August is the celebration of the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ. And then on the 16th of August—the day after the Dormition of the Holy Theotokos, the falling asleep of Christ's Mother Mary—you have the third Feast of the Savior, which is the Festival of the Icon Not Made by Human Hands, as it's called (the *Acheiropoietos* - not made by hands), and it is a particular image of Christ's face on a cloth. So you have these three Feasts of the Savior that go from August 1st to August 6th and then to August 16th.

August 1

Now this first Feast of the Savior that was celebrated on the 1st of August is a festival where in Byzantium they carried the wood of the Holy Cross, and they blessed the springs of water with this wood and had a procession with this relic of the Holy Cross throughout the city. And then it was repeated in various cities and copied in various cities throughout the Empire. Some scholars think that the reason for this—which was connected with the two week Lenten period before the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, which is on the 15th of August—was actually because this time of the year in that part of the world was what we might call today 'disease season'. It was a time of great sickness: plagues, water, summer, whatever. But, in any case, scholars think that during that particular time, there was a proclamation of a time of prayer and fasting, a time of holiness, a time of singing particular praises. And then it developed during those fifteen days to sing the special service called the *Paraklesis* to the Theotokos, the Mother of God, on each day of those fifteen days; and then end with the celebration of the falling asleep and the entrance into the Kingdom of

God of Christ's Mother, Mary. So you had fifteen days of prayer and fasting and fifteen days of singing the hymn to the Theotokos for her help, for her healing, for her salvation upon the people and for the protection from diseases and sicknesses that seemed to be particularly rampant during that part of the year.

Now, the custom still exists—in fact I do it myself, on that first Feast of the Savior, the first day of August—to have a special service of the Blessing of Waters. And very often the waters outside are blessed during the month of August. I serve a church up in Canada on a lake—and that's why I haven't been recording too much during this month; I've been kind of on vacation watching the grandchildren—but in any case every year up there around or [on] the Sunday nearest to the first of August, we make a procession with the wood of the Holy Cross, with the Holy Cross, which in that case is always a cross made of wood. And we make the procession to the waters of the lake, and we sing the service of the Great Blessing of Water over the lake; and we throw the cross into the waters, and the little children go in and take the cross out of the water—they like it very much. But this is a wonderful celebration to begin the month of August and to begin the fifteen days before the Dormition, as a kind of a sanctification of the cosmos, a calling for the healing of all creation on that day.

And it just happens, I think it just happens—although we Christians usually don't believe in coincidences, we rather believe in providential care—that this first day of August is also the celebration in the Church of the Maccabean boys in the famous seventh chapter of 2 Maccabees in the Bible. And I would suggest that if you have a chance, you could read that seventh chapter of 2 Maccabees in your Bible. It's a beautiful story of the mother of these seven boys—in tradition her name is Solomonias—and her boys are being killed because they refuse to defile themselves and to eat the unclean foods and to blaspheme and to make sacrilege in the Temple of God, that is in fact being treated in a sacrilegious, blasphemous manner by the occupying forces: Antiochus IV Epiphanes, [and] the Babylonians who kind of took over the Jerusalem temple. And it's just a wonderful, wonderful story where these boys just refuse to break the law of God, and then they are tortured terribly; and their mother is urging them on not to give in, not to defile, not to break the law of God. And it's almost like she's a cheerleader, you know, urging them on, saying, "I bore you, I gave you life, but the life came from God." And it's one of those places in the Bible where you have a pretty clear statement about life beginning in the womb, from

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TWENTY-TWO CLERGY, LAY LEADERS COMPLETE OCA'S THIRD MISSION SCHOOL



HUNTINGTON, NY [OCA] Twenty-two clergy and lay leaders representing every diocese of the Orthodox Church in America completed the third annual Mission School held on the campus of Immaculate Conception Seminary here August 21-25, 2017.

"The school was organized with the blessing of the Holy Synod of Bishops and funded through a bequest to the OCA earmarked for missions and evangelism," said Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, OCA Secretary and Mission School organizer. "The school brings together one clergyman and one lay person from each diocese of the OCA. The week-long program offers an intensive study on the theory and practice of mission and evangelism."

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon led Wednesday's discussions, while His Eminence, Archbishop Michael led Tuesday's presentation. Other clergy seasoned in the mission field presented a series of talks, evaluations and round table discussions. Among them were Archpriest John Jillions, OCA Chancellor; Archpriest Steven Voytovich, Dean of Saint Tikhon Seminary; Archpriest Chad Hatfield, President of Saint Vladimir's Seminary; Archpriest David Rucker of Saint Tikhon Seminary and OCMC; Archpriest John Parker, Chair of the Department of Evangelization; Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky, Rector of Holy Apostles Church, Mechanicsburg, PA; Archpriest Thomas Soroka, Rector of Saint Nicholas Church, McKees Rock, PA; Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, Secretary to the Metropolitan and Chair of the Stewards of the Orthodox Church in America; and Matushka Jennifer Mosher, Saints Peter and Paul Church, Meridan, CT.

"The topics covered subjects as diverse as the theology of evangelism and mission, sacramental and liturgical practices in a mission community, developing a catechism and education program in a mission, community building, engaging contemporary society, stewardship, and parish revitalization as mission," Father Eric explained. "Each day incorporated worship, evaluation exercises and open discussions. Each participant received a certificate of completion from His Beatitude as well as a host of reading and study materials."

To date, nearly 100 clergy and lay persons have

completed the Mission School and have brought back the lessons learned to their parishes, deaneries and dioceses.

Metropolitan Tikhon celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the Leave-taking of the Great Feast of the Dormition on Wednesday morning, during which he delivered a stirring homily, the text of which appears below.

August 22, 2017

Leave-taking of the Dormition of the

Mother of God

Mission School 2017

Saint Sergius Chapel

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" [Philippians 2:10-11].

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Are not these concluding words from today's Epistle a beautiful expression of the goal of our missionary work as Christians? They are certainly fitting words with which to conclude our celebration of the life-affirming feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos. But connecting the Mother of God and our Apostolic work in the vineyard of the Lord, there is a common thread. Just as it is through the Mother of God that our Lord came into this world and by her that it became possible for every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth to bow before the name of Jesus Christ, so it is that each of us, ordained and not ordained, married and monastic, young and old, have a part in striving for the glorious outcome that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Although we could look to the Gospel to bring us to the heart of our theology, and then to the application of that theology as a way of life, by focusing on the bringing together of the contemplation of Mary and the action of Martha as a model for missiology, it is rather on the words of the Epistle reading that I would like us to draw our attention, especially this week, as we gather together to learn from one another about our task as Apostles of Jesus Christ.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..." [Philippians 2:5].

Paul repeatedly throughout his letters makes Christ the pattern for our thinking, not only our behavior. In Romans (12:2) he says, "be transformed by the

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OCA REPRESENTED AT ORTHODOX- EVANGELICAL CONSULTATION



CAMBRIDGE, UK [OCA] Archpriests John Jillions and Eric G. Tosi, Chancellor and Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America respectively, were among those who represented the OCA at an international consultation held at Selwyn College, Cambridge, UK September 5-8, 2017.

The consultation—the fifth sponsored by the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative [LOI]—brought together some 70 Evangelical and Eastern and Oriental Orthodox theological educators who explored the theme, “Theological Formation for Mission.”

Father John offered the Orthodox response to the keynote address, delivered by the noted New Testament scholar, Bishop N. T. Wright. Other speakers, in addition to Father Eric, included Archpriest David Rucker and Dr. William Black, Orthodox Christian Mission Center missionaries to Alaska and Kenya re-

spectively, and Ancient Faith Ministries’ John Maddex. Priest John Parker, chair of the OCA’s Department of Evangelization, also participated.

Local speakers from the UK included Bishop Angaelos of the Coptic Orthodox Church, a LOI founder, and Father Dragos Herescu, Principal of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies in Cambridge. Dr. Tim Grass, an Evangelical scholar based in the UK, served as facilitator for the consultation.

“LOI was established in 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa as an informal vehicle for Orthodox Christians and Evangelicals to work towards a better understanding of each other and to find common projects in which to cooperate in various countries,” explained Father Eric. Previously, the OCA had been represented at LOI’s 2015 consultation near Helsinki, Finland.

LONE SUSPECT CONFESSES TO ATTACKING Two OCA CHURCHES IN OHIO



Fr. Mikel Hill celebrates his first Liturgy at St. Nikolai Mission in January 2017.

LOUISVILLE, OH [OCA] A lone suspect was taken into custody in the early hours of Tuesday,
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August 29, 2017, confessing to attacks on two parishes of the Orthodox Church in America on Sunday morning, August 27.

According to Priest Mikel Hill, Rector of Saint Nikolai Mission, Louisville, OH, “the suspect made a full confession” that included setting fire to the inside of the church, as well as damaging a large cross in front of Saint Nicholas Church, Alliance, OH. Established two years ago, Saint Nikolai Mission is within the OCA’s Bulgarian Diocese, while Saint Nicholas Church, which dates back to 1912, is within the OCA’s Romanian Episcopate. Priest Ilie Geani Nemes is Rector of the Alliance parish.

Fire officials were convinced from the start that the churches, which are a mere five miles from each other, were targeted. “It is definitely arson, there is no question,” township Fire Chief Matthew Anstine told CantonRep.com reporters. When firefighters arrived

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Twenty-Two ... *Cont. from page 6*

renewal of your mind.” It often happens that we work on shaping our behavior before our minds are fully convinced, but in the end our whole being and behavior are called to transformation in Christ, guided by an inner being—heart, soul and mind—shaped entirely by Christ. There can be no missionary work, no proclamation of the Gospel, no healing of the illnesses and brokenness of the world, if we ourselves have not begun to have our entire being shaped by Christ, “...Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God...” [Philippians 2:6].

