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CONVOCATION
In conformity with Article III, Section 7, of the By-Laws of The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, we hereby call into session

THE 79TH ANNUAL EPISCOPATE CONGRESS
Friday, September 30 through Saturday, October 1, 2011
at
HOLIDAY INN CHICAGO – NORTH SHORE
5300 W TOUHY, SKOKIE IL 60077
(866) 750-3369 or (847) 679-8900

The Congress will be in session starting Friday, September 30 at 9:00 am Central Daylight Savings Time

The Agenda, as will be presented in the Annual Report to the Episcopate Congress 2011, will include:

Reading/Approval of the 78th Annual Episcopate Congress Minutes;
Official Reports to the Congress;
Reports from the Episcopate Auxiliaries;
New Business as submitted by the Episcopate Council

As per Article III, Section 1, The Episcopate Congress shall be composed of:

• The Bishop
• The Auxiliary Bishop(s)
• The Vicar
• The Parish Priest and Assistant Priest(s)
• Two Lay Delegates elected by each Parish Assembly for Congress 2011-2012
• Two delegates from each Auxiliary organization of the Episcopate
• Priests under the jurisdiction of the Episcopate not having parishes, deacons, abbots, abbesses, if accredited by the Episcopate Council
• Members of the Episcopate Council in office, including Auxiliary Presidents ex-officio.

Should the duly-elected lay delegates be unable to attend, their alternates will represent the parish. No addition, substitution or ad hoc delegation will be recognized by the credentials committee.

+ NATHANIEL
Archbishop of Detroit and The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America
The 63rd National A.R.F.O.R.A Congress was held on June 3-5, 2011, hosted by the Ladies Auxiliary of Presentation of Our Lord Romanian Orthodox Church, Fairlawn, OH.

The weekend activities began with the Executive Board meeting on Friday afternoon, followed by an informal Welcome Reception for His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, Clergy, Preotese, Delegates, Past Presidents and guests. The ladies did a wonderful job in preparing delicious dishes, and a very enjoyable evening was had by all in attendance. The delegates present registered.

On Saturday morning, the registration of the delegates continued, and a very nice breakfast was served by the ladies of the host parish. The Host Parish Priest, Fr. Ian Pac-Urar, opened the Congress with a prayer and addressed the delegates. The Congress Co-Chairperson, Karen Pascu, and Lucy Pop, ARFORA President, also addressed the Congress and welcomed the delegates. The Auxiliaries represented were: “Holy Nativity”, Chicago, IL; “Holy Cross”, Hermitage, PA; “Falling Asleep of the Ever-Virgin Mary Cathedral”, Cleveland, OH; “St. Mary”, Chicago, IL; “Holy Trinity”, Youngstown, OH; “Presentation of Our Lord”, Fairlawn, OH; “Saint Nicholas”, Alliance, OH; “Saint George Cathedral”, Southfield MI; “Saints Peter and Paul”, Dearborn Heights, MI; “St. Mary”, St. Paul, MN.

President Lucy Pop thanked the Board and the delegates for taking time from their busy schedules to attend the Congress and to work for the benefit of the Episcopate and its parishes.

A.R.F.O.R.A. awarded one $1,000 Undergraduate scholarship this year, and no one applied for the Graduate scholarship. We encourage the parish priests and the local ladies auxiliary presidents to remind the young people that ARFORA offers these scholarships, and the forms are posted on the ARFORA website (www.ARFORA.org). We continue to support the Monasteries, Seminarians, the Vatra Summer Camps, the widowed Preotese and the Episcopate Mission Fund. Our project, “Cancer Awareness in Women,” raised monies both nationally and on local levels. Our main focus is organizing new auxiliaries and encouraging the existing auxiliaries to be more active on the National level. We have information packets which we can send to parishes or missions that need help in organizing a ladies auxiliary. Over the past few years, ARFORA has mailed over 100 packets with information to the new Missions and Parishes, to familiarize them with our organization. During the past four years, three Auxiliaries were re-activated, and three new Auxiliaries joined ARFORA. Louise Gibb, past ARFORA President and current Board member, printed a fundraising ideas booklet, which is available upon request.

