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# SOLIA

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**COVER:** One of the iconographic scenes of "The Creation" in St. Sava Church, Iași, Romania, depicting the Exile of Adam and Eve from Paradise.

## PASTORAL CHANGES

### ORDINATIONS

**OANCEA, Archdeacon David**, was ordained into the Holy Priesthood on December 27, 2015, by His Eminence, Archbishop NATHANIEL, at Holy Dormition Monastery, Rives Junction MI, and attached to St. Mary Hierarchal Chapel, Grass Lake MI.

### RELEASED / ASSIGNED / ATTACHED

**AGOSTON, Rev. Fr. Florentin Gabriel**, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of Holy Trinity Church, Youngstown OH and assigned Parish Priest of St. Mary Church, Portland OR, effective December 20, 2015.

**ENACHE, V. Rev. Fr. Constantin**, was released at his own request from Annunciation Church, Grand Rapids MI, effective January 15, 2016, and attached to Descent of the Holy Spirit Church, Warren MI.

**PARTIOC, V. Rev. Fr. Alexandru**, who is retired, was released from his attachment to St. George Cathedral, Southfield MI and attached to St. Theodora of Sihla Mission, Royal Oak MI, effective March 1, 2016.

**VESA, Rev. Fr. Ion**, is attached to Holy Archangels Michael & Gabriel Church, Middle Village NY, effective March 1, 2016.

## 2016 CLERGY CONFERTREAT

Over fifty priests and deacons, and ten preotese attended the Episcopate's annual Clergy Conference-Retreat held February 15-19, 2016. The program is mandated by our archbishop and counts toward the clergy's continuing education, as mandated by the OCA's Holy Synod of Bishops.

Each day began and ended in church with services; and on the closing day, a Hierarchal Divine Liturgy was celebrated. The sessions included the following speakers and topics: An extensive presentation was

*Cont. on page 7*



# A GENEALOGY OF GOD'S MERCY

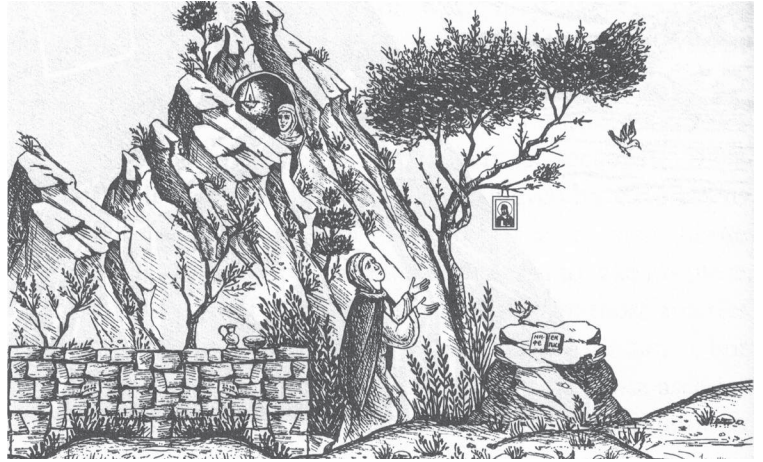
by Deacon Stephen Muse

The Muse side of my family can trace our roots back to the 1500's in Soul-drop Parish in Lancashire, England. The Trevathan side, my mother's, are from Cornwall, England. I find the older I get, the more interesting I find such things, not because I am particularly proud of my name or heritage, but because history becomes more palpable – a part of the present, like approaching a holy relic. Elder Sophrony says that all of time and space fit into eternity. History is His Story and ours. The origins and relationship of all things past are contained in all things present.

In our family, when our last child, now thirty, headed off to college, it sparked the empty nest, rearranging and rediscovering our lives together. One of my colleagues reminded me at the time, "Life looks different when you've passed the half-way mark." I'm sixty now and hope to live to a hundred, but I know he's right. I felt changes in my outlook beginning many years ago. It has been a fascinating journey, and I notice several things happening as I age, other than losing the hair on my head while gaining more in my ears and nose and eyebrows.

I find the bits and pieces of everyday life much more precious than the hopes and dreams of an un-lived future. Clouds passing in the sky on a moist and windy day. A crane stretching its neck in Cooper Creek as it walks on its stilted legs reminds me of a theologian I know. The hammering of a Flicker on the drum of a hollow tree trunk sounds the talanton for a worship not created by human hands. My wife's sparkling eyes, and the joy engendered in me noticing a flower she has planted in the yard all make me grateful and can start the Jesus Prayer going. Only it isn't enough to slake the thirst to offer thanksgiving that can't ever seem to match the gift that is being given.

Being able to breathe and know I am alive is more and more precious. As the list of treasured encounters grows, memories pile up and they get better and better as the years go by. Pain is forgotten. Joy remembered. Marrying. The miracle of our first child's birth. Being warm around a wood stove and raising our children in the midst of the beautiful rolling farm hills of Eastern Pennsylvania are memories that have become so precious with the years; my heart overflows when I remember them. I am today a grateful man for the gift of those years alone. And yet when we lived them, we had tremendous trials and tribulations. But like the labor of a woman in travail of birth, all that is remembered is the laughter and giggles and love of children, the friendship of unexpected persons who cared and the



spiritual bond that links a husband and wife together through the joys and sorrows of shared pilgrimage, labors and love. I am so grateful to have had a partner to walk the Emmaus road with. The gift of marriage and bearing children is a miracle. Imagine: total strangers from different cultures and family backgrounds encounter each other and choose to be joined forever in a spiritual covenant, ready to love all that is produced through their union.

Our children become our teachers. Their challenges and disobedience, their discoveries in areas outside what we would have ever dreamed of doing, become living reminders of the mercy of God who endures all for each of us. All of us on the earth are related to everyone else biologically just as we appear to have derived our existential conditions from the first couple who sprang from the mouth of God.

Yes, the closer death gets, the more sober I am and the more precious life reveals itself to be. Now I want to live longer in order to repent for being unworthy of it all and to give thanks for the eucharistic gift. The fewer choices I have, the more important each one becomes. The more attentive I am to what I experience in the moment, the more is revealed of what cannot be seen with the eye. The faster time passes with the years, the more I realize all that I will never get to do. But there is a greater peace in my heart, because I know that behind and through it all is Christ, the source of every good thing.

Like the skin horse and the velveteen rabbit in Marjorie Williams' beloved children's story, well-worn people begin to have more and more forgiveness and mercy toward what goes wrong, because they begin to realize how much mercy and forgiveness and love have made it possible for them to live when they went wrong.

*Cont. on page 6*

# OCL BOARD CALLS ON HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL TO UNITE THE CHURCH IN AMERICA

**Meeting in Houston, Texas, on February 5, 2016, the Board of Orthodox Christian Laity called on the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church to unite the Church in America.**



**The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church will take place at the Orthodox Academy of Crete.**

Meeting in Houston, Texas, on February 5, 2016, the Board of Orthodox Christian Laity called on the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church to unite the Church in America.

The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church will take place at the Orthodox Academy of Crete in Kolympari of Chania.

2016 is a historic year for Orthodox Christianity throughout the world. After over 1,200 years since the Seventh Ecumenical Council was held in Nicea (now part of Turkey) in 787, the Orthodox Church has scheduled the Holy and Great Council. The meeting, which has been in the planning stages for more than fifty years, will be held from June 16-27, 2016 in Crete at the Orthodox Academy of Crete.

This event will provide the opportunity for the hierarchs and representatives of all of the autocephalous churches to approve the establishment of a unified Orthodox Church in the United States of America. The administrative unification of the Church under a single Synod of Bishops is not only an event whose time has come, but it is an event which must not be delayed.

The hierarchs who will meet in Crete know that the existence of twelve separate, overlapping and often competing Orthodox jurisdictions in the same territory violates Orthodox canons and ecclesiology. These same hierarchs, meeting in Chambesy, Switzerland in 2009, signed protocols establishing Assemblies of Bishops across the globe to bring canonical order – order that is in its very essence unifying – to the churches in the New World.

The United States Assembly of Bishops has been meeting for the past six years, and much progress has been made to comply with the mandate given to them;

but the time of the Holy and Great Council has now arrived, and it is the responsibility of the hierarchs at this Council to act.

Patriarch Bartholomew addressed the American Assembly of Bishops in Dallas in 2014. In his video address that unmistakably urged unity, he called upon the American Bishops to:

*“... move beyond words to actions. We know much better than what we actually do. We are called to put our theory and theology into practice. We are called to move beyond what is ‘mine’ and what is ‘yours’ to what is ‘ours’. From now on, this is how we should conceive and conduct all of our ministries and resources, all of our departments and initiatives. Otherwise, we do not practice what we preach. It is really up to us to accept the challenge or refuse the call.”*

This message is now directed to the hierarchs who will be meeting in Crete in June of this year. They alone, meeting in Council as one body, have the responsibility to bring the Orthodox Church in the United States into canonical order. This Holy and Great Council should recognize the Assembly of Bishops of the United States as the Canonical Synod of the territory of the United States of America which should meet to elect its Presiding Hierarchy, taking its place as an Autocephalous Church.

Orthodox Christian Laity (ocl.org) calls upon all Orthodox Christians in the United States of America and throughout the world to fervently pray for the success of this historic Holy and Great Council.

## PRAYER FOR OUR CHILDREN

O Greatly-Merciful Lord, who gives food to the birds of the sky and to all living things on the earth, who watches over the flower that sprouts amidst the rocky cliffs; nourish, bring up, and protect well our children also. Help us, O Lord, to plant in their souls what is good and useful for the Holy Church and the nation, and what is well-pleasing to you, that your holy name may be exalted through them. Fill them, O Lord, with the enlightened wisdom and holy understanding which comes down from you. Protect them from all the snares of enemies both visible and invisible. Command your angels as always to be their enlightened guides and counselors in all good works.

-Archimandrite Nicodim Mandita from *On the Upbringing of Children* by Bishop Irenaeus



# 2016 FAMILY LIFE/ ALL-AUXILIARIES CONFERENCE

## June 23-26, 2016

**What:** Family Life/ All-Auxiliaries Weekend  
**When:** June 23-26, 2016 (Thursday-Sunday)  
**Where:** Vatra Romaneasca, Grass Lake, MI  
**Theme:** “With Faith and Love, Draw Near”

### Events:

- Worship services: Morning and Evening Prayers, Memorial Service, Divine Liturgy
- Auxiliary Meetings: ARFORA, Youth/AROY, Brotherhood
- Additional Gatherings: Clergy, Clergy Wives, Christian Educators
- Possible Thematic Workshops/Discussion Groups for Personal, Family, and Parish Enrichment:
  - “To each is given the Gift of the Spirit...” Our Ministry in the Church
  - An Orthodox family: How are we different than others or not?
    - Praying the *Prayer of the Heart*
    - *Vatra Generations* Project: How can I help?
    - And more...
  - Vatra Service Project
  - Bible *Challenge* – Explore the **Book of Acts**
    - Teams (3 persons/ea)
    - Church School and Adult Education curriculum possibilities
    - Study guides/quizzes available: [www.orthodoxyouth.org/acts](http://www.orthodoxyouth.org/acts) (Under “Handouts”)
      - \*\*Prizes for the Contestants and Winning Teams
      - First Prize - \$750, Second Prize - \$500, Third Prize - \$250
      - Donated to parish or charity of winning teams’ choice
      - Sponsored by the Orthodox Brotherhood USA and AROY
  - Luncheons (with Speaker)—ARFORA
  - Youngster Activities
  - Social Events
    - Opening Picnic
    - Friday Evening Program – “**Vatra Generations Cultural Night**”
    - Saturday Evening – \*\***Cotillion/Semi-formal dance**
      - (\*\*The Cotillion is a celebration of “coming of age” for young women (ages 15–19) and young men. During the evening they are presented to the Romanian-American Orthodox Community. For more information, contact: Marie Avramaut at [avramaut5@aol.com](mailto:avramaut5@aol.com))
    - Sunday Banquet
- Displays, Tours, Opportunities for Spiritual Direction and/or Sacramental Confession

## WHAT YOUTH MINISTRY SAYS ABOUT US

by Steven Christoforou



Steven Christoforou

SOLIA JAN/FEB 2016

In high school, I was terrified of public speaking. A class valedictorian, I had to offer remarks during our graduation, which would have been fine, if there weren’t several thousand people present.

