

SOLIA

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THE 93RD CONGRESS OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE OF AMERICA



The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (ROEA) gathered this year for its 93rd Annual Congress, which took place from September 4–7, 2025, in the Chicago metropolitan area.

The event, beginning at Saint Athanasius the Great Parish in Aurora, Illinois, and continuing at other parishes in Chicago, brought together clergy and faithful from across Canada and the United States for four days of prayer, fellowship, and shared responsibility.

Opening Day in Aurora

The Congress began on Thursday, September 4, at Saint

Athanasius Parish with the celebration of the Holy and Divine Liturgy, officiated by His Grace Bishop Andrei, assisted by a number of priests and deacons, in the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel.

The afternoon program included two important presentations: V. Rev. Fr. Nicholas Solak, Director of the Office of Pastoral Life of the Orthodox Church in America, addressed the challenges facing parish life today: rapid cultural changes, media influence, financial pressures, and the risk of clergy burnout. He emphasized the importance of balance in pastoral ministry, healthy priestly

families, and the role of peer support groups in sustaining clergy well-being.

Mother Abbess Gabriella, from Holy Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction, MI, then offered a moving reflection on the life and witness of Archimandrite Roman Braga, a confessor under the communist regime and spiritual father to many in North America. Speaking about his years of detention under the communist regime, she recounted how Father Roman transformed suffering into a school of holiness, secretly memorized Scripture, encouraged fellow prisoners, and later inspired generations of faithful through his teaching and personal example.

The first day concluded with the Akathist service to Saint Olga of Alaska, celebrated by His Grace Bishop Andrei. Participants received the recently published bilingual text of the Akathist and an icon of Saint Olga, published by the ROEA Publications Department.

Assembly and Resolutions

On Friday, September 5, the delegates — comprising all clergy and two lay representatives from each parish — gathered at Holy Nativity Parish in Chicago. Following the opening remarks of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel and His Grace Bishop Andrei, reports

were delivered by ROEA Chancellor Mr. David Oancea and Financial Secretary Mr. Mark Chestnut.

The Congress was honored by the presence of V. Rev. Fr. Alessandro Margheritino, Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America, who conveyed the greetings and blessings of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon of America and Canada.

The highlight of the day was the presentation of a resolution by His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, proposing to the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America the canonization of V. Rev. Archimandrite Roman Braga under the title Fr. Roman Braga of the Great Lakes, emphasizing the region where he lived and carried out his mission.

Liturgy and Eucharistic Fellowship at Saint Mary Parish, Chicago

On Saturday, September 6, participants of the Congress gathered at Saint Mary's Parish in Chicago for the Holy and Divine Liturgy, concelebrated by His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel and His Grace Bishop Andrei, assisted by clergy from across the Episcopate.

Closing at Holy Nativity Parish

The final day, Sunday, September 7, brought together

clergy and faithful from the Chicago-area parishes: — Saint Mary's, Descent of the Holy Spirit (Merrillville), and Saint Athanasius (Aurora) — at Holy Nativity Parish. The Holy Divine Liturgy was celebrated by His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel and His Grace Bishop Andrei, assisted by a number of priests and deacons, marking the conclusion of the 93rd Congress of the Episcopate.

CEL DE-AL 93-LEA CONGRES AL EPISCOPIEI ORTODOXE ROMÂNE DIN AMERICA



Episcopia Ortodoxă Română din America (ROEA) s-a reunit anul acesta pentru cel de-al 93-lea Congres anual, care a avut loc între 4-7 septembrie 2025, în zona metropolitană Chicago.

Evenimentul, a început la Parohia Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare din Aurora, Illinois, și a continuat în parohiile din Chicago, a reunit timp de patru zile clerici și credincioși din

Canada și Statele Unite în rugăciune, comuniune și responsabilitate.

Ziua de deschidere în Aurora

Congresul a început joi, 4 septembrie, la Parohia Sfântul Atanasie, cu săvârșirea Sfintei și Dumnezeieștii Liturghii, oficiată de Preasfințitul Părinte Episcop Andrei, înconjurat de un sobor de preoți și diaconi, în prezența Înaltpreasfințitului Pă-

rinte Arhiepiscop Nathaniel.

Programul după-amiezii a cuprins două prezentări importante: a PC. Pr. Nicholas Solak, Director al Biroului pentru Viața Pastorală al Bisericii Ortodoxe din America, care a abordat provocările cu care se confruntă viața parohială astăzi: schimbările culturale rapide, influența media, tensiunile financiare și pericolul în care preoții pot cădea: epuizarea. El a subliniat importanța echilibrului în slujirea pastorală, a familiilor preotești sănătoase și a rolului grupurilor de sprijin între preoți pentru menținerea sănătății clerului.

Și prezentarea Maicii Starețe Gabriella, de la Mănăstirea Adormirea Maicii Domnului din Rives Junction, Michigan, care a oferit o reflecție emoționantă asupra vieții și mărturiei Părintelui Arhimandrit Roman Braga, mărturisitor în temnițele comuniste și părinte duhovnicesc al multor persoane din America de Nord. Vorbind despre anii săi de detenție, petrecuți sub regimul comunist, ea a relatat cum Părintele Roman a transformat suferința într-o școală a sfințeniei, memorând Scriptura în secret, încurajând colegii de detenție și inspirând mai târziu generații de credincioși prin învățatura și exemplul său personal.

Prima zi s-a încheiat cu

Slujba Acatistului Sfintei Olga din Alaska, săvârșită de Preasfințitul Părinte Episcop Andrei, iar la final participanții au primit Acatistul bilingv și câte o icoană a Sfintei, publicate de curând la Departamentul de Publicații al ROEA.

