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**Christ is Born! Glorify Him!
Hristos se Naște! Măriți-L!**

SOLIA

THE
HERALD

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Attention Parishes!

ELECTION OF EPISCOPATE CONGRESS DELEGATES 2013-2014

REMINDER for 2013 Parish General Assembly: The Lay Delegates and Alternates shall be elected by their respective Parish memberships at their Annual Assembly for a two year term. They cannot be elected either as Delegate or Alternate Delegate for a third consecutive two year term. (The Episcopate Council may grant exceptions to this limitation with just cause. It is not in the competence of the Parish Council ever to elect any Delegate or Alternate Delegate. See Article IX, Section 29, (g)).

Each Parish shall be represented in the Episcopate Congress by its Parish Priest or Administrator and two Lay Delegates and two Alternates elected by the Parish Assembly for a term of two years. In order to be eligible for election as a Delegate or Alternate Delegate, a person must have been an enrolled member of the Parish for at least one year.

The election of the Delegates and Alternates shall be certified to the Episcopate by the President and the Secretary of the Parish Assembly and the documentation sent to the Episcopate Office (Chancery). [No Alternates should be elected if no Delegates are elected. If an individual is nominated to be a Delegate or Alternate but does not intend to attend the Congress, then that person should decline the nomination. **Missions do not have Delegate representation at the Congress**].

COVER: Fresco of the Nativity of Christ in Holy Trinity Orthodox Church (Serbian Patriarchate), Butte, Montana (<http://holytrinitybutte.org/fresco.html>).

HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

HIS EMINENCE, ARCHBISHOP NATHANIEL

August 4 – December 2, 2012

August 4-5. Hiram, OH. St. John Monastery. **Saturday:** Attended the Vigil Service. **Sunday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

August 5-6. Ellwood City, PA. Holy Transfiguration Monastery. **Sunday evening:** Presided at Vigil for Feast of Transfiguration. **Monday morning:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishop Melchisedek. **Monday afternoon:** Holy Unction service.

August 12. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. **Morning:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. **Detroit, MI. Center for Orthodox Christian Studies – St. Andrew House.** Prepare for meeting of Holy Synod of Bishops.

August 13-14. Detroit, MI. Center for Orthodox Christian Studies – St. Andrew House. Meeting of Holy Synod of Bishops. **Tuesday afternoon: Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery.** Vigil service for Feast of Dormition.

August 15. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. **Morning:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishop Alexander of Toledo (OCA). **Afternoon:** Holy Unction service.

August 17. Oregon City, OR. Descent of Holy Spirit. Visit.

August 18-21. Portland, OR. Saturday: St. Mary. Great Vespers and Memorial Service for 25th Anniversary. Reception. **Sunday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Festive Banquet. **Monday:** Visit to Summer Camp for St. Mary and Descent of Holy Spirit Parishes.

August 26. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

September 2. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

September 8-9. Chicago, IL. St. Mary. Saturday: Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

September 10-12. Chicago, IL. Assembly of Bishops 3rd Annual Meeting.

September 13-18. San Jose, CA. Holy Cross. **Friday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy for Lifting of the Cross Feast Day and Parish 25th Anniversary. **Friday afternoon:** Visit to Psa. Betty Limbeson. Holy Unction service. **Saturday:** Blessing of Iconography. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Ordination of Deacon Florin Lapustea into the Holy Priesthood. Banquet. **Sunday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

September 21-25. Winnipeg, MB. St. George. **Saturday:** Parish Council, Committees and Youth meetings. Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchical Divine

Liturgy. Banquet. **Monday:** Presented Conference to local clergy and faithful on Orthodox Unity.

September 27-29. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. 80th Annual Episcopate Congress. **Thursday:** Clergy Conference. **Thursday Evening:** Vespers. Episcopate Council Meeting. **Friday:** Congress Meetings. **Friday Evening:** Vespers. **Saturday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Ordination of Dan Hoarste into Holy Diaconate. Banquet.

September 30. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

October 5-7. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. **Friday:** Vigil for Consecration of New Church. **Saturday:** Consecration Service. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishops Alexander of Toledo (OCA), Vicar Bishop Irineu and Bishop Irene of the Archdiocese of Canada (OCA). Banquet. **Sunday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

October 8-11. Syosset, NY. OCA Chancery. Holy Synod Meeting.

October 12-14. Ellwood City, PA. Transfiguration Monastery. **Saturday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Thanksgiving Service for Mother Christophora's 25th Anniversary as Abbess. **Evening:** Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

October 19-22. Woonsocket, RI. St. John the Baptist. **Saturday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Memorial Service. Veneration of Myrrh-Streaming Icon of Our Lady of Hawaii. Lunch. **Evening:** Great Vespers. Festive Banquet for 100th Anniversary. **Sunday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Banquet.

October 24-27. Washington, DC. Orthodox Christian Laity 25th Anniversary Program and Meeting. **Wednesday:** Board Meeting. **Thursday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Cathedral (OCA). Tours. **Friday:** Meetings. Tours. Vespers at St. George Antiochian Church. Anniversary Dinner. Speakers & Program. **Saturday:** OCL Panel Discussion – Our Orthodox Past, Present & Future.

October 28. Falls Church, VA. Protection of the Holy Mother of God. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Memorial Service for Scala family.

November 3-4. Alliance, OH. St. Nicholas. Saturday: Great Vespers. Memorial Service. Reception. **Sunday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishop Mark of Baltimore (OCA). Banquet for 100th Anniversary.

November 8. Clinton, MI. Ascension Monastery. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishop Irineu for feast of Archangels Michael, Gabriel & Raphael. Banquet commemorating first anniversary of first Divine Liturgy at the monastery's new site.

November 10-11. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. **Saturday:** Great Vespers. Program for 100th Anniversary. **Sunday:** Hierarchical Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishop Ioan Casian (Romanian Archdiocese) and Bishop Irineu. Banquet.

Cont. on page 4

ARCHBISHOP TIKHON ELECTED METROPOLITAN OF ALL AMERICA AND CANADA



PARMA, OH [OCA] His Eminence, Archbishop Tikhon, Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, was elected Primate of the Orthodox Church in America during the 17th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America at Holy Trinity Church here Tuesday, November 13, 2012.

Six hundred and sixty three hierarchs, clergy and lay delegates and observers representing OCA parishes across the US, Canada, and Mexico participated in the Council. Five hundred and ninety were eligible to vote.

The Council opened with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and, at noon, the plenary session. After the celebration of a Service of Thanksgiving and the singing of the troparion invoking the Holy Spirit, Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, OCA Secretary, opened the plenary session.

“Christ grows brighter as we grow dimmer, as we approach the eternal light,” said His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate, Locum Tenens of the Metropolitan See, in his opening address. “And it is within this context that we gather today for one purpose: to glorify Father, Son and Holy Spirit ... and to elect the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America.”

No single candidate received the required two-thirds margin on the first ballot. On the second ballot, His Eminence, Archbishop Tikhon of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania and His Grace, Bishop Michael of New York and New Jersey, received 317 and 355 votes respectively.

The members of the Holy Synod retired into the altar where they elected Archbishop Tikhon.

Biography

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon of All America and Canada was born Marc R. Mollard in Boston, MA on July 15, 1966, the eldest of three children born to Francois and Elizabeth Mollard.

After brief periods living in Connecticut, France, and Missouri, he and his family settled in Reading, PA, where he graduated from Wyomissing High School in 1984. In 1988, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and Sociology from Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, PA, after which he moved to Chicago.

In 1989, he was received into the Orthodox Church from Episcopalianism and, in the fall of the same year, he began studies at Saint Tikhon’s Seminary, South Canaan, PA. One year later he entered the monastic community at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery as a novice. He was awarded the Master of Divinity degree from Saint Tikhon’s Seminary in 1993, after which he was appointed Instructor in Old Testament and subsequently Senior Lecturer in Old Testament, teaching Master level courses in the Prophets and the Psalms and Wisdom Literature. He also served as an Instructor in the seminary’s Extension Studies program, offering courses in the lives of the Old Testament saints, the liturgical use of the Old Testament, and the Old Testament in patristic literature.

He collaborated with Igumen Alexander [Golitzin]—now Bishop of Toledo and the Bulgarian Diocese of the Orthodox Church in America—in the publication of “The Living Witness of the Holy Mountain” by Saint Tikhon’s Seminary Press.

In 1995, he was tonsured to the Lesser Schema with the name Tikhon, in honor of Saint Patriarch Tikhon, Enlightener of North America. Later that year, he was ordained to the Holy Diaconate and Holy Priesthood at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery. In 1998, he was elevated to the rank of Igumen, and in 2000, to the rank of Archimandrite.

In December 2002, he was named Deputy Abbot of Saint Tikhon’s Monastery. Two years later—on February 14, 2004—he was consecrated to the episcopacy at Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery Church. On May 9, 2012, he was elevated to the dignity of Archbishop.

On November 13, 2012, Archbishop Tikhon was elected Primate of the Orthodox Church in America at the 17th All-American Council.

Hierarchal Schedule *Cont. from page 3*

November 12-14. Parma, OH. Holy Trinity (OCA). Monday: Vespers. Holy Synod Meeting. **Tuesday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy concelebrated by the Holy Synod of Bishops. Lunch. Afternoon: 17th All America Council to Elect Metropolitan. Banquet. **Wednesday:** Meeting of Holy Synod with newly-elected Metropolitan Tikhon.

November 18. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

November 25. Clinton, MI. Ascension Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Pastoral Visit.

December 2. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

50TH ANNIVERSARY ST. GEORGE - WINNIPEG

On September 23, 1962, a General Assembly of Saint George Orthodox Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, voted in favor of incorporating the Parish. Coincidentally, though the formal registration of the incorporation took place after this date, the fiftieth anniversary of incorporation took place on Sunday, September 23, 2012, with the presence and blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel.

The celebration began on Friday, September 21 with a supper in a local restaurant, related to Nia Vardalos, hosted by Father Mirone for all of the presidents of parish council and the presidents of the ladies auxiliary and their spouses. Archbishop Nathaniel and Archpriest Michael Lupu, a former member and current Dean of the Western Deanery of Canada, added to the joy and fellowship of the event.

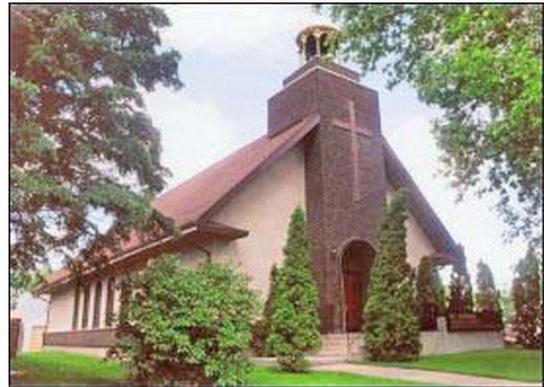
It has been a long-standing tradition in the Parish to set aside time for the children and youth to have an opportunity to get to know their Hierarch. Therefore, on Saturday morning, September 22 the children were invited to have breakfast with Archbishop Nathaniel in the church hall. The breakfast was prepared by the parents of the children. After breakfast, the children formed a circle around their Hierarch and were excited to learn that a short version for "Eminence" is "M and M"!