We believe that Christ is the pre-eternal Word of God, that He exists from all eternity in loving communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, that He is fully divine. His divinity was not an illegitimate “add-on.” He was not grabbing a state of being that did not belong to Him. This is what Saint Paul means by “robbery.” He was God from the beginning, from before there was a beginning. This is, in summary form, the most profound expression of our theology, one which we long to share with the world, but often find ourselves mute and unable to adequately convey this divine reality to our fellow human beings, who would prefer their gods to be mortal and of the earth. What can we do? Saint Paul gives us a clue:

“...but [He] emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death on the cross” [Philippians 2:7-8].

Christ did not hold on to His divine status but voluntarily emptied Himself, or as some translations say, He made Himself of no reputation. God refused to look on at the misery, grief, confusion and sin of the world at a distance. Instead, out of supreme love, He desired to share that world with us, alongside us, with none of the privileges of divinity. He shed His divine distance and entered the messiness of the world.

But He did this only with the cooperation and collaboration of the Theotokos. This in itself is remarkable, but it is even more remarkable when we recognize that we can do the same. It can be said that God sets aside His omnipotence and waits for His servant, Mary, to say “yes.” And without her “yes,” He willingly binds Himself to be powerless to effect the salvation of the world. We often say, “only God can save.” In an important sense, that is not true. God, in His love for mankind, in His desire to preserve human freedom so that love for God remains free, limits Himself and says, “I need Mary’s freely given ‘yes’ in order to save the world.” This is why we Orthodox can say without reservation, “Most Holy Theotokos save us.” And He says the same to each of us: “I need your help in order to save you. I can’t save you against your will.” And this is what should motivate our missionary labors today: to imitate the

self-emptying, the kenosis, not only of the great saints of our Church, not only of the Theotokos, but of God Himself. For it is a self-emptying that leads to the fullness of divine glory:

“Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” [Philippians 2:9-11].

In emptying Himself, God demonstrates His glory. This is why in icons of the crucifixion, we often see the phrase, “the King of Glory.” The Mother of God shows us as well the most excellent way of humility which paradoxically leads to exaltation. Neither the tomb, nor death could hold the Theotokos, and her falling asleep becomes translation to life.

Archimandrite Zachariah, from the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist in England, says that self-emptying love for all and humility before all is our practical pattern of life as Christians. [See *Man the Target of God*, Monastery of Saint John the Baptist, 2016, pp. 158-160.] He writes, “I think that even in our ministry if we learn to humble ourselves, and we put ourselves below the people we try to serve; in the end, we will enjoy more authority and we will do more than by behaving with authority as priests of the Most High. We cannot have a true relationship with anybody, neither with friends, nor with husband and wife, unless we put ourselves below the other person. Even with our own children, we have to put ourselves below them, come down to their level at least, reasoning with them as with our equals, and not with parental authority. If we behave with them with parental authority, we will not convince them, and they will not follow us.... In fact, what makes our preaching unconvincing to the surrounding world is the fact that we, and first myself, do not have this self-denial which the commandment of the Lord demands.... What I mean to say is this: In our ministry, we need to be humble and not behave with authority. It is a temptation that many priests have especially in traditionally Orthodox countries, but when we live in the Diaspora, in America or in England, we cannot get anywhere in that way. The only way to convince people in the Church is by showing a humble example and putting ourselves below the people that we try to serve.”

The Mother of God not only gives us this example, but she is also ever-present to listen and to intercede. And we, the Apostles and Missionaries of Christ, should likewise strive for this life of self-emptying humility, which is the only means by which we can truly proclaim the glory of God, the light of the resurrection and ourselves become vessels for the life of the world.

By the prayers of the Mother of God, may we once again commit ourselves and each other and all our life to Christ our God and to His self-emptying humility.

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX PRIEST ADDRESSES SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS IN UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PANEL

In August 2017, Fr. George Shalhoub, pastor of The Basilica of St. Mary in Livonia, MI, a parish of the Antiochian Christian Archdiocese, participated in a panel discussion at the University of Michigan, Dearborn, on the pastoral issue of suicide prevention. After his presentation at the University, “Preventing Suicide in Middle Eastern Communities,” Fr. George answered questions and said there is “the need to speak of this spiritual darkness that can affect all of us.”

Q: Father George, what were you doing at the University of Michigan-Dearborn today?

A: The Middle Eastern Law Enforcement Officers Association invited me, along with religious leaders Rabbi Daniel Syme of Bethel Temple and Imam Ibrahim Kazerooni of the Islamic Center of America, for an interfaith perspective panel which addressed addiction and suicide in our communities. A panel discussion discussed the topic of suicide prevention and substance abuse in the Arab American community.

Q: How did you contribute to this discussion?

A: The Arab American community in this country suffers from drug abuse and faces cases of suicide and suicide attempts, just as many other communities do. The number one difficulty is to break the stigma or taboo associated with suicide. Most immigrants in the Arab American community do not realize that these crises do exist within one’s own church, mosque, or temple. This goes beyond ethnicity, economic status and religious background. Families, in particular, do not want to hear that they have children who are less than perfect or that their children are capable of taking drugs or contemplating suicide. We are bound together by shame and are often warned by our parents not to talk about issues that bring disgrace, disrespect or dishonor to our families. Therefore, we shove things under the rug and pretend that all is well. Arab Americans and Orthodox Christians, in general, often pretend that we are a gift of God to America, living in great denial of the problems that exist in the community. While our rates of drug use and suicidal thoughts may not be as high as the national average, they are still prevalent within many churches and communities. The abuse of drugs and alcohol, the addiction to gambling and pornography, and the risk of suicide, affect many families—and we are not immune to it.

Q: How can a church, mosque, or synagogue raise these issues?

A: My responsibility as a priest is to convey these issues to the community through weekly sermons, to create awareness in their lives and community, to let

them know that there is always help and one does not have to suffer alone. In this country, nearly 1,500 people between the ages of 10–15 commit suicide each year. As clergy, we need to educate ourselves on the ills that affect our community in every city. Today, social media, schools, and youthful peers provide many opportunities for getting into trouble. The best way to address these possible problems is within our families.

It is the responsibility of parents today to not only encourage their children to excel academically, economically, or in athletics, but to also embrace all education with a sense of spirituality, kindness, and respect to value one’s own life and dignity as a human being.

Parents must be the eyes and ears to make sure that children can cope with these challenges and pressures. If parents are not equipped to provide answers to the problems presented by issues such as bullying or pressure to use drugs, they should feel comfortable seeking professional help from their spiritual leaders or medical professionals.

In almost every case of suicide, there is at least one person who knows about the person’s intentions, but sadly they don’t come forth until after the fact. We must educate our children to be aware that there are some things to be kept private; however, keeping suicidal thoughts, physical and mental abuse a secret is never an option. We must speak out.

In my own limited experience, I’ve learned that those who attempt suicide don’t wish to die, but they also don’t wish to live, and they don’t know how to bridge that gap.

Q: Father, how do you remind families of their calling as Orthodox Christians?

A: I think it’s important to address challenging issues within the context that they occur. Suicide is the despair of a life where the pain of nothingness has overtaken the soul. While one can wish to live in a simpler time, we must understand the place and time where we actually live. In this time and place, there are so many distractions faced by children and parents alike, as it relates to social media and the constant need to be connected.

Being connected to your children means not just being able to reach them at a moment’s notice via text message, but looking them honestly in the face, knowing that you can embrace them when they are hurting or experience the joy of their laughter. It is not enough to put your hand on their shoulder. They need to be brought up with moral upbringing, knowing the Ten

Cont. on page 10

Antiochian ... *Cont. from page 9*

Commandments and being aware that whatever they face in their life, Christ is the center. No matter what we face, we are not in despair. "We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed – always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2 Cor. 4:9-10). To do this requires less time looking at a screen, seeking validation from the outside world; and instead, realizing how valued they are as a human being, made in the image and likeness of God.

As a child, when I did something wrong, my parents (after they scolded me and sometimes spanked me) reminded me how precious I am, that I am made in God's image. They taught my siblings and me from an early age that we should come to them when we are faced with questions that are not easy to answer. I always remind my parishioners, from the earliest stages, that life is difficult and imperfect, and one is allowed to struggle to overcome one's limitations. We will face failures in school, in work, in business, in relationships, and in other areas of our lives; however, these difficulties do not define our identities. It is important that parents introduce their children to the church and to the community so that they may realize they can rely on each other and help one another, so that we may help those who cannot help themselves. As Jesus said, "I am the Vine and you are the branches." As long as we are attached to the Vine, we always have life. A simple reminder of this is when St. John wrote in his letters, "In Him was the true light." If Jesus took on human flesh, He must have experienced many of the struggles and questions each and every one of us face.

A church is more than a building. It is the family of God, praying and worshipping together, embracing one another as St. Paul expressed when he said, "If one member suffers, we all suffer together. And if one member rejoices, we all rejoice together" (1 Corinthians 12:26). We, as Orthodox Christians, must understand that God is the source of life. Our bodies and souls are not our own property to abuse or dismantle. It is against God's commandment to take one's own life. As someone once said, "We might have a flood in our daily life and no clear answers, but as long as we are in the ark, we can be saved."