His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel presented a report to the Congress on the progress made with the ARFORA House improvements. This building is at Cont. on page 17
An enthusiastic group of teenagers gathered at the Vatra for the annual Seniors’ Camp, held July 10-16. After a half day of rain on Monday, the warm but clear and breezy weather was the first of many blessings. There was a good balance between a full program and a relaxed and flexible schedule. Everyone enjoyed the various aspects of the camp program.

Each day began with morning prayers (including the Epistle and Gospel readings for the day). The traditional flag-raising ceremony was done immediately after prayers, followed by a delicious breakfast. After the meal, campers changed from church clothes to “comfies” and gathered in the outdoor pavilion for lessons.

Three thirty-minute classes were presented for each of the five weekdays: Fr. Calinic presented an overview of the book of Genesis, with many interesting side trips into moral applications and scientific discoveries that relate to its contents; Fr. David Wey then did an overview of the icons of the Great Feasts of the Church, with a view to what they teach us about “who we are” and “what will happen to us”; and Fr. Ioan Bogdan taught the various forms of prayer used in our private and public worship, and how to practically include the rhythm of prayer in daily life.

After some free time for the remainder of the morning, lunch was served, usually shared with Archbishop Nathaniel and the staff of the Chancery. Daily cleaning chores followed, before heading off to a different activity each afternoon. Monday (again, because of the rain) gave the opportunity for some fun and lively competition at a local bowling alley. Tuesday was a trip to the Buffalo Ranch: campers got to take a wagon ride out into the field habitat, feed the buffalo with corn cobs, learn about a very rare “white” buffalo which was born on the ranch some years ago, and finish with an exhilarating zip-line ride across a pond. Wednesday afternoon was spent making diptych icons of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Mother of God, and putting the finishing touches on tie-dyed camp tee-shirts. Thursday the campers were treated to a tour of the Chancery and the Episcopate Museum, and were graciously received at the residence by His Grace, Bishop Irineu, who bestowed gifts upon all. Later that day, they made a pilgrimage to Dormition Monastery, where Mother Macrina gave them a spiritual talk and walking tour of the grounds. The afternoon was capped with a trip to the Jackson Parlour for ice cream. Friday afternoon held perfect weather for a visit to the Portage Lake Beach.

In the afternoons and evenings after supper, several activities were offered for the remainder of the week.
Come Let Us Worship was the theme inviting children and teens from parishes across Canada to participate in the annual St. Nicholas Orthodox Summer Camp in Fort Qu’Appelle, Saskatchewan. With the blessing of His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, St. Nicholas Camp was held during the week of July 10-16, celebrating this year a half century of existence. Participants from three provinces (British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) came together to learn more about their faith, make lifelong friends and have fun in the beautiful Qu’Appelle Valley.

On a sunny Sunday afternoon, July 10, campers arrived at the Orthodox Christian Centre ready for a week of joyful learning adventure that would become for them a piece of treasured memory. The camp officially opened in the Protection of the Mother of God Orthodox Church with prayers led by Fr. Cosmin Vint. The Dorm, the Kitchen, St. Martinian Dining Hall, the adjacent buildings and grounds were then blessed with holy water, the boys assisting by carrying the necessary vessels, candles, crosses and icons. The girls joined in the procession singing: “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us”. Psa. Mihaela Vint welcomed everybody, introduced the counselors and the rest of the staff, presented the schedule and outlined the camp rules. After Supper, campers and staff members alike couldn’t wait for the first campfire of the week to be started. Cheerful singing and jolly visiting, while enjoying yummy snacks, were clear pictures that everyone was having a good time.

The echoing sounds of the church bells summoned everybody for morning and evening prayers and also announced to the campers when to switch activities or go to meals. Mornings were centred around three rotating sessions: Teaching, Arts & Crafts and Music, which the three groups of campers (Juniors, Intermediates and Seniors) would alternately attend.

