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Most Rev. Archbishop

Nathaniel Popp

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COVER: Icon of St. John the Baptizer from the Monastery of Dionysiou on Holy Mount Athos. the Birth of St. John is celebrated on June 24.

EPISCOPATE CONGRESS 2015

Thursday, Sept. 3 – Sunday, Sept. 6, 2015 St Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, Ohio

> **Schedule** Thursday -

Clergy Conference / Episcopate Council Meeting Friday & Saturday -

> Episcopate Congress Sessions at Hotel Sunday -

Hierarchal Divine Liturgy / Closing Banquet

Hotel

Cleveland Airport Marriott, 4277 W 150th St, Cleveland, OH 44135 Phone: 216-252-5333 / marriott.com/hotels/ travel/cleap-cleveland-airport-marriott/ Name of Event: ROEA / Guest Room Rate: \$89/night (plus state and local taxes) Reservation Deadline: August 11. After this date, no room guarantee! Shuttle provided: airport-hotel-airport

PASTORAL CHANGES

ORDINATIONS

PREDA, Cristian Mihail, was ordained into the Holy Diaconate on June 6, 2015, by His Grace, Bishop IRINEu, on behalf of His Eminence, Archbishop NA tHANIEL, at Holy trinity and St. Nectarios of Aegina Church of Radu Voda Monastery, Bucharest, Romania, with the blessing of His Beatitude, Patriarch DANIEL.

PREDA, Rev. Deacon Cristian Mihail, was ordained into the Holy Priesthood on June 7, 2015, by His Grace, Bishop IRINEu, on behalf of His Eminence, Archbishop NAtHANIEL, at Holy trinity and St. Nectarios of Aegina Church of Radu Voda Monastery, Bucharest, Romania, with the blessing of His Beatitude, Patriarch DANIEL.

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THE BEAUTY OF THE CHURCH: ITS PLACE AND PURPOSE

By Bishop ANTHONY

When you have your wedding photo framed and hung in your home, you probably put that picture in the most expensive and stylish frame you can afford. You do not think of the cost, so much as the memory of the event it preserves and the feelings experienced. In this way, and with all family pictures, something more than paper and ink and color are present for us. It is the sacrament of the moment that counts. Material things become the conveyor or vehicle for an invisible and spiritual reality that is far more precious to us than the expense demanded to express it. Yet, if these special times in our lives are not adorned with the beauty and expense of frames and colors, we might cheapen them, and turn something that was wonderful into a common, forgettable and ordinary thing, the beauty of the material attracts us to the lasting value of the experience which that package re-presents.

the icons we see in Church are material things: wood, paint, lamination, and so forth. through them, how ever, we find the presence of the wonder-working saint. Material things deliver the presence of the person. Our material bodies, following our baptism and chrismation, carry our immortal and beautiful soul, which is invisible to the eye. St. Paul has written of this: "Do you not realize that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit that is in

you?" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Do we not ask the Holy Spirit to come down upon the bread and wine and make it the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Church? Do we not need the material church in order for the priest to say those words? Is not the Church the Body of Christ? Should we not clothe the Body of Christ in beauty? Is not the vested priest the presence sacramentally of the glorified Christ when the Divine Liturgy is served? How helpful can it be to see Christ only in street clothes?

We should read the Scripture which talks about the anointing of Jesus before His Crucifixion:

Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at table. But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me" (Matthew 26:6-11).

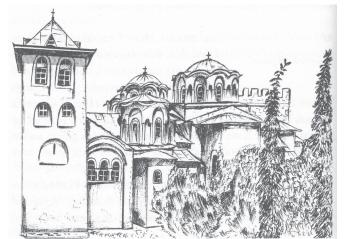
Did Jesus ever condemn the beauty of the t emple or comment on the wealth it contained? No, He knew that the beauty of the material t emple produces the presence of heavenly worship. He even praised the poor widow who loved God so much in His material sanctuary that she gave all her money to keep it beautiful: "He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury; and he saw a poor widow put in two copper coins. And he said, 't ruly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she has'" (Luke 2:1-4).

When the Hebrew slaves left Egypt following the plagues, the Egyptians gave them enormous wealth - as though paying them reparations for all the slave labor that built the pharaohs' monuments. "Speak now in the hearing of the people that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, jewelry of silver and of gold" (Exodus 11:2). We know that this wealth was used exclusively for the building of the t abernacle in

the wilderness, and for the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat and the furnishings of the t abernacle (See Exodus 25:19, the rest of Chapter 25, and all of Chapters 26-31.) See Exodus 35 and 36 for the generosity and expense of the Old t estament t abernacle, and how the people understood the purpose of their private wealth: it was for sacred and public worship! the building of Solomon's t emple in the books of Kings also makes this point.

Finally, the depiction of paradise after the Second Coming of Christ in the Book of Revelation describes the beauty of the New Jerusalem - in which we participate already here, in anticipation, in the Church, the Kingdom of God on earth, according to our theology (Revelation 21:9-21).

If we are receiving for dinner the most important person we know, the person we love and need the *Cont. on page 9*



A HISTORY OF THE APOSTLES' FAST

By John Sanidopoulos

"the Apostles almost always fasted."
Saint John Chrysostom (Sermon 57 on the Gospel of Matthew)

Patristic Testimony Concerning the Fast

the fast of the holy Apostles is very ancient, dating back to the first centuries of Christianity. We have the testimony of St. Athanasius the Great, St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Leo the Great and theodoret of Cyrrhus regarding it. the oldest testimony regarding the Apostles Fast is given to us by St. Athanasius the Great (+373). In his letter to Emperor Constans, in speaking of the persecution by the Arians, he writes: "During the week following Pentecost, the people who observed the fast went out to the cemetery to pray." "the Lord so ordained it," says St. Ambrose (+397), "that as we have participated in his sufferings during the Forty Days, so we should also rejoice in his Resurrection during the season of Pentecost. We do not fast during the season of Pentecost, since our Lord Himself was present amongst us during those days ... Christ's presence was like nourishing food for the Christians. So too, during Pentecost, we feed on the Lord who is present among us. On the days following his ascension into heaven, however, we again fast" (Sermon 61). St. Ambrose bases this practice on the words of Jesus concerning his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew 9:14,15: "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? the days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

St. Leo the Great (+461) says: "After the long feast of Pentecost, fasting is especially necessary to purify our thoughts and render us worthy to receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. ... therefore, the salutary custom was established of fasting after the joyful days during which we celebrated the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, and the coming of the Holy Spirit."

the pilgrim Egeria in her *Diary* (fourth century) records that on the day following the feast of Pentecost, a period of fasting began. *The Apostolic Constitutions*, a work no later than the fourth century, prescribes: "After the feast of Pentecost, celebrate one week, then observe a fast, for justice demands rejoicing after the reception of the gifts of God and lasting after the body has been refreshed."

From the testimonies of the fourth century, we ascertain that in Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch, the fast of the holy Apostles was connected with Pentecost and not with the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul on June 29. In the first centuries, after Pentecost, there was one week of rejoicing, that is Privileged Days, followed by about one week of fasting.

the canons of Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople (806-816), mention the Apostles' Fast. *The Typicon*



of St. Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of Studios in Constantinople speaks of the Forty Days Fast of the holy Apostles. St. Symeon of thessalonica (+1429) explains the purpose of this fast in this manner: "t he Fast of the Apostles is justly established in their honor, for through them we have received numerous benefits and for us they are exemplars and teachers of the fast. ... For one week after

the Descent of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the "Apostolic Constitutions" composed by Clement, we celebrate; and then during the following week, we fast in honor of the Apostles."

Duration of the Fast

the Fast of the Apostles came into practice in the Church through custom rather than law. For this reason, there was no uniformity for a long time, either in its observance or its duration. Some fasted twelve days, others six, still others four, and others only one day. theodore Balsamon, Patriarch of Antioch (+1204), regarding the Apostle's Fast, said: "All the faithful, that is the laity and the monks, are obliged to fast seven days and more, and whoever refuses to do so, let him be excommunicated from the Christian community."

From the work *On Three Forty Days Fasts*, which is credited to a monk of the monastic community of St. Anastasios the Sinaite (6th or 7th century), we learn that the Fast of the holy Apostles lasted from the first Sunday after Pentecost to the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God on August 15. Later, however, the Fast of the Dormition was separated from it, and the month of July was excluded from the Fast of the Apostles. St. Symeon of thessalonica speaks of the Apostles' Fast as of one week's duration.

In the Orthodox Church, the Fast of the holy Apostles lasts from the day after the Sunday of All Saints to the 29th of June, the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul. this fast may be of longer or shorter duration depending upon which day Pascha is celebrated. According to the Old Calendar, it could last from as little as 8 days to as many as 42 days depending on

Cont. on page 5

ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETS WITH ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Istanbul, t urkey — On t uesday, June 16, 2015, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew warmly received the Executive Committee of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the united States of America at the Phanar in Constantinople.

During the meeting, which took place in a spirit of open exchange in the personal office of the Ecumenical Patriarch, the hierarchs reviewed with His All-Holiness the work of the Assembly of Bishops, especially as it relates to the overall work of its committees. Particular attention was given to the work of the Committees for Pastoral Practice and Canonical Regional Planning. the

hierarchs also discussed a number of challenges and opportunities in the formulation of a proposed plan for the restructuring of the Orthodox Church in the united States.

Joining the Ecumenical Patriarch, Elder Metropolitan John of Pergamon discussed the mission of the Assemblies of Bishops as originally envisioned at their inception in Chambésy in 2009. Both the Ecumenical Patriarch and Metropolitan John commended the efforts of the uS hierarchs, and acknowledged their work as a model for inter-Orthodox cooperation.

Present at the meeting with the Ecumenical Patriarch and Elder Metropolitan John of Pergamon were the following members of the Executive Committee:



Archbishop Demetrios (Ecumenical Patriarchate, Assembly Chairman), Bishop John (Moscow Patriarchate, Second-Vice Chairman), Metropolitan Antony (t reasurer), Bishop Longin (Patriarchate of Serbia), Archbishop Nicolae (Patriarchate of Romania), Metropolitan Joseph (Patriarchate of Bulgaria), Bishop Saba (Patriarchate of Georgia). Also present were Bishop Maxim (Coordinator for Committees) and Metropolitan t ikhon (OCA).

At the conclusion of the meeting, the hierarchs departed with a renewed spirit of love and unity, eagerly looking forward to the annual General Assembly Meeting, which will take place in Chicago from September 14-17, 2015.

A History ... Cont. from page 4

the date of Pascha, but this is shortened by the New Calendar which sometimes obliterates the Fast altogether. If the feast of Pascha occurs sooner, then the Apostle's Fast is longer; if Pascha comes later, then the Apostle's Fast is shorter.

Prescription for the Fast

the Fast of the Apostles is somewhat more lenient than the Great Fast before Holy Week and Pascha. the Kievan Metropolitan George (1069-1072) approved the Rule for the Kiev Caves Monastery which does not allow meat or dairy products to be eaten during the Apostles' Fast. On Wednesday and Friday, they prescribed dry food, that is, bread and water or dry fruits. On t uesday, thursday, Saturday and Sunday, they permitted fish, wine and oil. In addition to this,

they directed that one hundred prostrations (profound bows to the ground) be made daily, excepting Saturdays, Sundays and holy days (the Feast of the Birth of John the Baptist falls on June 23rd, and fish, oil and wine is permitted no matter the day). this rule was transferred to Russia via the Kiev Caves Monastery which based their rule on that of the Monastery of Studios in Constantinople. We can thus assume this was the rule for the Fast practiced by both the Roman Empire and the Russian Empire. this is the rule still practiced today with possible minor variations among jurisdictions.