So, I urge parents to teach their children about the true hope God gives, as testified by what St. Paul writes in Romans 5:1-5: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith in this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

The burden is not only on the parents but all of society to raise awareness; to talk and not be ashamed; to bring to light this epidemic of suicide and addiction. In Christ, we see our greatest hope and wonderful glory as human beings. No one should run into endless despair and darkness if we have the Faith to raise us up.

NOTE: Father George emphasizes that he "...leaves the psychological and medical treatment of suicide and drug addiction to the professionals."

Source: Antiochian.org.

Lone Suspect ... *Cont. from page 7*

at Saint Nikolai's at 8:26 a.m. Sunday, the fire had burned itself out.

Meanwhile, at about 8:00 a.m., vandalism at Saint Nicholas Church also was discovered.

"They cut down a hand-carved wooden cross that was enshrined in front of the church," Alliance Police Officer Aric Cook told CantonRep.com reporters. "They just vandalized the cross out in front of the church, causing about \$75,000.00 in damage. Some neighbors heard the chainsaw at approximately 5:30 a.m. (Sunday)."

The faithful at Saint Nicholas Church are able to use their church, which is not the case with Saint Nikolai Church.

"Much of the interior of the church experienced smoke and related damage," said Father Mikel, who discovered the fire as he arrived early Sunday morning. "While we anticipate that insurance will cover the bulk of the damage, we will probably have to renovate the interior down to the studs. We lost all of our vestments, our Gospel book and tabernacle, and many liturgical items."

It appeared that after gaining entrance into the church by smashing a window, the arsonist sprayed accelerants throughout the building to intensify the fire.

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The End ... *Cont. from page 5*

conception, and of God creating all things originally out of nothing, out of that which did not exist. God brought them into being and fashioned the human beings in their mother's womb. And this particular mother is urging her children on not to break the law of God but to be strict with the law of God; and then each of the martyrdoms of these boys is described, and then she herself is killed at the end of the story.

St. John Chrysostom commenting on this particular feast—which must have been a feast day already in Constantinople when he was a bishop there, already at the end of the fourth century—says these incredible words, he says: That woman died eight times. She died with each of her sons and then she died herself. And Chrysostom says: Isn't this so marvelous? Before even the coming of the Messiah, before even the resurrection of the Lord, before even the resurrection of all the dead in the Lord, before the victory of the salvation of the world in the Son of God, you have these people, these faithful righteous people, according to God's law, absolutely refusing to break the law of God. And here Chrysostom, in other sermons also, he's very fervent on the fact that, even before the coming of Christ, that the righteous person who would believe in God and trust his word and keep his commandments; that they would already be witnessing to the victory over death in the Messiah himself. That they were already, in some sense, anticipating the ultimate victory that God would effect in the world through his Messianic Son, Whom they did not really understand; [...] it wasn't very clear, but they trusted in God and had this marvelous grace and power of God even before the coming of Christ to die, to give their life rather than to disobey the Lord.

So all that takes place on the first day of August, and then each successive day, up until the 15th, the Paraklesis— and *paraklesis* means comfort, encouragement—and so there's a special service sung, a canon sung to Christ's Mother Mary for her help over disease and affliction and suffering in this world, which is going to culminate in the celebration of her own victory by faith and grace over death on the 15th of August. But before the Christians get to the 15th of August, there is the celebration of the Transfiguration of Christ. And that comes on the 6th of August. And then there's an octave for the Transfiguration that runs virtually right up to the celebration of the Dormition. The Leave-taking of Transfiguration takes place on the day the Pre-feast of the Dormition occurs in the calendar, and then the Christians celebrate the repose in Christ of his own Mother Mary and her full glorification, even in her body, as it is celebrated in the kingship and the Kingdom of God in the risen Christ who is her Son.

August 6

But let's take a little look at the **Transfiguration**
SOLIAUG/SEPT 2017

now. Oh, there's so much that could be said about that. But what we should say today, just as we're reflecting on these things is, I don't know—I don't know who knows—but I do not know why that particular date, 6th of August, was actually picked, and why it was even providential that the Eastern Orthodox Church would celebrate Christ's Transfiguration on the 6th of August.

In some ancient texts, that celebration of the Transfiguration is called the celebration of the booths, of the tabernacles, in Christ the risen Lord. So there is a connection of Transfiguration with the tabernacles, the Feast of Tabernacles in the Bible. And that makes all the sense in the world, because, according to the Scripture, the Transfiguration which is the centerpiece of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, is the high point, the center point of those Gospels. Everything before it leads up to it, and everything after it is interpreted in the light of it including the Lord's Passion itself. That Transfiguration feast took place at the Feast of Booths. And we can remember now how it's given to us in the pages of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

What happens in the Gospel is that Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan, and he begins preaching and announcing the Kingdom of God. He begins doing all the Messianic signs—which by the way are all read on the Sundays following Pentecost in the Orthodox calendar; each of the Sundays after Pentecost during the summer months is one or another of the Messianic signs of Jesus: the healing of the blind man, the feeding of the five thousand, the casting out of the demons, the walking on the waves. We're contemplating, in the Holy Spirit, Jesus as in fact God's Son who has all the divine qualities and powers in the universe in his humanity—but in the Gospel we have Jesus doing all these things and then asking the disciples—in Matthew on the road to Caesarea Philippi—who do the people say he is? They give various answers: that he is a prophet or Jeremiah or they say he is John the Baptist risen from the dead—and that's where you have even the little pericope there; the narrative about John being beheaded—because he was already killed, and so people thought that maybe Jesus was John *redeivus*, resurrected. But then Jesus asks: who do you say that I am? And Peter gives the answer, in Mark and in Luke, he says, "You are the Christ." In Matthew, he says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And then Jesus begins to teach that he has to suffer and die, be given up and mocked and spit upon and beaten and cursed and blasphemed and ultimately rejected, arrested and killed. And he says, at the same time, that so do his disciples. And in that very same narrative, he says, "And if you will be my disciple, you will deny yourself, and you will take up your crosses, and you will follow me. You will not be ashamed of me." And so we have the first announcement of the

Passion of Christ.

Then it says, in one Gospel it says “after eight days”; I believe that’s Luke, and the other says “after six days”—depending on how you’re counting the days—it says Jesus takes Peter, James and John with him up on the high mountain. By tradition, it’s Tabor. And on that mountaintop during the Feast of Booths, he reveals to them his divine glory. He is transfigured and shows them that he is indeed God’s divine Son who has taken on human flesh. Because the *kabod Yahweh*, the glory of God, the light of God, the splendor of God, the *shekhinah* which the Feast of Booths was celebrating; the Feast of Booths was celebrating the indwelling of the splendor and glory of God among his people. They would build these booths, and they would live in them; and they would eat of the fruits of the earth that were now becoming ripe. And so, in the Orthodox Churches, they still bless grapes and fruit on the Feast of the Transfiguration with the Holy Water that they have consecrated on August 1st usually—that special blessed water that’s consecrated at the beginning of August, the first day—then on the sixth day they take that water, and they bless the first fruits. Christ, of course, is the first fruit of our salvation, the first born of the dead, the first born of creation, the first fruits, the first entering into Paradise on our behalf and taking us with him.

So on that day, that Feast of Tabernacles in the Old Testament was celebrating not only the harvest feast, but they would build these booths and live in them, anticipating the *shekhinah*. Anticipating the coming and the indwelling in the *skene*, in the tabernacle, in the booth, of God himself at the end of the ages. And that’s very typical of the Biblical feasts; they begin agriculturally, then they have a historical meaning, and then they have an eschatological meaning, a meaning at the end, their *final* meaning. So in the Transfiguration, you have Jesus anticipating the end of the ages by showing himself in glory.

And it’s interpreted, by the Church Fathers and the Orthodox Church, as that’s what Jesus meant before they went up to the mountain when he said, “Some of you standing here will not taste of death until you see the Kingdom of God coming in glory.” And for Peter, James and John he meant his revelation on Tabor and the Transfiguration, but he also meant his revelation to all the apostles and to the disciples, many disciples—according to Scripture, hundreds—after his being raised from the dead, after his entering into glory, they see the Son of God in glory.

But at the Transfiguration itself, he goes to the mountain, he prays. Peter, James and John are there, and then they see him transfigured, metamorphosized. His form changes, and then there appear with him Moses and Elijah in the fullness also of a splendor, even in some kind of glorified bodies—I mean, they’re not disincarnate souls there; it’s Moses himself and Elijah himself with the risen Christ—and then, of course, as

the services say, Moses and Elijah are there to show that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. He’s the fulfilment of the Law symbolized in Moses, and the Prophets symbolized in Elijah. Or, the Covenant of Law symbolized in Moses and the Covenant of Grace symbolized in Elijah who is taken up into Heaven in a fiery chariot to be alive and to appear at the Transfiguration in that way. They also signify, Moses and Elijah, not only the Law and the Prophets and the Law and Grace, the Covenants, but they signify Heaven and Earth. Because Elijah is whisked up into heaven and Moses is buried in the earth. They signify the living and the dead, because Elijah is exempt from biological death according to scripture and the stories of the Bible; he is taken up alive without biological death, to be the Forerunner, the announcer of the Messianic Age when it comes. And when we talk about John the Baptist and his beheading, which is celebrated on the 29th of August, we’ll see that connection between John the Baptist and Elijah that is given to us in the scripture.