Adunarea și Rezoluțiile

Vineri, 5 septembrie, delegații — clericii și doi reprezentanți laici din fiecare parohie — s-au reunit la Parohia Nașterea Domnului din Chicago. După cuvintele de deschidere ale Înaltpreasfințitului Părinte Arhiepiscop Nathaniel și ale Preasfințitului Părinte Episcop Andrei, au fost prezentate rapoartele Cancelarului ROEA Dnl. David Oancea și al Dnl. Mark Chestnut Secretar Financiar.

La ședința Congresului a participat și PC. Pr. Alessandro Margheritino, Cancelar al Bisericii Ortodoxe din America, care a transmis salutările și binecuvântarea Preafericitului Părinte Mitropolit Tikhon al Americii și Canadei.

Momentul cel mai important al zilei a fost prezentarea unei rezoluții de către Înaltpreasfințitul Părinte Arhiepiscop Nathaniel, propunerea ce va fi adresată Sfântului Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe din America, pentru canonizarea Părintelui Arhimandrit Roman Braga cu titlul

Părintele Roman Braga al Marilor Lacuri, subliniind astfel zona în care acesta și-a petrecut viața și misiunea.

Liturghie și Comuniune Euharistică la Parohia Sfânta Maria din Chicago

Sâmbătă, 6 septembrie, participanții Congresului s-au adunat la Parohia Sfânta Maria din Chicago pentru Sfânta și Dumnezeiasca Liturghie, oficiată de Înaltpreasfințitul Părinte Arhiepiscop Nathaniel și Preasfințitul Părinte Andrei, împreună cu clerici din întreaga Episcopiei.

Încheierea la Parohia Nașterea Domnului din Chicago

Ultima zi, duminică, 7 septembrie, a reunit clerici și credincioși ai parohiilor din zona Chicago — Sfânta Maria, Pogorârea Sfântului Duh (Merrillville) și Sfântul Atanasie (Aurora) — la Parohia Nașterea Domnului. Slujba a fost oficiată de Înaltpreasfințitul Părinte Arhiepiscop Nathaniel și Preasfințitul Părinte Episcop Andrei, alături de un sobor de preoți și diaconi, marcând astfel încheierea celui de-al 93-lea Congres al Episcopiei.



ÎNVĂȚĂTURILE SFINȚILOR PĂRINȚI

Să răspândim tuturor iubirea noastră în chip dezinteresat, fără a căuta la starea lor. Când vine înlăuntrul nostru Harul lui Dumnezeu, nu ne va mai păsa dacă ne iubesc sau nu, dacă ne vorbesc cu bunătate. Vom simți noi nevoia de a-i iubi pe toți.

Mai presus de toate să fie iubirea. Lucru de care trebuie să ne îngrijim, copiii mei, este iubirea pentru aproapele, sufletul său. Tot ceea ce facem – rugăciune, sfat, muștrare – să facem cu iubire. Fără iubire rugăciunea nu folosește, sfatul rănește, muștrarea vatămă și îl nimicește pe celălalt, care simte dacă îl iubim sau nu, și răspunde pe potrivă. Iubire! Iubire! Iubire! Iubirea fratelui ne pregătește să-L iubim mai mult pe Hristos. Nu -i frumos?

Să răspândim tuturor iubirea noastră dezinteresat, fără a căuta la starea lor. Când vine înlăuntrul nostru Harul lui Dumnezeu, nu ne va mai păsa dacă ne iubesc sau nu, dacă ne vorbesc cu bunătate. Vom simți noi nevoia de a-i iubi pe toți. Este egoism să vrem ca ceilalți să ne vorbească cu bunătate. Să nu ne strămtoreze cele potrivnice. Să-i lăsăm pe toți să ne vorbească așa cum simt. Să nu cerșim iubirea. Să urmărim a iubi și a ne ruga din tot sufletul pentru aceia. Atunci vom vedea că toți ne vor iubi fără să



urmărim aceasta, fără să le cerșim deloc iubirea, ne vor iubi liber și sincer din adâncul inimii lor, fără să-i silim. Atunci când iubim fără să urmărim a fi iubiți, se vor aduna toți împrejurul nostru ca albinele. Asta e viabil pentru noi toți.

Dacă fratele tău te stânjenește, te obosește, atunci să te gândești: „Acum mă doare ochiul meu, mâna mea, piciorul meu, trebuie să îl îngrijesc cu toată iubirea mea” (cf. I Cor. 12, 21). Să nu ne gândim însă că vom fi răsplătiți pentru cele chipurile bune, nici că vom fi pedepsiți pentru cele rele pe care le-am făcut, ci la cunoașterea adevărului când iubești cu iubirea lui Hristos. Atunci nu ceri să fii iubit, aceasta este rău: iubești tu. Să dăruiești iubirea ta, aceasta este după dreptate.

(Ne vorbește Părintele Porfirie)

FR. ROMAN OF THE GREAT LAKES PROPOSED FOR CANONIZATION



Fr. Roman Braga (right), Saint Sofian Boghiu (left). Photo: cuvantul-ortodox.ro

The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of the Orthodox Church in America has formally requested the canonization of Archimandrite Roman (Braga).

On Friday, September 5, at the 93rd Annual Congress of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, during its final session, His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel presented before the plenary assembly a resolution to advance to the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America the cause for the canonization of Fr. Roman.