For lunch, Archbishop Nathaniel met with the youth of the Parish and shared a meal prepared by members of the Ladies Auxiliary. The meal was followed by a discussion of the challenges that the youth, as Orthodox Christians, face in this secular world.

During the period of 50 years of incorporation, 52 individuals have served at the Altar by assisting the priests. They were invited by Father Mirone Klysh, Parish Priest for the past 42 years, to be his guests for a catered supper in the parish hall with Archbishop Nathaniel and Archpriest Michael Lupu. Most of those who still live in the area were able to attend. In some cases, it involved now father and son(s).

Following the supper, Great Vespers was served in the church by Father Mirone and Archpriest Stephen Kennaugh, an OCA priest and long-time friend of the Parish, assisted by Father Deacon Kenneth Gaber of the Episcopate Parish, St. Elijah, in Lennard, Manitoba, and Subdeacon Dennis Ptashnik. The responses were sung by all who were present in the church. At the end of the Great Vespers, Archbishop Nathaniel officiated a Memorial Service in remembrance of all of the reposed members of the Parish.

On Sunday, September 23, Archbishop Nathaniel celebrated the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy assisted by Fr. Mirone, Archpriest Michael Lupu, Archpriest Stephen Kennaugh, Fr. Deacon Kenneth Gaber, and



Fr. Deacon Michael Ungrin, Parish Deacon. The responses were sung beautifully by the parish choir and people under the direction of Tamara MacLellan, daughter of a founding member and former co-priest of the Parish, Archpriest Joseph MacLellan of Blessed Memory.

The catered anniversary banquet was held in the hall of a neighboring Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Speakers at the banquet, introduced by the Master of Ceremonies, Father Deacon Michael Ungrin, were: Jack Ungurian, the first Parish Council President; Dr. Thomas Thomas, current Parish Council President; Psa. Colleen Ungrin, Ladies Auxiliary President; Archpriest Michael Lupu, Archbishop Nathaniel, and Father Mirone. Before the speeches began, the children presented bookmarks that they had created for this celebration to all who were present. At the end of the speeches, Felix Kuehn, a parish member, presented His Eminence with his artistic representation of a "Troitz".

On Monday, September 24, His Eminence had lunch with Fr. Deacon Michael and Psa. Colleen Ungrin. Then, he blessed the graves of those parish members who have "fallen asleep". For a catered supper in the parish hall, Archbishop Nathaniel and Father Mirone invited His Eminence Metropolitan Yuriy, Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, and the Orthodox Clergy of Winnipeg, along with their wives. Following supper, Archbishop Nathaniel presented a talk in the church on the topic: "Orthodoxy in North America - Past, Present and Future." The talk was attended by Metropolitan Yuriy, the Orthodox Clergy and their wives, and many members of the parish and of the other Orthodox parishes in Winnipeg.

After breakfast with Father Mirone on Tuesday morning, September 25, Archbishop Nathaniel departed Winnipeg, leaving behind wonderful memories of an anniversary fully celebrated with prayers, fellowship and food! MANY YEARS, O MASTER!

Parish Correspondent

PASTORAL LETTER 2012

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Christ is born! Let us glorify Him!

Today, Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem.

*Today, he who is without beginning begins to be, and the Word is made flesh.
The Powers of heaven rejoice, and earth with mankind is glad. The Magi offer gifts;
the Shepherds proclaim the marvel, while we cry aloud without ceasing:
Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth; good will among men.*

[Nativity of Christ, Praises, Tone 2 - Monk John]

Beloved Spiritual Children in Christ,
Reverend Clergy, Venerable Monastics and Devout Faithful of our God-protected Episcopate:

*May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace,
and from us, hierarchal blessings!*

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

Today the world celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ! I clarify this statement by saying “the birth is of our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ!” I say “the world” because even if not everyone knows the true meaning of this holy day, the world in general is made known that this is a special day for those who do know its significance. For those who only know that “Christmas Day” is widely publicized on civil calendars, they know that it is a time of great economic benefit to merchants and to the general economy. We know the event to be from the plan of God, and that it is of universal benefit to the human race.

There are those who know only of the economic aspects of the celebration, and there are others who realize the significance of this celebration for Christians but who reject what it represents to them; that is, the coming into human history of the Son of God in our flesh. “Today, he who is without beginning begins to be, and the Word is made flesh.”

The person of Jesus Christ and his unique life has been and will remain controversial until his Second Coming. It is the central theme of Christianity: God became man so that man may become as God, as Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, Egypt states. Let us who are believers in Christ, however, put aside debates about the truth of this event which we accept and confess; and concentrate, as is proper for us, on the significance of the day and the joy it brings into our hearts and homes!

In the Creed, we confess: “I believe in One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-Begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of light, true God of true God, Begotten not made, of one essence with the Father through whom all things were made; Who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.” In the early days of the Church, what the Christian people believed had to be re-affirmed, because there were some who denied that Jesus was the Son of God in a unique way. Others denied that the Holy Virgin is the Mother of Christ God. This statement about Jesus Christ was hammered out by the early Fathers of the Church who met in Councils.

“*The angel Gabriel was sent by God...and the virgin’s name was Mary, and the angel said to her... ‘Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God’s favor. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High’; and “...the child will be holy and will be called Son of God” (Lk.1:26-35).* We say that Jesus was incarnate of the Holy Spirit who over-shadowed Mary after she had agreed to bear the Lord. She accepted to bear the Messiah in her womb, and thus “he became man,” that is, Christ was born of her, flesh of her flesh, incarnate.

Thus, the fact of God descending from on high to become like us in every way, except for sinning, means that the Creator took on created human nature, our nature, our fallen nature. Another way of expressing the word “incarnate” is to say “taking on our flesh,” or taking on our humanity. This came about because he was conceived in the virginal womb of the Blessed Theotokos, Mary, of her own free will. Why God himself came to live among us is made clear: to restore our fallen nature to where it had been at the time of its creation.

This favor, that the angel Gabriel says Mary won, is that through all the ages before her there was no woman as pure and dedicated to adoration of God as was she. After having given birth, she remained as before; and there is no one after her sojourn on earth as pure and dedicated to adoration of God as she is. This is what is meant by the expression “the fullness of time” - when the Virgin Mary was born of her parents, Joachim and Anna.

By her free will, she remained pure and dedicated to adoration of God. “*My soul exults in God my savior; for the Almighty has done great things for me*” (Lk 1:47). She says that God has done great things “for” her, not “to” her; meaning that the Almighty found favor with her, because she would cooperate with Him. That is why she was chosen to conceive the “Son of the Most High, the Son of God” in her virginal womb. This was her free choice: “Let it be to me according to your word” (Lk. 1:38) Mary says to the angel Gabriel.

Saint Romanos, the Hymnographer, writing about the year 518 A.D., composed what we entitle, Kontakia, a form of religious poetry sung on certain feasts. In the following words of Nativity Kontakia, he sets a scene of a conversation of the Holy Virgin Mary with Christ, Eve and Adam, explaining why Jesus came to dwell among us.

The eyes of Mary as she beheld Eve and as she looked on Adam, quickly filled with tears...Hence she said to them: ‘Cease your lamentations, I shall become a mediator for you in the presence of my son. I have a son who is merciful, even too compassionate, as I know from what I have experienced; I observe how he spares: Although he is fire, he inhabited my womb and did not consume me, humble as I am’ (Strophe 10). And Christ answers his mother: ‘O mother, I save them because of you and through you. Had I not willed to save them, I should not have dwelt in you, I should not have allowed my light to shine from you, and you would not have heard yourself called my mother. It is for your race that I lie in the crib. At my will I now give milk to your breasts. For their sake you carried me in your arms. The Cherubim did not see me, but you beheld me, and carried me and cherish me as son’ (Strophe 14).

Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, Egypt says: “*For it is the Father’s glory that man, made and then lost, should be found again; and when dead, that he should be made alive, and should become God’s temple...and the heavenly powers will not be astonished at seeing all of us, who are of one body with him, introduced into their realms*” (4 Discourses Against the Arians 1:42).

It is God’s love for us, his creation, to save us from sin and death. It is God’s humility to take on our human nature which he himself created and to lift it higher than it was before; and thus, his Only-Begotten Son was born in our human nature, born of the pure and Ever-Virgin Mary to bring us back to the Father Almighty. The role of the Holy Virgin in salvation history was debated from the earliest days of the Church and is found in the discussions at the Councils about who is Jesus Christ! This is why the icon of the Nativity of Christ shows centrally both the infant Son of God and the Holy Virgin. He is born of her free will and she is exulted through him, because she willingly gave herself to be the bearer of God, the Theotokos.

Saint John of Damascus reminds us: “*For the purpose of God the Word (Jesus the Holy One of God, the Son of God) becoming man was that the very same nature, which had sinned and fallen and become corrupted, should triumph over the deceiving tyrant (Satan) and so be freed from corruption*” (Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, Bk. 3. Ch. 12). The Holy Virgin Mary, flesh of our flesh, and joy of all humanity, bore the Messiah, the Savior of his own Creation whom the angel had proclaimed when he came to her in the town of Nazareth.

Finally, let us reflect on the words of St. Clement of Alexandria: “*The Word, who in the beginning bestowed life on us as the Creator when he formed us, taught us to live well when he appeared as our teacher; that as God he might afterwards conduct us to the life which never ends*” (Exhortation to the Heathens. Ch. 1, 7:1).

So, we see that, to celebrate this feast of the Incarnation of Jesus, the Holy One of God, the Son of God, we must also reflect on our own fallen human nature and acknowledge that because we do sin, we need God’s forgiveness. We reflect on the reality that all men die and because we do die, we have faith that the incarnation, the taking on of our fallen human nature by Jesus, the unique Son of God, Savior of mankind came to destroy Death by his death and bestow on us in the future, eternal life.

Let us today say, as we do on the Great Day of Pascha, “This, too, is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,” for Christ is born and he has glorified his creation and is lifting us to the heavens!

Christ is born! Glory Him!

The Messiah is among us! Let us go forth and receive Him!

+ NATHANIEL

Archbishop of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate

MOTHER CHRISTOPHORA - 25TH ANNIVERSARY



**Mother Abbess
Christophora**

Saturday, October 13, 2012, the sisterhood and friends of the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration [<http://www.orthodoxmonasteryellwoodcity.org/>] celebrated the 25th anniversary of the elevation of V. Rev. Mother Christophora to abbess of the monastery.

Divine Liturgy in the morning was served in the monastery chapel. Celebrants were Archbishop Nathaniel and Bishop Melchisedek, assisted by Archimandrite Pitirim (Stehnach) and Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko. Attending monastics included Archimandrite Alexander, abbot of the Orthodox Monastery of St. John the Theologian, Hiram, Ohio; and abbesses Mother Theonymphy of St. Mary of Egypt Monastery, Cleveland, Ohio, and Mother Alexandra of St. Thekla Monastery, Bolivar, PA.