During college, I got involved with the Yale Political Union and began

attending weekly debates. As I spoke more often, I learned a critical lesson: you’ll never be able to clearly communicate something unless you first understand it yourself.

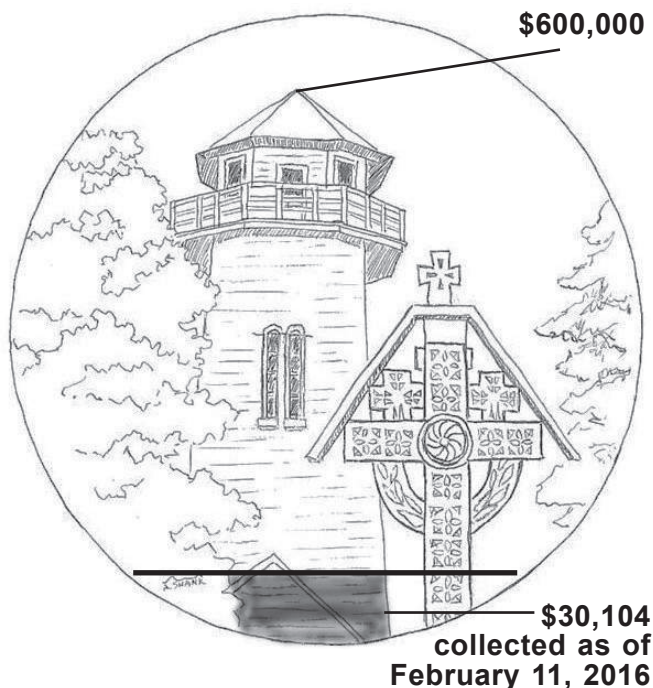
During my years at Holy Cross Seminary, Fr Nicholas Belcher reiterated the lesson in the context of sermons: *a mist in the pulpit is a fog in the pews*. If a speaker is unclear about a topic, the audience will be left mystified. If we speak with uncertainty, our confusion will be magnified in the minds of our listeners.

*Cont. on page 13*

PRAY AND WORK FOR ORTHODOX UNITY IN NORTH AMERICA



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*Donations are tax-deductible.*

## A Genealogy ... *Cont. from page 3*

Love and thanksgiving grow with age as we surrender our bodies to the effects of time and our physical vitality wears away. Our minds lose their sharpness and our eyes cloud over. Our joints ache. And in all this, the heart grows more and more acutely aware of how very, very precious is this event called life that lives itself through us by the Grace and love of God. We are a royal priesthood through whom God wants to re-member Himself. Our situation helps us recognize what St. Maximos the Confessor observed, that our very lives are on loan to us. Life was not "ours" to begin with. We cannot hold on to it by anything we do, think, feel, say or will.

My granddaddy used to let me drive the car sitting in his lap when I was a young boy. I had the steering wheel, so I thought. My legs didn't even reach the pedals. No matter. I was driving! I did the same with my children. Now I realize, the older I get, that God has been doing that with me all my life. My legs don't reach the pedals. But I have the thought often that I am doing the driving; and I'm sure to some extent, that God is preparing me to be able to extend His reach into the world through loving obedience. After all, it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom.

If we discover this one thing over a lifetime, it may be the most important. Thanksgiving that emerges for the privilege of being born is a recognition that God in Christ wishes to give us His whole life as our own. Learning that we want it so much, that we will give our own lives in return for His is the great and divine eucharistic mystery at the heart of the marriage between heaven and earth.

I wonder what it will be like after I die—is that when I finally grow up? If eternity is even a fraction as marvelous as the taste of life has been in time, my heart will need infinite Grace to be able to receive and express the joy of that worship. But first we each will face the task of saying goodbye to our beloved and to all the life we have ever known. This moment of giving up we cannot know ahead of time, and the sorrow will be turned to joy. Like a newborn babe, God will wipe every tear from our eyes and we will no longer see as in a mirror dimly, but face to face with the Light that enlightens all humankind.

*Deacon Stephen Muse, PhD, LMFT is a deacon and pastoral psychotherapist in Georgia where he works extensively with clergy, marriages and trauma. He and Diakonissa Claudia have four children and two grandchildren. He is the author of **When Hearts Become Flame** and **Being Bread**. He serves at Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church in Columbus, Georgia. This article was originally published in the "Orthodox Observer," July-August 2014, p. 25.*

# SCV HOLDS CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: HEALING, AUTHORITY AND MINISTRY



SCV Conference Presenters and Participants

Saint Catherine's Vision (SCV) presented *Divine Compassion Conference III - Divine Compassion and Women: Healing, Authority and Ministry in Orthodox Spiritual Tradition* on Saturday, November 7, 2015, at the Archbishop Iakovos Library Learning and Resource Center of Hellenic College / Holy Cross School of Theology.

Dr. Helen Creticos Theodoropoulos, a graduate of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, presently serving as Adjunct Professor of Theology at St. Savas Serbian Orthodox Seminary, and Dr. Evangelia Amiridou, Associate Professor of Church History of the Aristotelian University School of Theology in Thessaloniki, Greece, offered the keynote address and keynote response, respectively.

This Conference was presented by Saint Catherine's Vision (SCV), and co-sponsored with Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston.

SCV is an international, Pan-Orthodox fellowship of women theologians together with ordained and lay servant-leaders engaging contemporary issues within the life of the Orthodox Church, blessed by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America.

Dr. James Skedros, Dean of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, served as Host and Moderator for the event. Dr. Kyriaki FitzGerald, Adjunct Professor in Theology at Holy Cross and SCV Executive Director, offered an introduction to the conference topic and brief history of SCV's progress to date.

Three afternoon seminar presentations engaging *Divine Compassion, Women and: 1) Healing, 2) Authority and 3) Ministry* were offered by co-authors of SCV's upcoming book, *Encountering Women of Faith: The Saint Catherine's Vision Collection, Volume III*. During the seminars, co-authors offered highlights from their research engaging the lives of women saints. A fourth optional seminar was presented just

after the official close of the Conference for persons interested in taking part in SCV's ongoing "*diakonia*" discussions regarding "*Divine Compassion and Human Trafficking*".

For further information, please visit SCV's website ([saintcatherinesvision.org](http://saintcatherinesvision.org)) and co-sponsors: Hellenic College-Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology ([hchc.edu](http://hchc.edu)) and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston ([boston.goarch.org](http://boston.goarch.org)).

Video footage and photographs from this event will be posted on Saint Catherine's Vision website soon. For further information about SCV's initiative "*Divine Compassion and Human Trafficking*" visit: <http://saintcatherinesvision.com/collaborative-work/divine-compassion-and-human-trafficking>.

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## 2016 Clergy Confertreat ...

*Cont. from page 2*

given on "The Sacred Offering of First Fruits: Reflections on Personal & Parish Stewardship in Our Orthodox Tradition" by Very Rev Dr Robert Halet (Ukrainian diocese). Rev Dr Ioan Cozma (ROEA, New York, NY) spoke about Marriage in the Orthodox Church from the perspective of Canon Law. Fr Anthony Karbo (OCA, Colorado Springs, CO) spoke on the heartbreaking challenges faced by parents at the time of miscarriages, stillborn infants, etc. and the related pastoral challenges of priests. Rev Mother Cassiana (Protection of the Holy Virgin Monastery, Colorado Springs, CO) spoke on the same topic with the preotese. Very Rev Dr Remus Grama (ROEA, Cleveland, OH) and Very Rev Dr James Barkett (ROEA, Warren, OH) respectively gave theological and practical presentations regarding "Challenges of Confessors Today", and clergy had the opportunity to break out into groups to consider and discuss real-life cases. Father Vicars Dan Hoarste and David Oancea (ROEA Chancery) spoke on practical administrative concerns. The final evening session was reserved for Archbishop Nathaniel to share some thoughts on various topics and questions submitted by the participants.

Unlike the clergy's one-day gathering prior to the Episcopate Congress each year, this extended gathering is intended as a time away from daily parish life that offers brotherly interaction, spirituality, learning and updating on contemporary societal and diocesan realities, etc. It is next scheduled for February 13-17, 2017 at the same location, the Franciscan Retreat Center in Scottsdale, Arizona.

*Excerpted from the weekly Bulletin of St. George Cathedral, Southfield, Michigan, with modifications.*



# THE AMERICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IS HOLY, CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC — IT MUST NOW BE ONE

The year 2016 is a momentous, historic time for Orthodox Christianity throughout the world. After 1,200 years, Orthodox Christianity is on the verge of a seminal event, a meeting of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, to be held in Crete, Greece, during the week of Pentecost this June.

This event will provide a pivotal opportunity for hierarchs to officially recognize a unified American Orthodox Church which selects its own hierarchs. It is an idea whose time has come. Moreover, it is properly based on the canonical precedents of the Church.

Indeed, it is a clarion call for action — a firm declaration — for the appropriate hierarchs to make sure that the subject of unity in the United States is on the official agenda of the forthcoming Holy Council. There is an urgency to reach a pragmatic consensus among the church leaders, for the world is changing rapidly, with dire consequences to traditional faith and Christian virtues.

The necessity for ecclesiastical teamwork was made explicitly clear when Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew addressed the American Assembly of Bishops in Dallas, Texas in 2014. His video message unmistakably sounded the call for unity among them:

*“...move beyond words to actions. We know much better than what we actually do. We are called to put our theory and theology into policy and practice. We are called to move beyond what is “mine” and what is “yours” to what is “ours.” From now on, this is how we should conceive and conduct all of our ministries and resources, all of our departments and initiatives. Otherwise, we do not practice what we preach. It is really up to us to accept the challenge or to refuse the call.”*

This important and insightful statement by the “First among Equals” Patriarch resonates historically, since the Holy and Great Council will be meeting soon in Crete.