Reprinted from MYSTAGOGY (johnsanidopoulos. com).



EPISCOPATE AUXILIARIES CONFERENCE CONVOCATIONS

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FAMILY LIFE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS MUST REGISTER AT http://roea.org/upcomingevent.html

A.R.F.O.R.A.

In conformity with Article II, Section 2 of the By-Laws, we hereby convoke the

67TH ANNUAL A.R.F.O.R.A. CONGRESS JULY 2-5, 2015

Presentation of Our Lord Church 3365 Ridgewood Rd, Fairlawn OH 44333

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop

Adela M. Price,

Deborah Moga,

President

Secretary

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, JULY 2

1:00 pm Registration

4:00 pm Executive Board Meeting

5:00 pm Opening Prayer Service

Family Picnic / Cookout

FRIDAY, JULY 3

8:30 am Morning Prayers - Registration

9:15 am ARFORA Meeting I

11:00 am ARFORA / Brotherhood /

AROY Panel Discussion

12:15 pm ARFORA Luncheon w/ Speaker

2:15 pm Bible Challenge – Gospel of Luke

3:45 pm ARFORA Meeting II

5:30 pm Evening Prayers / Discussion

7:00 pm Dinner

8:00 pm Social: "Carnival & Karaoke" Night

SATURDAY, JULY 4

8:30 am Morning Prayers

9:15 am ARFORA – Meeting III

11:00 am ARFORA Board Meeting

12:15 pm Memorial Service for all Departed

4:15 pm Great Vespers

7:00 pm Hors d'oeuvres & Cotillion Dance

SUNDAY, JULY 5

9:00 am Music Rehearsal / Confession

10:00 am Hierarchal Divine Liturgy

12:30 pm Banquet & Program

AMERICAN ROMANIAN ORTHODOX YOUTH

In accordance with Article III, Section 2, of the A.R.O.Y. Constitution & By-Laws, we convoke the

64TH ANNUAL A.R.O.Y. CONFERENCE JULY 2-5, 2015

Presentation of Our Lord Church 3365 Ridgewood Rd, Fairlawn OH 44333

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop

Jessica Hendricks,

Bethany Avramaut,

Interim President

Secretary

The Conference is open to all youth of the Episcopate.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, JULY 2

1:00 pm Registration / AROY Field Day

(pick up games)

5:00 pm Conference Opening Prayer Service

Family Picnic / Cookout / Games & Children's activities / Olympics

FRIDAY, JULY 3

8:30 am Morning Prayers

9:15 am AROY – Workshop 1: Liturgy 101

10:45 am Break

11:00 am ARFORA/AROY/Brotherhood –

Why belong to a National Organization?:

Panel and Discussion

12:15 pm Lunch followed by free time

2:15 pm Bible Challenge – Gospel of Luke

3:30 pm Break

3:45 pm AROY – Workshop 2: "Hot t opics"

5:30 pm Evening Prayers t alk: Navigating the

American Religious Landscape

7:00 pm Dinner

8:00 pm Social: "Carnival and Karaoke" Night

SATURDAY, JULY 4

8:30 am Morning Prayers / Registration

9:15 am AROY – Group Meeting

10:45 am Break

11:00 am AROY – Workshop 3: "Staying Connected with the Church through College and Beyond"

12:15 pm Memorial Service for all Departed

- 5:00 pm Break / Free time
- 7:00 pm Hors d'oeuvres & Cotillion Dance

SUNDAY, JULY 5

9:00 am Music Rehearsal / Confession 10:00 am Hierarchal Divine Liturgy 12:30 pm Banquet & Program

ORTHODOX BROTHERHOOD U.S.A.

In accordance with Article III, Sections 1 & 2 of the By-Laws of the Orthodox Brotherhood USA, we hereby convoke the

46TH ANNUAL BROTHERHOOD CONFERENCE JULY 2-5, 2015

Presentation of Our Lord Church 3365 Ridgewood Rd, Fairlawn OH 44333

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop

Ronald Muresan, President Dorina Riscutta, Secretary

Every Brotherhood member in good standing is entitled to attend, participate in the Conference's work, and vote on all motions and in election of officers and delegates to the Congress. Any member in good standing may send the secretary names for the nominating committee to consider for next year's Board and delegates.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, JULY 2

1:00 pm Registration

5:00 pm Opening Prayer Service Family Picnic / Cookout

FRIDAY, JULY 3

8:30 am Morning Prayers

9:15 am the American Religious Landscape 1 - Doctrine

10:45 am Break

11:00 am ARFORA/AROY/Brotherhood -

Why belong to a National Organization?:

Panel and Discussion

12:15 pm Lunch followed by free time

2:15 pm Bible Challenge – Gospel of Luke

3:30 pm Break

3:45 pm the American Religious Landscape 2 - Ministry

5:30 pm Evening Prayers t alk: Navigating the American Religious Landscape

7:00 pm Dinner

8:00 pm Social: "Carnival and Karaoke" Night

SATURDAY, JULY 4

8:30 am Morning Prayers / Registration

9:15 am Workshop – American Religious Landscape Q & A

10:45 am Break

11:00 am Workshop – Recognizing our Addictions

12:15 pm Memorial Service for all Departed

12:45 pm Lunch / Free time / Cotillion Dessert t ea / Rehearsal

2:45 pm Brotherhood - Annual Conference

4:15 pm Great Vespers

5:00 pm Break / Free time

7:00 pm Hors d'oeuvres & Cotillion Dance

SUNDAY, JULY 5

9:00 am Music Rehearsal / Confession

10:00 am Hierarchal Divine Liturgy

12:30 pm Banquet & Program

There will be activities and workshops throughout the Conference for THE ENTIRE FAMILY.

Child care available and youth activities planned.

HOTELS:

Discount Code for all motels is "Family Life Conference"

Akron Courtyard - Marriott,

100 Springside Dr, Akron, OH 44333 330-668-9090 or 800-321-2211 / courtyard.com/cakmt

Hampton Inn Akron-Fairlawn,

80 Springside Dr, Akron, OH 44333 330-666-7361 / hamptoninn.com

Pastoral Changes Cont. from page 2

ASSIGNED

ENE, Rev. Fr. Florian, who was Parish Priest of St. Luke the Evangelist Mission, Markham ON, is assigned Parish Priest of Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste Church, Aurora ON, effective May 8, 2015.

RECEIVED

BALAN, Rev. Fr. Cornel Daniel, was accepted by the Episcopate Council into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America from the Church of Romania, effective May 2, 2015, and temporarily assigned to St. John of Suceava Church, Manchester NH.

MARINESCU, Rev. Deacon Nicolae, was accepted by the Episcopate Council into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America from the Church of Romania, effective May 2, 2015, and attached to Annunciation (Buna Vestire) Church, Montreal QC.

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Building a Strong Family by Serving Others

by Nicholas Chakos

the tech giant Google recently reported that 93 million "selfies" are taken every single day. On many days, I think that my 15-year-old daughter is single-handedly responsible for a sizeable percentage of that



Photo courtesy of Nicholas Chakos

number. From the time that the first Kodak camera was sold in 1888 through 1950, it's estimated that a few billion photographs were taken worldwide.

that's seemingly less than what my other kids, ages 11, 9 and 7, snap, tweet, post and vine in one week. It's easy to think that young people these days are so hooked on technology, so absorbed in self promotion through their social networks, that they can't see past their device's screens and don't care for anyone other than themselves, their "friends" and "followers."

But to dismiss our young people's social networks as frivolous or downright bad is to ignore the trend of how young people are using their phones, computers and virtual networks to inspire action and activity in the real world. While we do need to be protective of what our young people are viewing and sharing across cyberspace, we also must understand that our children value these networks and connections immensely, and that they are not going away any time soon.

throughout history, there have always been many demands, distractions and societal problems pulling at families. I doubt that an Orthodox Christian family, at any point in time, would say that raising a family "in the Church" was easy. Yet, we must deal with where we are today, live within the society which we currently have, and struggle towards salvation in this world as it is.

the challenge for families today is to allow our children to leverage the strengths of technology while teaching them that our faith places a high value on external and personal relationships. Christ's commandments to love God completely and to love and serve our neighbors, were given to all of us and include every age group. Fulfilling these two great commandments typically takes personal interaction. At some point, if we are going to live up to Christ's commandments and stand on His right side at the Judgment, we must teach our children to put the tech down, and go out and meet people where they are. But who has the time to go out and help others? Life is busy, plain and simple. I'm the first to admit that my wife and I struggle to

keep a balance among Church, work, school, Greek school, baseball, Greek dance, modern dance, Girl Scouts, family vacations, gymnastics, swim team, soccer, house chores, and homework. Even though we claim an importance on raising kind and helpful children and a desire to have our kids stay faithful members of the Church into adulthood, our actions often do not follow our aspirations.

Many of us suffer from the fleeting desire to give our children material wealth and prosperity while we fail to give them the peace, calmness of home and dedicated time that is necessary to grow together as a family and to work together, family-as church, towards our salvation.

"We need to keep our kids in the church!" this is a plea that I hear often. I think that a better approach would be to say that "we need to keep the Church in our kids". Keeping the Church in our kids starts with the family. As faithful parents, we must root our Faith deep into our homes and then take that faith back out into the world, building it into the routines and habits of our children.

this needs to be done through actions, not words. Parents need to lead by example, allowing our children to see us actively praying, fasting, attending church regularly and participating in acts of service to others.

Working together on outreach projects as a family not only allows us to follow Christ's teachings, but it strengthens family togetherness, helps children learn, and empowers them to understand that they can help others. Serving others benefits a child's psychological, social and intellectual development. It increases self-esteem, responsibility and helps children develop new social skills. the time that you spend together as a family helping others will be rewarding and more memorable than almost any other family activity this year.

Christmas is hardly two months past, and my children have already forgotten what they received as presents. My children don't remember where they celebrated their last birthday party (was it at home or did we go bowling?). My kids do remember with perfect clarity the days that we spent in Fairfax County, Va., just outside of Washington, as a family, helping children in need through FOCuS North America.

Each year, the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians united to Serve (FOCuS) assists thousands of homeless and disadvantaged children get ready to go back to school. FOCuS' program, "Operation Lace up," helps families in need get ready for school by providing children with medical and dental check-ups, school

supplies, new backpacks and new athletic shoes, so that they can attend school ready to learn and succeed. Over the past five years, FOCUS has been a significant partner with 250 school districts in 30 cities throughout the country, providing more than 252,000 disadvantaged children with educational support services while moving their parents from dependency to self-sufficiency through vocational training, job placement, and securing permanent housing.

Once these children are in school, FOCuS provides many of them with nutritious meals to ensure they stay properly fed, especially during targeted times of the week and month when family cupboards may be bare. FOCuS provides more than 20,000 meals each month to children who are hungry through no fault of their own.

My kids will never forget sitting and talking with children from area homeless shelters, walking hand in hand with them and helping them size a new winter coat and a new pair of shoes. they remember those children's names, and they cherish the photos that they have. At first, my kids were shy and uncomfortable, being surrounded by children who they didn't completely understand. But once my kids got past that discomfort, they realized that these children had the same hopes and fears, likes and dislikes as any other child.

And, in the end, when the children in need reached out and hugged my kids, my kids realized that they had the power to help others, to make people happy, and in a very small way to bring positive change into the world. Working together as a family in service to others is a wonderful way to instill the teachings of Christ into our children. In addition to teaching our children to pray, participating in the sacraments and attending services regularly, family outreach activities are excellent ways to look outward from ourselves and invigorate parish life.