A moleben of thanksgiving followed. For this we were joined by Metropolitan Theodosius. After the moleben, Archbishop Nathaniel presented Mother Christophora with a jeweled cross which he had made. Metropolitan Theodosius presented her with a large beautiful hand-painted icon of the Mother of God, painted in Romania [a gift to him from the Patriarch].

A luncheon was held at a nearby restaurant, attended by the hierarchs, area clergy, members of Mother Christophora's family, friends, neighbors, and monastery workers. The toast was offered by Archimandrite Alexander.

Speakers included: Archbishop Nathaniel - "One thing that has kept the Church together in this country is the monastic communities—the monastics are the 'glue.' ... Mother Christophora has managed to weave together all manner of liturgical traditions, all woven together into an American cloth."

Fr. Thomas Hopko: "We thank God the monastery is here, so we could be here. Thank you, Mother, for being what you are and doing what you do."

Fr. Andrew Matychak (Mother Christophora's brother): "My favorite memory is Sundays when my sister and I would come home from church to play church. ... Even though I was the one who went to seminary, my sister is the one that was called 'Rev.' Her heart was in the monastery even before she knew there was a monastery. I am proud to call my sister "Mother." ... She is blessed not only with blood

relatives that love her very dearly, but also a family of very dedicated sisters who love her also. ... Thank you for loving my sister and praying for us."

Her sisterhood also thanked her for her gently firm leadership, teaching by the example of her godly life which is thoroughly immersed in the ancient monastic tradition. The sisters presented Mother with a hand-painted icon of the Presentation of the Mother of God, to whom our future small prayer chapel will be dedicated. In honor of this anniversary, they also set the Paraklesis service to a Ukrainian/Polish tone and presented her with the first CD of this. Live music was played and sung by sisters and friends during luncheon and as a part of the program afterwards.

EPISCOPATE ASSISTS UNION & LEAGUE ARCHIVES



**Dr. E. Haven
Hawley**

A few years ago, a large part of the Archives of the Union and League was brought to the Episcopate Chancery as a temporary depot until other arrangements could be made for its final destination. These included numerous bound volumes of the *America* newspaper, Congress and Committee Reports, membership lists and financial documents.

The Episcopate inquired of the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota (IHRC) [<http://www.ihrc.umn.edu/>] to ascertain if there was an interest in preserving these archives. Having a positive response, His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel set aside three work days to assist Dr. E. Haven Hawley, Program Director, in preparing the material for transmittal to the University.

The Episcopate retains a large number of *America* newspapers which are not bound. **It is seeking a new home of this remnant of the U & L archives.** There are also some copies of previous volumes of the *America* Yearbook.

The Episcopate already has its own relationship with IHRC concerning its own archival materials which are already in the collection. This includes Congress, Episcopate Council Reports; publications including the *Solia*, liturgical books and history books.

CHRISTMAS IN TURKEY — A VISIT TO ST. NICHOLAS

In the centuries since Nicholas served as bishop here, silt carried down from the mountains buried the city of Myra and formed a new coastline. The church was buried along with the city, and the work of digging out the church is not yet complete. In the 19th century, the Tsarist Russians, for whom Nicholas was a patron saint, came to Demre to excavate and restore the church. Eventually, the Turks took over the task. We were told that a team of archeologists from the University of Ankara works at St. Nicholas intermittently; the problem is not lack of interest but a shortage of funds. There is also competition from more exciting digs. Within walking distance of the church are a Roman theater and an extraordinary Lycian necropolis with tombs carved directly into the face of a cliff.

Part of the left side of the church of St. Nicholas is still buried under silt, and the original entrance is inaccessible. Access now is down the incline, past fallen columns and other archeological rubble, through an arch in the right wall. Inside, the church looks as though it was accreted rather than built; one can only guess what it might have looked like in the fourth century.

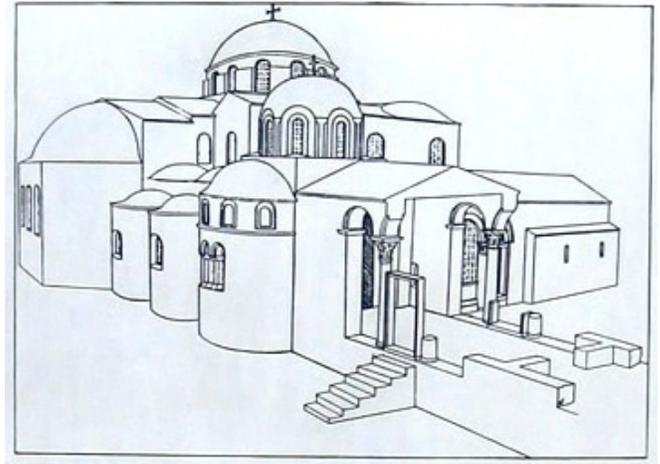
The original roof is gone except for one small dome, and a new brick roof covers most of the building. It would appear that the original church had a lofty nave, or center aisle, flanked by two side aisles. There were later additions to both sides of the church which have left it architecturally and esthetically unbalanced.

The mosaic tiles on the floor are broken, filthy or missing; the frescoes that remain on the walls are faded and decayed; interior columns and capitals lie where they have fallen. The altar is a plinth with a tall stone mounted atop it. Behind the altar is a series of 10 steps which rise in a semi-circle from the floor to the curved wall, giving the impression of a miniature amphitheater, although the steps are so narrow, it is difficult to imagine anyone sitting on them.

After we had prowled around the church for a while, the caretaker or guide entered. In three trips to Turkey, we have found bilingual and multilingual Turks in the most remote areas, but at the major Christian shrine in Anatolia, the guide speaks only Turkish.

Anxious to help, however, he took us to the sarcophagus which we had already recognized as the one usually identified as the original tomb of St. Nicholas. The guide pointed to it and spoke the only English he knew, "Senta Klos."

Though as bishop of Myra, Nicholas was undoubtedly buried in the church, no one knows exactly where. This particular sarcophagus has been chosen because it has a gaping hole in its side, and when men from



Conceptual sketch of the original Church of St. Nicholas in Demre (Myra), Turkey

Bari stopped at Myra in 1087 to steal St. Nicholas's body, they smashed open his tomb. However, an early account suggests the tomb the Barians broke into was beneath the floor of the church and that they shattered the lid "to dust." The sarcophagus identified as St. Nicholas' is not only above ground but has been smashed in at the side rather than the top. In fact, it is the only sarcophagus in the church that still has a lid, and the lid adds to the mystery of who was buried within, because it has two figures on it, not one. The head of the larger figure rests on a pillow and the head of the smaller figure seems to rest on the shoulder of the larger one. Both faces have been chipped away.

The Venetians sailed to Myra in 1116 and not only brought back what they said were the true bones of St. Nicholas but the body of his uncle as well. When the Russians arrived centuries later to restore the church, they looted another sarcophagus and sent the bones to St. Petersburg as the real St. Nicholas. The French claim a part of one of his fingers, and the Turks not to be outdone on their own territory, have a reliquary with some of St. Nicholas's bones in their new museum in Antalya. In 1972, in an ecumenical gesture, the Archbishop of Bari presented a few fragments from the skull in Bari to the Greek Orthodox community in America. Some of these fragments were placed in a reliquary in the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas at 196th Street and Northern Boulevard in Flushing, N.Y.; the rest are in a reliquary in the Greek Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity at 319 East 74th Street in Manhattan.

We counted six sarcophagi in the church at Demre, plus one in the courtyard. It seems likely that as each

Cont. on page 10

raiding party arrived, it cracked open another sarcophagus and claimed St. Nicholas's bones. Who was correct and which tomb was his is impossible to say.

After showing us the smashed sarcophagus, the guide led us to a steep staircase on the left side of the church. At the top of the stairs, he unlocked a door and we walked onto a balcony within the church that is being used for storage. A Roman frieze was propped against the wall. A bell with a Greek inscription dated 1876 rested atop a small Byzantine sarcophagus.

Sitting on the ledge of the balcony was a skull. I pointed to it. "Senta Klos," said the guide helpfully. We examined the next item on the ledge, a pile of broken dishes in the pattern known as English willow, a pattern we recognized instantly. Years ago, every Jewish household had two sets: red pattern for meat, blue for dairy. These were blue for dairy. I pointed to the dishes. "Senta Klos," said the guide.

We went back down to the nave of the church. It was dim and desolate. Carved into the walls in Greek are graffiti dating back to 1870. On the floor were orange peels, chicken feathers, cigarette butts, film boxes, and other signs of indifference and neglect.

Centuries ago, people came here to worship St. Nicholas; now they go to Macy's to see Santa Claus. Yet there is a link.

Nicholas was born in Patara, another important Lycian port, about the year 270 or 280. Although many miracles would be attributed to him, his most enduring deed was done before he became holy; when he was merely good.

His parents died in a plague, leaving Nicholas a very wealthy young man. He felt he should give his money to the needy, but he also felt it should be done anonymously. In Patara lived an impoverished nobleman who, unable to provide dowries for his three daughters, had decided to sell them into prostitution. Nicholas was horrified. One night, he came silently to the nobleman's house and tossed some gold wrapped in a cloth through the window. The grateful father used the gold to marry off his eldest daughter. Nicholas came a second night and threw in another bag of gold, which became the dowry for the second daughter. By this time, the father wondered who his mysterious benefactor was. Every night he waited, and when the third bag of gold came through the window, he rushed outside and saw Nicholas.

Later, Nicholas went on a pilgrimage to Palestine. When he returned, he settled in Myra, where he was bishop until he died around the year 350. In the centuries after his death, his fame spread from Lycia through Byzantium and then into Europe. He was taken as patron by such disparate groups as virgins (the three bags of gold), thieves (because he was imprisoned by Diocletian), students (for restoring to life three students who had been murdered, dismembered and pickled in brine), and sailors (for calming seas in storms). Possibly because Nicholas was bishop in a major port,

sailors often prayed to him, and those who survived brought word of his miracles wherever they traveled.

The church at Myra became a famous shrine and the object of many pilgrimages, and thousands of other churches were dedicated to St. Nicholas. In much of Europe, the Christmas celebration was a month-long festival beginning with St. Nicholas Day on Dec. 6 and ending on Jan. 6 with Epiphany, which marks the visit of the three wise men. It was on Dec. 5, St. Nicholas Eve, rather than on Christmas Eve, that many European children hung up their stockings.

The Reformation attempted to curtail the cult of saints, and the giving of gifts was moved to Christmas Eve, because the Protestants said that all good things came from the Christ child, the Christkind or Christkindel. But whatever St. Nicholas lost in worship, he gained in folklore, and Christkindel somehow became Kris Kringle, another name for St. Nicholas.

St. Nicholas probably came to America with the first Dutch colonists, but Washington Irving's tales of his being patron saint of New Amsterdam and the object of public celebrations are dismissed by scholars as spoofs. In the course of centuries, the name of St. Nicholas has been twisted by many tongues into such variations as Santiklos, Samiklaus and Sinterklaes. In America, it found its final distortion as Santa Claus.