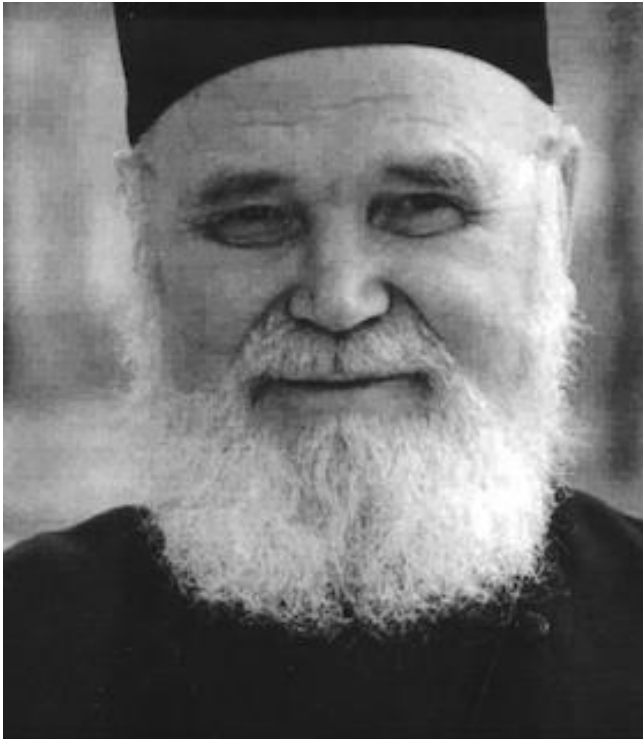
His Eminence Arch-

bishop Nathaniel addressed the assembly:

From the time of his arrival in the United States, we saw in Fr. Roman, in his unique way, a living icon of our Lord. He was a person whose life was not only dedicated to, but literally was, the personification of man as God intended. He exuded true humility in his written teachings, his informal conversation, his sermons. His very demeanor touched our hearts and changed us. Fr. Roman was, and now after ten years since his blessed repose, continues to be for us a true image of holiness and sainthood. We share these words

with and on behalf of the 93rd Congress of our Holy Romanian Episcopate. And in humility, faith, and love, we ask that our holy hierarchs, His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel and His Grace Bishop Andrei, to present our request to the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America to begin the formal process of initiating the canonization of the Very Rev. Archimandrite Roman (Braga), Fr. Roman of the Great Lakes.

Fr. Roman Braga spent the last four decades of his life in America serving various parishes, as well as the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, and Holy Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction, Michigan, both part of the Episcopate. He served at Holy Dormition Monastery from 1988 until his repose in 2015, and he was buried there, in the monastery where he spent the final years of his life.



UNITY IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

By Dr. Gayle E. Woloschak

Over the years, many people have complained to me that our Orthodox Church has not achieved unity in America after decades of work. For example, the Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL) has published pamphlets, held conferences, and dialogued with parishes about unity for its entire 40 years of existence (visit ocl.org). I remember attending an OCL conference in Chicago in my youth after which I was inspired (and even to this day remain inspired) to strive for unity in the Church. Nevertheless, it is easy for those who have worked for so long to become discouraged by what is perceived as the lack of progress toward unity.

The Orthodox Church has come a long way in the last 40 years, in part due to the OCL movement and also in part due to the diligence of Orthodox Christians who have been inspired to commit to unity in their hearts and minds. In my opinion, many Orthodox Christians believe that certain steps must occur before our Church can achieve unity—perhaps we must have a unity in finances or administration or parish organization. If that is where we have set our goals,

then one could view that we have not succeeded. I believe though, that there are many markers of our success for unity. Even 5 years ago, I don't think you would have heard bishops talking about the need for unity extensively, but I am hearing it almost universally these days. Most of our organizations (IOCC, OCMC, OCL, OCF, OCAMPR, OTSA, OFT, others) are all blind to jurisdictions; these groups have boards that select members without even considering the jurisdiction of the participants. In recent years, meetings of the Assembly of Bishops have become avenues for discussing issues of importance for the broad Church. Last year, they had a series of presentations from each of the seminaries to create more dialogue and interface among them. The Assembly has commissions that work on joint liturgical services, support our inter-jurisdictional committees, and even provide unity for these groups. Most of our parishes are mixed...few are exclusively Greek or exclusively Romanian, etc.

The work of unity is the Lord's work, and as noted above, there is success in which we should take joy. There is of

course much more work to do...but jurisdictional unity will never occur without all of these things — figuring out how the seminaries work together, having the same sets of services for the parishes, sharing our organizations, developing programs that interface among the parishes, developing networks of interactions, and more. **UNITY IS A PROCESS NOT AN EVENT!**

We all need to continue to bear witness to the need for unity with the loudest voice possible...but in ways in which we can be heard and understood. We need to think about ways in which we can lead and nurture this process. We will not succeed if our goal is to achieve unity in one easy step or if we have a vision that is not based in a realistic view of our world. With Christ guiding our way, we can continue in this work by facilitating the efforts that are being exerted by the bishops and our many organizations, by cooperating with our sister Orthodox parish communities, by fostering interactions with each other, and by praying for the Lord's direction.

Dr. Gayle E. Woloschak is Professor of Radiation Oncology, Radiology, and Cell and Molecular Biology in the Feinberg School of Medicine,

Northwestern University. Her scientific interests are predominantly in the areas of molecular biology, radiation biology, and nanotechnology studies, and she has authored over 200 papers. She is editor-in-chief for the International Journal of Radiation Biology, is a member of various national and international committees and serves on the US delegation to the United National Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. She also received a DMin degree from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in Eastern Christian Studies having worked in bioethical questions and science and religion studies. She is Adjunct Professor of Religion and Science at Lutheran School of Theology Chicago and Sessional Professor of Bioethics at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. Her research interests there include environmental issues, bioethical questions, and evolution. Dr. Woloschak also serves as president of the board of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), vice-president of the International Orthodox Theological Association (IOTA), and officer on the board of directors of Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL). She is a past president of the Orthodox Theological Society in America (OTSA).