## A Historical Perspective

The forthcoming Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church is enormously significant and consequential. The historic importance of this event needs to be understood in chronological context. This will be the first Holy and Great Council in the Orthodox Church’s long history. All seven ancient Ecumenical Councils (325-787) were meetings of bishops of the SINGLE unified Christian Church which included Rome, hundreds of years before the Great Schism between East and West in 1054.



Over 300 Church representatives are expected to attend from the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, and the autonomous and autocephalous Churches of Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, the Czech lands, and Slovakia. It is not widely known that attempts to unify the Church have been an integral component of the 2000-year history of Orthodoxy.

After the tragic and decisive events of 1054, 1204 and 1453, the Orthodox world became increasingly under the captivity of Islamic rule. When Islamic rule ended, Communist control enslaved the Church in Russia and nations of Eastern Europe until the last few decades.

These far-reaching and profound political occurrences had horrific impact on the Patriarchates and national Churches in the Old World. After such traumatic upheavals, they found themselves weary but freer to resume their legitimate functions which were interrupted over a millennium of Islamic and Communist oppression. Some Orthodox centers continue to tragically struggle to survive.

During the same epic time, newly-formed Church communities became a central link for the wave of immigrants that emigrated to the New World. Finally,



by 1960, after years of deliberations, a framework to achieve a unified Orthodox Church in the United States was established. The Pan-Orthodox jurisdictions were called SCOBA (The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas). SCOBA was replaced in 2010, at the direction of the Mother Churches, by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the United States of America.

The importance of singularity of purpose became the mandate of the Assembly of Bishops, by the firm directive from a 2009 meeting in Chambesy, Switzerland. All Orthodox Patriarchs were represented. The meeting was called and presided by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew after 20 years of contemplative activity by these mother churches. At Chambesy, the Patriarchs signed protocols establishing Assemblies of Bishops throughout the world in order to restore canonical order. The largest group was in the United States with 54 bishops.

In response to the Chambesy protocol, the United States bishops have been meeting for six years as a group and in committees. They recognize that the existing parochial arrangements are impractical, counterproductive and uncanonical, resulting in loss of members, fragmentation and overlapping of functions.

The convener of the Assembly is Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. He has been a driving force in asserting his leadership in favor of Orthodox unity, reflecting the vision of the Chambesy Protocols. He continues to face the challenge of hastening the Assembly's deliberate but uneven progress. A few jurisdictions, for a variety of reasons, believe it is better to delay the unification of Orthodoxy in America for 10 or more years. However, their reluctance in overcoming obstacles does not reflect the urgent commitment toward unity and collegiality as expressed in the official statements of the Chambesy Protocols.

### **Ethnic and Cultural Factors**

The ethnic and cultural diversity of the American Orthodox Church reflects global Orthodoxy in microcosm. Its essence is a doctrinal Church of diversity with local ethnic and cultural variations. The cardinal principle of decentralization has allowed the Church to ADAPT to the culture of its local people on a selective basis, including the liturgical language and traditions.

In the past 60 years, there has been extensive ethnic research which offers valuable insight on the complexity of assimilation within a culturally pluralistic society. For the preservation of ethnic/cultural practices to survive, there need to be ongoing modifications among identifiable community institutions, especially the church affiliation. Studies also concur that there is a lessening of ethnic bonds with each successive generation, especially past the sixth generation. Unlike the misinformation of some, no organization is asking for an eventual abandonment of one's heritage and

ethnic identity. Just the opposite is true!

Other reports show that when American-born offspring of immigrants completely abandon their original church affiliation, their ethnic identity is quickly diminished. Compelling statistical data of Orthodoxy in America reveal a serious decline of active and marginal supporters in recent decades. With the present church structure, Orthodox authenticity is weakened and confusing, especially for converts.

One of the causes of confusion is due to the varying waves of early, and then later immigration to the New World which resulted in multiple "ethnic" jurisdictions, with different assimilation rates. Today, there are 14 jurisdictions, with the majority of bishops located in a few big cities. A few jurisdictions have one bishop for all 50 states. Some bishops live and work a few blocks apart with limited interaction.

The transition toward an administratively-united Church would strengthen Christian outreach. Imagine the effectiveness of a unified Orthodox Church actively embracing internal and worldwide evangelism; in unified rather than competing parishes in small towns; and in raising a single bold voice at the highest levels of government and media to decry the persecution of Orthodox brethren!

Adaptation, modification and infusion of cultural distinctiveness are essential characteristics for Orthodox viability in America. One way to describe the similarity of common ideals that bind people together is America's motto of national unity—*E PLURIBUS UNUM*—from many one.

### **A Proclamation for Leadership**

Amidst a rapidly changing inter-connected world, the year 2016 is an enormous crossroad for Orthodoxy everywhere. It necessitates a call to action—a proclamation for leadership—among the Orthodox prelates in order to resolve the canonical issue of unity. As stated earlier, the subject needs to be on the Holy Council's agenda in Crete. Furthermore, the Assembly of Bishops in the United States is in a unique position to take concrete steps to transform the call for unity into reality. The laity must be enlisted to assist in the implementation of a workable blueprint. It can become the "best of times" for Orthodoxy.

Without a unified Orthodox Church in the United States, the consequences are regressive for Church survival and sustainable growth. A healthy, viable Church guarantees a multicultural adaptation and appreciation for customs and traditions; not the other way around.

It is a decisive mission and monumental moment whose time has come. Pray that the bishops attending the Holy and Great Council capture the Spirit of hope and courage and take bold action now. Above all, it can become a LANDMARK LEGACY for the future of Orthodoxy in America. Amen!

*Orthodox Christian Laity*

*The following article is a chapter excerpted from the second part of an interview with Dr. George Bebawi, M.Lit., Ph.D., entitled "Where the Cross Divides the Road: Thoughts on Orthodoxy and Islam," that was published in the periodical, "Road to Emmaus," Vol. X, No. 4 (#39). The first part of the interview appears in issue #38.*

## ISLAMIC CONVERSIONS TO CHRISTIANITY



Dr. George Bebawi

### **Road to Emmaus (RTE):**

We occasionally hear rumors that many Muslims in North Africa are converting to Christianity? Is this true?

**Dr. George Bebawi (DR. GEORGE):** There were 80,000 converts in Algeria this year [2009] alone from Islam to Christianity, and at least half a million Muslims became Christian in Egypt over the past two years. We know how many are converting because they speak on the internet chat rooms.

**RTE:** Why do they convert?

**DR. GEORGE:** Miracles. Christ is manifesting Himself because the Coptic Church is very weak, and we've lost our courage to speak. Not long ago a Coptic Christian priest was defrocked by the order of the Egyptian government because of his missionary work. Through his program via satellite, over 4,000 Muslims in Saudi Arabia became Christian. These converts include Islamic academics, professionals and clergy.

I sometimes hear stories that make my hair stand on end. There is a man in Gaza whom I want to bring to speak here. He is Muslim and has been to Mecca fourteen times. On the last visit, as he was going around the Kaaba, he heard a voice coming from the loudspeaker in Arabic, "Jesus Christ is Lord." He looked around and thought, "There must be a crazy Christian here, trying to commit suicide." He couldn't see anyone, and no one else seemed to have noticed, so he kept praying. The second time around the Kaaba, he heard the same voice, and again, no one else around heard it. He thought, "This is for me, then." He became a Christian. His brother, who lives in Canada and is a member of an ultra-orthodox Muslim brotherhood, then took a solemn vow to kill him because of his conversion. About a year ago, this man came to the U.S. and gave his testimony at a conference with six other converts, and believe me, those stories take you back to the early days of Christianity. You are hearing things that are utterly impossible to believe.

One of these converts has a DVD available on the internet. She was the headmistress of a secondary school in Cairo when a young Christian woman who had just transferred to her school came to greet her wearing a golden cross. The headmistress saw it and said, "Christ was not crucified," and snatched the cross from the girl's neck, snapping the chain. A little later,

Christ appeared to the headmistress in her office, called her by name and said, "Why are you resisting me? I have died for you." (Now, isn't that just like Paul of Tarsus?) She went to the Copts, but they were afraid to baptize her so she was baptized in an evangelical church and then she emigrated abroad. Sometimes these Islamic converts go to the Coptic Church, sometimes to the Catholic, sometimes to the Orthodox Church. Believe me, there is something going on in Egypt, in Syria, in Lebanon, in Iraq, in Saudi Arabia. We don't know why Christ is moving the crisis in that direction but this is what is happening.

On a recent visit, a priest that I trained years ago at the Coptic Seminary told me, "George, I baptize at least one Muslim per week. We don't advertise, we don't speak, we don't let them tell their story publicly in church. They can speak in small Bible studies and prayer meetings, but we don't expose them to danger." All of his converts from Islam have come to Christ through the healing of a medically impossible situation.

Once, when I served with Fr. Mikael at St. Mark's Church in Cairo, one of our church members, a very fine Christian, had a heart attack. Because he was wealthy, they were able to rush him to the best military hospital in the south of Cairo, where he was placed in a small room with another man. We went to pray with our Christian brother, and after Fr. Mikael anointed him, the man in the next bed asked, "Why don't you anoint me also?" As usual, in order to avoid any complications with the police, we asked, "Are you a Christian?" He said, "No, I am a Muslim." Fr. Mikael then said, "Do you believe that Christ can heal you?" He said, "Yes." So he anointed him, prayed with him, and left.

The following day our Christian brother died. We were very sad, and as I sat in my church office arranging the funeral, a neatly-dressed man walked in and said, "I've come to see you." "Yes, what about?" He said, "You must teach me the Christian faith because I have to be baptized." I asked, "Who are you?" "My name is General \_\_\_\_." He was a high-ranking officer in the Egyptian army. I panicked because sometimes the authorities come as fake converts to create problems for us. I replied, "I can't baptize you. You will have to see our priest." When I told Fr. Mikael, he replied, "George, let's go, he is ready to accept the faith."

As it turned out, this was the man in the other bed, who had been anointed the night before. I didn't even recognize him. After we left, Christ had appeared to him in a vision, taken out his heart, put it aside, and put a new heart in its place. Christ said to him, "Do you see this pool of water? You have to go into this



water. And do you see this table with bread and a chalice? You have to eat this bread and drink from the chalice. The young man who came with the priest yesterday will teach you the Christian faith." I was amazed. Me, teach the Christian faith? What a privilege, but how dangerous! The General said, "That's why I've come." He was hungry for anything I said, and was always asking for more books.

We baptized him on a Thursday at three in the morning. In our churches, like all ancient churches in the Middle East, the font is about the size of this room. You walk down steps and stand up to your chest or shoulders in the water. As we were praying, two bodyguards who had come with him (Muslim boys from the army) stood outside. In the middle of the service they suddenly broke through the door of the baptistery shouting, "Where is the general? Where is the fire?" They had seen a flame of fire fall from heaven onto the baptistery. I asked Fr. Mikael, "Where is the fire?" He said, "George, there has been a manifestation of the Lord, but not for you to see...." The two Muslim soldiers saw it, the priest saw it—but I didn't see it.