Clement Moore's "The Visit of St. Nicholas" has no trace of the Anatolian ascetic but does distill many elements of European folklore. Illustrator Thomas Nast took Moore's description of St. Nicholas and created the Santa Claus we know today. The jolly old man immediately caught on, because he filled the need of commerce for a Christmas symbol - someone who could push the merchandise. St. Nicholas was benevolent but divine; Santa Claus is benevolent but secular. Yet, in his own way, Santa Claus continues the spirit of anonymous giving embodied by St. Nicholas 16 centuries ago.

It was evening when we left the church of St. Nicholas - Christmas Eve. Millions of children were waiting for Santa Claus to bring them gifts, joy and laughter. In Demre, we had been the only visitors to the church. The guide locked the barbed wire gate behind us and, except for the distant sound of a muezzin calling the Moslems to prayer, the church of St. Nicholas was as silent as his empty tomb.

**Lord, we pray, that the celebration
Of the birth of Your only-begotten
Son may ease our struggles;
Whose heavenly mystery is our
Food and drink.**

Originally published in The Word Magazine (March 1975), a publication of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

[Editor's note: Updated information about the site of the Church of St. Nicholas in Demre is available at: <http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/myra-church/>].

CLERGY CHANGES

ORDINATIONS

HOARSTE, Dan, was ordained into the Holy Diaconate on September 29, 2012, by His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel at St. George Cathedral, Southfield MI and attached to St. Mary Hierarchal Chapel, Grass Lake MI.

LAPUSTEA, Deacon Florin, was ordained into the Holy Priesthood on September 17, 2012, by His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel at Holy Cross Church, San Jose, CA and attached to that parish.

RECEPTIONS

NICHITEAN, Rev. Fr. Bogdan, was received from the Church of Romania on November 10, 2010, and accepted into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America by the Episcopate Council on July 28, 2012.

SIRJITA, Rev. Fr. Cornel, was received from the Church of Romania on May 1, 2012, and accepted into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America by the Episcopate Council on September 27, 2012.

ASSIGNMENTS / RELEASES

FRUNZA, V. Rev. Fr. Anton, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of Annunciation Church, Walker MI, effective July 15, 2012, and remains unassigned.

RADULESCU, Rev. Fr. Ioan O.E., was released from duties as Parish Priest of Holy Archangels Michael & Gabriel Mission, Niagara Falls ON, and attached to St. John the Baptist Church, Kitchener ON, effective May 1, 2012.

SIRJITA, Rev. Fr. Cornel, was assigned Parish Priest of Archangels Michael & Gabriel Mission, Niagara Falls ON, effective September 27, 2012.

UNGUREANU, Rev. Fr. Daniel, was released from duties as Assistant Parish Priest of St. Nicholas Church, Montreal QC, and assigned Parish Priest of St. Paraschiva Mission, Saint-Laurent QC, effective September 27, 2012.

NEW MISSION

SAINT-LAURENT, QC – St. Parascheva, was accepted as a Mission by the Episcopate Council on September 27, 2012.

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“SALVATION OF THE NATION” CATHEDRAL FUNDED BY EPISCOPATE

His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel, issued a Pastoral Letter May 10, 2012, to the parishes inviting them to participate in a collection of funds for the new cathedral being built in Bucharest, “Catedrala Mantuirii Neamului.” Parishes were invited to take special collections at the Sunday Divine Liturgies for this project. *“We ask the Reverend Clergy and Parish Councils to sustain and promote the collection for this unique project which gives thanks to God for his benefits of which Romanian Orthodox Christians in North America, through the generations and those who are also members of the parishes, have also benefited through the decades. May Saint Andrew bless these efforts and intercede in bringing this project to its completion.”*



The amount of \$16,000 was collected and transferred to the appropriate account in October, 2012.

In short, the intention to build a Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest goes back to the time of King Carol I (Charles) in 1878 as a symbol of the spiritual unity of the Romanian people. Over the decades, the idea was kept alive through two World Wars, through the destructive era of atheistic communist rule until now. From the first Patriarch, Miron (Cristea) until the present, Daniel (Ciobotea) the Church has waited patiently for the possibility to erect this holy place. Work began on September 3, 2010 with the blessing of the site and the work by Patriarch Daniel.

A book relating to the history of the project by Nicolae St. Noica, “**Catedrala Mantuirii Neamului: Istoria unui Ideal**,” was published in 2011. A thank you letter from Patriarch Daniel appears on page 22 of this issue of *Solia*. An article about the Episcopate’s donation can be found on [Basilica.ro](http://www.basilica.ro/stiri/romanii-din-america-sprijina-zidirea-catedralei-mantuirii-neamului_633.html), dated November 6, 2012 (http://www.basilica.ro/stiri/romanii-din-america-sprijina-zidirea-catedralei-mantuirii-neamului_633.html).



FAMILY LIFE / ALL AUXILIARIES CONFERENCE



NEW DATE – JULY 4-7, 2013
Vatra Romaneasca, Grass Lake MI
“With Faith and Love Draw Near...”

*Excerpted remarks from the Presentation to the Episcopate Congress,
September 28, 2012
by Teva Regule*

Your Eminence, Your Grace, Rev. Fathers, Delegates, Brother and Sisters
in Christ,

I am here today to introduce to you the first Family Life/All-Auxiliaries Conference of our Episcopate. This new way of gathering as a Church family will be held next July (**July 4–7, 2013**) at Vatra Romaneasca. It is with our “hearth” in mind that the planning committee has picked as a theme for this inaugural event, “*With Faith and Love Draw Near.*”

I preface my remarks with a bit of Episcopate history. I remember growing up in the Episcopate (c.1970s-80s) when we would gather together as a “Church Family”—young and old alike—at the various conferences every year. In addition to the AROY Conference, this included attending the Episcopate Congress at the Vatra, and for those involved in the other auxiliaries, the ARFORA and Brotherhood Congresses. These gatherings shaped my experience of Church as something larger than just my local parish and something with universal significance, and of course, formed and nurtured life-long friendships. However, for those who remember these gatherings, they were not without their problems (and here I refer particularly to the AROY Conference) — the meetings could be dry and boring, there were few activities for those other than delegates, and evenings could be marred by rowdy, disruptive behavior. In addition, the numerous conferences also posed logistical problems. Those active or interested in the various auxiliaries had to make four separate trips a year in order to attend the respective gatherings. Over time, they ceased to be family events—mostly kids just went to the AROY conference with few parents attending, and all of the problems of not having adult supervision proliferated; only delegates and clergy went to the Church Congress; some women still attended ARFORA (but often without the participation of their younger sisters); and only a handful of those interested in supporting the Episcopate attended the Brotherhood Conference. Aside from AROY, that at present is inactive on the national level, the situation is similar today.

I would like for us to *imagine* a new way of coming together as a Church Family—one that appeals to all ages and allows those who wish to serve the Church further to seamlessly move from AROY to the adult

auxiliaries. In addition, such a gathering would be an opportunity to continue to nurture our spiritual lives. It is somewhat ironic that in every other facet of our lives, we are encouraged to continue to learn and grow—in our relationships as well as our professions. For instance, if we are professionals, we attend university (and often graduate school) and continue to take classes to maintain any certifications that our profession requires. Even if we do not work outside the home, we continue to learn and grow as an adult citizen. We should be doing the same for our relationship with God. This event could provide the opportunity and encouragement to do that within the context of our Church family. It is envisioned as a programmatically rich extended weekend of worship, attention to one’s spiritual life (with opportunities for spiritual direction and sacramental confession), auxiliary meetings, and workshops on a variety of themes and for all stages of life. Moreover, the conference plans include contests such as a “Bible Challenge” for kids and adults as well as an Oratorical Contest for various age brackets, both youth and adults, with scholarship money available to the winners of the former. We are hoping that this will encourage both youth and adults to think more deeply about their faith and to begin to articulate it to others. Lastly, the conference plans include community building events and opportunities to socialize and enjoy the company of our family and friends.

This is the model of the Parish Life Conference in the Antiochian Archdiocese. It has proven to be very successful in that context. The Greek Archdiocese also gathers likewise. While we would be using a similar model, we would certainly tailor it to our circumstances. We are hoping that by coming together and *re-imagining* how we can gather as a Church Family, we can look to do so in a meaningful way once again.

Included with this article are some program highlights for this event. More detailed information will follow in upcoming issues of the *Solia*, but for now, **mark your calendars for next July and plan to Draw near, with Faith and Love.**

Family Life/All-Auxiliaries Conference

Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America
In Review...

What: Family Life/ All-Auxiliaries Weekend
• A re-imagining of how we gather as a Church Family.

• A way to strengthen and grow the Auxiliaries of the Episcopate.

When: July 4–7, 2013 (Thursday-Sunday)

Where: Vatra Romaneasca

Theme: “With Faith and Love, Draw Near”

Events:

- **Worship services:** Morning and Evening Prayers, Healing Service, Divine Liturgy
- **Auxiliary Meetings:** ARFORA, AROY, Brotherhood
- **Additional Gatherings:** Clergy, Clergy Wives, Church School Teachers, Youth Workers, Parish Council Representatives, Parents
- **Thematic Workshops** (projected) / Discussion Groups for Personal, Family, and Parish Enrichment:
 - One Body in Christ—Our Church Family
 - Making God Real in the Orthodox Christian Home
 - Drawing Nearer to God in Liturgy
 - Living an Orthodox Life Today: Walking the Walk
 - Parish Outreach, Ministry, and Tithing: In the Tradition of St. Basil
 - Inviting Others to Our Faith: Missions
 - Mother Alexandra and the Beginnings of Monasticism in America
- **Contests/Festivals**
 - Oratorical Contest for Jr AROY (12-18 yrs), Sr. AROY (19-30 yrs), Adult (31+yrs)
**Scholarships for the winners
 - Bible *Challenge* – Explore the Gospel of Mark
 - Teams (3 persons/ea) – Jr. AROY, Sr. AROY, Adult
 - Yearly Church School and Adult Education curriculum possibilities

(Study guides available:

www.orthodoxyouth.org/Mark)

**Prizes for all Contestants and Winning Teams including a GRAND Prize of \$1000 to the Parish of the Winning Team!

- **Luncheons** (with Speaker)—ARFORA and AROY/Brotherhood
- **Youngster Activities**
 - Childcare for Toddlers
 - Elementary School – “Vacation Church School”
- **Other Social Events**
 - Thursday “Romanian” Picnic with Vatra Olympics
 - Friday Evening Entertainment

FINANCIAL REPORT

EPISCOPATE SUPPORTERS

Anonymous (IMO Armand Scala) \$3,000.00
Robert & Becky Omilian, Sterling Hts, MI . \$75.00
George & Nancy Ittu, Cleveland, OH \$50.00
Valer & Elaine Luca, Struthers, OH \$50.00
Mary Demetriade, Warren, MI \$25.00

EPISCOPATE ASSESSMENT

Holy Trinity, Youngstown, OH (2013) \$2,000.00
St Mary Mission, Ft Qu’Appelle, SK
(2012) \$280.00