**The Senior Summer Camp at Vatra Românească, Grass Lake, MI (June 29—July 12, 2025)
Tabăra de Vară a Seniorilor la Vatra Românească, Grass Lake, MI (29 Iunie—12 Iulie, 2025)**



**The Junior Summer Camp at Vatra Românească, Grass Lake, MI (July 20—August 2, 2025)
Tabăra de Vară a Juniorilor la Vatra Românească, Grass Lake, MI (20 Iulie—2 August, 2025)**

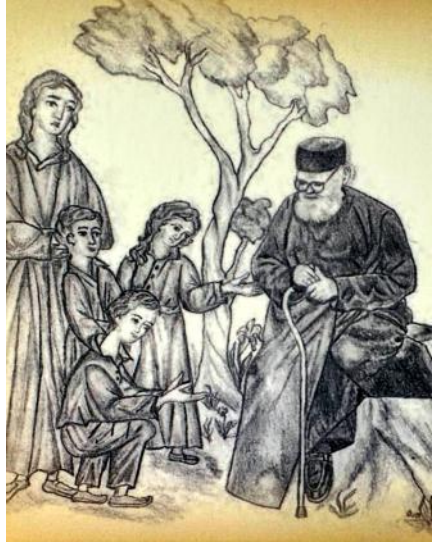
GROWING IN GOD: PURIFICATION, ILLUMINATION, AND PERFECTION

By Father Roman Braga

Part III - final part

Mary Brown (M.B.) *It is hard to imagine progressing to perfection, yet it seems the saints did.*

Fr. R. The processes of purification, illumination, and unity with God occur within our human nature. Because we remain people and created beings, we cannot go beyond human nature. We cannot become God according to the essence, yet we can become divinized. For example, think of a piece of iron put into a fire. The fire does not change the elements of the iron. When iron is purified by fire, it can be heated and molded, but its essence or elements do not become something different. The same happens with us – in being purified, our human nature becomes divinized but retains the same essence. We are affected by the energies of God and share in His energies – as the iron is purified by the heat of fire – but we cannot



share His essence.

When we experience unity with God, purification and illumination do not end but continue together as we grow more united with Him. We must constantly pay attention and watch ourselves so that we do not fall. The most dangerous sin or temptation is pride, thinking we are better than others.

M.B. *It seems that pride is such a temptation and humility is so important.*

Fr. R. As we become more united with God, pride is a common temptation. In our journey toward God, we must guard that we do not become proud but remember that we, like everyone else, are sinners.

The truth is that all saints are humble because, being very close to God, they see that God is everything and that they are nothing. Only those who are far from God think that they are OK. They ask, "Who, me? I am an honorable person, I did not do anything wrong, I do not have sins," and so forth. In fact, they think that they are gods and that there is no one more important than themselves.

Humility and unworthiness are good signs in Christian lives. Humility means we are close to God. The education given in our

schools – to be first in everything, to compete, to be proud, to win the gold medals, to receive awards – is not a Christian education. Somebody must be in the middle and at the bottom. Those people are human too and need love and respect.

To feel unworthy is not to lack dignity. On the contrary, it means to admit your limits. To feel unworthy is an *act of courage*.

(A chapter from the book: *Living as a Christian in a World that Rejects God: Conversations with Mary Brown*, Dormition Orthodox Monastery, Rives Junction, Michigan, 2024, pp. 57-65) Purchase at: dormition-monasterygiftshop.squarespace.com



Pastoral Visits and Events

Strengthening Faith and Community



With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, between June 6-8, 2025, His Grace Bishop Andrei made a pastoral visit to New Westminster (Vancouver), British Columbia, Canada, where he visited the parish of The Holy Trinity, on the occasion of its patronal feast and the blessing of the parish's new community center.



The Committee for Liturgy of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America met at Dormition Orthodox Monastery in Rives Junction, MI, on June 10, 2025.



On June 7-8, 2025, His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel made a pastoral visit to Merrillville, Indiana, where he visited the Parish of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the occasion of its patronal feast.



The Romanian Orthodox community of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, experienced days of great spiritual joy from June 13–15, 2025, on the occasion of the consecration of their newly built church dedicated to Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, in the heart of Canada’s capital. On Saturday, June 14, the service of consecration of the new holy church was celebrated by the three hierarchs: His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, His Grace Bishop Theophan (Albanian Diocese — Ecumenical Patriarchate), and His Grace Bishop Andrei. The solemn service was attended by approximately thirty clergy and over four hundred faithful from various parts of Canada and the United States.



On Saturday, June 14, the Holy and Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the newly consecrated altar of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker from Ottawa, under the omophorion of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, together with His Grace Bishop Theophan (Albanian Diocese — Ecumenical Patriarchate) and His Grace Bishop Andrei. During the service, Deacon Alexei Leahu was ordained to the Holy Priesthood and assigned to serve the Parish of the Holy Prophet Elijah in Anjou (Montreal), Quebec, Canada.



His Grace Bishop Andrei of Cleveland participated in the canonization of Saint Olga of Alaska, known as the "Mother of the Kuskokwim." The historic event took place between June 19–22, 2025, in Kwethluk, Alaska.



With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, His Grace Bishop Andrei made a pastoral visit to St. Varlaam of Moldova Romanian Orthodox Parish in River Glade, New Brunswick, Canada, on the weekend of June 28–29, 2025, the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost and the Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. During this visit, His Grace presided at the Divine Services and officiated at the installation of the new parish priest, Rev. Fr. Lucian Vasile .



On the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost and the Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter & Paul, June 29, 2025, His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, visited the Sts. Peter & Paul Parish in Dearborn Heights (Detroit), Michigan, where he celebrated the Holy and Divine Liturgy on the occasion of the parish's patronal feast.



His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, together with His Grace Bishop Andrei and some clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (ROEA), participated in the 21st All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), held from July 14–18, 2025, in Phoenix, Arizona.