When your family serves alongside other families from your parish, the network of community-family is extended. You become better friends, all families are strengthened; and, we often learn more about ourselves than any selfie could ever show.

Nicholas Chakos is the executive director of FOCUS North America and holds an academic appointment at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School for Public and International Affairs, where his teaching centers on developing and implementing human assistance programs.

What Can Your Family Do to Serve Others?

- START at home watch *Be the Bee* (youth.goarch. org) each week, and have a conversation with your kids about the topic covered. t eaching your children to focus on others and be aware of people's needs is an important step in raising compassionate children.
- SPONSOR a food drive at your parish or youth group and let your children be involved. Let your younger children color a poster or flyer advertising the drive. Bring your older children to the food bank or shelter when you drop off the collected items. Local food banks are incredibly strained this year, and there is always a need for non-perishable grocery items.
- CREATE greeting cards for children or adults who are hospitalized with chronic illnesses.
- VISIT the elderly and shut-ins—especially around Christmas time, visit parishioners in their assisted living facilities and sing Christmas carols to them. Bring them a small gift—a flower, plant, small icon, greeting card.
- INVITE FOCUS to your parish or youth group for a "family day" of service. FOCuS will lead a daylong outreach into your community to help people in need while helping you learn and experience the root causes of poverty and understand what you can do to help.
- LISTEN to your kids; ask them for ideas of how you can help someone in need.
- LEAD by example. It won't do to tell your kids, "go rake Mrs. Pappas' leaves!" But if you get a few rakes, put them in the hands of your kids and lead them over to her house, you will find that it is wonderful to work together.
- HELP FOCUS cook and serve meals to hungry children during the summer months when they don't have access to free/reduced meals at school.
- MAKE outreach a habit. It will take time for your children to be comfortable at a nursing home or serving meals at a soup kitchen. Don't expect them to feel comfortable on their first volunteer experience. But know that with each time they volunteer, they are building an inner strength that will help them throughout their lives. For more information on FOCuS North America and how you can get involved visit www.focusnorthamerica.org.

Reprinted from Orthodox Observer, February-March 2015, p. 25.

The Beauty ...

Cont. from page 3

most, wouldn't we put out our best china, utensils and tablecloth, and seat them at the polished dining room table, if we could? Don't we want to give Jesus our Savior, who comes to visit us in His Church and to give us His Holy Body and Blood, the best we

have, our very best? It cost Him everything He is to save us. Should it not cost us something - much less than He gave for us - to receive Him? Doesn't love demand that?

Reprinted from "The Word," June 2015, p. 10. Bishop Anthony [Michaels] is Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest for the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

MEMORY ETERNAL: ARCHIMANDRITE ROMAN BRAGA



RIVES JuNCtION, MI. Archimandrite Roman [Braga], 93, of the Monastery of the Holy Dormition here, fell asleep in the Lord shortly before midnight on the evening of t uesday, April 28, 2015.

Father Roman was born in Condrita, Bessarabia on April 2, 1922, the last of seven children born to Cosma and Maria Braga. Raised by a devout Orthodox mother and in close

proximity to the Monastery of Condrita, he grew up in an Orthodox Christian environment. During his formative years, he had the living example of his mother, who imprinted on her children the virtues of Christian life. He often recalled how his mother attended lengthy services at the monastery in his childhood and how sleepy and tired he would become, yet he always was at her side. these formative years laid the foundation for the strict discipline of his entire life that served him to the very last day of his life.

At the age of seven, he entered grade school in his native village. Five years later, he was sent to the Caldarusani Monastery near Bucharest, Romania, from which he was sent to the Monastic Seminary of Cernica, also near the Romanian capital, where he formed life-long friendships with some of Romania's greatest future spiritual fathers. It was there that he met Fathers Sofian Boghiu, Felix Dubneac, Benedict Ghius, Grigore Babus, and Gratian Radu. Later, he would spend time in prison with some of them, reuniting with them years later in the u.S.

In 1942, he returned to the Seminary of Chisinau, Bessarabia and began simultaneous studies at the theological Institute, the School of Letters and Philosophy and the Pedagogic Institute in Bucharest. In 1947, he graduated Magna cum Laude from the Theological Institute, receiving the Certificate of Professor of the Romanian Language and theology. the following year, he entered the Doctoral program at the Institute of theology in Bucharest. However, he was unable to continue his studies, since he was arrested in the summer of 1948 and spent the year under interrogation, being accused of belonging to an anti-Semitic movement. He was detained in Bucharest at the Jilava prison and then sent to Pitesti, notorious for conducting brainwashing experiments, where he was placed in solitary confinement. In 1951, he was

sent to the labor camp in the Danube Delta, from which he was released under parole in the summer of 1953. He then relocated in Iasi, where his sister, Mother Benedicta, was a nun.

He was tonsured to monastic rank in January 1954 and ordained to the diaconate the following week at the Iasi Metropolia, where he was permitted to remain until 1959, although under surveillance by the Secret Services. During this time, he served daily at the Metropolia and sang in the choir. He also conducted theological sessions at the Medical School and other universities, discussing the practice of the Prayer of the Heart and interpreting the *Philokalia* for the students. this led to his second arrest and another year of interrogation in 1959. unsure of what kind of accusations to bring against him, the regime accused him, along with 15 others, of participating in the "Burning Bush" movement. As a result, he was sentenced to 18 years of forced labor.

From 1959 until 1964, he spent time in various concentration camps in the Danube Delta. under pressure from the West, he was released in 1964 after the General Amnesty decree freed all political prisoners in Romania. Later that year, he was ordained to the priesthood at the Episcopate of Oradea; and, on January 1, 1965, he was installed as parish priest in a village in northern Romania, where he organized a 100-voice children's choir and a Sunday School. the authorities did not look favorably on his ministry; and two years later, he was transferred secretly to another parish. Being considered an "unwanted element" by the communist government, the Patriarchate subsequently sent him as a missionary to Brazil. In 1972, after four years of ministry in Sao Paulo, Brazil, he was invited by His Eminence, the late Archbishop Valerian [t rifa] of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, to relocate to the uS, where for the next five years he translated Romanian liturgical music into English, pursued the development of religious education programs for children, and served on the committee that translated Romanian religious texts into English. He also served in many parishes across the uS and Canada. On the Great Feast of the Annunciation in 2015, His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel, on behalf of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, presented the Order of Saint Romanos to Father Roman in recognition of his work in the field of liturgical music.

In 1979, he was assigned parish priest at Holy t rinity Church, Youngstown, OH, and was reassigned to Saint George Cathedral, Southfield, MI in 1982. The

APPLICATION FOR GRANTS TO FURTHER MISSION OF ORTHODOXY NOW AVAILABLE

WILLIAMSPORt, PA [OCA/GOF] the Ganister Orthodox Foundation is now accepting applications for grants for organizations and parishes with innovative approaches to advancing the mission of Orthodox Christianity in the uS. The deadline for submitting grant applications is July 31, 2015. Recipients will be announced in the fall.

Founded in 2001, the Ganister Orthodox Foundation is a component of the Williamsport, PA-based First Community Foundation of Pennsylvania. the foundation takes its name from the village of Ganister in Central Pennsylvania, where immigrants drawn there by employment opportunities in the limestone quarry established Saint Mary's Holy Assumption parish in 1916.

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

Grants are modest in size, generally ranging from \$250 to \$2,500. But, properly used, they have the potential to jump-start valuable initiatives that otherwise might not get off the ground. Examples of grants given over the years include

- funding a guest speaker program to help seminarians develop their pastoral skills.
- providing tutoring materials and sports equipment for a church-run after-school program for inner-city Latino children.
- translating invaluable music textbooks from Russian to English.
- purchasing digital recorders to distribute Orthodox radio broadcasts world-wide.
- developing a "mission starter" kit.
- printing materials regarding human services for aging Orthodox Christians.
- supporting continuing education opportunities for clergy.
- underwriting the *Profiles of Ministry* program to assess and counsel seminarians on their strengths and weaknesses.

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

t o receive an application, contact the First Community Foundation of Pennsylvania, 330 Pine Street, Suite 401, Williamsport, PA 17701, or visit the Foundation's website (http://www.fcfpa.org/). Applications will be reviewed and recommendations made by the Advisory Board of the Ganister Orthodox Foundation, a donor-advised component of the First Community Foundation of Pennsylvania.

Additional information is available at the Ganister Orthodox Foundation web site (http://ganisterorthodoxfoundation.org/).

Memory Eternal ... Cont. from page 10

following year, he was transferred to the Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration, Ellwood City, PA, where he served as priest and spiritual father until 1988, at which time he retired to the Monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God, Rives Junction, MI, where he remained for the remainder of his life. His years at Dormition Monastery were filled with the complete cycle of liturgical services, counseling, teaching and pastoral ministry. up until the past two years of his life, he never missed a service, and he maintained his prayer rule intact—rising at 2:00 a.m., reading morning prayers, and preparing to be in church at 5:00 a.m. sharp every day. He maintained much of this schedule even after he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, until he no longer had the strength to do so. However, he never missed a Divine Liturgy, for which he always prepared in advance, regardless of how tired he may have been. His spiritual children were—and are—many, and he never forgot any of them, even if he did not see them for many years.

Father Roman was confined to bed for 10 days before his repose, yet he remained lucid and completely aware of his surroundings until the very end.

On thursday, April 30, Vespers and a Wake Service were celebrated, followed by Matins. His Grace, Bishop Paul (OCA – Midwest) was present and offered a homily.

On Friday, May 1, a Hierarchal Divine Liturgy was celebrated by His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel. the Funeral Service was concelebrated by Archbishop Nathaniel, Bishop Irineu and Bishop timotei [Prahoveanul] of the Church of Romania, assisted by numerous priests and deacons from across the country and Canada. Interment followed in the monastery cemetery, after which all were invited to partake of the mercy meal.

May Father Roman's memory be eternal!

Moscow Patriarchate: China authorizes the ordination of Chinese Orthodox priests on its territory

by Marta Allevato

Moscow (AsiaNews) – Metropolitan Hilarion, the Moscow Patriarchate's 'foreign minister', made the announcement after a visit to China where he met the leaders of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. The first priest should serve in Harbin. two more ordinations are expected. With a new Cold War as the background, the Moscow-Beijing strategic alliance also has a Church connection with the People's Republic recognizing the latter's 'political' role in Russia.

In order to compensate for its isolation from the West over the ukrainian crisis, Moscow has revived its strategic alliance with Beijing, a step that includes the Church. Indeed, for the first time in 60 years, the People's Republic of China has authorized the ordination of Chinese Orthodox priests.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Synodal Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, made the announcement after an official visit to China (14-17 May), the *TASS* news agency reported. In Beijing, the Russian Orthodox Church official took part in the fourth session of the Sino-Russian working group for contacts and cooperation in religious matters.

Hilarion's visit came a few days after President Xi Jinping travelled to Moscow (8 to 9 May) for the 70th anniversary of the Soviet victory over the Nazis, which was deserted *en masse* by Western leaders.

After the meetings with Vladimir Putin, Xi held talks with Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, who praised Beijing for the value China places on the "role of culture, traditions and the moral factor in shaping the lives of people and individuals."

"We had very constructive talks with the State Administration for Religious Affairs," Metropolitan Hilarion said. "We agreed on the ordination to the priesthood of an ethnic Chinese who studied for several years in Russia. We hope that he will serve in Harbin at the Church of the Intercession," which is currently undergoing restoration. "until now, it had no priest. Now, God willing, it will have a priest".