GENERAL DONATIONS

Holy Cross Mission, Phoenix, AZ
(Hierarch Travel Expenses) \$1,360.00
Orthodox Christian Laity
(Hierarch Travel Expenses) \$717.90
Holy Trinity, Miramar, FL
(Hierarch Travel Expenses) \$600.00
St Nicholas, Alliance, OH
(Hierarch Travel Expenses) \$300.00
Stephen & Katherine Miroy, Stafford, VA
(Camp Vatra) \$400.00
Victor Chuka, Warren, OH \$50.00
Helen & Nick Burz, Royal Oak, MI \$25.00
Iustina Cantor, Commerce Twp, MI \$10.00
Anna Jonascu, Westland, MI \$10.00

MEMORIAM

Julian & Rodica Iordache, Commerce, MI
(IMO Ionel Macris) \$100.00
Iustina Cantor, Commerce, MI
(IMO Ionel Macris) \$60.00
Stephen & Katherine Miroy,
Stafford, VA \$50.00
(IMO Armand Scala, Marie Ficken &
Winston Miroy)
Mariana Tipa, White Lake, MI
(IMO Ionel Macris) \$50.00

A.C.E. FUND

Anonymous (IMO Fr John Limbeson) \$1,250.00
Alexa & Florica Mindea,
Morton Grove, IL \$500.00

- Saturday Evening Dance
- Sunday Banquet
- **Displays, Tours, Opportunities for Spiritual Direction and/or Sacramental Confession**



THE ORIGIN OF THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS

by Very Rev. Fr. Antony Bassoline

The celebration of the birth of Christ has become the most obvious religious-based public festival of American life. Its arrival in December is prepared for months in advance. It is the one event which generates the most anticipation and to which the most tradition and custom have attached themselves. Individual homes and whole cities dress up for Christmas. In popular sentiment, it has eclipsed the greater feast of the Resurrection, and has completely dwarfed its twin festival, the Epiphany.

But how did we get a feast of Christmas? What was its original purpose? How does it actually fit into the life of the Orthodox Christian Church?

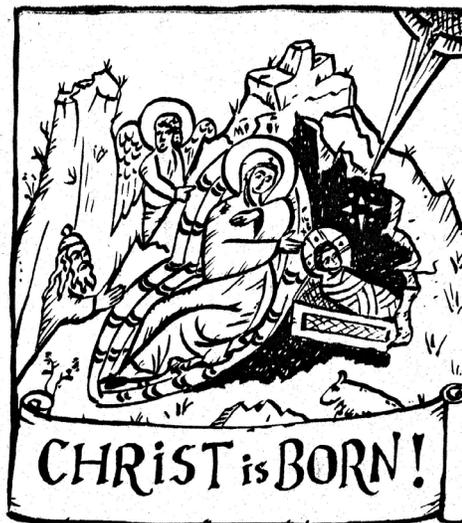
The Christian Church in the first three centuries of its existence knew of only one great festival, Pentecost (by Pentecost is here meant the complete celebration of the Christian Passover from the cross and resurrection to the 50th day commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit). Every Sunday was considered a feast in that it was a gathering to proclaim the mighty redemption brought by the death and resurrection of Christ. This festival of redemption was realized weekly by the Holy Eucharist, the presence of the victorious Risen Christ in the midst of the assembly. It was realized yearly in the great Paschal Feast in the administration of baptism. We see that in this ancient period, the interest and emphasis was not at all on the historical facts concerning what happened to Jesus, but rather how what happened to Jesus now happens to those who join His Church; how the new believer dies and rises to new life in Christ through baptism, and how in the Eucharist the believer participates directly in the sacrifice of Christ.

In time, the celebration of martyrs' days, that is, the yearly anniversary of a martyr's death, came to be celebrated. But these festivals were local and usually conducted at the martyr's tomb.

It is not until the Fourth Century that the idea of celebrating occasions in the earthly life of our Lord started to become popular. Much of this is due to the Church of Jerusalem. Special celebrations which were devised on the actual or supposed sites of the events of the life of Christ lent themselves particularly well to the celebration of historical remembrances. Thus, interest developed in where Jesus was born, where He grew up, where He performed His miracles, etc.

It is to the Church of Rome, however, that we must give the credit for the origins of the feast of the birth of Christ. **But on what was this feast based, and why was December 25th chosen as the day for its celebration?**

The actual historical facts surrounding the birth of Christ are clouded in mystery. No one really knows



when Jesus was born. Only certain facts can be deducted from the biblical account and from history. For one thing, Jesus was definitely born in B.C. (Before Christ!). This is known, because Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., and Herod figures in the account of the Nativity given by St. Matthew. Jesus was definitely not born in winter. St. Luke mentions that the shepherds were staying out in the pasture land with their flocks, an event that does not take place in winter. We must look elsewhere for the origin of the late December celebration of the Nativity.

We find the origin of the winter feast of the Nativity not in the historical facts available concerning the birth of Christ, but in a curious astronomical phenomenon. In late December, we reach the shortest day of the year with more hours of darkness than daylight. From this point, the hours of daylight become gradually longer. This observable phenomenon was given a religious significance in the pagan Roman world. It became the feast of Sol Invictus (the Unconquerable Sun). It was popularly celebrated in Rome during the last two weeks of December as Saturnalia. What better time for the Christians to celebrate the coming of the true unconquered "Sun"? Thus, the feast of Christmas was born; the celebration of the dawning on the world of the Sun of Righteousness.

The feast was not originally called Christmas or Nativity, but Epiphany or "Manifestation." It celebrated the idea of Christ's coming and manifesting Himself through several events of the New Testament, and its timing was based on the feast of the Unconquered Sun. In the East, this feast of "coming" was generally kept on January 6th and in the West on December 25th. It did not originally concentrate exclusively on the birth of our Lord, but celebrated several aspects of

His manifestation: the birth in the cave, the adoration of the Magi, the baptism in the Jordan, and the first miracle at Cana in Galilee. All of these themes came in one way or another to be associated with the feast of the Epiphany. The East celebrated all of this on January 6th and knew of no feast on December 25th. (The Armenian Church to this day still celebrates the nativity and the baptism together on January 6th with no celebration whatsoever on December 25th.) Egeria, a nun from Spain, traveling in Palestine at the end of the 4th century mentions a great celebration of our Lord's coming. Thus, it was only later that the East and the West came to share both December 25th and January 6th. The East separated the Nativity from the Baptism, leaving the January date as the feast of the Baptism of Christ and accepting the December date as the feast of the Nativity. The West in turn added January 6th to its "Manifestation" celebration as the commemoration of the Adoration of the Magi.

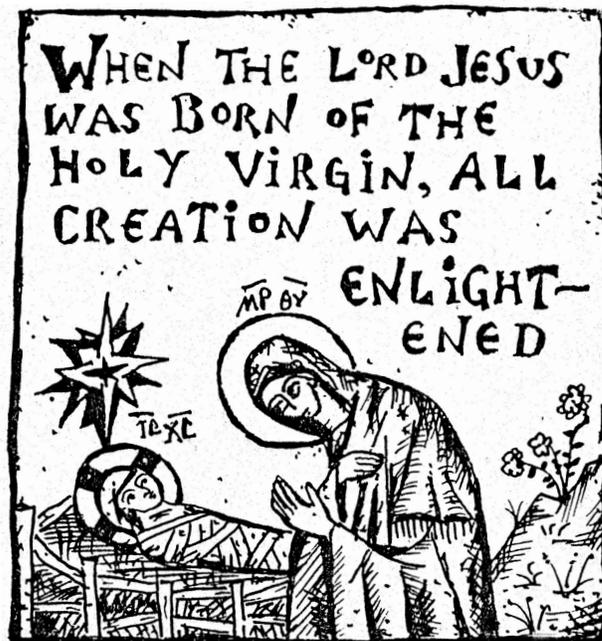
Once this double feast, Christmas-Epiphany, entered the life of the Church it became, like Easter-Pentecost, an occasion for the celebration of baptism. The feast of Christ's coming was seen to be appropriate for the administration of the sacrament by which Christ would come to the new believer. Several relics in our present liturgical practice hint at the baptismal connections of Christmas and Epiphany, as the long list of readings of the vigil of both days (meant to cover the time of actual baptizing), and the singing of the baptismal verse "As many as have been baptized into Christ" in place of the Trisagion. The strange notation in the liturgical books: "Nativity of our Lord ... Three days Passover" and "Epiphany of our Lord ... Three days Passover" can only be explained in connection with the sacrament of baptism.

The hymns of both Christmas and Epiphany reveal the origin of these days in the old winter festival of the Unconquered Sun. Note how many astronomical references we find in the Nativity Troparion: Christ is described as the "Sun" of Righteousness, who **illuminates** those who worshipped **stars** (of which the physical sun is one). Jesus has come as the **dawning from the East** (as the sun does).

The Matins exapostilarion hymn speaks of: A newly **risen day**. Our Savior is the **Dayspring from the East**. Those who were in **darkness** and **shadow** found the **Light**.

Epiphany is still known as "ton Foton" (feast of **Lights**). Its hymns also concentrate on astronomical themes. In Vespers, Christ is described as "**Bestower of light**," who desires to give **light** to those in **darkness**. In the Matins of the feast, we find: "With Your **light** that never **sets**, **shine** forth, O Christ."

Unfortunately, most of society has reverted to celebrating the pagan winter holiday under the excuse of celebrating the birth of Christ. The Romans had their Saturnalia, but modern man has his Santa, reindeer, drinking parties and materialism to highlight his feast.



In spite of all of this, Christians are still called to celebrate joyfully in the Spirit, the coming of the Messiah. As the Christians of old celebrated under the guise of Saturnalia, so the modern Christian must still celebrate the true feast as the rest of our society keeps its pagan winter holiday. The Church at one time conquered and transformed that pagan holiday into the sublime celebration of the coming of the Sun of Righteousness. She still is challenged to transform and transfigure and to proclaim that coming and to lead men beyond tinsel and cheap lights to the true meaning of this holiday: the glorification of the true Gladsome Light of the Holy Glory of the Immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ.

Archpriest Antony Bassoline was pastor of Sts. Peter & Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church in Northeast Philadelphia until 1993 when he fell asleep in the Lord. This article was first published in The Word Magazine (a publication of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America) in December 1979.

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HELP A MISSION

Mission Kits Needed



Approximately 7 years ago, we made an appeal in the *Solia* for donations toward “Mission Kits”, basic items needed by newly-established Mission parishes to function liturgically. Often, the Department of Missions has provided used items; however, due to your past generosity to our first appeal, we’ve been able to provide a number of missions with new items.

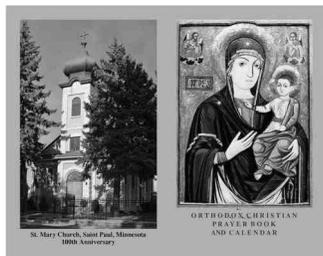
With those “Mission Kits” now depleted, we once again appeal to the members of the Episcopate Parishes and our dear readers, to **consider a year-end, tax-deductible gift to purchase more kits** that consist of the following items: Set of Priest’s vestments, set of holy vessels, censer, Gospel book (Romanian & English), Blessing cross, Baptismal kit, Wedding crowns, Liturgy book, Book of Needs, Book of Hours, Vespers book, Matins book, Epistle book (Romanian & English), Triodion, Pentecostarion, Epitaphion. One Kit, which includes all of the above items, may be purchased for \$1,000. However, any amount you are able to offer, combined with the offerings of others, will help provide the needed items.