Rev. Frs. Cosmin Sicoci and Cosmin Vint provided the religious instruction during the week. All teaching sessions were held in the church and concentrated on the most important service of Orthodoxy – the Holy Liturgy. The participants were invited to watch how a priest vests for the service and some were truly amazed at such a sight. Campers also enjoyed learning about the prosphora, the Lamb, the letters of the Seal, and the preparations performed before the Divine Liturgy. Questions followed each teaching session, and the priests answered them. All campers were given folders with a summary of the teaching material for each day.

Cont. on page 11
What is the Meaning of Christ’s Ascension?

by Hieromonitor Calinic (Berger)

Why did Jesus ascend? What is the meaning of this final act of His life on earth, both for Him and for us? The Ascension of Jesus Christ is the culmination of His ministry and a key component to help answer the question, “Who do men say that I am?” (Mk 8:27). Descriptions of the ascension are found primarily in the writings of Luke (Lk 24:49-53, Acts 1:6-11). The second ending of Mark also mentions the event, albeit in summary form (Mk 16:19-20). It is not to be found in Matthew or John, though it may be inferred in the latter (20:17). It is also included in the wider tradition as witnessed by the early Pauline creeds (e.g. 1 Tim 3:16). These elements in Luke, Mark, John and Paul all appear to be independent traditions, so we can state categorically that Christ’s “being lifted up” into heaven is part of the original Gospel preaching.

The fact that the ascension is mentioned in the Nicene Creed is also significant: it reveals that the Fathers saw it as a salvific event in the life of Christ. Of course, everything Christ did for us was salvific, but in the Creed, only the most essential points were summarized. What is then the meaning of the Ascension that gave it such prominence? What do the historical details gathered from the Scriptures tell us?

Several key details arise in the Scriptural accounts. First, it is clear that Jesus chose the place of His ascension. The Gospel of Luke tells us that He “led” His disciples out “as far as Bethany” (Lk 25:50), whereas Acts specifies the Mount of Olives as the place of the Ascension (Acts 1:12). In fact, this is one and the same place: the small village of Bethany (the home of Lazarus) was on the Mount of Olives. In other words, Jesus chose the same place to enter the “heavenly Jerusalem” from which He entered the earthly Jerusalem to suffer His passion, after He worked His last great miracle (the raising of Lazarus, Jn 11:1). Additionally, there was another important place on the Mount of Olives: the garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:30, 36), the very place of His trial and prayer, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Mt 26:39). This would mean that the location of Jesus’ agony and of Jesus’ exaltation was the exact same place. Indeed, insofar as the Gospel does not say that Jesus ascended from Bethany but near it, the opinion of some commentators is that Jesus ascended from Gethsemane itself. In either case, Jesus’ choice of the Mount of Olives is highly significant and, as with all elements of His life, creates a path for us. Consequently, any Christian who wishes to ascend to heaven must do so through sacrifice, sufferings and sorrows, being obedient to God’s mysterious will, and not one’s own.

The second detail from the Scriptural narrative is that Jesus’ final act was to “lift up His hands, and bless them” (Lk 24:50), a clear reference to hierarchic blessing (cf. Lev 9:22, Sir 50:20-1). Jesus blessed with both hands, the same hands nailed on the Cross. He blesses everyone, even those who abandoned Him in that very garden of Gethsemane. He did not leave without displeasure, nor a rebuke, but in love and forgiveness. Again, Jesus shows those who follow Him an example: to always leave this world and every situation with a blessing behind us.

That is the legacy of Christians (Rom 12:14).

Finally, the Scriptures tell us that Jesus ascended “into heaven” (Lk 24:51) in order to “sit at the right hand of God” (Mk 16:19), that is, not into exile but into the very center of God’s existence. Jesus remains in a place of total authority. “All power in heaven and on earth is given unto Me” (Mt 28:18). Christ as mediator cannot get any higher (Heb 8:1). The power bestowed on the glorified Christ is then shared by Him with His disciples: “… tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until you are endued with power from on high” (Lk 24:49). This is not an earthly power, which even after the Resurrection the disciples sought (Acts 1:6), but the power of the Holy Spirit – in other words, it is not a power to rule, but to witness (Acts 1:8).