The general came out of the baptismal font, and afterwards he insisted on giving his testimony in the cathedral on a video in front of 6,000 people. He left the country immediately afterwards. His wife and two daughters followed him and they live somewhere abroad under false names. We look back now and think, "My goodness, we lost our Christian brother, we gained a convert, and his testimony came like an earthquake." This was under Nasser, when one could still do those kinds of things. Now he would be killed. We have a file of testimonies of tortured converts that has been given to the U.S. Congress in Arabic and English. In one American city there is a street of thirty-five homes, all occupied by Islamic converts to Christianity from Egypt.

A similar story occurred in a secondary school in Cairo. During recess, a Christian girl often used to open her desk and read the New Testament. Another student became curious and thought, "What is she doing?" One day, she opened the girl's desk and found the New Testament, which she took to read. This was the daughter of the highest-ranking Muslim cleric of Al- Azhar, the largest Islamic university in the Middle East, and she became Christian after reading the New Testament.

Her family lived in a Muslim neighborhood, and when they found out that she wanted to be a Christian, they chained her to the entrance of their block of flats and all of the people who lived there threw garbage on her and tortured her. One night she said to Christ, "I can't take it anymore. You have to save me." So Christ came and cut off her chains, and said to her, "If you go to that street you will find a priest. Follow him, he will lead you to salvation." That priest was Fr. Mikael.

The good thing is that our priests wear their black cassocks on the street, so she recognized him right away. She followed him and said, "My name is ... and this is my story...." He replied, "Come with me," and she lived in a room next to mine at the Coptic seminary for six months. Meanwhile, the police were looking everywhere for her, and I have to tell you that we were afraid. I was present when she was baptized, and afterwards a group of Christians working in the passport office gave her a false passport and smuggled her from Egypt to Lebanon. From Lebanon she went to Jordan, where she lived with a Jordanian woman who later moved to the United States. One day, I was speaking about Amel (her baptized name), when this Jordanian woman, who is a friend of mine said, "Oh, Amel! She lived in my house!"

But, you know, these things go on all the time. Because the Christians cannot testify or preach, the Lord is doing His work outside the churches. Even in Saudi Arabia, Muslim clerics are converting to Christ. And these converts from Islam are not timid; there is something powerful in them. Whenever Amel prayed, you felt there was a fire in the room. When I asked Hassan, who heard the voice at the Kaaba, if he needed police protection, he said, "No. If my brother really wants to kill me, he will come and kill me. My time is in the hands of the Lord."

Just a few weeks ago I learned that the Dean of Islamic Studies of the largest university in Cairo has just converted to Christianity. He said that he has come to the conclusion that monotheism, because it lacks communion within the Godhead, is empty and unsatisfying, and that a God who does not reveal Himself as a person, but only through law or in a book, is not worthy of study.

You look at all these people and marvel at how Christ is working.

**RTE:** Amen. May He give the increase.

### **About Dr. George Bebawi**

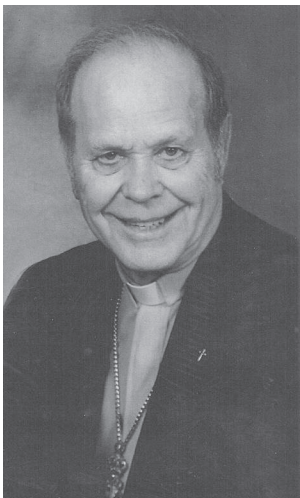
*Born in Egypt in 1938, Dr. George graduated from the Coptic Orthodox Theological College in Cairo after a rich spiritual youth spent in the company of contemporary 20<sup>th</sup>-century Coptic Egyptian desert fathers in Cairo and Scetis. (See Road to Emmaus, Summer, 2009, Issue 38). He went on to attend Cambridge University on scholarship, where he studied Theology, Patristics, and Biblical Criticism, receiving an M.Lit and Ph.D at Cambridge University in 1970. Dr. George taught Theology, Patristics, Church History, and Islamic studies at Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant seminaries in Europe, the Middle East and the United States.*

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# *In Memory*

## ARCHPRIEST DANIEL NENSON



[Regina, SK, Canada] - Funeral services for Archpriest Daniel Nenson, attached in retirement to Saint George Church, Dysart, SK, were celebrated on February 29, 2016 at Saint George Cathedral, Regina, SK by His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel, assisted by Rev. Frs. Cristian Frunzulica, Lucian Constantin, Cosmin Vint, Spiros Vadoros, John Bingham and Rodion Luciuk. Father Daniel fell asleep in the Lord on February 23

following a brief battle with cancer.

Daniel was born in Wheatstone, SK to parents Bucur and Maria and spent a few years on the farm prior to the family moving to Timmons, ON during the depression years. The family then moved back to settle just outside of Regina where he grew up with 11 siblings and worked extremely hard on the acreage. He was up at 5 am to feed and water the animals and do chores, went to school, and also took a part-time job herding cattle for three hours every evening, earning .75 cents and a ½ gallon of milk daily. He graduated from Balfour Technical Collegiate and went on to build a career in financial services from which he retired as a senior manager with Laurentian Financial Services in Regina, after spending 40+ years in the industry.

Daniel was brought up in the Romanian Orthodox Christian faith and attended St. Nicholas Church, where he met Alice Lipan. They married on July 30, 1960 and had six children: Timothy Daniel, Douglas Michael, Garrett Christopher (Susan), Lisa Marie (Greg), Brian Matthew and Patricia Vera-Anne (Paul).

As the founding President of the Regina Romanian Orthodox Youth organization, he grew the organization to over 30 members and raised numerous funds for Church projects. Ordained to the priesthood in September 1970 after studying with Archimandrite Martinian Ivanovici, he served parishes in Assiniboia, Calgary, and Dysart while continuing full-time employment in the financial services industry. He was the first Canadian-born, Romanian-speaking priest in Canada, and also served as Dean of Canada of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate from 2000 until 2007. He and Preoteasa Alice were founding members of the Kidney Foundation Chapter in Regina. He volunteered with the Canadian Diabetes Association, CNIB, the Romanian Pavilion at Mosaic and the Romanian food booth at the Exhibition. He was heavily involved in

Church activities, most notably the Deanery Centre at Fort Qu'Appelle, SK, where he and parishioners restored a church and renovated a site used to this day as a summer camp for Orthodox Christian children. He always made time for his children and grandchildren. You could often times find him at the arena, the ball field, at the pitch watching and cheering, or at the dance hall.

In addition to his wife and their children, Father Daniel is survived by nine grandchildren, two sisters, one brother, and several nieces and nephews

Donations in Father Daniel's memory may be made to Saint George Cathedral, 2005 Edgar Street, Regina, SK S4N 3K5 Canada or the Regina Qu'Appelle Palliative Care Unit at the Pasqua Hospital, 1802 McAra Street, Regina, SK S4T 1A5 Canada.

May Father Daniel's memory be eternal!

### HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

#### HIS EMINENCE, ARCHBISHOP NATHANIEL

**October 11 – December 31, 2015**

**October 11. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery.** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

**October 17-18. Ridgewood, NY. Descent of the Holy Spirit. Saturday:** Great Vespers. Banquet for 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

**October 24-25. McKees Rocks, PA. St. Andrew the Apostle.** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet for 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

**October 30 – November 1. Seattle, WA. Three Hierarchs. Saturday:** Great Vespers. Banquet. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Blessing of New Church with Holy Water.

**November 5-6. San Diego, CA. Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL) Annual Meeting.**

**November 7. Tihuana, Mexico. St. Innocent Orphanage & Project Mexico.** Visit together with members of OCL.

**November 8-9. Temecula, CA. Holy Resurrection Monastery. Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet.

**November 14-15. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Saturday:** Episcopate Council Meeting. Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet for 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination as Hierarch.

**November 21-22. Manchester, CT. Holy Transfiguration. Saturday:** Great Vespers. Banquet for 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Lunch.

**November 28-29. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Saturday:** Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

*Cont. on page 16*

SOLIA JAN/FEB 2016



# EARTHCAM TRACKS CONTINUOUS PROGRESS AT ST NICHOLAS NATIONAL SHRINE SITE

NEW YORK – When the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine opens, it will also mark 100 years since the birth of a man named Buddy Cury. He is the father of Brian Cury, President and CEO of EarthCam, the global leader in delivering webcam content, technology and services. Brian Cury feels that this connection is much more than coincidence and is thrilled to now be connected to this new church and shrine.



A number of months ago, Cury was approached by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese for assistance in visually documenting the day-to-day rebuilding of the new St. Nicholas Church and National Shrine.

After 14 years of negotiations with the Port Authority, the tiny church, the only house of worship destroyed on 9-11, was finally beginning construction. Cury was instantly interested in lending his support and expertise.

Working hand-in-hand with the Port Authority and EarthCam, the Archdiocese was able to place two cameras at the W New York-Downtown Residences that look directly onto the site at ground zero. One camera now offers live streaming video of the activity on the building site, while the other camera captures a high resolution photograph of the site every 15 minutes and stitches together a daily panorama made up of 1 billion pixels. Upon completion of the Shrine, these photos will be compiled into a time-lapse video of the entire construction process.

“It is my honor to participate in a small way to the rebuilding efforts of the church,” said Cury. He explained that his great-grandfather “Beddy” and father, “Buddy”, both Orthodox Christians, would be so honored that he is able to contribute his talents and financial support to this historic church. “The Church was part of one of the darkest days in US history, and now it is a significant part of the rebuilding. It’s EarthCam’s mission to continue to document the site for future generations, so people can see what it took to rebuild these important 16 acres.” Cury is confident that the documentation of the rebuilding with EarthCam’s unique perspective will help the church transcend its initial purpose and truly become a beacon of faith to

the entire world.

“Like a candle lighting the way, the cameras offer an opportunity to enlighten people all over the world to see how far we’ve come and yet be reminded that there is still more to accomplish. People everywhere can now participate in the rebuilding today and for many years to come.”

EarthCam also provided the video recording services for the building of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, One World Trade Center and many other important structures around the world.

To watch the live stream, log on to [www.stnicholaswtc.org](http://www.stnicholaswtc.org) or [www.earthcam.com/stnicholaswtc](http://www.earthcam.com/stnicholaswtc).

*Originally published by the Orthodox Observer, November 2015, p. 5.*

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## What Youth Ministry Says ...

*Cont. from page 5*

This saying comes to mind often as I consider our Archdiocesan youth and young adult ministry programs. As a Church, we’re terrified that young people are leaving the Faith *en masse*, that they are bored and checked out. We’re terrified that they aren’t fully appreciating the richness and beauty of the Faith, that they’re not fully committing their lives to Christ.

It’s always said with great frustration, which is directed at these young people in particular. We grumble at our children and grandchildren, at the easy lives they enjoy, and loudly complain that they’re not doing enough to develop their spiritual lives.

Yet remember: *a mist in the pulpit is a fog in the pews*. Do young people see their elders live the Faith? Do young people see, in the lives of their parents and grandparents and fellow parishioners, a real relationship with Christ? When young people have questions, do we have thoughtful and honest answers for them? Or do we have safe, generic responses that appear ill-informed and ill-considered, the products of superficial religious knowledge rather than deeply-held and genuinely-lived communion with the Lord?

**We complain that young people don’t know God, but do we know God?** Or are we merely religious members of a cultural faith that looks and sounds and smells Orthodox but is hollow within?

