

ARCHBISHOP VALERIAN D. TRIFA

In Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of His Birth

From The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America: The First Half Century, 1929-1979, by Gerald J. Bobango (pp. 200-217), published by The Romanian American Heritage Center, 1979.



Viorel Dionisie Trifa was born in the valleys and foothills of the Transylvanian Plateau in Campeni, in the county of Alba, Transylvania, on June 28, 1914. For the first four years of his life he was a subject of Austria-Hungary. His father Dionisie and his mother Macinica Motora Trifa were not wealthy, but owned livestock and made a decent living, along with other *fruntași* peasants in the region of Țara Moților. Viorel was the eldest of seven children who helped their father farm and cut wood for his modest lumber business. Dionisie Trifa also taught the local

one-room grammar school in the canton of Dealul Capsei, and his sons had their father both in school and at home for the first four years of elementary school. Viorel's job when not at his desk was to take the sheep herd to graze on the slopes of the hills, and to cut hay in season.

There was no high school near the family home, so in 1924, at age ten, Viorel was sent to the Horea Gymnasium in Campeni proper. There was not enough money for paying the boarding school in the city, so except in wintertime, the boy walked daily to school about five miles away. In the fall of 1927 came a determining move in his young life. He entered the Gheorghe Lazar Lyceum in Sibiu, and began to live with his uncles Constantine and Iosif Trifa. Not only was he in one of the best high schools in the country, but his uncle Iosif was a priest of high reputation and unique personality. Under the sponsorship of the Orthodox Archdiocese of Sibiu, Father Trifa edited and published two weekly newspapers, *Lumina Satelor* (The Light of the Villages) and *Oastea Domnului* (The Army of the Lord). The second paper was the organ of a movement of religious renewal founded by Iosif Trifa after the First World War, a movement which by the middle twenties had thousands of devotees throughout the nation.

At a most impressionable age, then, Viorel Trifa found himself in a stimulating atmosphere, both spiritually and intellectually. He had come to Sibiu thinking to study agriculture and return home to improve the family holdings. . . . With a large library at his disposal and the chance to meet religious figures from all over the country at his uncle's home, his goals turned to theology. Bible seminars, community singing, and the absence of smoking and drinking as he worked through his high school years, indeed, made him something of an ascetic. Iosif Trifa, like many Orthodox clergymen in Transylvania, was militant in his practical theology. One of the purposes of *Oastea Domnului* as a movement, other than spiritual elevation of the peasantry, was to combat the competing religious revivalism and inroads made by Protestants and various sectarian churches in this era. Sometime in this period, by the time Viorel graduated from high school in the spring of 1931, it was decided by mutual agreement between uncle and nephew that the boy would pursue higher studies and assist his uncle in the future, especially in the journalism of the movement. His talent for writing was already apparent; his ability to relate to simple country people in his personal contacts and speaking seemed to stamp him as a lay missionary. Young Trifa was nothing if not intelligent, and this combined with an intensity shared by many of his generation. One final element of his personality, for those even remotely acquainted with the

culture of Eastern Europe, is almost too obvious to mention: his unrelenting Romanian nationalism, a deep-seated devotion to land and people which Romanian boys inhaled from their first breath. Like thousands of his generation Viorel would work toward the betterment of Romanian society through individual moral and spiritual regeneration. His aunt herself was a niece of Avram Iancu, and the same heady brew of 1848 flowed in the veins of those of this first generation to see the creation of Greater Romania become more than a dream.

Where should he study? The Andreana Theological Academy was right next door in Sibiu, but several factors worked against Viorel's going there. His uncle knew most of the professors personally: charges of favoritism might be raised, for Viorel knew them also, from Iosif Trifa's home. Moreover, the strictness of the school regime in regulating student life lent to a good deal of student circumvention of the rules, while at the same time one's personality could be stifled. Just in this period, however, a new Theological Faculty was opened in Bessarabia, at Chisinau, as a branch of the University of Iași. Two important factors made the school highly recommendatory. It contained some of the best professors in Romania, not only in theology but in other areas. . . . Equally important, too, for the Trifa family was the availability of scholarships, of which Sibiu had none. Dionisie Trifa also planned to educate two of his other sons, Constantin and Domniș, and money was not plentiful. Trifa applied for one of the twenty Chișinău scholarships opened to forty candidates, and came in 16th on the list. . . . In the next four years, from 1931 to 1935, as a university student, he distinguished himself both in his studies and in university activities. He pursued Orthodox theology, liturgics, apologetics, and church history, along with iconography and Byzantine art. He read widely in philosophy, political theory, Romanian and European history, and acquired what was, for his time and place, a relatively broad grasp of Western religious tradition and the place held by Orthodoxy in the universal scheme of things. When he graduated in 1935, it was *Cum Laude*. He had many friends, but was not a party-goer or a socialite. Yet he was an activist student leader, as he had been since high school. At age fourteen he was president of a student literary society which sponsored public evening programs in Campeni. At the lyceum he had been president of the "St. George" Society, which coordinated religious extra-curricular activities. Almost from the time he entered Chisinau Theological School he became president of the theology students association; by the time he was in his final year, in 1934-1935, he was chosen president of the city-wide University Students Society.