On 14 May in Beijing, Hilarion met Wang Zuoan, director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (*pictured*). "We agreed that two other seminarians will study in Russia, with a view to their possible ordination," he explained. In fact, "I hope that Orthodoxy will grow in China with the help of God," added the



Metropolitan Hilarion with Wang Zuoan, director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs

Patriarchate's 'foreign minister'.

In Beijing, Hilarion also took part in a panel discussion with representatives of 'traditional religions' of Russia and China and visited the oldest mosque in the city. He then travelled to Labdarin, in Inner Mongolia, which has one of the largest Orthodox communities in China, where he celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Church of St Innokenty of Irkutsk, blessed in 2009 by Michael Wang, the oldest priest of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church.

In Labdarin, the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate also met with local political authorities and those in charge of religious affairs.

Orthodoxy in China

the Russian Orthodox Church arrived in China in the 17th century. The first communities were made up of Russian immigrants, mainly in the north of the country. Even today, most of China's 13,000 Orthodox Christians are of Russian origin, concentrated mostly in Harbin's Parish of the Intercession (Heilongjiang); in Labdarin (Inner Mongolia) as well as Kulj and urumqi (Xinjiang).

the Chinese Orthodox Church acquired its autonomy in 1950, Kirill's secretary Deacon Alexander Volkov said; however, the Cultural Revolution left the country without bishops and priests. Even today, the faithful have no priest, gathering occasionally on Sundays to pray.

Cont. on page 14

CLOSED COMMUNION

by Ilias Levy

People who are interested in knowing more about the Orthodox Church frequently ask about the practice of closed communion - that is, allowing only Orthodox Christians to receive Holy Communion in our churches.

to some Orthodox, it may seem that this is a somewhat bizarre issue to think worthy of an article. Indeed, perhaps it ought to be. unfortunately, however, it is something about which there appears to be a certain amount of ignorance and confusion - to the extent where there have been very troubling instances of non-Orthodox being given Communion in Britain and other places. Where this happens, it is of course a disciplinary issue which must be dealt with by the appropriate Hierarchs. However, it is also true that for some people it is an issue which is very difficult to understand - and from this lack of understanding can come an understandable pastoral difficulty when people are told that, for instance, a Catholic or Protestant spouse or friend cannot be admitted to Communion.

It is therefore my intention to try to make this subject more widely understood; and, hopefully, by increasing knowledge and understanding, removing the potential for insult or offence.

Part of the reason for this confusion is that other Christian denominations allow any Christian (and, occasionally, anyone at all) to receive the Precious Gifts. Whether this is in fact true is something to which I will come later. Indeed, it seems more likely that the reason is simply that there is a lack of knowledge about the significance of Communion. This Mystery is not a cause of unity, rather a result of it.

the act of receiving Communion is not something which brings someone into unity with the Church. In fact, the most serious penalty which the Church can put on its members is that of excommunication - refusing to allow an individual to receive the Gifts. this shows not only the importance of the Eucharist for Orthodox Christians, but also the fact that one must be a faithful member of the Church to take part in the Mystery.

The most significant reason for keeping a practice of closed communion is that it is vitally necessary for a communicant to have a correct understanding of the Holy Mystery from which he is partaking. As A.S. Frangopoulos explains in his book 'Our Orthodox Christian Faith', other Christians have an alternate - and therefore incorrect - understanding of the Eucharist. How, then, would it be at all reasonable to invite them to share, as Frangopoulos puts it, a common cup? this difference is most keenly felt when it comes to the vast majority of Protestant denominations. the Orthodox doctrine is that the bread and wine used in the Eucharist truly become the Most Precious Body and Blood of our Saviour. Most Protestants, on the other hand,

tend to see this as purely a symbolic matter, choosing to concentrate on the words of Christ - "Do this in remembrance of me". this line is, of course, only a very small part of Christ's institution of the Eucharist.

In the account of the Last Supper in the Gospel of St John, Christ tells us that this sacrament is for the unity of the faith, that His disciples might be one. How, then, can we share this most sacred of Mysteries with those with whom we have no unity? A (rather strange, it must be said) response to this might be that "well, we are all Christians". Only in the most basic of senses, this may be true. But we, as Orthodox Christians, believe that the Orthodox Church holds, uniquely, the fullness of truth. It carries the traditions and faith of the Apostles, and therefore springs from the salvific teaching of Christ Himself. Any theological deviation from this faith is, by definition, lacking in truth.

Another scriptural justification for the practice of closed communion comes from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians - "So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord."

One of the reasons that this is apparently such a difficult issue in our modern, Western, society is the rise of the oppressive atmosphere of pluralism. this doctrine attempts to teach us that all opinions, beliefs and ideas are equally valid, and that it is in some sense morally wrong to question anyone else's views or to promote a known truth of your own. Of course, as Orthodox Christians, we know that this simply cannot work, there can be no such thing as a pluralist Orthodoxy, this does not, of course, mean that we should be judgmental, prejudicial or condemnatory. We are clearly commanded in the Gospel to love our neighbours, and even our enemies. It is sometimes a difficult balance to achieve, but we are extremely fortunate that we have two millennia of Church t radition and wisdom to draw upon.

Finally, I would like to quote an extract from an online article on this subject - "It is crucial to point out that the Orthodox practice of "closed" communion is not a judgment against a person or their standing in God's eyes or the potential of their salvation. It is not a way of saying that some are "good" and others are "bad". the practice of receiving communion together is the outward expression of having all things in common, in faith and worship. It is the fruit of unity."

Published by the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain.



67th Annual A.R.F.O.R.A. Congress

With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, the National Board of A.R.F.O.R.A. welcomes all Ladies Auxiliaries of the Parishes and Missions of the Episcopate to the 67th Annual Conference at the "Presentation of our Lord" Church in Fairlawn, Ohio (Akron) on July 2-5, 2015.

t his is the third year we are having an All Auxiliaries Conference in conjunction with the Family Life Conference. this year the Conference will commemorate Archbishop Nathanial's 35th Episcopal Anniversary.

In addition to the annual meetings of the Episcopate Auxiliaries—ARFORA, Brotherhood, and AROY—the Conference will focus on activities for the entire family. the program includes workshops on a variety of family oriented themes, worship services, and opportunities to socialize with family and friends.

the role of ARFORA has been a vital part in the life of the Episcopate. Our aim is to bring the women together to fully participate in the Church, and to speak out as the voice of the women in the Episcopate. By working together we can expand our Faith into the communities, help the less fortunate, assist in religious education, provide opportunities for Retreats, and generate resources for the maintenance and growth of our Episcopate. Only as an organized group can we meet the challenges in today's society.

Come join us for a weekend of Spiritual growth and fellowship.

Adela M. Price National ARFORA President

Moscow ... Cont. from page 12

there are, however, 13 Chinese students at Orthodox Sretenskaya theological Academy in Moscow and the Academy of St Petersburg. Russian priests celebrate the liturgical services at Christmas and Easter in Russia's embassy and consulates in China.

At the end of 2014, Kung Ming Cheung became the first ordained Chinese priest in Russia. He was sent to Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Hong Kong.

Cooperation between the Patriarchate and Beijing

the Patriarchate and the People's Republic have been cooperating for some years with Moscow involved in pushing Russian Orthodoxy on Chinese territory against its the traditional rival represented by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which, from Hong Kong has tried to have relations with Orthodox Christians in the mainland and other communities in the Far East.

"Religious cooperation" was officially sealed in 2013 when President Xi welcomed Patriarch Kirill for the first time at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

St. George the Great Martyr Church Partners with ZOE for Life!

Church School mothers of this Romanian Orthodox Church in Canton, Ohio, lovingly shepherded by V. Rev. George t reff, initiated a project to aid our ministry for the entire month of December, 2014. they hosted a brunch offering scrumptious crepes made to order following the Divine Liturgy on one Sunday. On another, coffee hour was served once again accepting free will offerings to benefit ZOE for Life!

Preoteasa Paula t reff introduced ZOE for Life! to her parish, encouraging each of them to actively support its life affirming work. A free will offering of \$234.00 was presented to ZOE, the evidence of the open-hearted love of this dedicated parish.

Winter time is an especially challenging time for our clients at ZOE House. Many come to us by way of bus transportation. If they have no one to watch their child, they must bundle them up against these severe temperatures and bring them along.

We deeply appreciate the concern and compassion the parish of St. George the Great Martyr has shown to women in distress. God bless you all!

From the Spring 2015 Newsletter of ZOE for Life! (zoeforlifeonline.org).

NEW 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF THE

Poftă Bună Cookbook

\$14.00 ea. – U.S. Funds

Make check payable to:
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In fact, China has come to recognize the Patriarchate's 'political' role in Russia. China's State Administration for Religious Affairs had directly invited the Russian Orthodox primate, with Moscow de facto recognizing the latter as the main Chinese interlocutor in religious matters.

this should come as no surprise, since the Russian Church has a long history of making compromises with authoritarian regimes. unlike the Holy See, it has shown no qualms about dealing with political authorities, even when the life of its own community of faithful is at stake.

Published by Asia News on May 19, 2015.

HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

HIS EMINENCE, ARCHBISHOP NATHANIEL

March 14 - May 31, 2015

March 14. Middle Village, NY. Sts. Michael & Gabriel. Holy unction service.

March 15. New York, NY. St. Dumitru. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Afternoon: Meeting with Parish Council of St. John of Wallachia Mission, Alpine NJ.

March 16-20. Syosset, NY. OCA Chancery. Holy Synod Spring Meeting.

March 22. Detroit, MI. St. Raphael. Liturgy.

March 22-23. Ellwood City, PA. Holy Transfiguration Monastery. Funeral and burial of Protopresbyter thomas Hopko.

March 24-25. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Tuesday: Vigil for feast of Annunciation. Wednesday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

March 28-29. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Saturday: Vigil. Sunday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

April 4-5. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Saturday morning: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday. Saturday evening: Vigil for feast of Entrance of Lord into Jerusalem. Sunday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Palm Sunday.

April 8-11. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Holy Wednesday: unction service. Holy Thursday morning: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Holy Thursday evening: Matins and Reading of 12 Gospels. Holy Friday evening: Matins with Lamentations. Holy Saturday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

April 11-12. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Holy Saturday / Pascha Sunday: Resurrection Service (Matins & Hierarchal Divine Liturgy).

April 12. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Pascha Sunday afternoon: Agape Vespers.

April 13. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Bright Monday.

April 14. Clinton, MI. Ascension Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Bright t uesday.

April 16-20. Regina, SK. St. George Cathedral. Thursday: Great Vespers for Feast of Life-giving Font. Friday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Friday evening: Vespers. Visit to St. George, Dysart, SK. Saturday: Blessing of Emmanuel Cristian Frunzulica as Reader and Subdeacon. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Ordination of Subdeacon Emmanuel Cristian Frunzulica into the Holy Diaconate. Ordination of Deacon Dan Chirtu into the Holy Priesthood. Saturday evening: Great Vespers. Sunday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Ordination of Deacon Emmanuel Cristian Frunzulica into the Holy Priesthood for service at St. George Cathedral, Regina. Sunday evening: St. Nicholas, Regina SK. Vespers. Monday: St. George Cathedral, Regina.

Blessed Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Cristian Frunzulica to be Confessor.

April 22-23. Detroit, MI. St. Andrew House. Attended OCA Mission School. Thursday: Attended Liturgy for feast of St. George followed by Mission School.

April 24. Livonia, MI. St. Mary Antiochian Basilica. 100th Anniversary of Armenian Genocide.

April 25-26. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Saturday: Vigil. Sunday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

April 28 – May 1. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. OCA Statute Revision Committee. Wednesday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy following the falling asleep in the Lord of Archimandrite Roman [Braga] on t uesday. Friday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, funeral and burial of Archimandrite Roman.