Please send your donation to: Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, PO Box 309, Grass



Lake MI 49240-0309 with the notation: “Mission Kit”. You may also call the Episcopate Office at (517) 522-4800 ext. 205 to put your donation on your credit card, or visit the Episcopate’s website at <http://www.roea.org/donate.html> and donate online with your credit card or PayPal account.

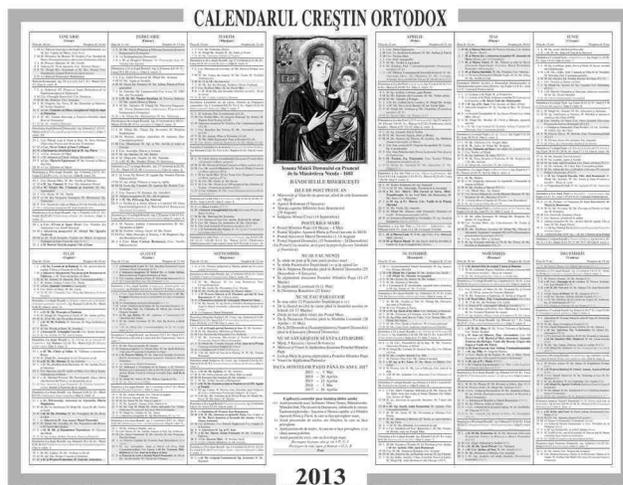
PURCHASE 2013 WALL & POCKET CALENDARS



The **2013 Pocket Prayer Book & Calendar** (*English & Romanian*) [7.25 x 5.75 in] and the **2013 Wall Calendar** (*Romanian only*) [19 x 25 in] are available through your local parish, or you may order directly from the Department of Publications.

Each publication is \$3 plus shipping, except for the English Pocket Prayer

Book & Calendar that is distributed for postage costs only since it is sponsored by the Orthodox Brotherhood USA (*All Brotherhood members receive a copy by mail*). Please call the Episcopate’s Department of Publications (517-522-4800 x205) if you would like to order any of these items, since shipping costs vary depending on number ordered.



2013

ARHIEPISCOPUL TIKHON A FOST ALES MITROPOLIT AL AMERICII ȘI CANADEI

PARMA, OH (OCA). Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Tikhon al Philadelphiei și al Pennsylvaniei de est, a fost ales Mitropolit Primat al Bisericii Ortodoxe în America în cadrul celui de-al 17 Consiliu al întregii Americi a Bisericii Ortodoxe în America, la Biserica Sf. Treime din Parma, Ohio, în ziua de marți, 13 noiembrie 2012.

663 de oameni, incluzând episcopi, clerici, delegați laici și observatori au reprezentat parohiile ortodoxe din OCA care au participat la Consiliu. 590 au avut drept de vot. Ședința Consiliului s-a deschis cu Slujba Sfintei Liturghii, urmată de sesiunea plenară la amiază. După slujba de mulțumire și cântarea troparului Pogorării Sfântului Duh, Părintele Eric G. Tosi, Secretarul OCA, a deschis sesiunea plenară.

“Hristos strălucește tot mai mult și lumina noastră se diminuează pe măsură ce ne apropiem de Lumina veșnică”, a spus Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel al Detroitului și al Episcopiei Române, Locțiitorul Scaunului de Mitropolit Primat, în cuvântarea sa de deschidere a ședinței. *“Și în acest context ne-am adunat aici cu un singur scop: Să mărim pe Tatăl, pe Fiul și pe Sfântul Duh... și ca să alegem pe Mitropolitul Primat al OCA.”*

Niciunul dintre candidați nu a obținut două treimi din totalul voturilor la primul scrutin. La cea de a doua votare, Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Tikhon al Philadelphiei și Pennsylvaniei de Est a primit 317 voturi, iar Prea Sfințitul Episcop Michael al New Yorkului și al New Jerseyului a primit 355 de voturi. Membrii Sfântului Sinod s-au retras în altar unde au ales ca Mitropolit Primat pe Arhiepiscopul Tikhon.

Biografie

Prea Fericirea Sa, Prea Fericitul Mitropolit Primat Tikhon, s-a născut la 15 iulie 1966 cu numele de Marc R. Mollard, în Boston, MA, fiind cel mai în vârstă dintre cei trei copii ai familiei Francois și Elizabeth Mollard.

După scurte perioade petrecute în Connecticut, Franța și Missouri, s-a stabilit împreună cu familia în Reading, PA, unde a terminat liceul Wyomissing în 1984. În 1988 a terminat Facultatea de limbă Franceză și Sociologie la Colegiul Franklin și Marshall din Lancaster, PA, apoi s-a mutat la Chicago.



În anul 1989 a fost primit în sânul Bisericii Ortodoxe convertindu-se de la Episcopalianism. În toamna aceluiași an a început studiile la Seminarul Teologic Universitar Sfântul Tikhon din South Canaan, PA. După un an, a intrat în mănăstire ca novice. A obținut titlul de Master în Teologie la Seminarul Tikhon în 1993, după care a fost numit asistent și apoi profesor de Vechiul Testament cu specializarea în Profeți, Psalmi și Literatura apocrifă. A servit și ca instructor pentru programul de studii, oferind cursuri despre viețile sfinților Vechiului Testament, uzul liturgic al Vechiului Testament și Vechiul Testament în literatura patristică.

A colaborat cu Starețul Alexander (Golitzin), actualul Episcop de Toledo și al Episcopiei Bulgare din cadrul OCA, în publicarea volumului “Mărturia vie de la Sfântul Munte Athos” sub egida editurii Saint Tikhon’s Seminary Press.

În 1995 a fost tuns în monahism cu numele de Tikhon, în amintirea Sfântului Patriarh Tihon, Iluminătorul Americii de Nord. Apoi, în același an a fost hirotonit diacon și preot. În anul 1998 a fost ridicat la rangul de Egumen, iar în 2000 a fost înălțat la rangul de Arhimandrit.

În decembrie 2002 a fost numit Stareț al Mănăstirii Sfântul Tikhon. Doi ani mai târziu, la 14 februarie 2004 a fost hirotonit episcop. În 9 mai 2012 a fost ridicat la treapta de arhiepiscop.

În 13 noiembrie 2012, Arhiepiscopul Tikhon a fost ales Mitropolit Primat al Bisericii Ortodoxe în America în cadrul celui de-al 17-lea Consiliu al întregii Americi.



SCRISOARE PASTORALĂ LA NAȘTEREA DOMNULUI, DUMNEZEULUI ȘI MÂNTUITORULUI NOSTRU IISUS HRISTOS PE ANUL 2012

Hristos se naște! Măriți-L!

“Astăzi Hristos în Betleem Se naște din Fecioara. Astăzi Cel fără de început Se începe și Cuvântul Se întrupează. Puterile cerurilor se bucură și pământul cu oamenii se veseleşte; magii daruri aduc; păstorii minunea vestesc; iar noi neîncetat cântăm: slavă întru cei de sus lui Dumnezeu și pe pământ pace, între oameni bunăvoire!”

[Nașterea Domnului, la Laude, glasul al 2-lea - Ioan Monahul]

Iubitului nostru cler, cinului monahal și dreptcredincioșilor creștini ai Episcopiei
noastre de Dumnezeu-păzite,

*“Fie ca Dumnezeu Tatăl și Domnul nostru Iisus Hristos să vă dăruiască har și pace,
iar de la noi arhieresti binecuvântări!”*

Iubiți întru Domnul,

Astăzi, lumea sărbătorește nașterea lui Iisus Hristos! Clarific această afirmație spunând că “nașterea este a Domnului, Dumnezeului și Mântuitorului nostru Iisus Hristos!”. Spun “lumea” pentru că, chiar dacă nu toată lumea cunoaște adevărata însemnătate a acestei sfinte zile, lumii, în general, îi este cunoscut că aceasta este o zi deosebită pentru cei care îi cunosc semnificația. Pentru cei care știu doar că “Ziua de Crăciun” este mediatizată pe larg, aceasta reprezintă doar o perioadă a cumpărăturilor de care beneficiază vânzătorii. Noi însă știm că acest eveniment face parte din planul lui Dumnezeu și că aduce beneficii universale omenirii.

Pe lângă cei care recunosc numai aspectele economice ale sărbătorii mai sunt și cei care realizează semnificația sărbătorii Crăciunului, dar care resping ceea ce reprezintă pentru ei, adică venirea Fiului lui Dumnezeu pe pământ în trup ca al nostru. “Astăzi Cel fără de început se naște și Cuvântul trup S-a făcut.”

Persoana lui Iisus Hristos și viața Sa unică au fost și vor rămâne controversate până la a Doua Venire a Sa. Aceasta este tema centrală a creștinismului, așa cum a exprimat-o Sfântul Atanasie al Alexandriei: “Dumnezeu s-a făcut om, pentru ca omul să poată să se îndumnezeiască.” Cei care cred în Hristos, trebuie să lase deoparte dezbaterile despre adevărul acestui eveniment pe care îl acceptăm și mărturisim, și, să se concentreze, după cum este adecvat nouă, la semnificația zilei și a bucuriei pe care o aduce în inimile și casele noastre!

În Simbolul de credință (Crezul), mărturisim: “Cred Într-Unul Dumnezeu, Tatăl Atoțiitorul, Făcătorul cerului și al pământului, văzutele tuturor și nevăzutele. Și Într-Unul Domn Iisus Hristos, Fiul lui Dumnezeu, Unul-Născut, Care din Tatăl S-a născut, mai înainte de toți vecii. Lumină din Lumină, Dumnezeu adevărat din Dumnezeu adevărat, Născut, iar nu făcut, Cel de o ființă cu Tatăl, prin Care toate s-au făcut. Care pentru noi oamenii și pentru a noastră mântuire, S-a pogorât din ceruri și S-a întrupat de la Duhul Sfânt și din Maria Fecioara și S-a făcut om.” În primele zile ale Bisericii, ceea ce creștinii credeau, trebuia să fie reafirmat, pentru că erau unii care negau faptul că Iisus era Fiul lui Dumnezeu. Alții tăgăduiau faptul că Sfânta Fecioară Maria este Maica lui Hristos Dumnezeu. De aceea, această afirmație din Crez a fost stabilită încă de la începuturile Bisericii de Sfinții Părinți ai Bisericii care s-au întrunit în Sinoade.

“... a fost trimis îngerul Gavriil de la Dumnezeu, ... iar numele fecioarei era Maria. Și intrând îngerul la ea, a zis: ... Nu te teme, Marie, căci ai aflat har la Dumnezeu. Și iată vei lua în pântece și vei naște fiu și vei chema numele lui Iisus. Acesta va fi mare și Fiul Celui Preaînalt se va chema... pentru aceea și Sfântul care Se va naște din tine, Fiul lui Dumnezeu se va chema.” (Luca 1:26-35). Noi spunem că Iisus S-a întrupat de la Duhul Sfânt Care a umbrat-o pe Fecioara Maria după ce ea a fost de acord să poarte pe Domnul. Ea a acceptat să poarte pe Mântuitorul în pântecele ei, și, prin aceasta, “El a devenit om”, adică Hristos S-a născut dintr-însa, trup din trupul ei, întrupat.