The research indicates that many, if not most, young people fall away from the churches of their parents, not because they stopped looking for God, but rather because they are finding Him elsewhere. Many, if

*Cont. on page 16*

# SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE (ROEA)

*All information and some application forms may be accessed via the internet at:  
<http://roea.org/scholarships.htm>*

## A.R.F.O.R.A. SCHOLARSHIPS

### A.R.F.O.R.A./MARTHA GAVRILA SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN

The A.R.F.O.R.A./Martha Gavrila Scholarship for Women is offered to women in post-graduate studies. It was established in memory of Mrs. Martha Gavrila, long-time president of A.R.F.O.R.A. who worked tirelessly for the Episcopate and Vatra Românească. The first scholarship was awarded at the 1985 A.R.F.O.R.A. Congress held at St. Mary Church in Chicago, Illinois. The sum of \$1000.00 may be awarded annually to a selected student. **DEADLINE: MAY 10, 2016.** Go to <http://roea.org/arforagavrila.html> to download the Application Form & Requirements.

### A.R.F.O.R.A. UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN

The A.R.F.O.R.A. Undergraduate Scholarship for Women was offered for the first time in 1994. A scholarship of \$1000.00 may be awarded annually to selected students who have successfully completed their first year of an undergraduate program. **DEADLINE: MAY 10, 2016.** Go to <http://roea.org/arforaundergrad.html> to download the Application Form & Requirements.

### A.R.F.O.R.A. HELEN MUNTEAN EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN

The A.R.F.O.R.A. Helen Muntean Education Scholarship for Women is a scholarship of \$1000.00 that may be awarded annually to women who are working toward a career in teaching.

**DEADLINE: MAY 10, 2016.** Go to <http://roea.org/helenmuntean.html> to download the Application Form & Requirements.

### WM. R. STANITZ / AROY SCHOLARSHIP

In August of 1971, the Constantin J. Stanitz family of Chicago established a Scholarship Fund in memory of their son, William Robert Stanitz, who met a tragic death in California. Two undergraduate scholarships of \$1,000 each may be awarded annually. The applicant must be an active AROY member, a graduate of high school or a college student, or one who intends to enroll in a school or college of university level. **DEADLINE: JUNE 1, 2016.** Go to <http://roea.org/stanitzaroy.html> for application requirements.

### DUMITRU GOLEA GOLDY-GEMU SCHOLARSHIP

Offers two undergraduate scholarships of \$1,500 each, which may be awarded annually to undergraduate students of Romanian origin according to the established requirements and rules. The applicant must have completed high school or already be enrolled in college. **DEADLINE: MAY 31, 2016.** Go to <http://roea.org/goldygemu.html> for requirements and application forms.

### THE PAMFIL AND MARIA BUJEA FAMILY ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SEMINARIAN SCHOLARSHIP

The Pamfil and Maria Bujea Seminarian Scholarship is a scholarship given once only to a male or female Canadian or American Orthodox Christian citizen studying with the intention of serving, for a given period of time, the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America in Canada. The time to be served is at the discretion of the ruling hierarchy. The number of scholarships awarded to qualified students is determined by the committee. The scholarship is given directly to the School of Theology at the beginning of the recipient's second year of continued theological studies. **To be considered for the Autumn-Winter Term, a fully completed application must be postmarked on or before May 31, 2016. Applicants may obtain requirements from <http://www.roea.org/bujea.html>.**

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Descent of the Holy Spirit, Oregon City, OR.....	\$3,825.00
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Middle Village, NY.....	\$3,825.00
St Mary, Laval, QC.....	\$3,750.00
St Dimitrie the New, Frederick, CO.....	\$3,450.00
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Merrillville, IN.....	\$3,380.00
St Anne, Jacksonville, FL.....	\$3,300.00
St Thomas, St Louis, MO.....	\$3,000.00
Holy Resurrection, Warren, OH.....	\$3,150.00
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Apopka, FL.....	\$3,150.00
St Paraschiva Mission, Laval, QC.....	\$2,640.00
Holy Cross, Phoenix, AZ.....	\$2,550.00
St John, Denver, CO.....	\$2,550.00
St John, Charlotte, NC.....	\$2,550.00
Holy Transfiguration, Manchester, CT.....	\$2,400.00

*Cont. on page 16*

## Financial Report *Cont. from page 15*

St Elias, Richmond Hill, ON .....	\$2,325.00
Holy Cross, Phoenix, AZ .....	\$2,250.00
St Athanasius Mission, Naperville, IL .....	\$2,250.00
St Stephen, Tampa, FL .....	\$2,250.00
St Andrew, McKees Rocks, PA .....	\$2,100.00
St Elias, Ellwood City, PA .....	\$1,950.00
St Raphael of Brooklyn, Detroit, MI .....	\$1,950.00
Annunciation, Grand Rapids, MI .....	\$1,650.00
St Anne, Pomona, CA .....	\$1,350.00
Holy Protection, Pierrefonds, QC .....	\$1,230.00

### 2015 EPISCOPATE ASSESSMENTS

St Andrew, Potomac, MD .....	\$3,680.00
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Warren, MI .....	\$3,230.00

### BUCHAREST FIRE VICTIMS APPEAL

St Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH .....	\$750.00
Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL .....	\$700.00

### DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS

St Dumitru, New York, NY .....	\$11,500.00
National A.R.F.O.R.A. ....	\$3,170.00
(St Paraschiva Mission Fund Project)	
Rev Fr & Psia Dan Chirtu, Aurora, ON .....	\$200.00

### VATRA GENERATIONS

Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA .....	\$5,000.00
(IMO Archbishop Valerian & Mother Alexandra)	
Society Farsarotul, Trumbull, CT .....	\$2,000.00
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Elkins Park, PA .....	\$2,290.00
Ak-Roy Jr, Fairlawn, OH .....	\$1,400.00
Judge John & Veta Regule, The Villages, FL ....	\$1,008.02
M/M John Santeiu Jr, Garden City, MI .....	\$1,000.00
Michaela Teodorescu, Devon, PA .....	\$977.70
Holy Trinity, Miramar, FL .....	\$825.00
Father David & Psia Stephanie Subu, Springfield, VA .....	\$700.00
Sandra Cotosman, Addison, IL .....	\$500.00
Horia & Mihalea Draghiciu, Muncie, IN .....	\$500.00
M/M John Pop, Northbrook, IL .....	\$450.00
St George Cathedral, Regina, SK .....	\$377.03
Rev Dn Nicholas & Catherine Dujmovic, Vienna, VA .....	\$300.00
Holy Ascension, Montreal, QC .....	\$300.00
Rachel Chebeleu, North Wales, PA .....	\$200.00
John & Domnica Shunda, Fullerton, CA .....	\$200.00
Dan Iliescu, Burlington, ON .....	\$193.00
Laura Bogdan, Doylestown, PA .....	\$150.00
Doru Posteuca, St Paul, MN .....	\$150.00
Liliana Badea, Norwood, NJ .....	\$100.00
Patricia Barbat, Hermitage, PA .....	\$100.00
V Rev Fr & Psia Leonte Copacia Jr, Shelby Twp, MI .....	\$100.00
Theodore & Eva Gavala, Glenside, PA .....	\$100.00
Louise M Gibb, Brookfield, OH .....	\$100.00
Mary Ann & Michael Glodich, Cleveland, OH ....	\$100.00
Valerie Nutial, Chicago, IL .....	\$100.00
M/M George Oancea, Jackson, MI .....	\$100.00
M/M Robert Omilian, Sterling Hts, MI .....	\$100.00
Christine & Anthony Pacuraru, Jenkintown, PA ...	\$100.00
Dan Virgil Pacuraru, Jenkintown, PA .....	\$100.00
Phil & Connie Paranuik, Fredericton, NB .....	\$100.00
Kathleen Podoba-Lind, Willoughby, OH .....	\$100.00

Judy Shonn, Austintown, OH .....	\$100.00
Anita Constant, Chicago, IL .....	\$97.50
Dr & Mrs Adam Frent, Tamarac, FL .....	\$97.50
Doina Dumitrescu, Princeton, NJ .....	\$75.00
Marius & Liliana Gogiu, West Windsor, NJ .....	\$75.00
John & Marlene Choban, Westlake, OH .....	\$50.00
Adrian & Maria Leu, Yonkers, NY .....	\$50.00
Denisa A Hristea, Woodbury Heights, NJ .....	\$50.00
Targvinus & Monica Stefan, Havertown, PA .....	\$50.00
M/M Ovidiu Grama, Berea, OH .....	\$50.00
M/M Valer Pufescu, Naples, FL .....	\$50.00
Constance Trollan, Juneau, AK .....	\$48.80
Joanne Davis, Sandy Hook, CT .....	\$48.60
Michael & Chris Preda, Georgetown, TX .....	\$40.00
(IMO Michael Grabowski)	
Victor & Floarea Fonta, Laurel Springs, NJ .....	\$20.00
Orlando & Elisabeta Catana, Sterling, VA .....	\$15.00

## Hierarchal Schedule *Cont. from page 12*

**November 30. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery.** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for St. Andrew the Apostle.

**December 5-6. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Saturday:** Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

**December 13. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery.** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

**December 20. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery.** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

**December 24. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery.** Vigil for feast of Nativity of Our Lord.

**December 25. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral.** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for feast of Nativity of Our Lord.

**December 26. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery.** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for feast of Synaxis of the Holy Birthgiver of God.

**December 27. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery.** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Ordination of Archdeacon David Oancea into the Holy Priesthood.

**December 31. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery.** Vigil for feast of Circumcision of Our Lord.

## What Youth Ministry Says ...

*Cont. from page 13*

not most, of the young people who are falling away from Orthodoxy are doing just that: falling away from Orthodoxy, though they are still looking for Christ.

Because, tragically, we are not introducing them to Him. Christ said “feed my sheep.” To do that, we must have food ourselves. **We must know Christ ourselves.** *A mist in the pulpit is a fog in the pews.*

*From the Orthodox Observer, December 2015, p. 31.*

*Steven Christoforou is the Director of Y2AM (the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries) and the Office of Camping Ministries of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.*

# COMUNICAT DE PRESĂ AL PATRIARHIEI ECUMENICE PRIVIND SINAXA ÎNTÂISTĂTORILOR DE BISERICI ORTODOXE, CHAMBÉSY, 21-28 IANUARIE 2016



La invitația Sanctității Sale Patriarhul Ecumenic Bartolomeu, Sinaxa Întâistătătorilor de Biserici Ortodoxe Autocefale a avut loc la Centrul Ortodox al Patriarhiei Ecumenice de la Chambésy-Geneva, în perioada 21 – 28 ianuarie 2016. La Sinaxă au fost prezenți următorii Întâistătători:

Patriarhul Ecumenic Bartolomeu  
Patriarhul Teodor al Alexandriei  
Patriarhul Teofil al Ierusalimului  
Patriarhul Kirill al Moscovei  
Patriarhul Irinej al Serbiei  
Patriarhul Daniel al României  
Patriarhul Neofit al Bulgariei  
Patriarhul Ilia al Georgiei  
Arhiepiscopul Hrisostom al Ciprului  
Arhiepiscopul Anastasie al Albaniei  
Arhiepiscopul Rastislav al Ținuturilor Cehe și Slovaciei

Următorii Întâistătători nu au putut fi prezenți: Preafericirile Lor Patriarhul Ioan X al Antiohiei și Mitropolitul Sava al Varșoviei și al întregii Polonii, din motive de sănătate, și Arhiepiscopul Ieronim al Atenei și al întregii Elade, din motive personale. Totuși, toți cei trei Primați au fost reprezentați de către delegațiile oficiale ale Bisericilor lor.