May 3. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

May 7-11. Montreal, QC. Annunciation Cathedral. Vicariate of Canada Annual Meeting. Friday: thanksgiving service (t e Deum). Meetings. Saturday: Meetings. Great Vespers. Sunday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Closing Banquet.

May 16-17. St. Louis, MO. St. Thomas. Saturday: Visit to cemetery. Great Vespers. Reception. Sunday: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Archbishop Nikon. Blessing of icons. Banquet for 80th Anniversary.

May 21. Clinton, MI. Ascension Monastery. Patronal feast day. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishop Irineu, Bishop Sofian (Germany – BOR), and Bishop Ioan Casian (Canada – BOR). Veneration of Myrrh-gushing icon of Our Lady of Hawaii

May 23. Clinton, MI. Ascension Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishop Irineu, Bishop Sofian (Germany – BOR), and Bishop Ioan Casian (Canada – BOR). Procession of Myrrh-gushing icon of Our Lady of Hawaii.

May 24. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Evening: Wedding of Jessica Precop and Scott Hendricks.

May 30. Dearborn Heights, MI. Sts. Peter & Paul. Funeral and burial service for Blaise Christian Hebert. Evening: Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Vigil for feast of Pentecost.

May 31. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy & Kneeling Vespers for Pentecost.

Address Change

Send your change of addresses to: SOLIA, PO BOX 185 GRASS LAKE, MI 49240 USA or solia@roea.org

FINANCIAL REPORT

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M/M Paul Scales, Arlington, tX		
Rachel C Chebeleu, North Wales, PA		
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thrisia Pana, Regina, SK		
Aldena Jinar, Ellwood City, PA		
Lillian Fedorovici, Livonia, MI		
Marcella Bourean, Warren, MI		
M/M thomas A Robertson, Oakton, VA\$3,000.00		
St Athanasius Mission, Naperville, IL\$500.00		
(Hierarch t ravel Expense)		
St Nicholas, Montreal, QC		
George Fara, Santa Monica, CA		
Madelena Ilcus, Jupiter, FL (Pascha Offering) \$100.00		
Holy Ascension, Montreal, QC\$79.65		
Audrey & George Fatsy, t rumbull, Ct\$50.00		
Marcella Bourean, Warren, MI\$30.00		
Lynn Nitzu, Schaumburg, IL\$25.00		
(Donation AROY-Stanitz Scholarship Fund)		
M/M Cristian Gheordunescu, Livonia, MI\$20.00		
Cristina Irimie, Canton, MI\$20.00		
Pavel & Floarea Getejanc, Washington, MI\$20.00		
Mircea Capatina-Rata, Northville, MI		
MEMORIAM		
Ielita Daba, Oak Park, MI (IMO George Daba) \$50.00		
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Betty J Oprian, uniontown, OH	\$25.00
Robert & Vickie Dietrich, t allmadge, OH	\$20.00
Stefana Popoviciu, Hudson, OH	\$20.00
Robert & Christine t yulty, Norton, OH	\$20.00
Sara Codrea, t allmadge, OH	\$15.00
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Pastoral Changes Cont. from page 7

RELEASED

BLAGA, Rev. Fr. Octavian, who was attached to St. Panteleimon Church, Saint-Eustache QC, was released to the Archdiocese of Canada (OCA), effective May 10, 2015.

DEATHS

BRAGA, Very Rev. Archimandrite Roman, fell asleep in the Lord on April 28, 2015.

ACCEPTED

St. Varlaam of Moldova Mission, Moncton NB, was accepted as a mission under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America by the Episcopate Council on May 2, 2015.

St. Nectarios Mission, Stoney Creek ON, was accepted as a mission under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America by the Episcopate Council on May 2, 2015.



EVANGELISM ON THE TRAIN

If I were to meet you on a train and ask you, "What is the center of the Christian message?," how would you succinctly put that?

"I believe in a God who loves humankind so intensely, so totally, that he chose himself to become human. therefore, I believe in Jesus Christ as fully and truly God, but also totally and unreservedly one of us, fully human. And I would say to you, the love of God is so great that Christ died for us on the cross. But love is stronger than death, and so the death of Jesus was followed by his resurrection. I am a Christian because I believe in the great love of God that led him to become incarnate, to die and to rise again. that's my faith. All of this is made immediate to us through the continuing action of the Holy Spirit."

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware Interview in "Christianity t oday," July 6, 2011

Biserica Ortodoxă Sfinții Arhangheli Mihail și Gavriil din Haledon, NJ

A PRIMIT VIZITA ÎNALTPREASFINȚITULUI PĂRINTE NATHANIEL, ARHIEPISCOPUL EPISCOPIEI ORTODOXE ROMÂNE DIN AMERICA

Prin rânduiala lui Dumnezeu, în toamna anului 2012, câţiva creştini ortodocşi binevoitori şi doritori de a avea o biserică şi un părinte duhovnicesc mai aproape de locul în care vieţuiesc, au decis să susţină întemeierea unui lăcaş de cult sub îndrumarea Părintelui Arhimandrit Longhin Muncean, venit din România pentru a urma un tratament în Statele Unite ale Americii.

În urma eforturilor acestor oameni mărinimoşi, între care la loc de cinste se află Domnul Arhitect Duşan Lazetic, de origine sârb, în luna noiembrie 2012 a fost cumpărată o clădire veche în orașul Haledon, New Jersey, edificiu care, prin așezare, dimensiuni și structură se putea amenaja ca biserică. Adresa bisericii este: 471 Morrissee Ave. Ext., Haledon, NJ 07508, Tel: 973-341-2528.

Istoria clădirii consemnează că este cea mai veche construcție din oraș și are un trecut important. În acestă clădire s-a format primul consiliu de conducere a Haledonului, consliu ales în 14 iulie 1908.

Amenajarea unei biserici în clădire a început în luna februarie 2013. Interiorul locașului de cult a fost împărțit după rânduiala Bisericii Ortodoxe în altar, naos și pronaos, icoanele ce împodobesc iconostasul și biserica fiind aduse din România. În paralel cu spațiul de cult, în spatele altarului s-a amenajat și o locuință spațioasă pentru preot. Prima slujbă în biserică a fost oficiată la Praznicul Nașterii Domnului din anul 2013, comunitatea hotărând ca biserica să fie închinată Sfinților Arhangheli Mihail și Gavriil.

Pentru că demersurile de amenjare s-au făcut cu binecuvântarea Preasfințitului Părinte Daniil al Daciei Felix, în paralel cu construcția s-au întocmit acte pentru ca biserica și credincioșii ce s-au adunat în jurul ei să fie înregistrați canonic și duhovnicește sub omoforul Înaltpreasfințitului Părinte Nathaniel, Arhiepiscopul Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America. Cu ajutorul



lui Dumnezeu, în luna septembrie a anului 2014, biserica ortodoxă românească din Haledon a fost acceptată ca misiune în cadrul Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America, iar în 14 decembrie comunitatea din Haledon a primit prima vizită pastorală a Înaltpreasfințitului Părinte Nathaniel.

Vizita a început sâmbătă, 13 decembrie 2014, când în prezenţa Înaltpreasfinţitului Părinte Nathaniel s-a oficiat slujba Vecerniei de către un sobor de preoţi din care au făcut parte: Preacucernicul Părinte Protopop Traian Petrescu, Preacucernicii Părinţi Dimitrie Musta, Ionuţ Preda, Adrian Grigoraş, Gosto Sailovic (preot pensionar sârb) şi Preacuviosul Părinte Longhin Muncean. După Vecernie a urmat un concert de colinde susţinut de Grupul coral *Harisma* din Bucureşti şi agapa frăţească în sala socială a bisericii. Următoarea zi, duminică, 14 decembrie 2014, Sfânta Liturghie a fost oficiată de Înaltpreasfinţitul Părinte Nathaniel şi a fost urmată de binecuvântarea noului locaş de cult. Ierarhul a apreciat *Cont. la pag 24*



Slujirea femeii în lumea contemporană ,,Nu vă înspăimântați (...) A înviat!" (Mc. XVI, 6).

Diac. Cătălin Grumeza

Istoria nobilă a femeii începe în creația sa, urmează în căderea ei dureroasă, și se termină cu o slavă incomparabilă în împăcarea ei în Iisus Hristos.

Slujirea femeii este o diaconie eclesială necesară, spontană, constantă. Aceasta rezultă din mărturia Evangheliştilor privitoare la femeile purtătoare de mir, care slujeau Domnului şi Apostolilor. Ele sunt primele care au îndrăznit să meargă la mormântul lui Iisus, unde sunt înştiințate de înger: "Nu vă înspăimântați (...) A înviat!" (Mc. XVI, 6). "Şi degrabă mergând, spuneți ucenicilor Săi că S-a sculat din morți" (Mat. XXVIII, 7). Aceasta indică o constantă a slujirii femeii în Biserică, aceea de a vesti mereu Apostolilor şi urmaşilor lor că Hristos a înviat, că este viu şi că porțile iadului nu vor birui Biserica, Viața, Dragostea (Matei XVI, 18).

Elementul laic în Biserică n-a fost niciodată mărginit la un singur sex, în ciuda importanței mai deosebite acordate bărbaților.

"Să apere lumea bărbaţilor ca mamă şi ca fecioară, s-o mântuiască, dându-i un suflet, sufletul său, iată chemarea femeii", spunea Paul Evdokimov. Vocaţia femeii nu este legată de societate, ci de omenire. Cu ochii deschişi, cu candelele pline de "untdelemnul bucuriei", fecioarele înţelepte sunt în aşteptarea Mirelui (Matei XXV, 1).

Lucrarea umanitară a Bisericii primare extinzându-se mult, s-a creat o necesitate a pregătirii unor persoane care să aibă responsabilitatea bunei funcționări a așezămintelor bisericești, instituția diaconițelor în paralel cu cea a diaconilor, care ajuta în slujirea și îngrijirea oamenilor sub toate aspectele vieții psiho-fizice.

Femeia participă la misiunea Bisericii. În acest sens nu există nici un dubiu întrucât în virtutea Botezului și a Mirungerii, ea - ca și bărbatul - a devenit părtașă la tripla misiune a lui Iisus Hristos: împărat, preot, profet, și deci este abilitată și angajată în apostolatul fundamental al Bisericii: evanghelizarea. Pe de altă parte, tocmai prin acest apostolat care-1 face, femeia este chemată să-și pună în acțiune "darurile" proprii: în primul rând, darul care este însăși demnitatea ei personală, prin cuvântul și mărturia vieții; apoi, darurile legate de vocația ei feminină. "Femeia procrează, crează; inventează, ea protejează, ca fântână de viață și sfințenie, e slava bărbatului, care proslăvește pe Dumnezeu (I Corinteni XI, 7), având darul pătrunderii directe în existența altuia, în imponderabilul ființei umane si harisma fundamentală a nasterii omului ascuns în inimă.

Lucrarea socială a Bisericii a fost dintotdeauna încredințată și femeilor, fecioarelor și văduvelor creștine evlavioase care erau deosebit de respectate. Ele aveau grijă de săraci, de cei din închisori, de orfani, de bolnavi.

Slujirea feminină, conchide Evdokimov, se exprimă cel mai bine în comuniunea euharistică şi starea de sfânt. Datorită instinctului matern pentru care orice obiectivare este organic imposibilă, femeia umanizează şi personalizează lumea, o salvează de la alienare, transmiţând - în cursul iniţierii pedagogice - simţul sacrului şi celorlalte fiinţe, lumina in sfesnicul societatii. Slujirea femeii nu se înfăptuieşte prin funcţii, ci prin firea, prin natura ei. Femeia este Eva -Viaţă, cea care dă viaţă, salvează, ocroteşte fiecare părticică a vieţii masculine.