Meanwhile he and his family discussed his ordination into the priesthood, once he had his degree in theology. He could easily have been given any parish in his home area he wanted, or even one in Sibiu, at that point. Trifa had not abandoned his intention to join his uncle and spread the gospel of *Oastea Domnului*. He did not want to be tied to a parish, which would limit his movements. Also, he owed his uncle something for all the time this worthy had invested in him. Trifa returned to Sibiu to work as assistant editor of the movement's newspaper and business manager of the printing shop. At the same time he traveled extensively throughout the country, preaching in villages, visiting local chapters, starting new ones. It was what he did best: reading, writing, organizing, urging, guiding. Such work also reinforced his first-hand knowledge of the misery of tens of thousands of his countrymen and the incredible corruption of the political regime of King Carol II. . . . Trifa saw poor people in his own home area, but Bessarabia was a true eye-opener. He often spent his school vacations at monasteries in the region, or at peasant homes in the districts of Lapușna and Soroca, and he soon discovered that many another

university student in the 1930s was grappling with the disastrous conditions besetting the country.

First, Trifa realized he needed more study. After one intense year of working for The Army of the Lord, he registered at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Bucharest in the fall of 1936, to begin work on a doctoral degree in theology. Simultaneously he audited lectures at the School of Letters and Philosophy. For a while he commuted between Sibiu and Bucharest, but this was impractical and the following year he moved to Bucharest to complete his thesis and continue to study philosophy. . . . In December, 1936, Trifa was elected vice-president of the students in Letters and Philosophy and soon after, president of the University Students' Center in the capital. Here he remained for the next two years, at the center of the growing maelstrom of the Romanian political scene, as the country was being more and more pressed by the expansionist policies of Hitlerist Germany from without, the underground activity of native communists within, and the chiliastic evangelicalism of the Legionaire Movement which foresook fixed ideologies for individual purification as a means to national regeneration. Trifa's educational background and all his inclinations naturally drew him to support such millenarianism. His position in student society put him in touch with the well-known Transylvanian Legionaire, Ion Moța (1902-1937), who was president of the students at the University of Cluj.

. . .As time went on, it became clear that only two major forces in the country were capable of open opposition to the Carlist regime: the working classes and the students. Activism among the latter led to the closing of the University of Bucharest at different intervals during 1937, and Trifa found his studies interrupted more frequently and his political work as student president growing. In 1937 Moța was killed fighting in Spain, and for a few months Trifa took over the management of his newspaper in Bucharest, *Libertatea*. Then on February 27, 1938, the government promulgated a new constitution: the old one was simply abolished, and a royal dictatorship inaugurated. . . .The University was closed, and Trifa's name was on the list of those to be arrested. . . .After an early morning raid in which one of his friends was dragged off to the police, Trifa was "invited" to report to the Prefect of Police himself the next day. He hid instead, and for the next nine months went underground. By January, 1939, he was able to leave the country. With three of his comrades he crossed the border into Poland. Two months later he was in Germany, an exile from his homeland at age twenty-five. In Berlin he hoped he might obtain a scholarship for the University of Berlin from the Lutheran Church, but he could not. He registered at the University on his own, and by tutoring and doing odd jobs he managed to remain there, studying history and journalism, for nearly a year.