But in any case, at Transfiguration, on this Feast of Tabernacles or Booths, you have Jesus being revealed for who he really is and what he really is: God’s divine Son. And therefore, the voice of the Father is heard: “This is my beloved Son; my Son, my beloved. You listen to him. You obey him.” That’s a very important part of the Transfiguration story, because it isn’t just some kind of an idea of the glorification of the cosmos or some kind of naturalistic understanding of the splendor of God shining through the things that are, but that ultimate final transfiguration of the world is participated in positively, gloriously, only by those who believe in him and follow him and hear him and obey him and struggle to keep his commandments and admit it and repent in tears when they don’t. That’s the teaching of the Holy Scripture.

So, we have this marvelous Feast of the Transfiguration. But it is connected to the Crucifixion. In fact, it’s very interesting to point out that the 6th of August is *exactly* forty days before the 14th of September, on which the Church celebrates the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. And at the Feast of the Transfiguration, the hymn called the Katabasia—the canon that’s sung at Matins, the second ode that’s sung at the canon—is already the ode for the Exaltation of the Cross. It’s what will be sung on the 14th of September when the Cross is celebrated. And then of course, the hymns of the Transfiguration are making this point all the time, following the Scripture; for example, in Luke’s Gospel, it says that Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration spoke with Moses and Elijah about the ‘exodus’—in the RSV it says ‘departure’, but it’s about the ‘exodus’, that’s the word used in Greek—that he will make in Jerusalem. So even on the Mount of Transfiguration, he’s speaking about his Passion, about his exodus, about his death and resurrection; about his being the new Pascha, the new Passover. In the Kontakion of the Feast it says:

“You were transfigured on the Mount, O Christ God, revealing your glory to your disciples in so far as they could see it, so that when they would behold you crucified, they would know that your suffering is voluntary, and that you came into the world to suffer and die, being yourself the radiance of the Father.”

And that expression, ‘the radiance of the Father’s glory’, it comes from the letter to the Hebrews, the first chapter, I think it’s the third verse, that Jesus is called in the letter to the Hebrews the *charakter tes hypostaseos autou* meaning his exact, express image—the ‘his’ means God the Father. And then he’s also called the *apaugasma tes doxes autou*: the radiance of his glory. The radiance of God’s glory, the light of God, the light of the world, hypostatic, personified light; the very glory of God that shines. And in the Old Testament, it shined from the face of Moses on the mountain. And Elijah entered into it also in his entrance into the theophanies of the Lord. So Moses and Elijah were both eyewitnesses of the glory of God prefigured in the Old Covenant. Now they see the same glory shining from the face of Christ. And St. Paul says that himself exactly in the letter to the Corinthians; he says the light that shined from Moses—that he had to even cover himself up, he was so radiant when he came from the mountain—is now shining, as he said *apo prosopou tou kyriou*; from the face of the Lord. Then he says: who is himself *hos estin eikōn tou theou*; who is himself the icon of God, the very image of God.

So you had this celebration on the 6th of August as a kind of Christian Tabernacle Feast. It’s also the Christian Tabernacle Feast that shows the glory of the Messiah before the Passion; and we always remember on Transfiguration, we cannot forget, that the world is saved not on Tabor, but on Golgotha. Tabor prefigures and shows *who* the Messiah is, but on Golgotha when he is marred and without beauty and form, the suffering servant, who you can’t even look upon because he’s so beaten, as Isaiah writes in his prophecy, that man of sorrows is in fact the radiance of the Father. And he showed himself to be so before the Passion. And it’s interesting that in the really ancient Church, in the earliest Church, in the Western churches for example and certainly in the Orthodox—it seems certain, that in the Orthodox also—the second Sunday of Lent, Great Lent before the Lord’s Passion, was often given over to the celebration of the Transfiguration of Christ. The Transfiguration was celebrated during Great Lent to show that it was connected to the crucifixion of Christ.

And in the Orthodox Church, that still is somehow held because of the celebration of Gregory Palamas on the second Sunday of Great Lent, who is the one who insisted that human beings can experience the uncreated light of God in the Holy Spirit that shines from the face of the risen Christ in the final covenant in Christ in the Church of Christ. Through prayer,

through fasting, through keeping the commandments, one can really be illumined with the uncreated light of the Transfiguration -- very few in every generation, according to the Fathers, but there are always some. Like St. Seraphim in the nineteenth century and Silouan in our century or last century, we hope to see who it will be in the twenty-first century who will witness to the uncreated light of God that transfigures the cosmos in the risen Christ who was crucified.

One thing that can also be mentioned here, that it’s simply incredible to think that the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima by Truman in the Second War took place on August 6th. And I think, we Christians, every time we see the photograph of that huge mushroom cloud that dropped the first atomic weaponry to kill so many people... it was actually dropped on the Church’s Feast of the Transfiguration. What a transfiguration. What a metamorphosis. It’s almost in total contrast to what is celebrated on August 6th in the Church where you have this transfiguration for life, whereas in Hiroshima you have this incredible image of death and destruction.

August 9

But then the Church moves on through August. And here in America, we have to mention another thing, the 9th of August is the day of the **Canonization of St. Herman of Alaska** – the first saint canonized in America. It took place during the octave of the Transfiguration; it took place in Alaska; it took place thirty-eight years ago in 1970. And it’s so interesting to note, Father Alexander Schmemmann—who many of us know about and he was our Dean at St. Vladimir’s—he preached the sermon on the Canonization of St. Herman, and it’s so interesting that when that sermon was published in the newspaper, it was called ‘The Days of Light and Joy’. And Father Alexander compared the Canonization of Herman to the Transfiguration. He even used the same expression that St. Peter used on the mountain: “Lord, it is good for us to be here.” And then he pointed out, and we’ve been thinking about this ever since, how that same light, that same glory, that same splendor that shone from the locus incarnate on the mountain, shined from that little unknown monk up in Alaska. Totally unknown. We don’t even know his last name. He wasn’t a priest; he wasn’t a bishop; I don’t even know if he was a reader. He was a lay-monk, for sure. And he just prayed and fasted and cared for the people and was completely hidden; and he is, in a sense, the real antithesis of the so-called ‘American way of life’. It’s so ironic and so like God to have the first canonized saint in America be St. Herman, because the man had no power, no position, no property, no possessions, no pleasures of life. He certainly had no public relations office. He had no projects, no programs, all those p-words; he had none of them. Nothing. Just nothing. And yet, he is transfigured, and he is shown as the great image of the transfigured person during

the Feast of the Transfiguration. This little unknown property-less, possession-less, powerless, pleasure-less person, with no position, no prestige, no pre-eminence, no *presvya* as we say in Greek, honors, at all. Yet, he is our first glorified saint; the North Star of Christ's holy Church in America.

August 15

But then we move on to the 15th of August, and there we have really, again, the marvelous celebration of the lowliest of the low among human beings who is the greatest of the greatest: Christ's Mother Mary. The female slave. The lowly one. The poor. The one of low estate; the one who possessed nothing. The one who is virtually hidden all through the whole Gospels, practically, especially after the resurrection of Christ. They say she was at Pentecost, and then we know nothing else about her in the Holy Scripture. Never mentioned by St. Paul. Yet she was the woman who gave birth to life, as we say in the service: she was the Mother of Life.

And how wonderfully the Orthodox Church celebrates her funeral; it patterns Great and Holy Friday. There is a shroud, a winding sheet, and lying in it is the Theotokos, the Mother of Christ. And behind her, in a mandorla, there is the image of Jesus risen in glory holding her in his arms, the same way she holds him in her arms in the icons of the Incarnation. You know, St. Athanasius and all the Holy Fathers said God became human to make humans divine. So in the icon of Mary holding the child, we see God becoming man. But in the icon and on the winding sheet of Mary's death, we see man becoming divine. We see a mere mortal person, a woman, a lowly woman, being transfigured in glory by her son who is the Son of God himself, the Word Incarnate. And we see him holding her in exactly the same position. And those two icons: Mary holding the Christ-child and then, in that mandorla at her Dormition, Christ holding *her* body in *his* hands, her most pure life, her soul; it shows really the deification of the world.

And so, in the Church services on the 15th of August, it's like a little Pascha in the summer; it's like a summer Easter. Actually, the same Psalm 119 is sung all the way through, with lamentations or praises - however you want to call them, in between each of the verses. And they're sung with exactly the same melodies as the marvelous canticle with Psalm 119 over the tomb of Christ on Great Friday. And a tomb is put there. And the Epitaphios is carried with the singing: God is the Lord and has revealed himself to us. And then that whole Psalm is sung. Up at the monastery where I served, it was all done so incredibly beautifully with the nuns singing over the dead body of Mary.

And she really died. Because she had to prove that by faith and grace, human beings can destroy death by death in Christ. If Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life, the first one in the tomb, so to

speak, spiritually, that we know that that happens to, is his Mother Mary. And that is what's celebrated on the 15th of August. What is celebrated is: here is this woman, the most perfect human being who ever lived, the most perfect Christian, but silent, secret, hidden, small, humble, of low estate, poor, having nothing. Yet she is the Mother of Life and enters into life. And that's how we sing:

"In giving birth you preserved your virginity and falling asleep, in your dormition, your *kimesis*, you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. For, being Mother of Life, you are translated into life by him who dwelt in your virginal womb."

And it's so interesting that on the Feast of Transfiguration, that little touch is put in there in the troparion, in the Transfiguration main hymn, it says:

"You were transfigured on the mount, O Christ God, revealing your glory to the disciples as much as they could bear it. Let your everlasting light shine also upon us sinners Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, save us..."

I can't remember the exact words there, but... "You are translated to life, O Mother of Life, and by your prayers you deliver our souls from death." And on Transfiguration it says: "Let your everlasting light shine upon us sinners through the prayers of the Theotokos. O Giver of Light, glory to thee." That's how it ends: "O Giver of Light, glory to thee."