Primații Bisericilor Ortodoxe s-au întâlnit pentru a finaliza textele destinate Sfântului și Marelui Sinod. În cadrul Sinaxei, duminică, 24 ianuarie, a fost oficiată Sfânta Liturghie la Sfânta Biserică stavropighială Sfântul Pavel. Împreună cu Patriarhul Ecumenic, care a prezidat Liturghia, Preafericirile Lor și șefii delegațiilor Bisericilor Ortodoxe au conslujit liturghia, cu excepția conducătorului delegației Patriarhiei Antiohiei.

În timpul Sinaxei, ale cărei sesiuni au fost ținute în duhul apostolic al „adevărului în iubire” (Efeseni 4, 15),

în acord și înțelegere, Întâistătătorii au afirmat decizia lor de a convoca Sfântul și Marele Sinod. Sinodul va avea loc la Academia Ortodoxă din Creta, în perioada 16 – 27 iunie 2016. În acest sens, Întâistătătorii cheamă, cu smerenie, harul și binecuvântarea Preasfintei Treimi și solicită rugăciunile stăruitoare ale pleromei Bisericii, ale clericilor și laicilor, pentru perioada rămasă până la Sfântul și Marele Sinod, precum și pe durata lucrărilor acestuia.

Temele aprobate oficial pentru a fi examinate și adoptate de Sfântul și Marele Sinod sunt: Misiunea Bisericii Ortodoxe în lumea contemporană, Diaspora Ortodoxă, Autonomia și modul proclamării acesteia, Sfânta Taină a Cununiei și impedimentele la căsătorie, Importanța postului și a respectării acestuia astăzi, Relațiile Bisericii Ortodoxe cu restul lumii creștine. La hotărârea Primaților, toate documentele aprobate vor fi făcute publice.

Întâistătătorii au discutat și hotărât, de asemenea, înființarea unui Secretariat Panortodox, regulamentul de funcționare a Sinodului, participarea observatorilor eterodocși la începerea și încheierea lucrărilor, precum și acoperirea cheltuielilor Sinodului.

De asemenea, Întâistătătorii și-au exprimat susținerea față de creștinii prizonieri din Orientul Mijlociu și preocuparea constantă față de cei doi Mitropoliți răpiți: Paul Yazigi, din partea Patriarhiei Antiohiei, și Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, din partea Arhiepiscopiei Siro-iacobite.

Lucrările Sinaxei s-au încheiat în seara zilei de miercuri, 27 ianuarie 2016, prin discursul de încheiere al Sanctității Sale Patriarhul Ecumenic Bartolomeu, Președintele Sinaxei.

Dat la Centrul Ortodox al Patriarhiei Ecumenice din Chambésy-Geneva, în data de 27 ianuarie 2016

**Secretariatul Sfintei Sinaxe**



# CE SPUN SFINȚII PĂRINȚI DESPRE EXORCISME ȘI EXORCIȘTI

Ieromonah Petru Pruteanu

În ultima vreme s-a înmulțit numărul preoților „făcători de minuni”, care propun ședințe publice de exorcizare. Dar nu știu de ce, în rezultat, numărul demonizaților nu scade, ci crește tot mai mult. De ce oare?

Puțini își mai amintesc de istorioara vindecării de către Macarie Egipteanul a unei demonizate, căreia sfântul i-a zis: *«Niciodată să nu neglijezi a merge la biserica lui Dumnezeu și a te împărtăși cu Tainele lui Hristos Domnul! Aceasta [demonizarea] ți sa întâmplat pentru că timp de cinci săptămâni nu teai apropiat de Preacuratele Taine»*.<sup>[1]</sup> Ideea poate fi ușor observată și într-o rugăciune înainte de împărtășire, în care Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur își arată teama că, dacă nu se va împărtăși mai des, „va fi prins de lupul cel înțeleghător”<sup>[2]</sup>.

Deci, principala cauză a demonizărilor este lipsa unei vieți duhovnicești ancorate în Tainele Bisericii. Un creștin care se spovedește și se împărtășește sistematic, se roagă dimineața și seara, respectă posturile și împlinește poruncile lui Dumnezeu, deși poate avea destule ispite de la diavolul, nu poate fi totuși stăpânit de acesta. Iar dacă preoții exorcisti nu-i învață și nu-i ajută pe oameni să ducă o viață duhovnicească echilibrată, ci doar se promovează pe ei înșiși ca mari făcători de minuni, diavolul își bate și mai mult joc atât de săracii oameni, cât și de preoți.

Este important să înțelegem cine poate citi exorcisme, cui pot fi ele citite și în ce condiții. În mod normal, **exorcismele se citesc doar oamenilor demonizați și fără prezența publicului**. La slujbele de exorcizare, care trebuie precedate obligatoriu de spovedanie, pot participa cel mult rudele demonizatului, pentru a se ruga alături de preot și pentru a-i ușura suferința celui posedat. Este de asemenea recomandabil ca exorcismele să se citească în perioadele sau în zilele de post și în legătură cu Liturgia și împărtășirea.

Personalitatea exorcistului este o problemă ceva mai complicată și, deja în sec. IV, Biserica a rânduit ca această slujire harismatică să se facă **doar cu aprobarea episcopului**. Prin urmare, orice preot care vrea să citească alte exorcisme decât cele baptismale, trebuie să aibă binecuvântarea ierarhului său (cf. Canonul 26 Laodiceea: *„Nu se cuvine ca cei ce nu sunt înaintați de către episcopi să exorcizeze, nici în biserici, nici în case”*).

Pe lângă această cerință canonică, neglijată cu nonșalanță de cei mai mulți, Tradiția Bisericii vorbește și de anumite condiții duhovnicești necesare celui care își asumă această slujire. În legătură cu aceasta voi



reda câteva citate din “Convorbirile duhovnicești” ale Sf. Ioan Casian:

*Bărbații [virtuoși] nu se socoteau cu nici un merit pentru puterea lor de a face minuni și mărturiseau că acesta nu este un dar al lor, ci cel al milei Domnului, respingând cu astfel de cuvinte apostolice admirația altora față de ei: “Bărbați frați, de ce vă mirați cu ochii ațintiți la noi, ca și cum cu a noastră putere sau cucernicie l-am fi făcut pe acesta să umble” (Fapte 3:12). Ei spuneau că nu trebuie lăudat cineva pentru darurile și minunile lui Dumnezeu, ci mai degrabă pentru roada virtuților, care ies din puterea minții și a faptelor. Adesea, cum am mai spus, oamenii stricați la minte și vinovați în fața credinței în numele Domnului alungă demonii și săvârșesc mari minuni.*<sup>[3]</sup>

*Însuși înfăptuitorul tuturor semnelor și am minunilor, pe când chema pe ucenici să le dăruiască învățătura Sa, le-a arătat limpede ce trebuiau să învețe de la El adevărații și prea aleșii lui credincioși: „Veniți, a zis El, și învățați de la Mine [...] că sunt blând și smerit cu inima” (Matei 11:29). Aceasta este cu puțință tuturor să învețe și să săvârșească, dar lucrarea semnelor și a minunilor nici nu este întotdeauna trebuincioasă și folositoare tuturor și nici nu se îngăduie oricui. Umilința, așadar, este învățătoarea tuturor virtuților; ea este temelie cea mai trainică a clădirii cerești, ea este darul propriu și măreț al Mântuitorului. [...] Iar cel ce dorește să poruncească duhurilor necurate sau să dea sănătate celor bolnavi și să arate mulțimilor vreun semn minunat lăudându-se, oricât ar chema numele lui Hristos, acesta este totuși străin de Hristos,*

pentru că mintea trufașă nu urmează pe Învățătorul smereniei. [...] De aceea mai marii noștri niciodată n-au socotit că sunt monahi cinstiți și scutiți de boala slavei deșarte cei care în auzul poporului spun că scot duhurile rele și defăimează în mulțimea de admiratori acest har pe care și l-au pretins ei înșiși. [...] Și de aceea, dacă va face vreun oarecare ceva din acestea, nu va avea laudă din partea noastră pentru semne, ci pentru podoaba vieții sale curate, și nu trebuie căutat dacă i se supun demonii, ci dacă are părțile iubirii descrise de Apostol (I Corinteni 13:1-8).<sup>[4]</sup>

Este mai mare minune să scoți din propriul trup îndemnurile la desfrânare, decât să alungi duhurile rele din trupurile altora; este mai măreț semn să oprești prin virtutea răbdării pornirile ucigașe ale mâniei, decât să poruncești stăpânitorilor văzduhului; și este de mai mult folos să-ți ferești inima de mușcăturile foarte lacome ale deznădejzii, decât să îndepărtezi bolile și neputințele trupești ale altora. În sfârșit, din multe puncte de vedere este o mai strălucită virtute și o înaintare mai vrednică de laudă să-ți vindeci bolile propriului suflet, decât pe cele ale trupului altuia. Cu cât sufletul este mai presus de trup și mai trebuincioasă sănătatea lui, și cu cât este mai prețioasă și mai deosebită ființa lui, cu atât este mai rău și mai primejdios ca el să se prăbușească.<sup>[5]</sup>

Un lucru interesant îl spune și avva Ioan, ucenicul lui avva Varsanufie:

„În orice patimă nu e mai de folos decât a chema numele lui Dumnezeu. Cât despre împotrivirea în cuvânt (față de patimă), ea nu este cu putință oricărui om, ci numai celor puternici, căroră dracii li se supun. Căci dacă vreunul din cei neputincioși vrea să li se împotrivească, dracii râd de el ca de unul ce vrea să li se împotrivească aflându-se sub puterea lor. La fel, certarea lor e cu putință numai celor mari, care au putere. Pe care dintre sfinți îl afli certând pe diavol ca sfântul Mihail (Iuda 9-10)? Iar aceasta pentru că avea putere. Nouă celor slabi nu ne este dat decât să alergăm la numele lui Iisus. Căci patimile, după Scriptură, sunt draci și aceștia ies în numele lui Iisus (Fapte 8:7, 16:18)”.<sup>[6]</sup>

Reieșind din toate acestea, ne dăm seama că nu oricine poate citi exorcisme, mai ales că lucrul acesta nici nu este necesar. Și nu mă refer aici la diferențierea periculoasă dintre preoții căsătoriți și cei călugăriți, căci, bineînțeles, nu tunderea monahală face pe cineva vrednic de a citi exorcisme și nici lungimea bărbii, ci autoritatea canonică și duhovnicească pe care trebuie să o aibă un preot.