In September, 1940, King Carol's regime in Bucharest collapsed. . . .Trifa returned to his country after a seventeen months' absence and immediately was elected President of the Union of Christian Students and plunged into relief work, assisting the thousands of student refugees from the Universities of Cernăuți and Cluj who were displaced by the Vienna Diktat of 1940. He became the administrator of scholarships, student residences and medical assistance. . . .Trifa by this time was the president of the National Union of Romanian Christian Students. On January 20, 1941, he led a mass demonstration of students from the University Plaza to the Council of Ministers. . . . Although the day closed in an orderly fashion, the next day produced wholesale firings in the government by Antonescu, and the Legion rebelled. This was more than the

students had bargained for. Again Trifa hid. . . On March 13, helped by some German officers who later ended up in concentration camps for disobeying orders, Trifa and nearly 50 others were able to entrain and pass into Germany. Here they were held, in a sense, to help the Germans ensure Antonescu's cooperation, for the future. . . In March, 1943, Trifa was sent to the notorious Dachau. . . by August 30, 1944, Romania capitulated under the invasion of Russian armies, and Trifa was shortly released.

Trifa was assigned residence in Vienna, where the German government hoped to establish a Romanian government in exile. Trifa, theology student, lay missionary, reformer, had had enough. He refused to cooperate. . . Just at this time Metropolitan Visarion Puiu was in Vienna, attempting to establish a Romanian Orthodox Diocese outside of Romania. Trifa joined the Metropolitan as his secretary, and thus managed to remain in Austria a few more months. . . Trifa snuck across the border and made his way to Italy, arriving in April and finding temporary quarters in a Roman Catholic monastery. Soon he filled out papers at the International Red Cross to migrate to the West. People with practical professions were wanted—not theologians or student leaders; Trifa was thus bypassed in the quotas and remained in Italy for the next five years.

January, 1946, found him learning Italian and substituting as a teacher in the Catholic Missionary College of San Guiseppe, lecturing in ancient history, geography, and foreign languages. . . Yet destiny, while it may leave us in peace for a time, is only waiting for its appointed moment to move us on. The moment came when one morning in 1949 Trifa's mail brought him a copy of *Solia* sent by a friend who had managed to get to America. He still hoped eventually to migrate, and he saw the name and address of a certain priest named Trutza in Cleveland, Ohio. It would do no harm to write and ask this man if he knew anything of the whereabouts of certain of Trifa's relatives who lived in Ohio. . . Thus Viorel wrote a fateful letter, addressing himself to Father Trutza. . . So a correspondence was initiated. When *America* was looking for an editor a few months later, Trutza mentioned to Iosif Drughociu and others the young Romanian theologian with much newspaper experience, in Italy. The Church World Service, not so burdened with refugees now as earlier, processed the papers. On his thirty-sixth birthday in 1950, Trifa followed the trail blazed by thousands of his countrymen over the decades in the hope of a new life. He sailed for the United States of America.

This, then, was one of those upon whom fell the task of defending the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate beset from all sides. . . the imperative necessity of acquiring a Bishop Co-Adjutor for Policarp as soon as possible increased. Trifa's work on *Solia*, and most of all his involvement in the federal court hearing in Cleveland made his name known in the Romanian community. . . Finally, the editor's ideological position was clear: he opposed all dictation from Bucharest in the affairs of the Episcopate, and, certainly not least in importance, . . he was Trutza's choice. The editor went to Chicago the odds-on favorite.

Sixty-two voting delegates assembled in the Pompeian Room of the Masonic Temple in Chicago for the Congress session of July 2, 1951. . . The theme was legality, and the legitimate right of succession to Policarp of whomever the Congress chose. . . The Congress was in an electing mood. It immediately resolved "unanimously" that it indeed had the competence to elect a Vicar, just as it alone could choose the Bishop. . . Another motion followed and was carried at once,

that this very session proceed to the election. What came next revealed in a few words more than could be reported in many volumes about the basic character of the Episcopate. Father Nicolae Moldovan moved and Alexander Buliga seconded a resolution that, even before the balloting, all delegates agree to recognize the person chosen, and that no one "will harbor any hard feelings nor will they be dissatisfied on account of the results of this election." . . . The men from Youngstown, Akron, Sharon, Detroit, and Indiana Harbor strode to the front desk and deposited their ballots in the traditional urn. . . . Immigrants and sons of immigrants returned to their seats and waited to hear the results of their effort to save the religious institution that they and their parents had established on these shores. . . . Twenty-six votes for Lucaciu; one ballot blank; one ballot annulled; thirty-four votes for Trifa. Dr. Nicolae Neagoe stood at once and, seconded by five other men, moved the vote be made unanimous, and Trutza had to shout the motion over the cries of "Da!" and the applause of an assembly on its feet, already clapping and cheering, and it went on and on as Trifa was notified and led back into the room. "We have an Episcopate and We Have a Bishop!" trumpeted *Solia's* next issue, and after twelve years of drought and bad harvests, the rain was falling at last on the Romanians.