So all this comes together in this incredible way in the month of August. It's just such a marvelous month that we just went through and experienced all these things once again. And then, the month will end on the 29th, and the Church year will end also. Because it's interesting: the Church year ends with Mary's death, but then it also ends with the death of the other greatest of the Old Covenant. And in fact, according to Jesus, he was the greatest born of woman. Mary belongs to the New Testament; John the Baptist belongs to the Old Testament.

August 29

And so, on the 29th of August, the Church celebrates the **beheading of John the Baptist**. The one who dies before Jesus so that he could be his forerunner, his *prodromos*, even into death. And that he could go into Sheol—so to speak, in symbolic language—and among the dead announce that the Messiah is coming also dead, also to those in death, in order to destroy death, to empty Hades and to raise up all who have died, giving life to those who love him and keep his commandments and being judgment through his mercy and love for those who do not want it. In the beginning of summer, we had his nativity in June; and in August, we have his martyrdom, his being killed for the sake of Christ. The Church also celebrates his conception as it celebrates the conception of Mary.

These are the two great figures for Christians: John

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Presentation of Our Lord, Fairlawn, OH	
(2018)	\$8,250.00
St Nicholas, Montreal, QC	\$3,750.00
Holy Cross, Hermitage, PA (2018)	\$3,000.00
St George, Toronto, ON	\$2,425.00
Sts Peter & Paul, Quebec City, QC	\$2,325.00
St Dimitrie, Frederick, CO	\$1,050.00
St George, Canton, OH (2018)	\$250.00

VATRA GENERATIONS

David & Jennifer Poroch, Dunwoody, GA	\$10,000.00
(IMO Parents: Dan & Eugenia Poroch)	
Radu & Rachel Chebeleu, North Wales, PA	\$5,000.00
Alexander John Shashko, Dearborn, MI	\$5,000.00
(IMO V Rev Fr Leonte Copacia Jr)	
Orthodox Brotherhood USA.	\$2,500.00
Archbishop Nathaniel Popp, Jackson, MI	\$2,000.00
Dr Gheorghe Marinescu, Rochester Hills, MI ...	\$1,500.00
(IMO George Oancea)	
Dr Horia & Dr Mihaela Draghiciu, Muncie, IN ...	\$500.00
Stephen Grabowski, Fairlawn, OH	\$500.00
(IMO V Rev Fr Leonte Copacia Jr & David Maxim)	
M/M Myke Jacobs, Bloomfield Hills, MI	\$500.00
(IMO V Rev Fr Leonte Copacia Jr)	
Marian & Aurelia Sarbu, Reseda, CA	\$300.00
George C Cantor, Cleveland, OH	\$200.00
(IMO George & Sylvia Cantor)	
M/M Ionel Maiogan, Arlington Heights, IL	\$200.00
M/M John Pop Jr, Northbrook, IL	\$200.00
Carol & Albert Schweitzer, San Diego, CA	\$200.00
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Families	\$200.00
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(IMO Constantin Mohr)	
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M/M Robert Bailey, Sr, Salem, OH	\$100.00
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Richard & Marianne Buta, Mt Pleasant, SC	\$100.00
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Donald & Joanne Carson, Clare, MI	\$100.00
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Elizabeth & John Dallas,	
Grosse Pointe Woods, MI	\$100.00
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M/M Victor Dinu, Chicago, IL	\$100.00
Roxana Florescu, Farmington Hills, MI	\$100.00
Leonard & Catherine Jones, Philadelphia, PA	\$100.00
M/M Michael Kalugar, Madison Hts, MI	\$100.00
(IMO David Maxim)	
Eugene & Mary Ann Kauffman, New Castle, PA ..	\$100.00
John & Betty Mihaiu, Utica, MI	\$100.00
(IMO V Rev Fr Leonte Copacia Jr)	
Atty Daniel Miclau, Strongsville, OH	\$100.00
(IMO V Rev Fr Leonte Copacia Jr)	
Rev Dn Laike Misikir, Ann Arbor, MI	\$100.00
Constantin T. Nan, Carrollton, TX	\$100.00
(IMO V Rev Fr Leonte Copacia Jr)	
Mary Ross, St John, IN	\$100.00
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Atty John & Veta Regule, The Villages, FL	\$100.00
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Richard Rogozan, Livonia, MI	\$100.00
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John R & Linda Sebo, Salem, OH	\$100.00
(IMO V Rev Fr Leonte Copacia Jr)	
Mary Katherine Stanesa, Dearborn, MI	\$100.00
Barbara Stelea, North Canton, OH	\$100.00
St Thomas Orthodox Church,	
Farmington Hills, MI	\$100.00
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V Rev Fr Dimitrie Vincent, Redford, MI	\$100.00
(IMO V Rev Fr Leonte Copacia Jr)	
Vasile Vincent & Heather Hansma, Redford, MI ..	\$100.00
(IMO V Rev Fr Leonte Copacia Jr)	
David & Stephanie Zablo, Canton, OH	\$100.00
(IMO David Maxim)	
Ronald & Sherry Ilivici, St John, IN	\$97.50
(IMO David Maxim)	
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(IMO George Oancea)	
Patricia Betroni	\$96.00
(IMO Constantin "Titi" Mohr)	
Ioana Rusu-Banu, Calgary, AB	\$71.31
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Donald & Nancy K Frost, Indian Lake, SC	\$50.00
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Richard C Grabowski, Jackson, MI	\$50.00
(IMO David Maxim)	

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(IMO David Maxim)	
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Daniel & Linda Miller, North Canton, OH	\$25.00
(IMO George Oancea)	
Cynthia Pollack, Warren, MI	\$25.00
(IMO David Maxim)	
Richard Rogozan, Livonia, MI	\$25.00
(IMO George Oancea)	
Gerald & Shirley Susalla, Warren, MI	\$25.00
(IMO George Oancea)	
Elizabeth Thatcher, Salem, OH	\$25.00
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Lisa Cittadine, Lake Orion, MI	\$20.00
(IMO David Maxim)	
Christina Nessin, Jackson, MI	\$20.00
Ronald & Mary Ann Pirrie, South Lyon, MI	\$20.00
(IMO V Rev Fr Leonte Copacia Jr)	

JR. CAMP VATRA CLOSING BANQUET DONATIONS

Radu & Rachel Chebeleu, North Wales, PA	\$300.00
Gary & Anna Devine, Plymouth, MI	\$200.00
Mihaela Urdea, Madison Hts, MI	\$200.00
Pyatnisa Family, Farmington Hills, MI	\$125.00
Anonymous	\$100.00
Bunea Family, Sterling, VA	\$100.00
Mihai & Oltea Cotofrea, Morton Grove, IL	\$100.00
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Anonymous	\$80.00
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Bogdan & Daniela Nitu, Plymouth, MI	\$40.00
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Lupascu Family, Dearborn Hts, MI	\$30.00
Pearl Jonascu, Westland, MI	\$25.00
Cecelia Chebeleu, North Wales, PA	\$20.00
Dan & Sidonia Nistor, Plymouth, MI	\$20.00
Andre Ilioviciu, Naperville, IL	\$13.00

2017 CONGRESS BANQUET DONATIONS

St Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH	\$500.00
Radu & Rachel Chebeleu, North Wales, PA	\$400.00
Rev Fr Ioan Catana, Kirkland, WA	\$300.00
Ioana Danciu, Bellevue, WA	\$200.00
V Rev Fr Aurel Petrescu, Arlington, VA	\$200.00
Holy Trinity, Miramar, FL	\$200.00
St Dumitru, New York, NY	\$150.00
Dorothy Aldea, Royal Oak, MI	\$100.00
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V Rev Dr Chesarie Berteau, Elmhurst, NY	\$100.00
M/M Joseph Bucciarelli, Livonia, MI	\$100.00
George Cantor, Cleveland, OH	\$100.00
Mark P Chestnut, Grass Lake Twp, MI	\$100.00
M/M Frank Copacia, Salem, OH	\$100.00
V Rev Fr Ioan Cozma, New York, NY	\$100.00
Graetz Family, Camas, WA	\$100.00
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Mike & Lillian G Kalugar, Madison Hts, MI	\$100.00
V Rev Fr Laurence Lazar & Family, Southfield, MI	\$100.00
V Rev Fr Ioan Lupescu & Family, Chicago, IL ...	\$100.00
V Rev Fr Michael & Psa Lilliana Lupu, Calgary, AB	\$100.00
Adrian Mihes, White Plains, NY	\$100.00
Angelica McClurg, Pine, CO	\$100.00
V Rev Fr & Psa Onisie Morar, Woonsocket, RI...	\$100.00
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V Rev Fr & Psa Romey Rosco, Dearborn Hts, MI	\$100.00
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Rev Fr Florin Bica, Youngstown, OH	\$50.00
Ioan Cibian Family, Waterloo, ON	\$50.00
Pavel Gataiantu, Washington Twp, MI	\$50.00
Richard Grabowski, Jackson, MI	\$50.00
Stephen Grabowski, Fairlawn, OH	\$50.00
Mark Kalugar, Madison Hts, MI	\$50.00
Rev Fr Vasile Ilie, Palm Springs, CA	\$50.00
Constantin Nan, Carrollton, TX	\$50.00
Rev Fr John & Psa Daniela Nemes, Alliance, OH	\$50.00
Rev Fr Daniel & Psa Cristina Pop, Grand Rapids, MI	\$50.00
Rev Fr Stefan Stoleru, Jacksonville, FL	\$50.00
St Joseph, Hazleton, PA	\$50.00
Anonymous	\$40.00
Grigore & Vasilica Burdea, Highland Park, NJ	\$40.00
Michael & Laurie Kalugar, Beverly Hills, MI	\$40.00
Lazar & Maria Knezevici, Kitchener, ON	\$40.00
Anonymous	\$30.00
Cristina Irimie, Dearborn Hts, MI	\$30.00
Rev Fr Lucian Constantin, Regina, SK	\$25.00
Chirion & Maria Stanulet, Dearborn Hts, MI	\$25.00
Anonymous	\$20.00