Jesus could not remain with His resurrected body on earth, in its present, fallen state. His glorified body is the harbinger of the age to come, when all creation will be renewed by the permanent, bodily presence of Christ. As the resurrection shows us that we are incomplete without our bodies, the ascension confirms that our bodies, as our souls, have an everlasting significance. Human beings are not souls trapped in bodies, as in a prison. What we do in this life will be carried over into the next in a mysterious and permanent manner. We see this in Jesus: after His resurrection and transformation, He yet bears the wounds of His sacrifice. In other words, His body is stamped by the actions of His soul, of His prayer in Gethsemane,

Cont. on page 15
In the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-31), we learn of a young man who chose to take his inheritance, leave home and squander all his fortune on loose living and a sinful life. He left his father’s guardianship to unbridled freedom. After he spent all his money, his life hit rock bottom, and he was starving of hunger. One day, he came to his senses, and he decided to go back to his father and ask forgiveness. Many sermons are given on the Prodigal Son, what he felt and how it was for him to go back home after all he did. We also hear about the other son who lived the good, loyal life at home with his father. He was jealous when his brother came home and the fattened calf was killed for the welcome home banquet. There are many lessons to be learned in both examples.

But what about the father? How did the father live during that time his son was away? And how did he feel when the son returned after disobeying him for all that time?

I imagine that the father knew the son was not making the right decision from the very beginning when he asked for his fortune, but gave him the money nonetheless. We do not know for how long the son was away, but scripture tells us that there was a famine that went through the country. This might have taken several years. The wild living son was away all that time with no word. Each day during those years, the father must have ached with a heavy heart. Did he shed tears in the quiet of the night when he remembered his son as a young child? What might have been the questions he would have asked himself? How is it that one son is so obedient and hard working, while the other is so disobedient and sinful? What could I have done differently in raising him? The father did not go after his son and drag him home. Rather, he trusted in God and waited patiently. Or was it patiently? The wait must have been excruciating; part of his heart must always have been far away with his lost son.

In the end, it was not the father’s pain that brought the selfish boy home, but rather his own hunger pains. That pain made him realize that he chose wrongly, and he did not have to be alone. It was the physical pain that stirred spiritual pain and led his heart to turn around. Is this much different than when we cry out to God when we are in pain? We don’t say “God you must be very disappointed in me and I am sorry,” but we say: “God you have to help me, because I am hurt.” Then as we mature, or “come to ourselves” as the prodigal, we understand what we did and how wrong it was.

The younger son was far off when his father saw him. We are told how he had rehearsed what he was going to say in order for his father to take him back. How did he feel as he saw his father coming out to him? I am sure that he was nervous, because he knew that his father was a fair and just man, and he had behaved wrongly. However, there wasn’t even a chance for the young man to say he was sorry, to ask forgiveness or to say he was hungry, because the father ran out to meet his son and poured out all the love he had saved during those years. His prayers had been answered, and his son came home. The father didn’t ask questions or make demands, because he knew what was in his son’s heart. The son had repented. Therefore, he accepted him home unconditionally.

This is how God receives us. God knows what is in our hearts, just as the father knew what was in his son’s heart. Even with the hurt God must feel when we sin, he still runs out to meet us when he knows there is repentance in our heart. He gives us the best we could ask for and makes us welcome in our Father’s house as long as we return. Our heavenly Father waits so patiently and with so much love.

All we have to do is go to Him. Let us run to Him as the prodigal son. Let us come to our senses, resolve to return and come to the Father. There is always an embrace waiting for us. Let us all meet at His heavenly banquet that He has thrown in our honour. “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).
**ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

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**DEADLINE:**

SEPT. 15, 2012
Stem cells are an area of misunderstanding. As with any scientific discussion that enters the public domain, mass misinformation and exaggeration of facts is occurring, so that the faithful are cornered into the position to ask themselves whether stem cell research reflects the will of God, or whether this is a deception of the evil one, aimed at desanctification of human life. The Holy Fathers of the Church teach us that the “devil may appear as an angel of light.” Could stem cells be one of these situations in which something is given to us that appears to be life-promoting but really is a dangerous trap?