. . . The Chicago Congress amounted to no less than a quiet revolution taking place in the Episcopate. Even before the election of a bishop, the twenty-four parishes present clarified for good their relationship with Romania and the mother church. They declared the Episcopate to be completely autonomous: not only administratively, as was affirmed in 1948, but also now in canonical affairs, and thus "free from all rules, regulations, orders, decrees, etc., emanating from the Patriarch or from the Holy Synod of Romania." It was a complete break, as Romanian-Americans climaxed the trend of events which had been preparing not only among them, but in other East European ethnic churches since the end of World War II. Along with this went two other major breaks with the past. . . . The impact of Trifa's acceptance letter and its conditions was evident here, as well as in the clearer definition given to the responsibilities and powers of the bishop's office. In essence, Chicago laid down the broad guidelines for an Episcopate of the future; it broke with the past, it charted a new course, and now each parish might choose, for if nothing else ambiguity was largely removed, as to where the Episcopate stood. This is important to bear in mind in seeking to understand how, in the next few years, Trifa was to win such firm and unmitigated support—and respect—from his people. It was partly the context of the times—the new bishop and those who had sponsored him represented an opposition to communism which struck deep roots in the sense of American patriotism which permeated the Romanian community. It was partly his young age, which symbolized the future and at last seemed as though here was someone with whom the young people of the church could identify, after decades of having the rhetoric of their elders fall on indifferent ears. It was partly the very sense of change and determination which hung over the Chicago Congress. "Reform" was always discussed, but never really acted on until now. It was all these and more, because in the years to come the new bishop himself showed above all other things that he meant business: he acted while others talked. . . . Trifa would suffer many setbacks in the years ahead, and many of the fundamental problems would not be solved. He himself had failings that exacerbated, rather than eased, certain long-standing lacunae in his diocese. Nevertheless in the final analysis the newly-elected had come to America with the same qualitative faith and resolution which had motivated generations of his fellow immigrants and, like them, he performed something of a miracle in less than three decades, that of creating a whole that was greater than the sum of its parts. None of

this was self-evident, of course, in 1951, and in the report made by Trutza to the Congress, it looked like the break with the past was anything but complete. . . .



Consecration of Bishop Valerian in Philadelphia

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the United States included over 100,000 members and considered itself autonomous, having broken with its mother church, as did the Russians in America, following the Bolshevik Revolution. This autonomy was not formally recognized, however, by other Orthodox Churches throughout the world. . . . The Episcopate commission eventually decided that, although the canonical autonomy of the Ukrainian Church could be in doubt,

the Apostolic Succession of its hierarchs could be traced to the regular Holy Orders of Metropolitan Dionysius of Warsaw, head of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Poland, which was in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople and also with the Romanian Orthodox Church in Romania. . . .

The ordination was set for April 27, 1952, at . . . Descent of the Holy Ghost Church at 723 North Bodine Street in Philadelphia with its twin white pillars and classic lines, leased from the Episcopalian Church in the 1920s. . . . Viorel Trifa became Bishop Valerian at the hands of Metropolitan John and his concelebrants on Sunday, April 27, 1952, and the Episcopate, battered and bruised and assailed it seemed from all sides, after thirteen years was once more whole.



*From the Introduction to the book, **Dearly Beloved. . . An Anthology of Archbishop Valerian D. Trifa's Writings**, published by the Valerian D. Trifa Romanian-American Heritage Center, 1995.*

Among the people of every nation, there are leaders who, by the sheer power of their innate gifts, rise to positions of authority and power. By their actions, they shape life and lives around them. History is made up of the stuff of leaders and followers, those who have vision and those who accept to acknowledge and embrace them.

Among the Romanian people, one such individual is Valerian Viorel Trifa. Although born in Transylvania, Romania, and educated there, Viorel Trifa was brought to the shores of the New



The parastas at the 50th anniversary of St. Mary Church, Cleveland, Ohio, 1954. The Bishop is assisted by Frs. Ioan Surducan, Ioan Stanila, Deacon Teodor Sideras, Frs. Traian Demian, Ioan Trutza, Eugene Lazar and Vasile Hategan.