Dacă bărbatul se prelungeşte în lume prin unealtă, femeia o face prin dăruire de sine. În însăși ființa ei, ea este legată de ritmurile naturii, în armonia cu ordinea care domnește în univers. Prin acest dar orice femeie este, virtual, mamă și poartă în străfundul sufletului ei comoara lumii.

Pe lângă puterea de a fabrica lucruri, omul o mai are şi pe aceea de a pătrunde în adâncul tainic al ființei. Dacă verbul bărbatului este de a acționa, al femeii este de a fi şi aceasta este categoria religioasă prin excelență.

Femeia poate acumula valori intelectuale, dar aceste valori nu aduc bucurie. Femeia, intelectualizată excesiv, la egalitate cu bărbatul şi constructoare a lumii, se va vedea deşertată de esența ei, căci femeia este chemată să aducă în cultură feminitatea ca manieră de a fi şi mod de existență de neînlocuit. Bărbatul creează ştiința, arta, filosofia şi chiar teologia ca sisteme, dar acestea conduc la o teribilă obiectivare a adevărului.

În vârful cel mai înalt al lumii, în însăși inima spiritualului, se află roaba Domnului, manifestare a ființei umane restabilite în adevărul ei inițial. În puritatea ei luminoasă, femeia este o oglindă care reflectă fața bărbatului, îl face să se descopere pe el însuși și prin aceasta îl corectează.

Ea este Eva-Viaţă, cea care dă viaţă, salvează, ocroteşte creaţia masculină. Dacă Apostolul Pavel afirma că femeia "să tacă în Biserică" (I Corinteni XIV, 34), interpretarea induce concluzia că ea nu ar avea voie să predice în Biserică sau să dea îndemnuri, dar îşi poate dezvolta preoţia universală prin naşterea de fii – cele căsătorite, sau pot deveni maici duhovniceşti prin

Cont. la pag 20

SFÂNTUL TEOFAN ZĂVORÂTUL: SFATURI PENTRU REUSITA IN DEPRINDEREA RUGACIUNII

Daca vrei sa sporesti in lucrarea rugaciunii si cauti acest lucru, atunci indrepteaza tot ceea ce faci in aceasta directie, pentru a nu darama cu o mana ceea ce zidesti cu cealalta.

- 1) Infraneaza-ti trupul cu strictete si la mancare, si la somn, si la odihna; nu-i da nimic doar pentru ca el o doreste, precum a randuit apostolul, zicand: grija de trup sa nu o faceti spre pofte (Rom. 13, 14). Nu da tihna trupului.
- 2) Redu legaturile tale din afara doar la cele care nu pot fi evitate. Aceasta pentru vremea cand inveti sa te rogi. Dupa aceea rugaciunea, lucrand in tine, iti va arata ce mai poate fi adaugat fara a-i dauna. Indeosebi pazeste-ti simturile, iar dintre ele mai ales ochii si auzul; inca sa-ti infranezi si limba. Fara a pazi acestea nu vei face nici macar un pas inainte in lucrarea rugaciunii. Precum nu poate lumanarea sa arda pe vant si pe ploaie tot asa nu poate nici rugaciunea sa se aprinda sub revarsarea impresiilor din afara.
- 3) Tot timpul liber de dupa rugaciune folosestelpentru citire si meditatie. Pentru citire alege mai ales carti in care se scrie despre rugaciune si in general despre viata duhovniceasca launtrica. Sa cugeti doar la Dumnezeu si la lucrurile dumnezeiesti, si mai cu seama la iconomia dumnezeiestii intrupari pentru mantuirea noastra, iar in legatura cu aceasta mai ales la patimile si moartea Domnului si Mantuitorului nostru. Facand astfel, vei fi afundat in marea luminii dumnezeiesti. Adauga la aceasta si mersul la biserica, ori de cate ori vei avea prilejul. Chiar si numai simpla prezenta in biserica te va invalui intr-un nor de rugaciune. Insa ce vei primi daca vei sta toata slujba intr-o adevarata stare de rugaciune?
- 4) Sa stii ca nu poti sa sporesti in rugaciune daca nu vei spori in general in viata crestineasca. Este neaparat necesar sa nu ai pe suflet nici un pacat necuratit prin pocainta; iar daca in vremea lucrarii rugaciunii vei savarsi ceva care iti va tulbura constiinta, grabeste-te sa te curatesti prin pocainta, pentru a putea privi spre Domnul cu indrazneala. Si sa ai neincetat in inima zdrobire smerita. Apoi nu pierde nici o ocazie de a face vreun bine sau de a arata o buna dispozitie, mai ales smerenie, ascultare si taierea voii proprii. Insa se intelege de la sine ca ravna pentru mantuire trebuie sa arda nestins si, umpland intregul suflet, trebuie sa fie principala forta care te pune in miscare in orice lucru, mic sau mare, dimpreuna cu frica de Dumnezeu si cu nadejdea neclintita.
- 5) Statornicindu-te in aceasta stare, osteneste-te cu lucrarea rugaciunii, rugandu-te cand cu rugaciunile de-a gata, cand cu cele proprii, cand cu scurte chemari de rugaciune catre Domnul, cand cu rugaciunea lui

Iisus, dar fara a neglija nimic din cele ce pot ajuta in aceasta lucrare. Si vei primi ceea ce cauti. Iti amintesc ce zicea Sfantul Macarie Egipteanul: Dumnezeu va vedea osteneala ta la rugaciune si ca vrei cu sinceritate sa reusesti in rugaciune si iti va da rugaciunea. Caci sa stii ca desi rugaciunea savarsita si dobandita prin sfortarile proprii este rugaciune placuta lui Dumnezeu, totusi adevarata rugaciune, aceea care se salasluieste in inima si se savarseste neincetat, este darul lui Dumnezeu, lucrarea harului dumnezeiesc. De aceea rugandu-te pentru toate, nu uita sa te rogi si pentru rugaciune.

- 6) Iti fac cunoscut ceea ce am auzit de la un iubitor de Dumnezeu. «Eu vietuiam - zicea el - nu tocmai cum se cuvine, dar Dumnezeu s-a milostivit de mine si mi-a trimis duhul pocaintei. Aceasta s-a intamplat in vremea pregatirii pentru impartasire. Eu ma sfortam in fel si chip sa inradacinez in mine hotararea neclintita sa ma indreptez. Mai ales inainte de spovedanie m-am rugat indelung inaintea icoanei Maicii Domnului, cerandu-i sa mijloceasca pentru mine ca sa dobandesc o astfel de hotarare launtrica. Mergand apoi la spovedanie, am spus totul sincer. Parintele meu duhovnic nu mi-a spus nimic, dar cand a rostit deasupra capului meu rugaciunea de dezlegare, in inima mea s-a aprins un focusor dulce. Senzatia a fost asemanatoare cu aceea cand inghiti ceva bun la gust. Acest focusor a ramas in inima si mie mi se parea ca si cum cineva ar fi tinut strans inima mea. De atunci ma rog mereu si imi tin atentia acolo unde am avut acea senzatie, avand grija doar de un lucru, ca ea sa nu plece. Iar Dumnezeu mi-a ajutat. Despre rugaciunea lui Iisus eu nu auzisem; iar cand am auzit de ea, am vazut ca ceea ce era in mine era chiar acel lucru care este cautat prin aceasta rugaciune". Ti-am adus aceasta marturie ca sa intelegi ce anume urmareste lucrarea rugaciunii si care este semnul dupa care se poate sti ca ai dobandit-o.
- 7) Voi adauga la aceasta si urmatoarele cuvinte ale Sfantului Grigorie Sinaitul: "Harul este in noi de la Sfantul Botez; dar, prin neatentia noastra, prin indeletnicirea cu cele desarte si prin neglijenta, el este inabusit sau, precum talantii, este ingropat in pamant. Cand cineva se hotaraste sa traiasca cum se cuvine, ravnind pentru mantuire, atunci intreaga osteneala a lui va avea drept rod repunerea in putere a acestui dar al harului. Aceasta se face prin doua mijloace: in primul rand, darul se arata prin savarsirea cu multa osteneala a poruncilor, si pe cat cineva sporeste in implinirea poruncilor, pe atat acest dar isi arata lumina si stralucirea sa; in al doilea rand, el vine la aratare si se dezvaluie prin chemarea neincetata in rugaciune

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Sfaturi din inimă pentru toți tinerii, de la Mitropolitul Bartolomeu Anania

de Natalia Lozan



Dragii mei tineri, voi sunteți în floarea vârstei, trăiți-vă tinerețea! E a voastră! Și trebuie s-o trăiți înainte de a fi prea târziu, dar în limitele decenței și ale bunei cuviinte. Nu vă imaginati

cât este de plăcut să-ți trăiești tinerețea fără ca mai târziu să-ți fie rușine sau să-ți pară rău de faptele pe care le-ai făcut. Dragii mei, păstrați-vă sănătatea sufletului, așa cum țineți cel puțin la sănătatea trupului vostru. Învățați-vă înainte de toate să aveți spirit de discernământ, a deosebi între bine și rău, între sănătos și nesănătos, între folositor și nefolositor. Este începutul înțelepciunii voastre de tineri.

Este în firea lucrurilor ca un tânăr să fie curios. Fiţi curioși! Cât se poate de curioși. În știința voastră, în setea voastră de carte, în setea voastră de educație, fiecare unde îl trage inima, dar nu lăsați curiozitatea să umble acolo unde este în primejdie. Oricât ai fi de curios, nu-ți vei pune mâna într-un cuib de vipere. La vârsta fragedă, vă pândesc anumite primejdii. Lipsa de discernământ, curiozitatea nesăbuită, viciile care se infiltrează încetul cu încetul. Dragii mei, vine o vreme

Slujirea femeii ...

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unirea cu Hristos (monahismul). Participarea femeilor la viața parohială, prin rugăciune, cântare, liturghie, asistență, consilii care iau decizii (Comitetul Parohial), este esențială pentru misiunea Bisericii.

Mântuirea nu vine decât prin sfințenie, iar aceasta este mai lăuntrică femeii în condițiile vieții actuale. Maica Domnului "păstra în inima ei toate cuvintele Fiului" (Luca II, 51) și orice femeie are o intimitate înnăscută, aproape o complicitate cu tradiția, continuitatea vieții. În Dumnezeu, existența coincide cu ființa, iar femeia este mai aptă să unească în sfințenie ființa și sfințenia prin puterea smereniei. Frumusețea va salva lumea, dar nu orice frumusețe, ci a Duhului Sfânt, cea a Femeii învesmântate în Soare.

Destinul lumii noi se află în brațele mamei, deoarce ea oferă educația noii generații. Giradoux, spunea că vremea în care femeia nu mai știe să iubească și să se dăruiască este sfârsitul lumii.

Femeia va salva lumea cu condiția să primească adânc cutremurată slujirea "fecioarelor înțelepte" din parabola evanghelică (Mat. XXV, 1-13), cu condiția ca "plină de har" s-o urmeze pe Maica Domnului.

când începi să bagi de seama că ai mers prea departe și că trebuie să te oprești. Dar vreau să vă spun acum un singur lucru, din ce în ce mai mult se dau semnale de alarmă în țara noastră că tinerii încep să devină toxicomani, să fie consumatori de droguri, țineți minte de la mine! Din orice deprindere rea și din orice viciu există o cale de întoarcere! De la consumul de droguri nu există cale de întoarcere! opriți-vă curiozitatea la pragul acestui mare pericol al vietii noastre sociale!