What are stem cells?
In order for us to understand the issues involved, and what exactly stem cells are, we are forced to take a quick lesson into the science of stem cells. A stem cell is a cell whose purpose is to generate new cells while having the ability to make copies of itself. Everyone has stem cells inside of them. For example, blood is made from stem cells in the bone marrow. After your skin is injured, healing occurs because of stem cells in the skin. Even after a stroke, although to a small extent, new brain cells are made from stem cells that are found in the brain. The younger an organism is, the more potent the stem cells are. For example, stem cells in a young person are found in higher numbers and have a higher ability to repair damaged tissue as compared to stem cells in an older person. The stem cells in the adult human cannot make another human from scratch. They can make human tissues that are useful for repairing the human body, but they cannot make a whole new human. They are not a new human life, but an extension of an existing life. These are adult stem cells.

The problems started when scientists wanted to analyze the earliest stem cell. Since stem cells from children are theoretically more potent than from adults, stem cells from embryos should be even more potent. According to this reasoning, the first cell in the development of a human life, the fertilized egg, is the most potent stem cell. Embryonic stem cells are made from the fertilized egg. They are essentially copies of the fertilized egg that can reproduce in the laboratory. These cells, because of their potential to create a completely new human, are considered by the Church a human life, and accordingly, their manipulation is a sin.

Medical problems with embryonic stem cells
Individuals not sharing respect for human life will answer the question posed by Caiaphas, the same way that Caiaphas answered it: “It is better for one life to be sacrificed in order for many lives to be saved”. So let us examine the scenario in which we put aside our beliefs and ask ourselves whether embryonic stem cells actually have the potential to benefit humanity today. The answer is a resounding “no”. We will explain three fundamental points that demonstrate in a black and white manner that embryonic stem cells from a scientific point of view are not therapeutically useful at present, nor will be in the foreseeable future.

1. Embryonic stem cells cause cancer. The actual definition of an embryonic stem cell is based on its ability to cause the teratoma type of cancer in the mouse. Now what exactly is a teratoma? The word “teratoma” comes from Greek, which means “monstrous tumor.” This type of cancer occurs rarely in humans and is fatal if not surgically excised before spreading. Defendants of embryonic stem cell research tell us that teratomas will not occur if embryonic stem cells are used in medicine, since it is not embryonic stem cells that are given to people, but embryonic stem cells made into specific tissues that the patient needs. The problem with this argument is that biology is not perfect. Even if conceptually in 10 years it is possible to make, for example, functioning liver cells from embryonic stem cells, how will it be possible to purify 100% only the newly generated liver cells and have no left over cancer cells? It only takes one single cancer cell to cause a tumor to form. To this point, the defenders of embryonic stem cells will tell us that even if a tumor cell is left over, it will be rejected by the immune system. This is not correct, since teratomas possess mechanisms to “hide” from the immune system, whereas normal tissue does not. An example of this is a mouse study in which teratomas developed and were not rejected, while the few embryonic stem cells that did differentiate into heart tissue were rejected by the animal.

2. It is not possible to generate the equivalent of human adult tissues from embryonic stem cells. The embryonic stem cell represents the fertilized egg. It has the same immaturity as the fertilized egg. During normal development, it takes numerous biological processes to occur for a cell to “grow up” from the immature state of the fertilized egg to the maturity of, say a heart cell in a 63 year old person with heart disease. Since the embryonic stem cells are so immature, it is naive to think that by exposing the cells to certain chemicals, we can “accelerate” their maturation to the timespan of days from processes that take decades. For example, embryonic stem cells treated with specific chemicals can mature into what resembles
heart cells. These cells even beat in the test tube! However, these cells are not true heart cells, since a lot of the properties of an adult heart cell are not possessed by these “accelerated maturity” cells. Accordingly, to date, no real tissue equivalent has been generated by embryonic stem cells.