On the 7th Sunday after Pentecost and the Feast of the Holy Great-Martyr and Healer Panteleimon, His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, together with His Grace Bishop Andrei, visited St. George Parish in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, for the celebration of 35 years of parish service and 45 years of priestly ministry of the V. Rev. Fr. Ioan Bunea. Following the celebrations, Archbishop Nathaniel presented the *Grammata* to the parish priest and the community, formally announcing that St. George Church in Toronto has been designated as a Cathedral of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America and Canada.



With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, on August 16, 2025, on the Feast of the Holy Brâncoveanu Martyrs: Prince Constantine with his four sons, Constantine, Stephen, Radu, and Matthew, together with their counselor Ianache, His Grace Bishop Andrei visited the parish of Holy Brâncoveanu Martyrs, in Montréal, Quebec, Canada, where he celebrated the Holy and Divine Liturgy on the occasion of the parish feast day (hramul parohiei) and the 20th anniversary of its ministry.



With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, His Grace Bishop Andrei made a pastoral visit to St. Nicholas Parish in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, on August 17, 2025, the 10th Sunday after Pentecost. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Rev. Fr. Vladut-Andrei Cretu was formally installed as the parish priest.



On Friday, September 5, 2025, at the Holy Nativity Orthodox Parish, Chicago, with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, His Grace Bishop Andrei blessed Rev. Fr. Teofil Petru Sarca as confessor. Father Teofil has been recently assigned as parish priest of St Joseph of Maramures in Hazleton, Pennsylvania.



At the invitation of His Grace Bishop Mihail, the Romanian Orthodox Bishop of Australia and New Zealand, and with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, His Grace Bishop Andrei visited Australia from September 17 to 22, 2025. On September 21, His Grace Bishop Mihail, together with His Grace Bishop Andrei, assisted by priests and deacons, consecrated the first Romanian Orthodox church in Australia built from the ground, dedicated to Saint Thomas the Apostle and Saint Arsenie the Confessor of Prislop.

HONORING A LIFETIME OF SERVICE: THE RETIREMENT OF PROTOPRESBYTER DR. REMUS GRAMA



On the 5th Sunday after service to the Church and the Pascha, the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, Father Grama has been deeply involved in the life of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, serving not only as Dean of the Great Lakes Deanery but also as the Episcopate's representative to the Department of External Affairs of the Orthodox Church in America.

May 18, 2025, His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel made a pastoral visit to Cleveland, Ohio, to the Cathedral of the Falling Asleep of the Ever-Virgin Mary (St. Mary). His Eminence officiated the Holy and Divine Liturgy, assisted by Protopresbyter Dr. Remus Grama, Dean of the Great Lakes Deanery; Protopresbyter Laurence Lazar, retired priest; Rev. Dn. Nicolae Neagoe, cathedral deacon; and Rev. Hdn. Benedict Oancea.

The occasion was especially significant as it honored Protopresbyter Dr. Remus Grama, who retired on July 1, 2025, after decades of devoted service to the Church and the faithful of St. Mary. He was born in 1952 in Arpașul de Jos, Făgăraș, Romania. He received his theological education at the Theological Institute in Sibiu, earning a Master of Theology degree in 1976. After coming to the United States in 1980, he became a U.S. citizen in 1987. He furthered his studies at McCormick Theological Semi-

nary in Chicago and earned a Master of Science degree in Counseling from Youngstown State University. He also completed coursework toward a doctoral degree in history at Kent State University.

In 1982, he was ordained to the Holy Priesthood at Holy Trinity Church in Youngstown, Ohio, by Archbishop Valerian (Trifa). Father Grama served that parish until 1989, when he was appointed to serve at St. Mary Church in Cleveland, Ohio, which has since been elevated to cathedral status.

The weekend's celebrations began on Saturday evening with Vespers, followed by a farewell dinner in honor of Fr. Grama and his family. During Vespers, Archbishop Nathaniel offered heartfelt words of appreciation, high-

lighting Father Grama's tireless pastoral work, exemplary leadership, and unwavering commitment to parish and diocesan life.

His Eminence also expressed profound gratitude to Preoteasa Elena Grama, acknowledging her constant support and presence throughout her husband's ministry. The gathering was a moment of sincere recognition and thanksgiving for the Gramas' many years of service and devotion to the Church and community.

The parish and diocesan community came together to celebrate this important event, honoring a priest whose ministry has left a lasting impact on countless faithful, both locally and throughout the wider Church.



FINANCIAL REPORT
EPISCOPATE SUPPORTER

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| M/M John Santeiu, Jr, Garden City, MI | \$500.00 |
| Manuela Cruga, Waterford, MI | \$100.00 |
| Judy Shonn, Youngstown, OH | \$100.00 |

2025 EPISCOPATE ASSESSMENT

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL | \$12,700.00 |
| Holy Trinity, Miramar, FL..... | \$7,200.00 |
| St Elias, Anjou, QC | \$7,000.00 |
| St Nicholas, Ottawa, ON | \$4,600.00 |
| Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL | \$3,000.00 |
| St Varlaam Mission, River Glade, NB | \$1,140.00 |
| St John the Baptist, Woonsocket, RI | \$1,110.00 |