Astfel, faptul că Dumnezeu S-a pogorât de sus ca să devină ca și noi în toate cele, cu excepția păcatului, înseamnă că Făcătorul a luat asupra sa natura umană creată, natura noastră, natura noastră căzută. Un alt mod de a exprima cuvântul “întrupat” este de a spune că “a luat trupul nostru” sau că a luat firea noastră omenească. Aceasta s-a întâmplat pentru că El a fost conceput în pântecele fecioare al binecuvântatei Născătoare de Dumnezeu, Maria, prin voia ei liberă. De ce Dumnezeu Însuși a venit să trăiască printre noi este arătat clar: pentru a restaura firea noastră cea căzută acolo unde a fost atunci când a fost creată.

Acest har, pe care Arhanghelul Gavriil a spus că Maria l-a aflat la Dumnezeu, nici o femeie nu îl aflase înainte de ea de-a lungul timpului, nici o femeie nu fusese atât de pură și dedicată adorării lui Dumnezeu așa

precum a fost Fecioara Maria. După naștere a rămas fecioară ca și înainte de naștere; și nimeni nu a existat pe pământ, înainte sau după ea atât de pură și dedicată adorării lui Dumnezeu precum ea. Aceasta este ceea ce se înțelege prin expresia “la plinirea vremii” – adică atunci când Fecioara Maria a fost născută din părinții ei, Ioachim și Ana.

Prin voia ei liberă a rămas pură și dedicată adorării lui Dumnezeu. “*Și s-a bucurat duhul meu de Dumnezeu, Mântuitorul meu, ...că mi-a făcut mie mărire Cel Puternic.*” (Luca 1: 47-49) Fecioara Maria a spus că Dumnezeu i-a făcut mărire, însemnând că a aflat har înaintea Atotputernicului pentru că a cooperat cu El. De aceea a fost aleasă să poarte pe “Fiul Celui Preaînalt, Fiul lui Dumnezeu” în feciorescul ei pântece. Aceasta a fost libera ei alegere: “*Fie mie după cuvântul tău.*” (Luca 1:138), a spus Maria către îngerul Gavriil.

Sfântul Roman Melodul, scriind în anul 518 după Hristos, a compus ceea ce noi numim Condacele, o formă de poezie religioasă cântată la anumite sărbători. În Condacul Nașterii, el prezintă o scenă de conversație între Prea Sfânta Fecioară Maria, Hristos, Eva și Adam, explicând de ce Hristos a venit să locuiască printre noi.

Ochii Mariei, uitându-se spre Eva și Adam, s-au umplut imediat de lacrimi... Prin urmare le-a spus: “Încetați plângerile voastre, pentru că vă voi fi mijlocitoare înaintea Fiului meu. Fiul meu este milostiv, chiar preamilostiv, știu aceasta pentru că eu însumi am văzut-o; Am văzut cum iartă: deși este foc, S-a sălășluit în pântecele meu și nu m-a ars pentru smerenia mea.” (Strofa a 10-a) ... Și Hristos a răspuns Maicii Sale: “O, Maică, i-am mântuit datorită ție și prin tine. Dacă nu aș fi vrut să-i mântuiesc, nu M-aș fi sălășluit întru tine, nu aș fi îngăduit ca lumina Mea să strălucească din tine și tu nu ai fi fost numită Maica Mea. Pentru neamul omenesc m-am așezat în leagăn. Din voia Mea dau lapte sânilor tăi. Pentru mântuirea neamului omenesc m-ai purtat pe brațele tale. Heruvimii nu M-au văzut, dar tu m-ai privit, m-ai purtat și m-ai nutrit ca Fiu.” (Strofa a 14-a).

Sfântul Atanasie al Alexandriei spune: “*Pentru slava Tatălui, omul creat și pierdut, trebuie găsit din nou; și când e mort, trebuie înviat, ca să devină templu al lui Dumnezeu... și puterile îngeresti nu se vor mira să ne vadă pe toți, care suntem un trup cu El, pe tărâmurile lor.*” (4 Cuvântări împotriva arienilor 1:42).

Este dragostea lui Dumnezeu față de noi, creația Sa, să ne mântuiască din robia păcatului și a morții. Este smerenia lui Dumnezeu să ia asupra Sa firea noastră omenească pe care El Însuși a creat-o și s-o ridice mai sus decât a fost înainte; și, de aceea, Fiul Său Cel Unul Născut s-a întrupat în natura noastră omenească, născut din Pururea Fecioara Maria pentru a ne întoarce la Tatăl Atotputernic. Rolul Prea Sfintei Fecioare în istoria mântuirii a fost dezbătut din primele zile ale Bisericii și se găsește în discuțiile Sinoadelor despre cine este Iisus Hristos! De aceea icoana Nașterii lui Hristos prezintă central atât pe Fiul lui Dumnezeu ca Prunc, cât și pe Fecioara Maria. Hristos S-a născut din voia ei liberă și ea exultă prin El, pentru că ea, de bunăvoie s-a dăruit pentru a fi purtătoare de Dumnezeu, Născătoare de Dumnezeu, Teotokos.

Sfântul Ioan Damaschinul ne amintește: “*De aceea Dumnezeu Cuvântul (Iisus, Sfântul lui Dumnezeu, Fiul lui Dumnezeu) a luat firea omenească, pentru că aceeași fire, care păcătuisse, căzuse și devenise coruptă, să poată triumfa asupra înșelătorului tiran (Satana) și să fie eliberată de stricăciune.*” (Dogmatica, cartea a 3-a, capitolul 12). Prea Sfânta Fecioară Maria, carne din carnea noastră, și bucuria întregii omeniri, L-a purtat în pântece pe Mesia, pe Mântuitorul propriei Sale creații, pe Care îngerul L-a proclamat atunci când s-a arătat ei în cetatea Nazaretului.

În final, să reflectăm asupra cuvintelor Sfântului Clement Alexandrinul: “*Cuvântul, Care la începuturi ne-a dăruit viața ca Făcător atunci când ne-a creat, ne-a învățat cum trebuie să trăim atunci când ne-a apărut ca Învățător; pentru ca, mai apoi, să ne conducă ca Dumnezeu către viața veșnică.*” (Cuvânt de îndemn către elini, cap 1, 7:1).

Vedem, deci, că pentru a sărbători Praznicul Întrupării lui Iisus Hristos, Sfântul lui Dumnezeu, Fiul lui Dumnezeu, trebuie, de asemenea, să reflectăm la firea noastră omenească căzută și să recunoaștem că întrucât păcătuim, avem nevoie de iertarea lui Dumnezeu. Gândindu-ne la realitatea că toți oamenii mor și întrucât murim, avem credința că prin Întrupare, adică prin asumarea firii omenești căzute de către Domnul nostru Iisus Hristos, Unicul Fiu al lui Dumnezeu, Mântuitorul lumii a venit să distrugă moartea prin moarte și să ne dăruiește viața veșnică, viitoare.

Haideți să exclamăm, așa cum o facem în ziua cea mare a Sfințelor Paști: “*Și aceasta, de asemenea, este ziua pe care Domnul a făcut-o să ne bucurăm și să ne veselim întru ea,*” pentru că Hristos S-a născut și a preamărit creația Sa și ne-a ridicat la ceruri!

Hristos se naște! Măriți-L!

Mântuitorul este între noi! Întâmpinați-L!

+NATHANIEL

**Din mila lui Dumnezeu, Arhiepiscop al Detroitului și al
Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America**



Schitul românesc Prodromu

izolate au rămas mai puțin afectate sau chiar intacte. Populația de călugări s-a redus pentru că bunăstarea lor a fost serios afectată timp de 5 secole prin faptul că satele “închinat” (prin impozite) acestor mănăstiri, aproape toate românești le-au fost luate. În Evul Mediu, puține mănăstiri și schituri au supraviețuit, îndeosebi datorită ajutorului material sistematic (bani și produse) venite din Valahia și Moldova (astăzi România). Treptat, în secolul al XIX-lea, prin donațiile noilor veniți din țările ortodoxiei estice (slave), precum: Rusia, Bulgaria și Serbia, ansamblul de mănăstiri s-a diversificat ca origine etnică, fiecare țară exercitându-și influența asupra mănăstirilor subvenționate: era epoca statelor naționale în plină expansiune. În 1912, în timpul Primului Război Balcanic, otomanii au fost forțați să plece și Rusia, în interesul panslavismului politic, justificat prin “misiunea de continuatoare a creștinismului din Bizanț” a revendicat controlul peninsulei. După conflictul asupra suveranității regiunii dintre noul stat grecesc în formare, pe de o parte, și Rusia panslavistă, pe de alta parte, după Primul Război Mondial peninsula a primit de la Marile Puteri statut de autonomie în cadrul Greciei.

Lista celor douăzeci de mănăstiri în ordinea ierarhică stabilită:

1. Mănăstirea Marea Lavră
2. Mănăstirea Vatopedi
3. Mănăstirea Iviron
4. Mănăstirea Hilandar
5. Mănăstirea Dionisiu
6. Mănăstirea Cutlumuș
7. Mănăstirea Pantocrator
8. Mănăstirea Xiropotamu
9. Mănăstirea Zografu
10. Mănăstirea Dochiaru
11. Mănăstirea Caracalu
12. Mănăstirea Filotheu
13. Mănăstirea Simonos Petras
14. Mănăstirea Sfântul Pavel

15. Mănăstirea Stavronikita
16. Mănăstirea Xenofont
17. Mănăstirea Grigoriu
18. Mănăstirea Esfigmenu
19. Mănăstirea Sfântul Pantelimon
20. Mănăstirea Konstamonitu

Lista schiturilor

1. Schitul Sfântul Ioan Botezătorul, sau Prodromu - depinde de Mănăstirea Marea Lavră
2. Nea Skiti (Noul Schit) - depinde de Mănăstirea Sfântul Pavel
3. Schitul Sfântul Dumitru - depinde de Mănăstirea Vatopedi
4. Schitul Sfântul Dumitru- Lacu - depinde de Mănăstirea Sfântul Pavel
5. Schitul Sfântul Pantelimon - depinde de Mănăstirea Cutlumuș
6. Schitul Sfântul Andrei - depinde de mănăstirea Vatopedi
7. Schitul Proorocul Ilie- depinde de Mănăstirea Pantocrator
8. Schitul Sfânta Ana - depinde de Mănăstirea Marea Lavră
9. Schitul Sfânta Treime, Kavsokalivia- depinde de Mănăstirea Marea Lavră
10. Schitul Buna Vestire- depinde de Mănăstirea Xenofont
11. Schitul Sfântul Ioan Botezătorul - depinde de Mănăstirea Iviron
12. Schitul Bogoroditsa – depinde de Mănăstirea Sf. Pantelimon
13. Schitul Mic al Sfintei Ana – depinde de Mănăstirea Marea Lavră

De-a lungul timpului, alte așezări monastice au avut statutul de schituri, cum ar fi Provata, un schit cu 36 de chilii în a doua jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea, depopulat în secolul XX, și care tinde să se repopuleze astăzi.