Anonymous.....	\$20.00
Anonymous.....	\$20.00
Ilie Crisan, Montreal, QC	\$20.00
Cristian Crivineanu, Jacksonville, FL	\$20.00
Pearl Jonascu	\$20.00
Irina Nelson, Greenbelt, MD	\$20.00
Eli Nemes, Hubbard, OH.....	\$20.00
Veturia Nicula, Livonia, MI.....	\$20.00
Dorina Riscutta, N Olmsted, OH.....	\$20.00
Ionut Rotariu, Montreal, QC.....	\$20.00
Adela Price, New Castle, PA.....	\$20.00
Scott Snelling, Copley, OH.....	\$20.00
Rev Dn Wayne Paul Wright, Uniontown, OH	\$20.00
Lucretia Bleahu, Boardman, OH	\$15.00
George Cantis, Cleveland, OH	\$10.00
John E Lazar, Southfield, MI.....	\$10.00
Tony Mashedan, Chicago, IL.....	\$7.00
Anonymous.....	\$6.00
Anonymous.....	\$5.00
Anonymous.....	\$4.00
Anonymous.....	\$3.00

HURRICANE RELIEF FOR HOUSTON PARISHES

Sts Constantine & Helen, Indianapolis, IN.....	\$3,280.00
Three Hierarchs, Seattle, WA.....	\$3,000.00
Cash donations collected during 2017 Episcopate Congress.....	\$2,001.54
Presentation of Our Lord, Fairlawn, OH	\$1,445.00
St Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH.....	\$1,300.00
Sts Constantine & Helen, Lilburn, GA	\$1,100.00
Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL	\$1,000.00
St Mary, Portland, OR	\$1,000.00
St Parascheva, Laval, QC	\$1,000.00
Akron AROY	\$800.00
St Mary, St Paul, MN	\$750.00
Sts Peter & Paul, Dearborn Heights, MI	\$696.00
Holy Trinity, Vancouver, BC	\$612.00
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Elkins Park, PA.....	\$609.00
Holy Forty Martyrs, Aurora, ON	\$600.00
St Andrew, Potomac, MD	\$521.00
St Dumitru, New York, NY	\$500.00
St Theodora, Royal Oak, MI	\$500.00
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Ridgewood, NY	\$410.00
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Merrillville, IN	\$400.00
St John, Charlotte, NC.....	\$390.00
Archbishop Nathaniel Popp, Jackson, MI.....	\$300.00
St Joseph, Hazleton, PA.....	\$300.00
St Luke, Markham, ON	\$300.00
Holy Cross, Hermitage, PA.....	\$304.00
Holy Trinity, Youngstown, OH	\$287.00
St Mary, Falls Church, VA.....	\$235.00
Rachel & Radu Chebeleu, North Wales, PA	\$200.00
Petru Sarca, Peachtree City, GA	\$200.00
St George, Canton, OH.....	\$200.00
Sts Peter & Paul, Quebec City, QC	\$143.06
Simion & Carmen Coca, Pittsburgh, PA.....	\$100.00
Rev Dn Laike Misikir, Ann Arbor, MI	\$100.00
Angelica McClurg, Pine, CO	\$100.00
Elizabeth & Todd Sweet, Springfield, VA.....	\$100.00
Psa Mary Copacia, Shelby Twp, MI.....	\$97.50
Rev Fr & Psa Ioan Bogdan, Frederick, CO	\$50.00
Donna & Joseph Bucciarelli, Livonia, MI.....	\$50.00
Dr Sanda Constantinidi, Hermitage, PA.....	\$50.00

Violet Kaibas, Farrell, PA.....	\$50.00
Elaine Luca, Struthers, OH.....	\$50.00
V Rev Fr & Psa Onisie Morar, Woonsocket, RI.....	\$50.00
Nicolene Cole, Warren, OH.....	\$25.00
Elena Szakach, Hermitage, PA.....	\$25.00
Adela Price, New Castle, PA	\$20.00
Nelu & Maria Garoiu, Columbiana, OH.....	\$10.00

The End ... *Cont. from page 14*

the Baptist, the greatest born of woman, and then Mary, the least in the Kingdom, who shows that in the Kingdom, the least, the smallest, the most humble... and even her death, she was so hidden in her death. She didn't die a martyred death, Mary. She didn't even die publically. The Church contemplates around her death-bed, surrounded by all the Prophets and the Apostles, and it even says that the Twelve are brought to her and Paul is there on the icon, and they put in the icon—the Church puts in the icon by the Holy Spirit's inspiration—the first Bishop of Jerusalem, James and the first Bishops of Athens, Dionysius, sometimes also Hieronymus [Hierotheos?], there's two of them there. And it gathers the whole Church through the ages around the tomb of the Mother of God.

And this is the *spiritual truth*. Whatever happened historically, this is the truth spiritually: that in Christ's Mother's death, we see the whole of the Gospel, the whole of God's economy, somehow coming together in that little woman who was his Mother to show that indeed all of us, by faith and by grace—because when you see the Theotokos, that's all you see, is faith and grace: blessed is she who believed, rejoice, o full of grace. So she is faith, she is grace—and that's what our salvation is: “We are saved by faith through grace. Not by any works of ourselves, lest we should boast, nevertheless we are God's workmanship, created for good works in Christ...” (Ephesians 2:8-10). ...who has saved us. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can have that same power that Christ himself had, including the power even to transform death itself, like Mary did, into an act of life. For in the Liturgy, her death is called a deathless death, a falling asleep, an entering into the Kingdom of God. And John the Baptist, he does the same thing, in a much more powerful and vibrant way, in a very different story.

But August is one of the most interesting months of the Church year, where all different things come together: The slaughtering of those seven boys and their mother on the first day. The slaughtering of John the Baptist, with his head severed from his body, towards the end. The great Transfiguration on the mountain. St. Herman coming in at that time. And then, of course, also, that summer Pascha of the death and the resurrection of Mary by the power of her crucified and risen Son.

Source: Ancient Faith Ministries (http://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/hopko/the_end_of_the_church_year).

VICTOR POP SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The Victor Pop Scholarship was established in memory of the late Victor Pop by his family to honor his legacy of hard work and perseverance in life which resulted in great achievements. The goal of the scholarship is to assist college students who are committed in their academic pursuits to complete their studies, and is specifically geared towards Junior and Senior standing college students or graduate students. Recipients of the 2017 Victor Pop Scholarship (\$1,000) are: Iulia S. Balaie and Irina A. Vatamanu.



Iulia Balaie

Iulia S. Balaie is completing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at Wayne State University College of Nursing in Detroit, Michigan. Ms. Balaie is a member of Sts. Peter & Paul Romanian Orthodox Church, Dearborn Heights, Michigan, where she has been extensively involved in the parish's educational program, youth group, and as a volunteer for other activities

and events. One of her reference letters notes: "She is a very hard worker. While pursuing her career in the nursing profession, she shares her time between going to school, attending church on a regular basis and working in the hospital. She makes time to visit

with the mothers at Holy Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction and assists at summer camp at the Vatra. Iulia will offer her assistance without having to be asked. I have witnessed Iulia's competent and compassionate treatment of patients in her duties as a student nurse. She will be a very good care giver once she completes her studies."



Irina Vatamanu

Irina A. Vatamanu is completing her studies at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Global Health and Health Policy. Ms. Vatamanu is a member of St. Mary Romanian Orthodox Cathedral, Cleveland, Ohio, where she grew up and has participated in a wide range of activities during her student years, including the local youth (AROY)

chapter and as a volunteer for numerous activities and events. In a reference letter by her parish priest, Irina is described as: "one of the young members we take pride in"; "Irina loves her church"; "she did not shy away from harder work"; "she enjoyed caroling on Christmas Eve to bring joy to the elderly"; "She grew up in the church, and I am confident that she will grow into a strong Orthodox Christian."

CHICAGOLAND ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE 125 YEARS

CHICAGO, IL: Chicago's Greek, Russian, Serbian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Albanian, Arabic and American Orthodox Christians gathered at Lane Tech Auditorium on Saturday, September 30, 2017, for a Pan Orthodox liturgical worship service commemorating 125 years of the Orthodox Christian presence in greater Chicagoland. A procession of more than 100 bishops, clergy, and youth in national costume commenced the worship service. Choral responses were sung in English by the Pan Orthodox Choir of Greater Chicago, and included music traditions of participating Orthodox jurisdictions.

Sponsored by the Orthodox Christian Clergy Association of Greater Chicago, an organization which represents 250,000 Orthodox Christians in Chicagoland, the service featured guest homilist and historian, Rt. Rev. Bishop Irinej (Dobrijevic) of the Serbian Orthodox Eastern American Diocese. Recently assigned to the United States, following 10 years in the Diocese of Australia and New Zealand, Bishop Irinej sits on the Central Committee of the World Council of Church-

es, is a member of Columbia University's Advisory Council for Serbian Studies and is on the editorial board of the Tesla Memorial Society. While residing in Chicago, as director of Christian Education for the Serbian Orthodox Church in the 1990s, he was also lecturer at Loyola University.