World by a destiny shaped by the hand of God. Had he been able to live out his life in Romania, undoubtedly, he would have risen to great heights of leadership there. I do not say, "greater," because in his adopted country, he was chosen by the Romanian Orthodox people to be their hierarch; in fact, their ethnarch. He was elevated by the American Church to the dignity

of Archbishop. Is there a more exalted position of leadership than that which he held? Whether or not he would have chosen to serve the Romanian

nation in a church position had he remained there will remain known only to God.

Leadership qualities are such that, no matter where in time or place the possessor of these talents lives, they are drawn on by circumstances to be used for the benefit of others. In a country the size of Romania, with its unique geo-physical and ethnological composition, the personage of Viorel Trifa was early on the rise toward positions of leadership.

Like his predecessor, the first bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate, Policarp Pompei Morusca, and like most "Ardeleni" (Transylvanians), Viorel Trifa was a stalwart patriot, remaining so all of his life. This is very important to know, because his life and writings show that he chose to balance this spirit of ethnic self-preservation, which could degenerate to an aggressive attitude toward others, with the universal acceptance of all peoples of the Gospel on which he based his life and actions.

People living in nations of large populations, such as the United States, who have never faced foreign invaders on their own soil, cannot understand the spirit of vigilance for self-existence which shapes the people of smaller nations, such as Romania. On the border of Romania is Russia, a large conglomerate nation which traditionally has fostered the dream of a Pan-Slavic Empire (which by geo-physical circumstances would logically seek to include the territories of Romania) and which, at various times, has shown limited respect for the self-determination of minority peoples within and outside of their borders. Valerian experienced this. On the other hand, Hungary, which has a smaller population than Romania, has had an official policy to "Magyarize" the majority Romanian population under its rule in Transylvania, a policy not limited to the Romanians, but extended to all non-Hungarians living within its borders. Valerian experienced this, too.

Whether he would have lived in Romania or, as he did, among Romanians outside her borders, Valerian Trifa valued his origins without belittling others theirs. He sought the self-

determination of his people in Romania and the right to self-identity in the New World and struggled to share with the New World lessons and values of the Old. With the qualities he possessed, he led without suppressing; he spoke with authority but without animosity; he shepherded his people with total dedication and with great personal sacrifice but did not isolate himself from the new society in which he lived out his life. In the end, one can determine that his death "in exile" was due to the heavy burden of caring for his flock which had lain on his heart.

Within the collection of some of the writings of Archbishop Valerian Dionisie Trifa we can perceive a rapid-stroke but still accurate portrait of the complex personality who led the Romanian American Orthodox Community for thirty-two years. By complex, I mean to say that he possessed a variety of gifts and talents, none of which he left unproductive. He had a literary interest and style which shaped the Romanian American press; he was a professor of history who drew from its lessons, knowing to be patient before taking a decision; he was a builder and a preserver, a combination not often found in one and the same person; he was a teacher who instructed his flock through formal and informal education, by courses, writing, preaching and listening.



Bishop Valerian at the 1966 Church Congress surrounded by Nicolae Horodniceanu, George Bocioaga, Stelian Stanicel, Fr. Eugene Lazar and (sitting) John Halmaghi, Mrs. Halmaghi and Ioan Simicin.

Archbishop Valerian was pragmatic and frugal, possessing a frugality which did not result from an internal miserliness but from concern for the material goods and meager wealth of the Church which was entrusted to him through his office. He was almost preoccupied with the intention that the faithful should not perceive the Church, and in this case, the Episcopate, as being greedy for the hard-earned wealth of the people.

Among his gifts, however, the arts cannot be numbered. He was not a musician, although he was concerned about the

responses for liturgical services; he was not an artist and often let his preference for "ethnic" artists rise above the traditional art of the Church; he was not a liturgist, nor did he enjoy the ritual of the Church. This is not to say that he was impious; it merely points out the reality that in some areas of Church life, even those which are very public, he was not gifted, and yet his words were powerful enough and his concern authentic enough that one balanced the other.

As a Churchman, Valerian Trifa did not accept stipends nor visitation fees; he accepted the salary given him (he managed to see that it remained meager) and set an example which was on the one hand admirable but on the other unrealistic concerning the needs of the priest in a parish.

There are very defined themes which reoccur throughout the Archbishop's writings, as well as in his oral presentations. Many today would say that he was "old-fashioned," and "conservative," concerning patriotism, morality, and politics. When put to the test, he was generous in listening to the opposition and rarely was moved to indignation or unkind rebuttals.