Cont. la pag. 23

PATRIARHIA ROMÂNĂ



† DANIEL PATRIARHUL BISERICII ORTODOXE ROMÂNE

Nr. 11.614/14.11.2012

Înaltpreasfinției Sale,
Înaltpreasfințitului Părinte Arhiepiscop NATHANIEL
al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America

Înaltpreasfinția Voastră,

Cu bucurie și dragoste în Hristos Domnul, dorim să Vă mulțumim pentru gestul pe care l-ați făcut, prin trimiterea sumei de 16.000 de dolari SUA, pentru sprijinirea construcției Catedralei Mântuirii Neamului.

Considerăm aceasta un semn de iubire fraternă și prețuire față de poporul dreptcredincios din România din partea clerului și credincioșilor ortodocși români de pe continentul american. Apreciem cu atât mai mult acest gest de solidaritate și cooperare, într-o perioadă de criză economică și financiară, care ne afectează pe toți, dar care, iată, este un prilej binecuvântat de cooperare practică a românilor din Statele Unite ale Americii cu cei din România.

Vă mulțumim și Vă încredințăm de dragostea și prețuirea noastră în Hristos Domnul.



† DANIEL
Patriarhul României

EPISCOPIA A CONTRIBUIT FINANCIAR LA RIDICAREA CATEDRALEI “MÂNTUIRII NEAMULUI” DIN ROMÂNIA

Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel a trimis tuturor parohiilor din Episcopie o scrisoare pastorală prin care făcea un apel pentru colectarea de fonduri în vederea construirii noii “Catedrale a Mântuirii Neamului” din București. Parohiile au fost invitate să facă o colectă specială în duminici, după Sfânta Liturghie pentru acest proiect. *“Solicităm Prea Cucernicilor Părinți și Consiliilor Parohiale să susțină și să promoveze colecta pentru acest proiect unic prin care se aduce mulțumire lui Dumnezeu pentru binecuvântările care s-au revărsat asupra românilor ortodocși de pretutindeni, de-a lungul generațiilor, binecuvântări de care au beneficiat și membrii parohiilor noastre de-a lungul timpului. Fie ca Sfântul Andrei să binecuvinteze aceste eforturi și să mijlocească prin rugăciunile sale pentru realizarea acestui proiect.”*

Ca urmare, s-a colectat suma de \$16,000 care au

fost transferați în luna octombrie în conturile Patriarhiei desemnate pentru acest scop.

Pe scurt, intenția construirii Catedralei Patriarhale în București datează din timpul domniei regelui Carol I, din 1878, ca simbol al unității spirituale a poporului român. De-a lungul timpului, această idee a fost menținută vie, deși națiunea română a trecut prin două războaie mondiale și prin anii distrugători ai stăpânirii ateiste comuniste. Începând cu întâiul Patriarh al României, Miron (Cristea) și până la actualul Patriarh Daniel (Ciobotea), Biserica a așteptat răbdătoare posibilitatea înălțării acestui sfânt locaș. Construcția a început la data de 3 septembrie 2010 cu binecuvântarea lui și a muncii de către Patriarhul Daniel.

O carte dedicată istoriei acestui proiect a fost publicată în 2011 de către Nicolae Șt. Noica, cu titlul “Catedrala Mântuirii Neamului: Istoria unui ideal”.

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Neamurile la Muntele Athos

Românii

Schitul românesc Sfântul Ioan Botezătorul (sau Prodromu) aparține Sfintei Mănăstiri a Marii Lavre. Este situat între Kavsoakalyvia și Marea Lavră, pe un deal stâncos, la mică altitudine. În 1857 a fost cumpărat de către 2 călugări români, cu numele monahal Nectarie și Nifon, după care a fost amenajat și recunoscut drept schit. Azi, este locuit de 25 de călugări de origine română și urmează principiul cenobitic al vieții monastice ortodoxe. Aici a viețuit ca stareț al schitului Părintele Petroniu Tănase între anii 1978 și 2011. Părintele Petroniu aparține unei generații de duhovnici români, cu adevărat binecuvântate de Dumnezeu, chemate să traverseze una dintre cele mai grele perioade din istoria neamului și a Bisericii românești, cu ascultări și răspunderi bisericești importante. O altă așezare monastică românească este Schitul Sfântul Dumitru Valahu (zis și Schitul Lacu) situat la jumătate de oră distanță de mers pe jos de la Mănăstirea Sfântul Pavel, de care aparține. Este construit la o altitudine de 280 m, între Marfonu și Antiathon. A fost fondat în secolul al X-lea de călugări din Moldova. Astăzi este format din 8 chilii și este locuit de 39 de călugări români. Prochinatarul Sfântul Munte al Atonului, scris de ieromonahul Serafim și tipărit la București în 1856, în tipografia celui cunoscut ca Iosif Românul Iosif Romanov, prin bogăția de informații și gravuri, constituie o adevărată carte de referință privind istoricul sfintelor lăcașuri, totodată și o dovadă a enormei contribuții românești la realizarea centrului de spiritualitate ortodoxă de la Muntele Athos. Practic, de-

a lungul a peste 5 secole, contribuția românească totală în complexul monastic Athos este prima ca mărime, depășind de departe oricare alta, chiar dacă originile poporului român sunt latine.

Bulgarii

Mănăstirea Zografu este situată în partea de sud-vest a peninsulei. A fost construită în secolul al X-lea de către călugării Moise, Aron și Ioan din Ohrid. Este dedicată Sfântului Gheorghe. În perioada bizantină târzie, mănăstirea a fost distrusă de pirații catalani și reconstruită cu sprijinul dinastiei Paleologilor, precum și cu sprijinul domnitorilor din Europa de Est. Ocupă locul nouă în ordinea ierarhică a celor douăzeci de mănăstiri athonite. Este locuită de 15 călugări. Toți călugării sunt bulgari, din 1845, iar slujbele sunt ținute în limba bulgară.

Rușii

Mănăstirea Sfântul Panteleimon este construită în partea de sud-vest a peninsulei. Mănăstirea rusă a fost construită în actualul loc în 1765, în timp ce clădirea originală datează din secolul al XI-lea. Construcția actuală aparține mănăstirii a fost realizată în primele două decade ale secolului al XIX-lea cu ajutorul financiar al domnului Moldovei, Scarlat Callimachi. Călugării ruși erau în număr de 1.000 în 1895 și 1.446 în 1903. În 1990, numai 35 de călugări mai locuiau în mănăstire.

Sârbii

Hilandar este situată în partea de nord-est a peninsulei. Numele său derivă probabil de la fondatorul vechii așezări monastice din acest loc, care se numea Chelandaris. Mănăstirea a fost fondată la sfârșitul secolului al XII-

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lea de către despotul sârb Ștefan Nemanian I și fiul său Rastko. În timpul secolului al XIV-lea, mănăstirea a atins apogeul dezvoltării materiale, acumulând bogății din donații imperiale și private. Este considerată a fi principalul centru spiritual al sârbilor. Este a patra în ordinea ierarhică a mănăstirilor și este locuită de 46 de călugări (1990).

Limba oficială a republicii monahale autonome a Muntelui Athos este limba greacă nouă.

Mănăstirile și schiturile au însă dreptul de a sluji în tradiția ortodoxă din care provin în mod tradițional. Astfel, limba liturgică în mănăstirile grecești este limba greacă, în Sfântul Pantelimon limba slavonă bisericească (35 călugări), în Hilandaru limba sârbă bisericească (46 călugări), în Zografu limba bulgară (15 călugări), iar în schiturile românești Prodromu și Lacu limba română.

Unele comunități sunt mai cosmopolite decât altele. Un aspect al înnoirii recente (începând cu anii 1970) este faptul că mulți greci școliți au intrat în mănăstiri, astfel că în prezent pe Sfântul Munte se vorbesc adesea limbi de circulație, precum engleza și franceza.

Adaptare și dezvoltare a articolului "Muntele Athos" din ro.wikipedia.org

NAȘTEREA DOMNULUI

Acum, mai mult de două milenii,
În Betleemul Iudeii, s-a împlinit,
Minunea cea mare, la cumpăna vremii,
Cum Tatăl a vrut, și-a fost proorocit...

Fecioara Maria și Iosif, o zi au umblat,
Abia au găsit un sălaș pe înserate;
N-au avut masă, nici loc de culcat,
Doar o iesle cu paie, de vânt răsfirate...

În noaptea de taină, cu cerul senin
Preacurata Fecioară prin Duh adumbrit
Sub raza de astru, fără suspin,
În lume ne-aduce, pe Iisus cel dorit.

Treziți din visări de vestea cea mare,
Păstorii din văi, de cum ajungeau
Cu ochi dilatați și plini de mirare
Cuprinși de fioruri, la El se-nchinău.

Pe drumul cel lung de stea luminat
Trei magi străbăteau, fără de tihnă,
Să cadă-n genunchi la Al lumii împărat,
Cu daruri: aur, tămâie și smirnă...

Ce-am putea Iisuse, mai mult să-ți dăruim?...
Pioși să ne strângem la loc de pruncie,
Prin imnuri de slavă să-ți mulțumim:
Hristos se Naște! Doamne slavă ție!

Alexandru Tomescu

ALEGEREA DELEGAȚILOR LA CONGRESUL EPISCOPIEI 2013-2014

Delegații mireni și locțiitorii lor vor fi aleși de către membrii parohiei respective la Adunarea Generală parohială anuală, pentru o perioadă de doi ani. Ei nu mai pot fi aleși, fie ca delegați, fie ca locțiitori ai delegaților, pentru un al treilea termen de doi ani. (Consiliul Episcopesc poate face excepții la această limitare în cazuri speciale și justificate. Nu intră în competența Consiliilor parohiale, în nici o circumstanță, de a alege delegați sau locțiitori ai delegaților. Vezi Articolul IX. Secțiunea 2, (g)).

Fiecare parohie va fi reprezentată în Congresul Episcopiei prin preotul ei paroh sau administrator și prin doi delegați mireni sau doi locțiitori (supleanți) ai delegaților, aleși de către Adunarea Generală parohială pe termen de doi ani. Pentru a fi aleasă delegat sau locțiitor, o persoană trebuie să fi fost membră a parohiei cel puțin un an.

Alegerea delegaților și a locțiitorilor va fi certificată Episcopiei de către președintele și secretarul Adunării parohiale, iar documentația trebuie trimisă la Oficiul (Cancelaria) Episcopiei. Nu pot fi aleși locțiitori, dacă nu au fost aleși mai întâi delegate. Dacă o persoană care este aleasă să fie delegat sau locțiitor, nu are de gând să participe la Congres, atunci acea persoană va trebui să refuze numirea. Misiunile nu vor avea reprezentare de delegați la Congres.