Am auzit de la unii preoți justificarea că, întrucât textul “molitfelor” atribuite Sfântului Vasile<sup>[7]</sup> se regăsește în orice ediție a Molitfelnicului (iar mai nou este disponibil și pe internet), înseamnă că „molitfele” pot fi citite de orice preot și oricărui credincios, pentru a preveni o eventuală demonizare. Totuși, accesibilitatea acestor rugăciuni nu trebuie să devină o ispită pentru nimeni, căci la fel de accesibile sunt și rânduielile de

tundere în monahism sau cele de hirotonie, dar asta nu înseamnă că ele pot fi săvârșite de oricine și oricui.

Tocmai de aceea, pentru a înlătura diferitele abuzuri și sminteli atât de răspândite în practica parohială și mănăstirească, cred că editorii Molitfelnicului ar trebui să facă niște precizări mai clare în introducerea acestor rugăciuni, căci la moment chiar nu-i clar cine, cui, când și cum pot fi ele citite.

[1] *Viața Sfântului Macarie Egipteanul*, în *PSB* vol. 16, București, 1992, p. 27. Apropo, cinci săptămâni sunt doar 35 de zile, adică mai puțin decât recomandarea unor duhovnici de a primi împărtășania nu mai des decât o dată la 40 de zile.

[2] Din învățătura Sfântului Macarie desprindem ideea că împărtășirea rară favorizează lucrarea diavolului. Este deci explicabil numărul mare de demonizații din zilele noastre. Posedarea demonică poate să nu aibă legătură directă cu împărtășirea, dar în același timp poate fi rezultatul unei împărtășiri cu nevrednicie, cum a fost cazul lui Iuda, precum și cauza unei împărtășiri rare, cum învață Sfinții Părinți.

[3] Ioan Casian, *Despre harismele dumnezeiești*, VI, în *PSB* 57 (1990), p. 572.

[4] *Ibidem*, VII, pp. 572-573.

[5] *Ibidem*, VIII, pp. 573-574.

[6] *Răspunsul 304*, în *Filocalia* vol. 11, pp. 386-387. (am citat după ediția electronică)

[7] Unii le numesc și „cartea Sfântului Vasile”, fără să știe că Sf. Vasile cel Mare are o mulțime de scrieri și cărți, iar aceste rugăciuni de exorcizare care i se atribuie, cel mai probabil nu-i aparțin. Mai sunt și unii care, atunci când aud de „rugăciunile Sfântului Vasile” nu au nici o reacție specială, dar imediat cum aud cuvântul slavonesc „molitfă” (sau schimonosit: „moliftă”), imediat au emoții, intuind ceva „puternic”, chiar dacă „rugăciune” și „molitfă” înseamnă același lucru.

*Învățăm de la Sfinții Părinți...*

## SFÂNTUL IOAN GURĂ DE AUR: DESPRE BISERICĂ

„Nimic nu este mai puternic decât Biserica. Nimic nu se ridică la valoarea Bisericii. Biserica este mai înaltă decât cerul, mai întinsă decât pământul, mai luminoasă decât soarele. Câți nu au luptat cu ea și nu au reușit să o biruiască? Toți cei care au luptat împotriva ei au fost dați pierzaniei, pe când Biserica a urcat la cer. Biserica are o asemenea putere, încât atunci când se pornește război împotriva ei, ea iese biruitoare, când este vorbită de rău, ea se întărește, iar când este batjorcorită, se face mai strălucitoare ca înainte. Este rănită, dar nu cade. Este lovită de valuri, dar nu se răstoarnă. Se pornește furtună împotriva ei, dar nu naufragiază. Luptă și nu este biruită. Dacă te lupți cu un om, fie vei birui, fie vei fi biruit. Dar dacă te lupți cu Biserica, este cu neputință să biruești, pentru că Dumnezeu este mai puternic decât oricine. Dacă însuși Dumnezeu a zidit-o, cine o poate urni din loc?”



# DIN VIAȚA PAROHILOR...



**Misiunea Sfântul Nectarie, Stoney Creek, Ontario - Părintele Paroh Ioan Rădulescu împreună cu credincioșii prezenți la Sfânta Liturghie de Crăciun marcând primul an de existență a misiunii, 25 decembrie 2015.**

**Parohia Sfântul Ierarh Nicolae, Ottawa, Ontario - Părintele Paroh Daniel Banu, împreună cu Părintele Vicar Dan Hoarște și credincioșii la Sfânta Liturghie cu ocazia hramului, 6 decembrie 2015.**



**Parohia Pogorârea Duhului Sfânt, Elkins Park, Philadelphia - Taina Sfântului Maslu - 13 decembrie 2015. Părinții Vicari Dan Hoarște și David Oancea împreună Părintele Paroh Adrian Grigoraș și clerul din parohiile din New York, New Jersey și Washington DC.**



# MAICA ALEXANDRA – PRINCIPESA ILEANA A ROMÂNIEI 25 DE ANI DE LA TRECEREA LA CELE VEȘNICE



La 21 ianuarie 2016 se împlinesc 25 de ani de când poporul roman cel binecredincios a dobândit încă un înger rugător către tronul Preasfintei Treimi: **Alteta Sa Regala Principesa Ileana (5 ianuarie 1909 - † 21 ianuarie 1991), ultima fiică a Regelui Ferdinand și a Reginei Maria. În 1967, a îmbrăcat haina monahiei, devenind Maica Alexandra** când a fondat Mănăstiriele Ortodoxa

“Schimbarea la Față” din Elwood City, Pennsylvania.

Redăm mai jos, în aducere aminte și spre zidirea sufletească a tuturor, o frumoasă mărturie a Maicii Alexandra despre cinstitele netrupești puteri ale îngerilor...care zi de zi ne înconjoară și ne însoțesc în lucrarea spre mântuire din această viață:

*”Intr-o zi, dis-de-dimineață, când aveam șapte ani, am văzut îngeri. Sunt tot atât de sigură azi cum am fost și atunci. Nu am visat, nici „n-am avut vedenii”. Știu precis că ei erau acolo, cu mare claritate. N-am fost nici mirată, nici înspăimântată. N-am fost nici măcar înfiorată, ci teribil de bucuroasă. Am vrut să le vorbesc și să-i ating. Camera noastră, a copiilor, era luminată de zorii zilei și am văzut un grup de îngeri stând în jurul patului fratelui meu mai mic. Eram atentă, altfel n-aș fi putut auzi vocile lor.*

*Purtau veșminte lungi, vapoase, de diverse culori pale. Părul le ajungea până la umeri și era diferit colorat, blond, roșcat și brun închis. Nu aveau aripi. La picioarele patului fratelui meu, Mircea, puțin mai la o parte, stătea o ființă cerească. Era mai înalt și nemaipomenit de frumos, cu aripi mari, albe. În mână dreaptă purta o lumânare aprinsă.*

*Nu părea să aparțină grupului de îngeri strânși în jurul patului. El stătea deoparte și aștepta. L-am recunoscut a fi îngerul păzitor. Am observat apoi că la picioarele patului meu stătea o făptură cerească asemănătoare. Era înalt, veșmântul lui era albastru, cu mâneci largi. Avea părul castaniu și fața ovală; frumusețea sa n-o pot descrie, pentru că nu poate fi comparată cu nimic omenesc. În spatele lui, aripile i se înălțau lateral și în sus.*

*O mână îi era ridicată la piept, iar în cealaltă purta o lumânare aprinsă. Zâmbetul lui era cu totul*

*îngerească: dragoste, bunătate, înțelegere și siguranță izvorau din el. Încântată, am trecut peste cuvertură și, îngenunchind la capul patului, am întins mâna, cu dorința arzătoare de a-l atinge pe surâzătorul meu păzitor, dar el a făcut un pas înapoi, a întins mâna prevenitor și a dat ușor din cap. Eram atât de aproape de el, încât l-aș fi putut atinge cu ușurință. „Oh, te rog, nu pleca!”, i-am spus, cuvinte la care toți ceilalți îngeri au privit spre mine și mi s-a părut c-am auzit un râs cristalin, dar de acest sunet nu sunt sigură, deși știu că râdeau. Apoi au dispărut.*

*Nu eram decât un copil când mi-am văzut îngerul păzitor. Pe măsură ce timpul a trecut, sporadic mi l-am amintit și i-am recunoscut prezența, dar cel mai des l-am ignorat. Paradoxal, doar răul și supărarea m-au trezit și mi-au limpezit viziunea.*

*Poate că datorită celor văzute și celor suferite în război și sub ocupația comunistă, în anii ce au urmat, am fost supusă unor coșmaruri diabolice. Singura mea salvare în timpul acestor vise era să fac semnul Crucii. Am știut întotdeauna că eram adormită, că era un vis conștient dar era o tortură ca să mă trezesc.*

*Intr-o zi, privind la o colecție de icoane vechi, am văzut un triptic, reprezentând îngerul păzitor; în panoul din mijloc el apăra somnul plin de vise rele al celui pe care-l păzea. Mai târziu, când eram bântuită a nu știu câta oară de unul dintre cele mai înfricoșătoare coșmaruri, când să mă trezesc mi-a venit în minte icoana și, cu o limpezime extraordinară, mi-am reamintit că, fiind copil, îmi văzusem îngerul păzitor, întărită, m-am întors imediat la îngerul meu păzitor, așa cum nu mai făcusem din copilărie; și am știut că stă lângă mine, protejându-mă. (...) îngerii au o miraculoasă realitate.*

*Activitatea lor printre noi a devenit pentru mine o realitate vitală, pozitivă. Nu mai caut să-i văd, cunoașterea prezenței lor îmi este suficientă. Ca să încerci să ai o viziune a îngerilor, sau să sperii să o ai sau să ceri așa ceva, e o greșeală. Să cauți intimitatea cu ei, prin alte mijloace decât harul lui Dumnezeu, este zadarnic; Dumnezeu Iisus Hristos este singurul nostru drum spre unirea cu Tatăl și cu toate creaturile Sale.”*

**Maica Alexandra**



# BISERICA ȘI MASS-MEDIA

Biserica este instituția sfântă întemeiată de Cuvântul cel întrupat al lui Dumnezeu - Iisus Hristos, spre mântuirea și sfințirea oamenilor și care posedă autoritatea Lui dumnezeiască. Biserica o alcătuiesc oamenii care au aceeași credință și se împărtășesc cu aceleași Sfinte Taine. Clerul conducător își derivă puterea, prin succesiune neîntreruptă de la Apostoli și prin ei, de la Domnul.

Viața de comuniune a oamenilor cu Dumnezeu, prin Hristos, în Duhul Sfânt, se manifestă în plan exterior prin acte de credință: iubire față de semenii, fapte bune, participarea la cultul Bisericii, rugăciune personală și cultivare spirituală. Deși Biserica (înțeleasă ca o comunitate a oamenilor credincioși) se pregătește pentru o altă lume (a spiritului și a virtuții) ce va începe o dată cu Judecata de Apoi, lucrarea ei, de sfințire a oamenilor, se desfășoară aici și acum. Altfel spus, Biserica există în istorie, dar nu se confundă cu ea: „*Împărăția Mea nu este din lumea aceasta*” (Ioan XVIII, 36).