In his acceptance speech, "Let Us Go Ahead As Before," in 1952, Valerian stated that he was convinced that Romanian Orthodoxy in the New World must not perish, that the churches built and which are the unifying element in the Romanian Orthodox Community must not have been built in vain and that the times demand the religious ideals which lift humanity. Of note is that, from the time of his first public address as bishop, Valerian Trifa expressed his intention to work for a unity of all American Orthodox.



Procession in 1957

When he wrote "Liberty, Religion, and Truth," the Archbishop showed that early on he had learned the lesson of America: that freedom of religion meant the freedom of choice, and that choice might also mean that some might stray from the Orthodox Church. He, however, kindly and properly reaffirmed that "Christ did create a hierarchy while in this world; and as the Son of God, He instituted certain Mysteries and established the living Church which has come down to us through His apostles, the Church Synods and the continuous practice of the liturgical cult." He was, after all, an Orthodox Hierarch.

By this, we see that he was not an "ecumenist" in the pejorative sense of the word; and while respecting the diversity of faith in the New World, he stressed the primacy of the Orthodox Christian faith and was certain that "... the presence of the Church is obligatory in the fulfillment of the Divine Commandment of man's salvation from the grips of materialism and confused abstractionism, in order to bring (man) to Christ and the revealed Truth."

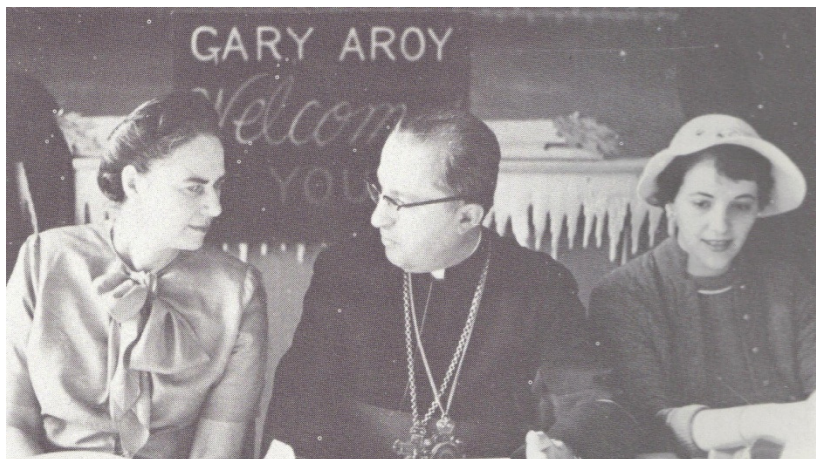
Elsewhere, in "Is Christianity a Theory or a Way of Life?", we find that he was saturated with an "American" spirit which is present only in those living here. "It would be tactless and un-Christian on my part to deny any fellow man his constitutional right to free speech. It's in vain and a waste of time this writing about religion ... if it does not correspond to a ... real desire to live the precepts put down on paper for others." The shepherd of the Romanian Orthodox had more than once to reaffirm in simple premises the need for orderly life in the parishes.

He wrote about "Meetings, Anniversaries, Banquets." Although written decades ago, the article is, unhappily, still applicable today. In it, he appeals to the clergy and people, "... not in criticism ... but as a general observation ... that many of you feel the same way. Let us, try then, to change the pattern, to see how we can keep up with those about us, so that our lives can be distinguished by their refinement and by the progress of our parishes." Certainly, this is an appeal to take from America what is good and to be part of society, improving by observing what is useful and adopting it in the life of the Episcopate.

In the areas of pastoral life, Valerian had made good progress by 1954, at which time he addressed the issue of "A New Man in a New World." To the priest newly-arrived from Europe, he stated: "America, as seen from here, is far from America as seen in Europe. You will find it better or worse, depending on how you will look at it. The advice we give you is this: be wary of the mistake of judging it before you know it ... you will be living in this new world."

Valerian the Archpastor to his clergy, however, was categoric: "If God has given you character, intelligence and love for the Church, you will find the true way. If you do not have these qualities naturally, all our advice would be in vain." He did not give awards nor honors, always stating that, "If someone is doing what he is supposed to, what need is there for special recognition?"