GENERAL DONATIONS

| | |
|--|------------|
| National ARFORA | \$6,200.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| St Andrew Ladies Auxiliary, Potomac, MD..... | \$3,459.78 |
| (Camp Vatra Furniture) | |
| Orthodox Church in America, Alexandria, VA | \$2,536.62 |
| (Hierarch Travel) | |
| V Rev Fr Mircea & Psa Miruna Banu, Gatineau, QC..... | \$1,403.93 |
| (Seminarian Fund) | |
| Holy Trinity, New Westminster, BC | \$1,397.20 |
| (Hierarch Travel) | |
| St George Cathedral, Toronto, ON | \$1,336.80 |
| (Hierarch Travel) | |
| National ARFORA | \$1,200.00 |
| (Housekeeping) | |
| National ARFORA | \$1,200.00 |
| (Camp Vatra) | |
| Descent of the Holy Spirit, Merrillville, IN..... | \$850.00 |
| (Hierarch Travel) | |
| St Mary Ladies Auxiliary, St Paul, MN..... | \$820.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| National ARFORA | \$750.00 |
| (Preotese Retreat Funding) | |
| St Mary, Elmhurst, NY | \$700.00 |
| (Hierarch Travel) | |
| Credinta Ladies Auxiliary, Chicago, IL..... | \$600.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| Holy Cross Ladies Auxiliary, Hermitage, PA | \$500.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| Presentation Ladies Auxiliary, Fairlawn, OH..... | \$500.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| St Elias, Anjou, QC | \$500.00 |
| (Hierarch Travel) | |
| St Mary Ladies Auxiliary, Chicago, IL | \$500.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |

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|---|----------|
| Toni Scala Robertson, McLean, VA | \$500.00 |
| (ACE Fund) | |
| Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL..... | \$400.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| Psa Martha MacLellan, Winnipeg, MB..... | \$350.74 |
| (Seminarian Fund) | |
| Mihai & Ioana Mihailescu, Decatur, IL | \$200.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| M/M John Santeiu, Jr, Garden City, MI..... | \$200.00 |
| (IMO V Rev Fr Simion Pavel) | |
| Carmen Sylva Ladies Auxiliary, Youngstown, OH | \$200.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| M/M Richard Long, Akron, OH..... | \$200.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| Rev Fr & Psa Rares Onofrei, Roseville, CA | \$200.00 |
| (Hierarch Travel) | |
| St Mary Ladies Auxiliary, Cleveland, OH | \$200.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| Dani Nadra, Ann Arbor, MI..... | \$125.00 |
| Andreia Filip, Glen Ellyn, IL | \$120.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| Lenny & Catherine Jones, Philadelphia, PA | \$120.00 |
| Loredana Collin, Cleveland, OH..... | \$100.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| Louise Gibb, Youngstown, OH..... | \$100.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| Chuck & Barbara Nanas, Canton, MI | \$100.00 |
| (Seminarian Fund) | |
| Olimpia Neagoe, Bloomfield Twp, MI | \$100.00 |
| Mona Pawelka, Lowell, MI..... | \$100.00 |
| (Seminarian Fund – IMO Florence Churilla) | |
| Rev Fr Wayne & Lenora Wright, Uniontown, OH | \$100.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| Richard Grabowski, Jackson, MI | \$50.00 |
| M/M David Pascu, Barberton, OH..... | \$50.00 |
| (Vatra Kitchen Equipment) | |
| Victor Tulbure, El Dorado Hills, CA | \$50.00 |
| (AROY) | |
| Elena Alina Gheorghe, Alexandria, VA..... | \$48.51 |
| Blackbaud – Giving Fund, Charleston, SC | \$25.00 |

MEMORIAM

| | |
|--|----------|
| National ARFORA..... | \$100.00 |
| (IMO Mary Sankey) | |
| Silvia Costea, Northville, MI | \$100.00 |
| (IMO Brother, Cristian Gheordunescu) | |
| Silvia Costea, Northville, MI | \$100.00 |
| (IMO Parents, Aurelian & Maria Gheordunescu) | |
| Gabriela Gheordunescu, Livonia, MI..... | \$100.00 |
| (IMO Husband, Cristian Gheordunescu) | |

Valerie M Nelson, Chicago, IL\$100.00
(IMO Mary Jane Calin)

VATRA GENERATIONS

Atty Michael Lawrence, Layton, UT\$5,640.00
 Holy Dormition Monastery, Rives Junction, MI.....\$1,500.00
 M/M David Porocho, Dunwoody, GA.....\$1,000.00
 M/M John N Santeiu, Jr, Garden City, MI.....\$1,000.00
 Gary & Vicky Danis, Elyria, OH.....\$500.00
 Holy Cross, Phoenix, AZ.....\$500.00
 Dr Mihai & Mihaela Sadean, Lake Grove, NY.....\$500.00
 (IMO Theodore Andrica)
 Valentin Hurgoi, Naples, FL.....\$300.00
 Dorina Maxim, Silver Springs, MD.....\$300.00
 Stephen & Katherine Miroy, Stafford, VA\$300.00
 St John Chrysostom, Old Hickory, TN\$297.68
 Mihai & Ioana Mihailescu, Decatur, IL\$250.00
 M/M John Pop, Northbrook, IL\$250.00
 Carol & Albert Schweitzer, San Diego, IL\$200.00
 Doina Teodorescu, Royal Oak, MI\$200.00
 Psa Lillian Lupu, Calgary, AB.....\$196.93
 Nick & Marie Avramaut, Middleburg Hts, OH\$100.00
 Mark P Chestnut, Grass Lake Twp, MI\$100.00
 Pauline Maxim-Criel, Oxford, MI\$100.00
 Valerie M Nelson, Chicago, IL.....\$100.00
 Valerie Nutial, Chicago, IL.....\$100.00
 (IMO Nasa Mary Jane Calin)
 Valerie Nutial, Chicago, IL.....\$100.00
 (IMO Sandy Cotosman)
 Thrsia Pana, Regina, SK.....\$75.00
 (IMO John & Mary Pana)
 Psa Mihaela Vint, Emerald Park, SK.....\$70.00
 Elena Croker, Fairlawn, NJ.....\$50.00
 Peter Lee, Huntingdon Valley, PA.....\$10.59