3. **Embryonic stem cells are not compatible with the recipient.** Let us imagine that the problem of cancer, and the problem of lack of maturity, has been resolved. A very significant obstacle that few people talk about is the fact that the tissues generated from embryonic stem cells are not compatible with the general population. God has made humans very unique from each other immunologically. This is why recipients of organ transplants are required to take drugs that suppress the immune system. Even if people take immune suppressing drugs, the transplant surgeon will not perform the transplant unless the tissues are immunologically matched. The likelihood of finding immunologically matched organs is between 1 in 100,000 - 10,000,000. At present, there are approximately 100 embryonic stem cell lines, which are derived from approximately 100 individuals. Therefore, even through using immune suppressing drugs (which are toxic and have many side effects), the ability of embryonic stem cells to be used on a widespread basis is impossible.

**Adult stem cells as an alternative**

It is sad that with all the media and public attention given to embryonic stem cells, the great promise of adult stem cells is largely forgotten. As we discussed at the beginning of the article, adult stem cells are found in all of our bodies and have the purpose of healing injured tissue. The only problem with adult stem cells is that these cells usually are not found at high enough concentrations at the areas where they are needed. For example, people who have a heart attack or stroke, contain much higher concentrations of stem cells in their blood compared to healthy people. This is because the stem cells start to migrate to the injured tissue in order to heal it, but there are not enough of them to cause full healing. If one could increase the number of stem cells in the body, then theoretically, one could enhance the ability of the body to heal itself. Indeed, this appears to be possible. Numerous studies have shown that augmentation of this natural process by administration of adult stem cells is highly beneficial to patients with diseases ranging from heart failure, to peripheral artery disease, to Crohn’s Disease.

In contrast to embryonic stem cells, which have never been used in people and most likely will not be in the next several years, thousands of patients have benefited from adult stem cells. Unfortunately, in the US, adult stem cells can only be obtained by joining clinical trials, which may be found at the NIH website (www.clinicaltrials.gov). The only alternative for patients seeking adult stem cell therapy is going outside the US to clinics such as www.cellmedicine.com which replicate the procedures used experimentally in the US for select patients that fit the inclusion criteria.

**Conclusion:**

**Jesus would support adult stem cells**

In today’s time of general godlessness and lack of respect for life, it is not only the responsibility, but the obligation, of the Christian faithful to understand the fundamental difference between embryonic stem cells and adult stem cells. Embryonic stem cell research is associated with not only the killing of innocent life, but also obscene desecration of God’s Image. Additionally, for the reasons mentioned, embryonic stem cells do not pose a scientific solution to health problems. They are a source of siphoning funds and attention away from real stem cell research that actually helps people’s health. Adult stem cells, being part of the body that God gave to us, are a great scientific discovery, whose translation into cures for horrible disease should be strongly endorsed by the faithful.

For more information about adult stem cells, please see www.youtube.com/cellmedicine or visit the adult stem cell clinic website at www.cellmedicine.com.

*Thomas Ichim, Ph.D. is the Chief Executive Officer of Medistem Inc. and son of V. Rev. Fr. Dumitru Ichim.*

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**St. Nicholas Camp Cont. from page 6**

The Arts and Crafts projects offered in the Program were: assembling and painting sturdy birdhouses (usually three campers worked on one) to be used in the trees around the campsite; decorating tote bags and painting on them favourite memories of camp; and, last but not least, embellishing picture frames in which to place a group photo to take home as a souvenir from Camp. Another Camp project was designing and making a commemorative cement plaque to which all campers added one small coloured rock.

During the Music sessions, students were taught the responses of the Divine Liturgy using the *Unison Liturgical Responses* published by the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate. It was indeed a great joy to hear all those young voices responding during the Holy Liturgy served at Camp. The dialogue between the priest and the faithful was kept unbroken throughout the service.

If mornings were learning-oriented, afternoons were filled with action and physical activity. Trips outside the camp included: the local Fish Hatchery; the Fort Qu’Appelle Museum; Ravine Adventures (with pedal-go-carts and the enormous hamster ball); visiting a farm and making friends with ponies, sheep, a horse and a donkey; Geocaching and Nature Hikes at Echo Valley Provincial Park; fishing and mini-golf. On Friday afternoon, everyone participated in the Mini-Olympics, having lots of fun with the relay games, volleyball and soccer.