Este un îndemn pe care ni-l cer și vremurile de astăzi în care în special tineretul este chemat la superficialitate, la frivolitate, la viața ușoară, la viața lipsită de preocupări stabile și serioase. Se vorbește de un tineret debusolat, care nu are niciun fel de ideal, care nu poate să-și facă un plan. Ei bine, scuturați-vă iubiții mei tineri și tinere, scuturați-vă de această superficialitate, de această comoditate a vieții și pătrundeți în firea voastră lăuntrică.

Vă va prinde bine și acum, vă va prinde bine mai cu seamă mai târziu, atunci când vă vor veni bătrânețile și veți simți că vă este sfârșitul aproape și veți privi în urmă și veți constata că Dumnezeu v-a făcut viața cât pasul de-o palmă și că nu ați lăsat sau nu ați realizat mare lucru în urma voastră. Dar dacă vă veți cunoaște ființa întreagă, în adâncul ei, atunci vă puteți clădi o viață adevărată, puternică, solidă, rodnică și atunci către sfârșitul vieții veți putea să vă apropiați împăcați, nu de neant, ci de împărăția lui Dumnezeu, cu gândul că v-ați împlinit misiunea și v-ați trăit cu adevărat viața care trebuia trăită și care este una singură. Să vă pregătiți pentru primirea Împărăției lui Dumnezeu, care este printre noi, prin biserica lui Hristos și pe care o așteptăm în viața veacului ce va să vie, Amin!

(Mitropolitul Bartolomeu Anania – transcriere după o înregistrare audio)

Sfântul Teofan Zăvorâtul ...

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a Domnului Iisus. Si primul mijloc este puternic, dar al doilea este mai tare, asa incat si primul isi castiga prin el puterea sa. De aceea, daca dorim sincer sa deschidem samanta harului ascunsa in noi, sa ne grabim sa invatam cat mai repede aceasta deprindere din urma a inimii si sa avem in inima numai lucrarea rugaciunii, fara de chip si fara forma, pana cand ea incalzeste inima noastra si o aprinde cu dragostea negraita pentru Domnul". Aici sunt cuprinse toate cele despre care ti-am amintit la punctul 4 de mai sus.

SEDINTA VICARIATULUI DE CANADA 8-10 MAI 2015

In perioada 8-10 mai 2015, la Catedrala Buna Vestire din orasul Montreal, Quebec, a fost gazduita prima Sedinta a Vicariatului din Canada. La acest eveniment, au participat majoritatea preotilor, o parte dintre familiile lor, si un numar considerabil dintre membrii Consiliilor parohiale din Canada. Sedinta a fost prezidata de Inalt Prea Sfintitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel, asistat de Parintele Vicar Dan Hoarste.

Lucrarile Sedintei s-au deschis cu slujba de Te-Deum, urmata de inscrierea participantilor si apoi de prima sesiune a Sedintei . A doua zi, s-au reluat urmatoarele doua sesiuni ale Sedintei, incheiate prin slujba Vecerniei, infrumusetata de glasurile slujitorilor si ale credinciosilor. Toata aceasta perioada a creat oportunitatea si bucuria, atat intre preoti cat si intre credinciosi, sa se intalneasca si sa-si exprime liber necesitatile si problemele din parohiile lor.

Discutiile au fost concentrate asupra problemelor administrative, pastorale si sociale, care reprezinta o necesitate a vietii parohiale. Au fost amintite ctitoriile vrednicilor inaintasi, din parohiile mai vechi si grija pe care, trebuie sa o purtam acum, in administrarea lor. Trecutul depinde de prezentul generatiilor, care cu ajutorul Lui Dumnezeu, vor putea continua lucrarea lor. S-au discutat apoi problemele actuale: administarea terenurilor si a cimitirelor, de pe langa bisericile vechi, salarizarea preotilor, una dintre problemele mai vechi cu care se confrunta parohiile, educarea tinerilor si incurajarea acestora de a participa la taberelor de vara si la activitatile organizate de Biserica.

La propunerea participantilor, preoti si mireni delegati, ca o extindere si o usurare administrativa a Episcopiei de la Vatra Romaneasca, a fost propus postul de episcop vicar pentru Canada, abrobat in unanimitatea voturilor celor prezenti.

Atmosfera de pace si intelepciune, a fost o caracteristica a Sedintei de Vicariat. Aceste momente de bucurie spirituala, dobandite de-a lungul lucrarilor, au fost incununate de Sfanta Liturghie, duminica dimineata, 10 mai 2015, care a adunat in jurul Inalt Prea



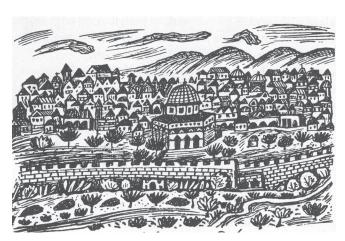


Sfintitului Nathaniel si a Parintelui Vicar Dan Hoarste, un numar considerabil de preoti si credinciosi. Cuvantul de invatatura, al Inalt Prea Sfintitului Nathaniel si al parintelui vicar, au impodobit atat slujirea cat si lucrarile Sedintei de Vicariat.

Dupa slujba arhiereasca, a avut loc Banchetul festiv de la Casa Romana, unde distinsele doamne, de la Catedrala Buna Vestire, au pregatit, ca si in celelalte zile, un meniu traditional bogat, aratand o deosebita ospitalitate fata de cei invitati.

Cu aceasta ocazie, atat Inalt Prea Sfintitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel cat si Parintele Vicar Dan Hoarste, au multumit gazdelor de la Catedrala Buna Vestire, care s-au ostenit la organizarea acestui frumos eveniment, si apoi si tuturor preotilor si delegatilor veniti la Montreal din toate partile Canadei prentu prima sedinta a Vicariatului Canadei.

Preot Paroh Liviu Alexandrescu
Catedrala Buna Vestire
Montreal, Quebec



Din seria: Mari Duhovnici Români contemporani aflați dincolo de granițele țării...

PARTEA I

In memoriam - Interviu cu Părintele Arhimandrit Roman Braga din S.U.A. Despre adevărata rugăciune, care nu trebuie să se sfârșească niciodată...



Părintele Arhimandrit Roman Braga, unul din cei mai mari duhovnici români, a murit în dimineața zilei de 29 aprilie 2015, la vârsta de 93 de ani.

Părintele Arhimandrit Roman Braga a fost un călugăr ortodox român, deosebit de oricare alt monah, pentru simplul fapt că n-a trăit viaţa călugărească într-un schit

sau mănăstire şi nici nu a cunoscut altă chilie decât celula închisorilor comuniste dar mai ales "cămara cea de sus a inimii"!...

Iar dacă monahismul înseamnă trăirea în Iisus Hristos, *Părintele Arhimandrit Roman Braga* a trăit-o din plin pe parcursul întregii sale vieţi, datorită smereniei, evlaviei şi iubirii de Dumnezeu care l-a stăpânit întotdeauna, calităţi şi virtuţi pe care le-a dobândit atât din familie cât mai ales de la călugării din Mănăstirea Condriţa, din nordul Basarabiei, în vecinătatea căreia s-a născut la 2 aprilie anul 1922 şi a crescut. Ulterior a fost vieţuitor al Mănăstirii Căldăruşani iar apoi elev seminarist la Mănăstirea Cernica de lângă Bucureşti, unde a fost, permanent, aproape de Sfântul Ierarh Calinic – Ocrotitorul spiritual al mănăstirii – care-i adăposteşte sfintele sale moaște!...

După desființarea acestei școli este transferat la Seminarul Central din București iar ultimul an îl va urma la Seminarul Teologic din Chişinău. Întorcându-se în București, între anii 1943 – 1947 urmează atât cursurile Facultății de Litere și Filozofie cât și cele ale Institutului Teologic.

În anul 1948 este arestat pe motivul că ar fi ajutat un legionar. Trimis la Piteşti trece prin toată teroarea "reeducării" dar în întunericul celulei află lumina vorbirii şi împăcării cu Dumnezeu.

De la Piteşti este trimis în lagărele de la "Canal". Acolo îl întâlneşte pe călugărul Evghenie Hulea – o figură de pateric, conform mărturiei *Părintelui Roman Braga*, care l-a determinat spre a intra, definitiv, în monahism.

Este eliberat în anul 1954 dar i s-a impus domiciliu forţat în Bucureşti şi, totuşi, în aceste condiţii, merge pe ascuns la Iaşi unde Mitropolitul Sebastian Rusan al Moldovei îl călugăreşte şi îl hirotoneşte diacon, aici

 la Catedrala Mitropolitană – făcând bună misiune, mai ales cu tinerii.

În anul 1959 este arestat din nou, anchetat timp de un an de zile, căutându-i-se învinuiri închipuite, pentru ca până la urmă să fie încadrat în lotul grupului "Rugul aprins" de la Mănăstirea Antim – unde a fost coleg, în anii studenției, cu Părinții Sofian Boghiu, Petroniu Tănase, Nicolae Bordoșiu și cu Mitropolitul Antonie Plămădeală al Ardealului.

Au urmat închisoarea Jilava, colonia de muncă Balta Brăilei, lagărele din Delta Dunării, cu suferințe grele, dar în același timp cu o companie de elită: Părinții Benedict Ghiuş, Grigorie Băbuş, Sofian Boghiu, Dosoftei Moraru, Tit Moldovan, Felix Dubneac, vestitul profesor Tudor Popescu, omul de cultură Petre Pandrea și alții. Condamnat la 18 ani temniță grea, lucrează până în anul 1964, când la 31 iulie este eliberat cu prilejul grațierii generale a deținuților politici.

De acum înainte începe lungul pelerinaj al ierodiaconului Roman Braga prin toată țara, cunoscut fiind de toți dar și izgonit fiind de către toți din cauza faptului că "avea tinicheaua de coadă!"...

De aici nu urmează, totuşi, faptul că toţi "inspectorii" de la Culte erau călăi. Aşa se face că tot în anul 1964, Dumnezeu îl scoate în cale pe unul din cei "buni" care-i dă Episcopului Oradiei – Valerian Zaharia – aprobarea pentru a-l hirotoni în treapta de preot, eveniment ce are loc cu binecuvântarea lui Dumnezeu în anul 1965!...

La 1 Ianuarie anul 1985 este instalat ca preot la Negreşti – Oaş, unde a început o intensă activitate pastoral-misionară şi catehetică, duminica la vecernie – cu copiii şi tineretul aşa încât oşenii îl înconjurau cu dragoste, ba chiar şi securiştii nu îndrăzneau să intervină pe față, de teama credincioşilor.

Apoi l-au mutat silit, într-o noapte, în localitatea Sârbi – Bihor, iar ulterior, adică în anul 1968 a fost chemat la Patriarhie și trimis ca misionar în Brazilia.

În anul 1972 episcopul românilor din S.U.A. – Valerian Trifa - îl cheamă la Vatra – unde îşi desfăşoară activitatea ca stareţ şi duhovnic al Mănăstirii "Înălţarea Domnului", iar din anul 1988 se va retrage la Mănăstirea "Adormirea Maicii Domnului" din Rives Junction, Michigan, SUA.

Cu toate acestea nu a fost scos în evidență decât primul strat al vieții *Părintelui Roman Braga*. Miezul (ei) duhovnicesc trebuie căutat în anii formării sale spirituale la mănăstirea copilăriei sale din Condrița Basarabiei apoi în anii formării sale intelectuale la

seminariile și la cele două prestigioase școli superioare bucureștene, în anii studenției sale petrecuți, alături de elita intelectualității creștine românești care făcea parte din gruparea "Rugului Aprins" dar, mai cu seamă, în perioada modelării și desăvârșirii sale duhovnicești de către mentorul său spiritual – călugărul Evghenie de la "Canal"!...