**CAMP VATRA FOR SENIORS
CLOSING BANQUET DONATIONS**

Rev Fr & Psa Daniel T Pop, Aurora, IL.....\$300.00
 Elizabeth Schester, Plymouth, MI.....\$200.00
 Carmen & Adrian Ciocan, Woodridge, IL.....\$200.00
 Cristian P Avasilcai, Superior Twp, MI.....\$150.00
 Balanean Family, Dearborn Hts, MI\$100.00
 Silvia Costea, Northville, MI\$100.00
 Adrian Donisa, Mt Prospect, MI.....\$100.00
 Laura Hidan, Des Plaines, IL\$100.00
 Michael & Andrea Kalugar, Fraser, MI\$100.00
 Pat Long, Coventry Twp, OH.....\$100.00
 Andrew Safta Family, Aurora, IL\$100.00
 Laura Sisu, Mt Prospect, MI.....\$100.00
 Rodica Babut, Westland, MI.....\$50.00
 Daniel Boca, Skokie, IL.....\$50.00

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| Patrick & Elena Rustandi, Arlington Hts, MI | \$50.00 |
| Psa Lenora Wright, Uniontown, OH..... | \$40.00 |
| Gary Danis, Elyria, OH..... | \$25.00 |
| Karen Pascu, Barberton, OH..... | \$25.00 |
| Mihai Stroe, Schaumburg, IL..... | \$10.00 |
| Aidan Kalugar, Fraser, MI | \$5.00 |

**CAMP VATRA FOR JUNIORS
CLOSING BANQUET DONATIONS**

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|--|----------|
| Eva Pavalascu, Kew Gardens, NY | \$500.00 |
| Lenus Damasaru, Lincolnshire, IL..... | \$250.00 |
| Mihai Cotofrea, Morton Grove, IL | \$200.00 |
| Andreea Ghetu, Morton Grove, IL..... | \$200.00 |
| Nicoleta & Mircea Olteanu, Richfield, OH | \$200.00 |
| Surcel Family, Glenview, IL..... | \$200.00 |
| Nadia Biciuc-Bogdana, Crystal Lake, IL | \$160.00 |
| Viorel & Lisa Ciharan, Hawthorn Woods, IL..... | \$150.00 |
| Chirila Family | \$150.00 |
| Oana Ciocoiu & Cristian A Vasilica, Superior Twp, MI | \$150.00 |
| Tatiana Chise, Lake Zurich, IL | \$100.00 |
| Ghenadie Guzun, Plainfield, IL | \$100.00 |
| Maior Family, Troy, MI..... | \$100.00 |
| Marcel Podar, Woodale, IL..... | \$100.00 |
| Teodora Chinde, Aurora, IL..... | \$100.00 |
| Bogdan & Jennifer Florea, Plymouth, MI..... | \$100.00 |
| Georgeta Hobe, Lindenhurst, IL | \$100.00 |
| Mike & Mihaela Williams, Canton, MI..... | \$60.00 |
| Alina Elekes, Des Plaines, IL..... | \$50.00 |
| Michael Kalugar, Fraser, MI..... | \$50.00 |
| Dumitru & Monica Iova, Dearborn Hts, MI | \$50.00 |
| Rev Fr Tiberiu Opris, St Louis, MO | \$50.00 |
| Mihaela Lujerodean, Chicago, IL | \$40.00 |
| Nathan & Larisa Simington, McLean, VA | \$20.00 |
| Alexandru Pap, Livonia, MI | \$20.00 |

2025 CONGRESS BANQUET DONATIONS

| | |
|---|------------|
| St Mary, Chicago, IL | \$1,439.00 |
| (Congress Proceeds) | |
| Rev Fr Cezar Cisloiu, Mars, PA | \$1,000.00 |
| St Elias, Anjou, QC..... | \$500.00 |
| M/M Stefan Russu, Kitchener, ON..... | \$500.00 |
| St Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH | \$500.00 |
| V Rev Dr Chesarie Berteau, Glendale, NY..... | \$300.00 |
| Simion & Carmen Coca, Pittsburgh, PA..... | \$300.00 |
| Dan Constantinescu, Katy, TX | \$300.00 |
| Rev Fr Geanie & Psa Daniela Nemes, Lake Bluff, IL | \$300.00 |
| St Anne, Jacksonville, FL | \$300.00 |
| Drs. John & Judy Blebea, Alliance, OH | \$250.00 |
| Patricia Bratulescu, Aurora, CO | \$250.00 |
| Rev Fr Radu & Psa Lucia Ciui, Macomb, MI..... | \$250.00 |
| Dorin Ladan, Glenview, IL | \$250.00 |