History reveals that the Orthodox Christian presence in Chicago began in the late 1800's with an organization called the "Greco Slavonic Brotherhood", comprised of immigrants primarily from Greece, Serbia and Carpatho Russians (Galicians) from the then, Austro-Hungarian Empire. After petitioning the ecclesiastical centers in their respective homelands, in 1892, all three mother churches responded by sending a priest to serve the faithful. This was the beginning of Annunciation Greek, Holy Resurrection Serbian and St. Vladimir Russian (later renamed Holy Trinity) Orthodox parishes. Today, there are nearly 80 Orthodox churches in greater Chicago. Early worship began in warehouses, meeting halls and house-chapels throughout Chicago's Near North side.

TABERELE DE VARĂ DIN EPISCOPIE — 2017



Tabăra de Vară Sf. Maria din Montreal, Quebec, Canada.



Tinerii de la Tabăra de Vară Sf. Antonie cel Mare din Toronto, Ontario, Canada.



Tabăra parohială de Vară a Parohiei Sfinții Trei Ierarhi din Seattle, WA.



Tinerii de la Tabăra de Vară pentru Juniori de la Vatra Românească împreună cu Înaltpreasfințitul Părinte Arhiepiscop Nathaniel.



Tabăra de Vară pentru Seniori de la Vatra Românească.



Tabăra parohială de Vară a Parohiei Pogorârea Duhului Sfânt din Merrillville, IN.

DIN VIAȚA PAROHILOR ...



Credincioșii din Kewlona, BC, Canada împreună cu Pr. Nicolae Lăpuste de la Parohia Sfânta Treime din Vancouver, BC.



Hramul și Aniversarea de 30 de ani a Parohiei Sfânta Maria din Portland, OR - 20 august 2017.



Primul Hram al Misiunii Sfantul Varlaam, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada - 27 august 2017.

CUVÂNTUL ÎNALTPREASFINTITULUI PARINTE NATHANIEL LA CONGRESUL EPARHIAL

1 septembrie 2017

Cât de repede este uitata istoria eparhiei noastre!

Preacuvioși și Preacucernici Părinți,
Stimați delegați și vizitatori,

Hristos în mijlocul nostru!

Când dictatura lui Nicolae Ceausescu a căzut la sfârșitul anului 1989, Episcopia noastră a început imediat să se gândească la modalități de a ajuta poporul român, poporul nostru, în măsura în care era în puterea noastră modestă de a o face. La acel moment, am înființat Fundația „Ajutor pentru România,” care a devenit ulterior Departamentul de Asistență Creștină și prin harul lui Dumnezeu, de-a lungul anilor, am reușit să facilităm trimiterea de ajutoare în valoare de peste 85 de milioane de dolari în țară, pământul strămoșesc al credinței și tradiției noastre.

85 de milioane de dolari! Ce alt grup de oameni - promotorii de țară și neam, patrioții, propagandiștii sau protestatarii - care dintre aceștia au făcut atât pentru frații și surorile lor?

Dar sunt cei care vă vor face să credeți că noi urâm România – sau că am uitat de unde am venit - Să le fie rușine!

Când a venit vremea să distribuim aceste ajutoare, știam că, așa cum ierarhia din România nu știa nimic despre nevoile și problemele noastre de aici, nici noi cei de aici nu știam nimic despre nevoile și problemele lor de acolo. Așa că ne-am adresat conducătorilor Bisericii Ortodoxe Române și le-am încredințat distribuirea acestor ajutoare trimise de către noi.

Dar sunt cei care vă vor face să credeți că noi urâm România – sau că am uitat de unde am venit - Să le fie rușine!

Când am vizitat România în numeroase ocazii, am slujit împreună cu frații noștri ierarhi din România, am hirotonit preoți în România pentru Biserica Ortodoxă Română și am slujit Sfânta Liturghie în Catedrala Patriarhală din București.

Dar sunt cei care vă vor face să credeți că noi suntem necanonici și urâm România – sau că am uitat de unde am venit - Să le fie rușine!

Am făcut toate aceste lucruri dintr-un singur și simplu motiv: pentru că suntem Biserica. Facem aceste lucruri pentru că Îl iubim pe Hristos - și iubindu-L pe Hristos, nu putem face altceva decât să iubim pe cei care au fost creați după chipul și asemănarea Lui. Aceasta este viziunea după care ne conducem - cea mai mare poruncă a Mântuitorului. Asta înseamnă să fii mireasa lui Hristos, care s-a sacrificat pentru noi, chiar dacă noi nu am meritat.

În ultimii cincisprezece ani ne-am îndepărtat de viziunea inițială a Bisericii ca Mireasa lui Hristos în lume. Încet, pas cu pas, am început să ne gândim doar la noi înșine. Episcopia noastră a devenit locul intrigiiilor, al

conflictelor și al conspirațiilor, al amărăciunii. Vorbe despre separare, corupție și comportament neadecvat a devenit noua normă. Anumiți indivizi, cu „polițe de platit”, au provocat un conflict între așa-ziii „români adevărați” și restul credincioșilor din eparhia noastră. Treptat, idealurile vechi de iubire pentru toți, de îngrijire pentru semenii noștri și de slujire a Domnului și Dumnezeului și Mântuitorului nostru, au fost înlocuite cu discordie și lupte pentru proprietăți și putere.

Astăzi, aici și acum, vă spun că aceste zile și comportamente s-au terminat.

Zilele de lupte politice și intrigi au dispărut. Vremurile de a trăi și de a acționa ca Biserica lui Hristos s-au întors. În această Eparhie nu există nici români, americani sau canadieni, nici „adevărați ortodocși” sau „convertiți,” ci cu toți suntem UNUL în Iisus Hristos, așa cum spune Sf. Ap. Pavel.

Vă asigur, că ne vom lupta pentru a proteja patrimoniul acestei Episcopii. Nu vom permite neascultarea și schisma - erezia, de fapt - pentru a rupe din trupului viu a lui Hristos. Vom afirma ferm și vom apăra Biserica împotriva dușmanilor ei prin toate mijloacele posibile. Dar nu vom uita niciodată că misiunea noastră este de a aduce mântuirea în lume și în noi înșine. Aceasta este chemarea pentru care vom fi judecați în ziua cea mare a venirii Domnului nostru.

Domnul a spus: „Prin aceasta toți oamenii vor cunoaște că sunteți ucenicii Mei - dacă aveți dragoste unul pentru celălalt”. Când păgânii au văzut primii creștini, au afirmat: „Vedeți cum se iubesc unii pe alții!”

Trăim astăzi într-o lume păgână, unde Evanghelia lui Hristos este uitată și Biserica este ridiculizată. Și aceasta, iubii mei, nu este vina altcuiva, ci doar a noastră. Așadar, astăzi și aici mă adresez creștinilor ortodocși de credință și închinare adevărată - să ne iubim unii pe alții și să spunem „frate” chiar și celor care ne urăsc și să ne alăturăm împreună în lucrarea menită Bisericii.

Astăzi, pentru dimaniza activitatea pastorală și a ne ajuta în buna ordine a Episcopiei noastre, reînființăm protopopiatele și vom numi preoți în funcția de protopopi.

Pentru provinciile Quebec și Maritime, pentru Ontario, pentru Canada de Vest, pentru California de sud și sud-vest, pentru California de nord și nord-vest, pentru Sud, pentru Midwest, pentru Michigan, pentru Ohio și Pennsylvania de Vest și pentru Nord-Est.

Voi încredința protopopii în conducerea protopopiatelor lor așa cum prevăd cerințele Sfintelor Canoane și ale Statutelor Episcopiei noastre, după cum urmează:

Secțiunea 1

Sub rezerva ratificării Congresului Episcopiei, Consiliul Episcopesc va putea grupa parohiile în Protopopiate

ce vor funcționa ca unități administrative ale Episcopiei.

Secțiunea 2

În fruntea Protopopiatului va sta un preot, numit de către Episcop cu știința Consiliului Episcopesc, și care va avea următoarele îndatoriri și autoritate:

- (a) La indicația Episcopului, să transmită parohiilor directivele Episcopiei și să supravegheze aplicarea lor;
- (b) Să organizeze servicii religioase și schimbări temporare de preoți între parohii;
- (c) În caz de vacanță într-o parohie, și de comun acord cu Oficiul (Cancelaria) Episcopiei, să ia măsuri pentru organizarea temporară a serviciilor religioase, potrivit obișnuitei practici și tradiții ortodoxe;
- (d) Să supravegheze activitățile religioase din protopopiat, înaintând Episcopiei un raport anual asupra lor;
- (e) Să prezideze Judecătoria de Pace a Protopopiatului;
- (f) Să convoace, cel puțin o dată pe an, o conferință a clerului din Protopopiat;
- (g) Să îndrumeze spovedaniile clerului și ale familiilor lor;
- (h) Să organizeze retrageri spirituale;

- (i) Să conducă, în mod periodic, seminarii de teologie pastorală și de practică liturgică pentru tot clerul din Protopopiat;
- (j) Să convoace Adunările generale ale Protopopiatului, la care vor lua parte clerul, delegații la Congresul Episcopiei, președinții și funcționarii Consiliilor parohiale și ai organizațiilor auxiliare parohiale;
- (k) Să coordoneze conducerea și participarea activă a tuturor parohiilor din Protopopiat în programe comune cu alți creștini ortodocși.