Orice cinste omenească i s-ar acorda părintelui pentru duhovnicia sfinției sale, sună ciudat deoarece viața sa jertfită, în întregime, lui Dumnezeu nu o poate cinsti decât binecuvântarea Celui Căruia i s-a jertfit!...

Este vrednică de laudă această viață și activitate!...

Datorită acestor oameni minunați, spiritualitatea creștină a rezistat. Noi cei de astăzi, luați cu problemele și greutățile cu care ne confruntăm, nu realizăm suficient și bine cât de importantă a fost mărturisirea ce au făcut-o ei pentru Iisus Hristos!...

Mi se pare că pentru generațiile tinere, care nu au trăit ororile comunismului, aceste mărturii nu spun mare lucru.

Noi suntem convinşi că dacă mai avem astăzi o spiritualitate serioasă, o avem datorită acestor bătrâni cuminți şi minunați, din care categorie face parte şi *Părintele Arhimandrit Roman Braga!...*

Şi pentru a ne folosi, din punct de vedere duhovnicesc, de învăţătura *Părintelui Roman Braga*, am purces, cu a sa învoială, dragoste şi binecuvântare la realizarea unui interviu de suflet, pentru care îi mulţumesc în mod deosebit.

Aşadar, parcurgând viaţa, opera, activitatea şi biografia acestui părinte îmbunătăţit, acum, cu prilejul naşterii Sfinţiei Sale în adevărata viaţa – cea cerească şi veşnică, constat, cu uimire şi admiraţie, tăria lor de caracter şi verticalitatea cu care au fost înzestrat acest contemporan al nostru în faţa căruia noi nu suntem altceva decât nişte oameni supuşi vremurilor acestui veac!...

Se cuvine așadar, să-i aducem prinos de cinstire și de recunoștință rugându-ne lui Dumnezeu să-l răsplătească cu harul și cu dragostea sa cea nemărginită acolo, în locașurile cele cerești, în lumina cea neînserată a Slavei Sale!...

- Preacuvioase Părinte Arhimandrit Roman Braga, astăzi propaganda în favoarea normalizării anumitor păcate și patimi are consecințe și efecte profund negative asupra vieții sufletești și spirituale a tinerilor, mai mult chiar decât propaganda ateismului din timpul regimului comunist. Ce măsuri și soluții credeți că ar trebui luate și adoptate pentru ca numărul victimelor așa numitei democrații să fie cât mai mic, cât mai scăzut?
- Întrebarea este interesantă şi mi-a mai fost pusă şi cu alte ocazii, şi ca şi atunci vă răspund şi dumneavo-astră acum, că ar trebui să întrebaţi guvernul statului (în cadrul căruia lucraţi şi dumneavoastră) de lucrul acesta. Să ştiţi că tinerii nu sunt vinovaţi cu nimic că trăiesc în această civilizaţie şi cultură decadentă.

Să nu credeți cumva că epoca pe care o trăim noi

acum este foarte diferită față de alte timpuri din istoria creștinismului și că ceilalți au fost privilegiați, bucuroși și norocoși că au trăit în altă epocă, iar noi suntem foarte nenorociți că trăim acum, în aceste vremuri.

Ce pot spune eu, este să nu așteptați nimic concret de la școli. Eu trăiesc, după cum bine știți, într-o țară în care oamenii își educă copiii acasă, până la intrarea în facultate. Bineînțeles că regimul permite să se dea numai examenele, fără ca profesorul să-l vadă pe copil la cursuri în timpul anului școlar.

În America foarte mulţi se feresc de şcolile publice. În statul Michigan, unde locuiesc eu, un sfert din copii nu se duc la şcoală, până la studiile superioare, universitare. Cine îi poate învăţa mai mult şi mai bine pe copii şi cine este mai mult interesat de morala lor decât părinţii, bineînţeles, dacă ei sunt nişte oameni responsabili. Nu ştiu, nu am auzit ca în România să fie oficializat acest sistem de homeschooling adică şcolarizare la domiciliu, acasă.

Știați că în Statele Unite ale Americii există o asociație de tineri care s-au jurat să fie virgini până la căsătoria lor? Ei poartă o insignă pe care scrie: only my wife sau only my husband (adică numai soția mea sau numai soțul meu). Sunt bine organizați, organizează conferințe și dansuri ori diferite spectacole și acțiuni dar sunt oameni care vor să arate și să demonstreze că omul nu este un animal și că se poate trăi în abstinență și înfrânare.

În altă ordine de idei, dacă un copil este crescut și educat să spună nu răului, va reuși să depășească ostacolele spirituale și ispitele de acum.

Desigur că tensiunea şi presiunea este mare, însă constrângerea diavolului a fost mare întotdeauna. Tânărul trebuie învățat să nu dorească ce are celălalt, adică să nu râvnească la bunurile aproapelui său.

Colegul şi-a luat maşină, vreau şi eu una, cel puţin la fel, celălalt are un anumit computer, vreau şi eu unul, cel puţin ca acela. Ei, felu acesta de gândire să ştiţi că îl distruge pe om, cultivându-i invidia şi egoismul. Trebuie ca tânărul să aibe puterea sufketească şi tăria de character să spună nu. Cui? Nu păcatului care-l vede pe stradă, ci să spună nu chiar lui însuşi.

Căci este mult mai greu să-ţi spui nu ţie însuţi, păcatelor tale, patimilor tale, dorinţelor tale egoiste şi posesive. Aceasta este educaţia care trebuie făcută. Ea nu s-a făcut niciodată în şcoală. Pe asta o fac părinţii acasă. Nu-i impui şi nu-i torni pe gât predici, fiindcă toţi s-au săturat de predici, discursuri şi toate de felul acesta. Ci îl iei de mână şi îl duci la biserică, tu săruţi icoana, o sărută şi el, îl duci la spovedanie şi împărtăşanie, te spovedeşti şi împărtăşeşti tu şi atunci va face și el la fel.

Dacă ai prezența lui Dumnezeu în tine, atunci ești într-o stare de rugăciune. Atunci omul devine rugăciune

- Preacuvioase Părinte Arhimandrit, ce să face ca să-L iubim pe Dumnezeu mai mult, ca să-L simţim mai aproape de noi? - Trebuie să vorbim permanent cu El. Trebuie să-L simți pe Dumnezeu în tine, nu în afara ta, în exterior, ci în interior, în inima ta, căci inima noastră este nelimitată, infinită deoarece în ea se sălăşluieşte Iisus Hristos începând de la botez. O persoană are nişte dimensiuni infinite ale personalității lui; în adânc, în profunzime, fără limită, cu alte cuvinte persoana umană este veşnică. În adâncul acesta din noi există Dumnezeu, după cum spune Sfântul Apostol Pavel de multe ori că "voi sunteți biserica Dumnezeului Celui Viu".

Deci să nu deturnăm ori direcţionăm rugăciunea noastră către un colţ ori într-un colţ, fiindcă Dumnezeu nu este material ori spaţial ca să-L pui într-un colţ şi să spui: acolo este Dumnezeu! Coboară-te în tine şi adresează rugăciunea în inima ta lui Dumnezeu şi vei simţi prezenţa Lui!

Să ştiţi că dialogul, convorbirea cu Dumnezeu îţi produce şi aduce sentimentul şi simţirea aceasta, a prezenţei lui Dumnezeu. Spune-I lui Dumnezeu când ţi-e foame, când ţi-e sete, spune-I lui că te duci la Bucureşti ori la Oradea, unde ai treabă, spune-i Lui ceva pe drum, arată-I lui Dumnezeu ce frumos este peisajul, ce frumoase sunt florile sau natura.

Vorbeşte cu Dumnezeu de toate şi despre toate. Doamne, ce să fac, cum să fac? Uite, trebuie să fac asta şi asta; mi-e foame, mă duc să mănânc o bucățică de pâine ori să beau un pahar cu apă... Tot ai în minte lucrurile astea, el par la prima vedere copilăreşti, puerile, însă conversația aceasta cu Dumnezeu se preface, se transformă în rugăciune. Pentru că ce este rugăciunea? Este o permanentă şi continuă comunicare a omului cu Dumnezeu, într-un mod cât se poate de natural.

Gândiţi-vă ce spunea (tot) Sfântul Apostol Pavel în Epistola sa către Tesaloniceni: "Rugaţi-vă neîncetat!". Cum putea el să se roage neîncetat, neîntrerupt, când era o persoană foarte activă?

A făcut atâtea biserici, a scris atâtea epistole, a propovăduit "cu timp şi fără timp", a făcut şi avea de făcut permanent, atâtea lucruri. Nu putea, nu avea cum să stea tot timpul în genunchi. Drept urmare, la asta s-a gândit el: să ai întotdeauna în inima ta sentimentul prezenței lui Dumnezeu.

De fapt, Sfinţii Părinţi în acest fel definesc rugăciunea: ca fiind sentimentul prezenţei lui Dumnezeu. Rugăciunea nu este doar atunci când citeşti din carte. Trebuie spus tinerilor acest lucru. Nu este doar atunci când te rogi dimineaţa şi, gata, am terminat. Sau zici: "ah, nu mi-am terminat rugăciunea". Păi, rugăciunea nu se sfârşeşte niciodată.

Nu-i nimic, vorbeşte cu Dumnezeu copilăreşte, căci noi suntem copiii lui Dumnezeu. Şi vorba asta copilărească cu Dumnezeu îţi aduce sentimentul prezenţei familiare, intime a lui Dumnezeu în inima ta. Dumneavoastră ştiţi proverbul călugăresc, invocat deseori şi de către Părintele Arhimandrit Teofil Părăian că "dacă te rogi numai când te rogi, de fapt nu te rogi deloc".

Dacă ai prezenţa lui Dumnezeu în tine, atunci eşti, te afli, într-o stare de rugăciune. Omul devine o rugăciune. Omul are o stare de rugăciune, nu clipe de rugăciune, momente când se roagă şi momente când nu se roagă. Ar fi cumplit şi groaznic.

În concluzie, trebuie să avem tot timpul simţirea lui Dumnezeu. Atunci când spui "Doamne!", să fii convins şi sigur că Dumnezeu Se întoarce cu faţa la tine şi aşteaptă să-I spui ceva. Când eşti ocupat, fii atent la lucrul pe care-l faci. Când ai conversaţii, gândeşte-te la ce zici. Însă, dacă ai puţin timp, acolo, câteva minute sau chiar într-o conversaţie cu oamenii, poţi să spui: "Doamne Iisuse Hristoase, Fiul lui Dumnezeu, miluieşte-mă pe mine păcătosul!"; "Doamne Iisuse Hristoase, uită-te la noi, ajută-ne!" sau "Binecuvintează-i Doamne, pe oamenii aceştia!".

Cu aleasă prețuire și deosebită recunoștință, Dr. Stelian Gomboș

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eforturile comunității de a ridica și a împodobi o biserică ortodoxă într-un timp așa de scurt. La aceasta se adaugă și faptul că există o viață bisericească frumoasă și activități culturale și sociale.

Credincioşii care vin şi roagă în biserica din Haledon sunt în principal

de etnie română, dar sunt şi mulţi credincioşi sârbi, aceştia având şi o contribuţie însemnată la ctitorirea şi suştinerea locaşului de cult.



Binecuvintează Doamne pe ctitorii, binefăcătorii şi închinătorii bisericii ortodoxe românești din Haledon şi pe toți cei ce iubesc podoaba casei Tale!