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| Jonel Maiogan, Des Plaines, IL | \$250.00 |
| V Rev Fr Ian & Psa Mary Lynn Pac-Urar, Fairlawn, OH | \$250.00 |
| John & Lucy Pop, Northbrook, IL..... | \$250.00 |
| St John of Suceava, Manchester, NH | \$250.00 |
| Anonymous | \$240.00 |
| Annunciation Cathedral, Montreal, QC..... | \$201.36 |
| Anonymous | \$200.00 |
| Ilie & Rodica Cretu, Anaheim, CA | \$200.00 |
| Alex Mindea Family, Chicago, IL..... | \$200.00 |
| V Rev Fr & Psa Alin Munteanu, Apple Valley, CA..... | \$200.00 |
| John & Georgia Omorean, Little Canada, MN..... | \$200.00 |
| Gus Secue, Cleveland, OH | \$200.00 |
| V Rev Fr George Ursache, Chicago, IL | \$200.00 |
| Rev Fr Wayne Paul & Psa Lenora Wright, Uniontown, OH..... | \$190.00 |
| Anonymous | \$185.00 |
| Anonymous, Montreal, QC | \$160.00 |
| George Cantor, Cleveland, OH..... | \$160.00 |
| Anonymous | \$150.00 |
| Adelina & Marius Balog, Elmhurst, IL | \$150.00 |
| Mark Chestnut, Grass Lake Twp, MI..... | \$150.00 |
| Claudia Lung/Cosmina Chindris, Hayward, CA | \$150.00 |
| Cristian Rus, Montreal, QC | \$150.00 |
| Mihai Costea, Kirkland, WA..... | \$140.00 |
| V Rev Fr Horatiu & Psa Mihaela Balanean, Dearborn Hts, MI | \$120.00 |
| V Rev Fr Sabin Pop, Philadelphia, PA | \$120.00 |
| Mike Williams, Canton, OH..... | \$120.00 |
| Armstrong Family, Indianapolis, IN..... | \$100.00 |
| Rev Fr Gabriel Alexe, Naples, FL..... | \$100.00 |
| V Rev Fr Cosmin Antonescu, Gaithersburg, MD..... | \$100.00 |
| Rev Fr Cosmin Barbos, Sewickley, PA..... | \$100.00 |
| V Rev Fr Ioan Catana, Kirkland, WA | \$100.00 |
| Rev Fr Nicolae Codita, Hallandale Beach, FL | \$100.00 |
| Dumitru Deac, Morton Grove, IL..... | \$100.00 |
| Rev Fr & Psa George Bogdan Diaconescu, Castro Valley, CA | \$100.00 |
| Alexandru Georgescu, St Louis, MO | \$100.00 |
| V Rev Fr & Psa Laurence Lazar, Walled Lake, MI | \$100.00 |
| Iulian Mares Family | \$100.00 |
| V Rev Fr Florin Mihalache, Miramar, FL | \$100.00 |
| John & Gail Morgovan, Valparaiso, IN..... | \$100.00 |
| Valerie Nelson, Chicago, IL | \$100.00 |
| Cristian Rus, Montreal, QC | \$100.00 |
| Rev Dr Silvius Sfera, Hollywood, FL | \$100.00 |
| Dorel Suboni, Davie, FL | \$100.00 |
| Vasile Timis, Sterling, VA | \$100.00 |
| Antonela Tosa, Arlington Hts, IL..... | \$100.00 |
| Mark & Amanda Vander Laan, Valparaiso, IN..... | \$100.00 |
| St Nicholas, Montreal, QC | \$100.00 |
| Rev Fr Daniel Radu, Merrillville, IN | \$100.00 |
| Mary Katherine Stanesa, Dearborn, MI..... | \$100.00 |
| Serghei Valerio..... | \$100.00 |

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| V Rev Fr Mircea VasIU, St Paul, MN | \$100.00 |
| Anonymous..... | \$80.00 |
| Jon & Kellie Groza, Fairlawn, OH | \$75.00 |
| M/M Cristian Chirila, Mississauga, ON | \$67.12 |
| V Rev Fr Liviu Alexandrescu, Montreal, QC | \$67.12 |
| Anonymous..... | \$60.00 |
| Psa Madalina Lapustea, San Jose, CA | \$60.00 |
| Stephen MacLellan, Winnipeg, MB | \$60.00 |
| Cornel Stana, Rockville, MD..... | \$60.00 |
| Mihai Stroe, Schaumburg, IL..... | \$60.00 |
| Anonymous..... | \$57.05 |
| Marius Barbat, Livonia, MI | \$50.00 |
| V Rev Fr Nicolae Lapuste, North Vancouver, BC..... | \$50.00 |
| Cecilia Maiogan, Des Plaines, IL..... | \$50.00 |
| Gabriela Moraru, Des Plaines, IL | \$50.00 |
| Max Murphy, Indianapolis, IN | \$50.00 |
| Marius Neacsu, Dallas, TX | \$50.00 |
| Magdalena Pampu, Troy, MI..... | \$50.00 |
| Vasile Timis, Sterling Hts, MI..... | \$50.00 |
| Chris Zaharie, Birmingham, MI..... | \$50.00 |
| St Mary, Portland, OR | \$50.00 |
| Irina Brigadin, Niles, IL..... | \$40.00 |
| Mihai Costea, Kirkland, WA | \$40.00 |
| Rev Fr Thomas Frisby, Phoenix, AZ | \$40.00 |
| Holy Trinity, New Westminster, BC | \$40.00 |
| Luca Irimie, Canton, MI | \$40.00 |
| Violanda Magda, Rolling Meadows, IL..... | \$40.00 |
| Rev Dn Nicolae Marinescu, Laval, QC | \$40.00 |
| David Oancea, Boardman, OH | \$40.00 |
| Cornel Stana, Rockville, MD..... | \$40.00 |
| Anonymous..... | \$35.00 |
| Anonymous..... | \$30.00 |
| V. Rev Fr Cosmin Vint, Regina, SK..... | \$30.00 |
| Anonymous..... | \$27.00 |
| Viorel & Lisa Ciharan, Chicago, IL..... | \$25.00 |
| Carol Schweitzer, San Diego, CA..... | \$25.00 |
| Barbara Stelea, North Canton, OH..... | \$25.00 |
| Anonymous..... | \$20.00 |
| Ion Gojim, Plainfield, IL..... | \$20.00 |
| Cornelia Merchant, Griffith, IN | \$20.00 |
| Stefan Sandu, Manchester, NH | \$20.00 |
| Lenora Ciharan | \$17.00 |
| Justina Antonescu, Potomac, MD..... | \$12.00 |
| Anonymous..... | \$10.00 |
| Vlad Irimie, Canton, MI..... | \$10.00 |



VATRA GENERATIONS APPEAL

THE VATRA
GENERATIONS
PROJECT
CONTINUES!



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Împreună, protejăm moștenirea care ne definește. Sprijinul tău poate păstra vie tradiția noastră pentru generațiile viitoare. Donează acum și fă o diferență pentru veacuri!



**\$702,880.55 collected as
September 30, 2025**



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