Reviewing the attitude of the Church in Romania vis-a-vis that of the American Church concerning the Holy Mysteries, in particular the frequent reception of Confession and Communion, Valerian took the path of liturgical renewal. In this way, while being true to his Romanian origins, he adapted himself to the spiritual needs of his flock in the Americas. It is amazing that, in 1954, he had to write an article concerning the obligation of parish members to receive Holy Communion at least once a year! The article, "The Measure of a Christian," could have been addressed to us at the recent Congress on the By-Laws. "It is necessary that the Church have a measure of judgment over its members ... one's attitude toward Communion is the most important. The Orthodox Church teaches us that anyone who does not feel the need, at least once a year, (to partake of Communion) ... is spiritually sick."



At an AROY Board meeting in Gary, Indiana, November 1956. From L-R: Princess Ileana, Bishop Valerian, Pauline Trutza.

The concern of the Archbishop for young people was evident to all from the beginning of his pastorate. In 1955, he wrote in behalf of "Sunday Schools," that "Of the greatest importance is the religious education that begins at home ... But it is also true that there are some areas with which parents may not be familiar and thus, Church Schools must be established." Nevertheless, the onus is on the parents to bring the child to the lessons. In

"Concerns for the Young," the tone set is one of admonition and chiding to those parents who have become "too enamored of their darling offspring who have surpassed them in education, in dress, and in social standing, and did not dare deprive them of their "liberty" in order to take them to church each Sunday."

"Who Should Sing in Church?," written in 1957, addressed the problem of the lack of singers for the services. "Even when there is a choir and there are cantors, and especially when there is no choir, if you wish the church to maintain the church tradition and to avoid ever letting the Holy Liturgy be without songs, we suggest the following plan: have congregational singing. ... Nothing is more beautiful, more uplifting, than to hear the entire congregation, men, women and children and elderly, giving the responses with one voice."

Part of the shaping of the Archbishop (the experience of which is limited to those born in other countries), was his becoming an American citizen. A loyal and good son of his adopted country, he nevertheless offered criticism when he felt it necessary. Among his articles on this topic are "Freedom Misunderstood," "Reflections on American Values," "Why have the Russians Beaten Us?," and "Disservice." As is fitting a good shepherd and a statesman, Valerian shines the light of the Gospel on America and sometimes found his adopted land wanting. In these articles, he does not so much challenge the American World as seek to guide and protect his own flock. It is not easy to stand up to the glares of those who are misshaped by the excesses which freedom has come to mean to some.

Valerian the Romanian patriot and Valerian the Churchman are one and the same, but it was the mind and heart of the pastor which shaped the uniqueness of the ethnic community. He was ever attentive to present the truth of the suffering of the Romanian Nation and to keep burning bright the beacon of resistance to the devastating propaganda of the atheistic communist government in Romania and elsewhere. " 'Paradise' Splattered With Blood" is a strong article shaming those who pretend that all is well in Communist Romania. "We feel that it is our duty to fight with all our strength, so that the whole world can have all that we here enjoy. Who would be left to think of them (20 million) if even we, their brethren, forget them? ... Behind the Iron Curtain (they)

publicly state that God and His Church are empty words ... If we remain silent and approve that, how can we answer when we come before God, for our betrayal of the holy teachings."

To the issue of the use of the Romanian language, the Archbishop places a good part of the blame on the old Romanian governments for not providing suitable teachers who could make up for the lack of didactic skills of immigrant parents to teach the language. " ... I have concluded that not much can be done..."

We are grateful to the Valerian D. Trifa Heritage Center for this work, much of which appears for the first time in the English language. It comes as a welcome echo in our hearts, recalling the voice of the young man from Campeni who, hearing the voice of his Lord, opened his heart to serve his people, his countries and his God.

When reflecting on the role of Orthodoxy and why Communism exists in many Orthodox nations, he replied: "Just as Orthodoxy will not be extinguished in spite of all that, we are sure that it will not be compromised through acts of man. It is not man who is the leader of Orthodoxy; it is the Father in heaven, Who can never be compromised." Archbishop Valerian's writings show that in the image of his heavenly Father so, too, as shepherd of his flock, he never compromised.

One of the last letters, written in 1983 to a newly-arrived priest from Romania and maintained today in the Episcopate Archives, contains a line which I believe sums up the life of Viorel Valerian Dionisie Trifa:

"Aici in America, singura forta de impunere
vine din inima omului."
"Here, in America, the only power which guides
is that which comes from within a man's heart."

**+ NATHANIEL, Archbishop of Detroit
Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America**