Iubirea unuia pentru celalalt înseamnă, dragostea pentru toți. Sfinții Părinți ne spun că Dumnezeu este în Treime, trei persoane, deoarece dragostea perfectă nu poate fi întruchipată în una sau două persoane. Aceasta înseamnă că pentru a iubi cu adevărat, trebuie să ne alăturăm celui alt pentru a ieși în afara noastră și pentru a ne extinde și împărtăși dragostea către o a treia parte, către altcineva. Acel „altcineva” este lumea din jurul nostru.

De aceea, în afară de cerințele statutare ale Episcopiei, protopopii vor fi de acum responsabili pentru cerceta și în afară, pentru a căuta și spre lumea și so-

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FOLOSIREA FORȚEI FIZICE CORECTIVE ÎMPOTRIVA COPIILOR ÎN CANADA

Pr. Nicolae Lăpuște, New Westminster, BC, Canada

Secțiunea 265 a Codului Penal canadian interzice aplicarea intenționată și ne-consensuală a forței fizice asupra altei persoane. Cu toate acestea secțiunea 43 din același cod exclude din comportamentul penal corecția fizică rezonabilă aplicată de părinți sau profesori. Măsurile coercitive trebuie să aibă un scop educativ sau corectiv pentru copii capabili de corecție, astfel fiind excluși copiii la vârstă fragedă sau cei cu dificultăți de învățare, iar forța aplicată să fie rezonabilă cu circumstanțele și fără să cauzeze daune. Secțiunea 43 nu permite înjosirea, comportamentul vătămător sau folosirea de obiecte sau lovituri la cap și nici aplicarea pedepsei corporale la copiii sub vârsta de doi ani sau la adolescenți.¹

În fiecare jurisdicție provincială și teritorială a Canadei funcționează agenții de protecția copilului finanțate de guvern a căror responsabilitate este să protejeze copiii de abuz sau neglijență. Aceste agenții angajează lucrători sociali special calificați care au puteri largite de a investiga și la nevoie, de a sechestra copiii a căror siguranță fizică și emoțională este amenințată și aduce în instanță părinții. Curțile de judecată au puterea de a plasa copiii luați în grija rudeniilor, a membrilor comunității sau a părinților adoptivi, dacă circumstanțele cer protejarea copiilor.

Statutele din fiecare jurisdicție precizează circumstanțele care trebuie epuizate înainte ca serviciile de protecție să poată interveni în viața familiei și să rețină

copilul precum și testul legal care trebuie îndeplinit înainte de a lua temporar sau permanent copilul de la părinții săi. Pentru detalii specifice fiecărei jurisdicții pot fi consultați avocații specializați în legea familiei. Serviciile de protecție a copilului pot fi alertate de unul din părinți, rudeni, vecini, profesori, doctori, avocați, clerici, consilieri sau polițiști. Agențiile sunt obligate să ia în serios orice alertă și informație primită de a investiga un abuz la adresa copiilor. Uneori alertarea autorităților este făcută de cetățeni care asistă la tratamentul abuziv al copiilor din partea părinților în locuri publice precum parcuri, magazine și parcuri. De asemenea, agențiile de protecție a copilului au permisiunea legii să intervină în familiile unde copiii sunt forțați să asiste la războiul dintre părinți manifestat prin certuri, înjosiri reciproce, violențe domestice pentru a preveni vătămarea lor emoțională. În ochii legiuitorului, părinții sunt modelul de comportament pentru copii, care învață cum să își trateze semenii din exemplul părinților lor. De aceea responsabilitatea de părinte trebuie luată în serios și evitate situațiile care pot crea tulburări emoționale ce pot afecta dezvoltarea sufletească a copilului.

Matricea culturii omenești este familia. Potrivit învățaturii Bisericii Ortodoxe părinții sunt datori să se îngrijească de bunăstarea și de sănătatea trupească a fiilor lor, asigurându-le hrana, îmbrăcăminte și condițiile igienice necesare pentru ca aceștia să fie sănătoși,

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cietatea în care trăim care suferă foarte mult. Fiecare protopop va fi obligat să promoveze și să raporteze nu numai despre întâlnirile și organizațiile sale, ci și despre activitatea cu adevărat caritabilă și misionară a clerului, parohiilor și credincioșilor săi. Societatea noastră este înfometată pentru cuvântul lui Dumnezeu și pentru lucrarea pe care Biserica Ortodoxă - Biserica adevărată - este chemată să o ofere.

În această după-amiază veți asculta o prezentare a unei tinere din cadrul Episcopiei noastre. Numele ei este Delia Popoviciu. Delia provine din familie de imigranți români și este chipul celei mai tinere generații de români creștini ortodocși aici în America. Cea mai mare parte a familiei sale locuiește în România. Vorbește fluent limba română și este mândră de tradiția ei dar și de faptul că trăiește în America. Delia a fost selectată pentru a reprezenta episcopia noastră la o conferință de tineret a IOCC, Organizația Internațională Caritabilă Creștin Ortodoxă, în iunie anul trecut. Vă îndemn să ascultați prezentarea, să adresați întrebări și să va formați propriile opinii.

Necesitatea este groaznică. În jurul nostru există disperare: sărăcie, dependența de droguri, singurătate, boala mentală și înfometarea spirituală. Întreaga noastră societate caută răspunsuri.

Cum putem lăsa omenirea să moară de foame în jurul nostru în timp ce ținem secretul vieții? Cine are răspunsul? Noi îl avem. Avem singurul lucru care va salva lumea și pe noi. Avem credința adevărată. Am văzut Lumina cea Adevărată, pe Hristos. Am primit Duhul cel Cereșc.

Dacă credeți cu adevărat în aceste lucruri, vă invit: să vă alăturați protopopilor, preoților și fraților creștini ortodocși și să ne întoarcem la misiunea care are atât de mult nevoie să fie făcută bine. Să ne întoarcem la propovăduirea Evangheliei în întreg pământul. Să primim pe cel străin în sânul familiei noastre spirituale. Să arătăm lumii că noi suntem Lumina care strălucește într-un întineric.

Să ne întoarcem la a fi Biserica.

Într-o zi, America păgână va spune: „Vedeți cum se iubesc unii pe alții! Vrem să fim ca ei!” Și atunci și numai atunci vom fi adus cu adevărat mântuirea în propria noastră casă.

Sigur, unii vor spune că mesajul nostru este un vis, o fantezie. Ei vor spune, așa cum au spus de-a lungul anilor, că am uitat de unde am venit. Ei vor spune că mântuirea vine numai prin neam.

Pentru acestia spun: Dacă credeți că Biserica este doar pentru neamul și țară, dacă credeți că sângele românesc este necesar pentru mântuire, dacă credeți că noi, în America și în Canada, suntem doar o diasporă a cărei adevărată patrie este undeva în lumea veche, atunci pentru acestia există o mitropolie. Dacă doriți să fiți guvernati de un Sfânt Sinod, care nu are nici o idee despre realitățile vieții voastre și despre problemele voastre de aici în această țară și unde veți conta pentru mai puțin de jumătate din 1% din credincioșii

lor, pentru aceștia există o mitropolie.

Dacă aceasta este Mitropolia pentru dumneavoastră, sau există o parohie undeva în apropiere, vă puteți alătura. Vă veți bucura de toate binecuvântările țării și neamului, de politica sa și de entuziasmul său. Mă rog să găsiți fericirea acolo.

Cât despre mine și Episcopia noastră – noi vom sluji Domnului!

Folosirea ... Cont. de la pag 23

să poată crește și să se poată dezvolta din punct de vedere trupesc. De asemenea părinții sunt datori să dea copiilor educația și instrucția necesară, începând în familie cu *“cei șapte ani de acasă”*, adică deprinderile care vor sta la temelie a întregii educații morale și intelectuale de mai târziu. Lipsa bunei creșteri din acești ani adeseori se vede mult mai târziu. Buna creștere a copiilor se datorează nu atât sfaturilor, învățăturilor și poveștelor pe care ei le primesc de la părinți, cât mai ales *exemplului* pe care părinții îl oferă. Părinții, prin relațiile negative dintre ei, fără să-și dea seama pot oferi cel mai rău exemplu propriilor lor copii, fiind pricină de sminteală, iar păcatul părinților este îndoit. În mod deosebit părinții trebuie să se îngrijească de educația copiilor, după îndemnul Sfântului Apostol Pavel: *“Părinți, creșteți pe fiii voștri întru învățătura și certarea Domnului...”* (Efes 6, 4). La creșterea și educarea copiilor, părinții împreună iubirea și blândețea cu asprimea și disciplinarea, adeseori acestea fiind necesare (Evrei 12, 7).²

La rândul lor copiii sunt datori să asculte de părinții lor, porunca cinstirii părinților se cuprinde în Decalog (Ieșire 20, 12). Această cinstire a părinților se manifestează prin devotamentul, supunerea și respectul față de cei care le-au dat viață, precum și în ajutorarea părinților. Sfânta Scriptură îndeamnă: *„Fiule păzește poveștele tatălui tău și nu lepăda învățăturile maicii tale.”* (Prov. 6, 20) iar în alt loc: *“Ascultați de părinții voștri întru Domnul, că aceasta este cu dreptate”* (Efes. 6, 1). Neascultarea față de părinți, necinstirea lor, ca și purtarea necuviincioasă față de ei sunt socotite păcate strigătoare la cer (Prov. 6, 20; 30, 17; Sirah 3, 12).³

1 M. H. Ogilvie, Religious institutions and the law in Canada, pp. 158 - 159.

2 Ioan Zăgrean, *Morala Creștină: Manual pentru Seminariile Teologice ale Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1974, pp. 276 - 277.

3 Ibidem, pp. 277 - 278.