Dar, tocmai pentru că dezideratul Împărăției lui Dumnezeu nu poate fi realizat decât trecând prin istorie și depășind-o totodată, Biserica propovăduiește cerul în limbajul pământului. Cuvântul rămâne același, doar cuvintele se schimbă. De la un popor la altul și de la o epocă la alta. Fiecare persoană umană care a existat vreodată a avut propriul său limbaj, nivel de înțelegere și bagaj de cunoștințe. Cu acestea s-a și înfățișat înaintea scaunului de judecată al lui Dumnezeu și în funcție de acestea i s-a rânduit porția de veșnicie.

Orice adversar al darwinismului este însă nevoit să recunoască faptul că trecerea omului prin istorie este una evolutivă. Omul evoluează, și odată cu el, nivelul de înțelegere și suma de cunoștințe pe care le posedă. Trăitorul secolului XXI comunică prin intermediul unor cuvinte având sensuri și putere de expresie schimbate față de generațiile anterioare. La fel și limbajul teologiei: împrumută termenii prezentului, sau îi actualizează pe cei vechi. Aceasta deoarece depozitarea teologiei, Biserica, nu poate face abstracție de structura gândirii omului contemporan.

Biserica nu poate face abstracție nici de inovațiile în domeniul transmiterii și prezentării informației, în care secolul trecut a excelat. Între acestea, pe un loc de frunte stau onorabil, mijloacele de comunicare în masă: mass-media. Cum le arată și denumirea, aceste mijloace slujesc comunicării interumane, așa cum Biserica slujește comuniunii. Iar dacă ne gândim că fără comunicare, comuniunea nu este posibilă, ajungem la o singură și fericită concluzie: Biserica are nevoie de mass-media, cu toate diviziunile ei: presă scrisă, radio, televiziune și spațiul web.

Nu toți creștinii vin la Biserică. Dar Biserica se gândește și la aceștia: „*Nu trebuie să neglijăm faptul că prin prezența sa în mass-media, Biserica se adre-*

*sează unor oameni pe care cu greu i-ar putea întâlni altminteri. Mass-media reprezintă în aceste cazuri o șansă, un început de dialog, pe care lucrarea tainică a Duhului Sfânt și luminile din căile comunicaționale le-ar amplifica tot mai profund*”.(1)

Propovăduind Adevărul de la o redacție, ca de la un alt fel de amvon, teologul-jurnalist, ca reprezentant al Bisericii, vine în întâmpinarea omului modern. Predica poate lua și forma unui reportaj, cateheza poate să capete aspectul unui interviu, un simplu cuvânt de folos se poate metanorfoza într-un editorial de ziar. Iar beneficiarul lor poate să își schimbe într-o bună zi optica și să dea mai multă importanță vieții spirituale.

Presa bisericească are mai multe obiective:

- promovarea credinței și vieții creștine promovarea educației moral-religioase
- valorificarea culturii creștine în context național și internațional
- susținerea activităților social-filantropice ale Bisericii
- inițierea și sprijinirea unor activități educative pentru protejarea mediului înconjurător
- promovarea dialogului cu alte biserici și instituții care cultivă demnitatea persoanelor umane și valorile spirituale
- ridicarea unor semne de întrebare specifice omului modern
- surprinderea vieții religioase cotidiene a orașului

Patriarhul Daniel a afirmat la inaugurarea postului de radio TRINITAS - Iași că „*presa bisericească trebuie să fie Liturghia prelungită în lume*”.

Un bun jurnalist religios face credința interesantă și aduce la Hristos pe mulți. Fără a fi suficientă în sine, presa bisericească dinamizează dogmele Bisericii, le traduce după nevoile cotidiene ale omului contemporan și le activează potențialul latent.

Și așa încheia cu aceste cuvinte: „*Dacă nu vom face sfințenia mai interesantă decât păcatul, nimeni nu va mai fi prins în mrețele ei*.”(2)

**Diacon Nicolae Marinescu**

Catedrala Buna Vestire, Montreal

Pr. Nicolae Dascălu, *Biserica și mass-media sau despre metamorfozele comunicării*, în „Teologie și viață”, nr. 5-12 / 1998, p. 120

Pr. prof. Ioan Buga - Facultatea de Teologie Ortodoxă din Constanța



# LA SUCEAVA S-A INAUGURAT „MARELE PREMIU: MITROPOLITUL BARTOLOMEU VALERIU ANANIA”, ACORDAT, LA ACEASTĂ EDIȚIE, POETULUI DUMITRU ICHIM (CANADA)

Stimați participanți la Simpozion,

Îmi face o deosebită plăcere să vă anunț că, începând cu această ediție a Simpozionului Național cu tema „Valori naționale în creația Mitropolitului Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania”, Asociația Școlară pentru Educație și Dezvoltare din Suceava, împreună cu Fundația „Mitropolitul Bartolomeu” din Cluj, instituie „Marele Premiu: Mitropolitul Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania”, care se va acorda unor personalități reprezentative ale culturii române din țară și din străinătate, pentru excelența operei lor și pentru efortul creator pus în slujba neamului și a identității noastre naționale. Același premiu se va acorda și unor autori de sinteze critice dedicate vieții, marilor proiecte teologice și literare sau modelului de slujire ortodoxă a Înalțului Ierarh.

Fericitul câștigător de anul acesta al Premiului este părintele și poetul Dumitru Ichim, un discipol sensibil și admirator al Mitropolitului, pentru excepționala lui integrală lirică și pentru remarcabila activitate de zidire sufletească în comunitatea românilor din Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. Este ctitorul unei sfinte biserici înălțate din temelii în același oraș, al unui Centru cultural și organizatorul de decenii al săptămânii de spiritualitate românească de la Hamilton (Canada). Ultimele două volume monumentale ca abordare mistic-filosofică a unor paradigme de istorie biblică sunt chiar cele prezentate astăzi: Psaltirea apocrifă a dreptului Iov, ediția II-a, revizuită și adăugită (Editura Școala Ardeleană, Cluj, 2015) și *Așa-i cânta îndrăgostitul din Sumer. Poeme de dragoste* (Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2016). Fac precizarea că singurele criterii de acordare a Premiului vor fi cele de valoare și de reprezentativitate, în încercarea de a provoca colegial și responsabil o competiție a dialogului, a comuniunii și a dragostei între toți cei care se regăsesc în bucuria și în revelația jertfei creatoare.

Vă mulțumesc! (Aurel Sasu)  
Suceava, 22 ianuarie 2016

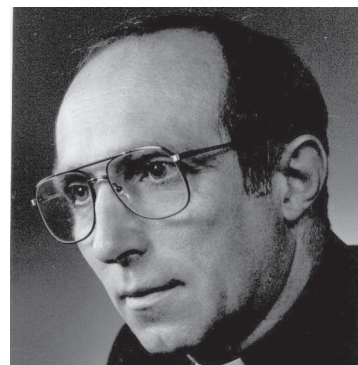
## Date biobibliografice

Poetul, prozatorul și eseistul Dumitru Ichim s-a născut la 14 august 1944, în comuna Dărmănești, jud. Bacău, România; fiul lui Dumitru Ichim, cântăreț bisericesc, și al Elenei (născută Camara).

A urmat Seminarul Teologic de la Mănăstirea Neamț (1959-1964). Este licențiat al Institutului Teologic din București (1968). Teza de licență e susținută cu prof. Petru Rezuș; Cursuri de doctorat în Teologie dogmatică, între 1968 și 1970, la București, sub în-

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drumarea prof. Dumitru Stăniloae. Studiază la Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, Garrett Methodist Seminary, ambele din Evanston, Illinois, și la McCormick Presbyterian Seminary, Chicago, Illinois (1970-1972); continuă studiile ca bursier al Consiliului Mondial al Bisericii



la Princeton Presbyterian Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey (1972-1973). Îndrumător al tezei de doctorat, intitulată *The Orthodox Liturgy and the World*, i-a fost teologul american James McCord (1973).

În 1974 se stabilește în Canada. În același an este hirotonit preot al Parohiei „Sfinții Apostoli Petru și Pavel” din Kitchener, Ontario (Canada).

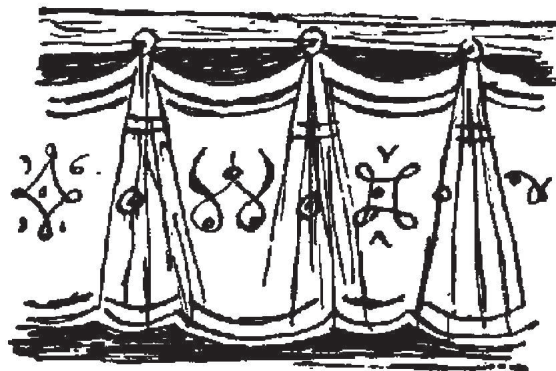
Din 1978 este preot paroh la Biserica „Sfântul Ioan Botezătorul” din Kitchener, Ontario. Desfășoară o susținută și rodnică activitate în rândurile comunității românești din Kitchener, contribuind în mod hotărâtor la înființarea Centrului Cultural Românesc și la ridicarea unei noi biserici ortodoxe române.

Începând cu 1979, face parte din colegiul redacțional al revistei *Cuvântul românesc* din Hamilton (Ontario).

Colaborează la *Amfiteatru*, *Gazeta literară*, *Luceafărul*, *Steaua*, *Tribuna*, *Caiete Silvane*, *Poesis*, *Studii teologice*, *Telegraful român*, *Revista Scriitorilor Români* (Germania), *Lumină lină / Gracious Light*, *Micromagazin*, *Drum*, *Solia* (SUA), *Luceafărul* (Canada) etc.

Editează revista literară *Orpheus* (1988), buletinul parohial *Rădăcini* și col. *Vestitorul român canadian*.

A introdus în literatura română genul de poezie fixă japoneză „haiku” și „tanka”.







## CONFERINTA “VIATA DE FAMILIE SI ORGANIZATIILE AUXILIARE ALE EPISCOPIEI” 23-26 Iunie, 2016

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**Motto:**

**“Cu Credinta si cu Dragoste sa va Apropiati”**

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- Fiecare are darul Sfantului Duh - rolul fiecaruia in Biserica
  - Familia Ortodoxa: ce este diferit sau asemanator fata de alte familii?

- Rugandu-ne o “Rugaciune din inima”
- Proiectul “Generatiile Vatra”: Cum pot sa ajut?
- Si multe altele...
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  - Bibliografia o gasiti la: [www.orthodoxyouth.org/Acts](http://www.orthodoxyouth.org/Acts)
    - \*\*Premii pentru participantii si echipele castigatoare: Premiul I - \$750, Premiul II - \$500, Premiul III - \$250; Premiile sunt sponsorizate de Fratia Ortodoxa si tineretul AROY
- Prezentrari in timpul pranzului (cu invitati speciali)—ARFORA si AROY/Brotherhood
- Activitati pentru scolari si copii
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- Programul de vineri seara - **Seara culturala “Generatiile Vatra”**
  - Sambata seara: **\*\*Cotillion- Balul Debutantelor/ Dans semi-formal**
    - (\*\*Pentru informatii contactati pe Marie Avramaut la [avramaut5@aol.com](mailto:avramaut5@aol.com))
  - Banchetul festiv de duminica
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