*Cont. on page 13*
HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

May 13 – July 3, 2011


July 30. Grass Lake, MI. Vatra Romaneasca. AROY Board Meeting.


AUXILIARY BISHOP SCHEDULE

January 2 – June 29, 2011


February 2. Grass Lake, MI. St. Mary Chapel. Akathist for the Feast of Presentation of Our Lord.


February 16. Detroit, MI. Wednesday Afternoon: Formal welcome dinner for Metropolitan Kallistos Ware attended by Metropolitan Nicholas of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Detroit and other Clergy from Metro Detroit Area on the occasion of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware’s visit to Detroit.

February 18. Livonia, MI. St. Mary Basilica. Attended the talk by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware.


March 6. Aurora, ON. Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Patronal feast day.


Sunday morning: Paschal Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.


April 29. Detroit, MI. Ascension Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for feast of Life-giving Fount of the Mother of God.


May 15 – June 5. Visit of Relics from Bulgaria: St. Barnabas, St. Marina, St. Mary Magdalene, St. George. Accompanied the relics to various parishes and monasteries as listed below.


May 24. Cicero, IL. St. George Antiochian Cathedral. Meeting with the Committee for Youth, as part of the Assembly of Bishops.

May 25-27. Chicago, IL. Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America.


ACCEPTED BY THE EPISCOPATE COUNCIL

ALBERT, V. Rev. Fr. Paul, was accepted into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Episcopate on July 9, 2011.

BERTEA, Rev. Fr. Danut Marius, was accepted into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Episcopate on July 9, 2011, contingent on his receiving a Religious Worker Visa.

COZMA, Rev. Fr. Ioan, was accepted into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Episcopate on July 9, 2011 contingent on his receiving a Religious Worker Visa.

FLOREAN, Rev. Fr. Daniel Ioan, was accepted into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Episcopate on July 9, 2011.

MIHALACHE, Rev. Fr. Florin, was accepted into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Episcopate on September 30, 2010.

ZINCA, Rev. Fr. Ioan Felicean, was accepted into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Episcopate on July 9, 2011.

ASSIGNMENTS

AIRINEI, Rev. Fr. Mircea, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of Three Hierarchs Mission, Baton Rouge, LA and assigned Parish Priest of St. Andrew the Apostle Mission, Brooksville, FL effective June 1, 2011.

PARAU, V. Rev. Fr. Vasile, who was Parish Priest of St. Parascheva Church, Phoenix, AZ, is attached to Exaltation of the Holy Cross Mission, Phoenix, AZ, effective November 7, 2010 (date of merger of St. Parascheva and Holy Cross).

RELEASED

HUDSON, Rev. Fr. David, is released from his duties as Parish Priest of Descent of the Holy Spirit Church, Merrillville, IN, effective June 15, 2011, and is attached to St. Mary Chapel, Grass Lake, MI.

RESTORATION / REINSTATEMENT

STOIAN, Hierodeacon Iustin, who was deposed, was restored to active exercise of the Holy Diaconate and reinstated to the ranks of the clergy by the Holy Synod on November 17, 2010.

RETIRED

BARR, Protopresbyter Romulus, was granted retirement, effective September 1, 2010.

CLARK, Rev. Fr. William John, was granted retirement, effective March 17, 2011.

COPACIA, V. Rev. Fr. Leonte, was granted retirement, effective December 31, 2010.

SFERA, V. Rev. Fr. Jon, was granted retirement effective June 1, 2011.

DECEASED


SIMONCA, Rev. Dn. Vasile, died on September 29, 2010.

MISSIONS ACCEPTED BY EPISCOPATE COUNCIL

UTICA, MI – St. Theodora of Sihla, accepted as a Mission on July 9, 2011.

ALPINE, NJ – St. John of Wallachia, accepted as a Mission on July 9, 2011.

CHARLOTTE, NC – St. John the Baptist, accepted as a Mission on July 9, 2011.

PIERREFONDS-WEST ISLAND, QC – Protection of the Mother of God, accepted as a Mission on July 9, 2011.

PARISH/MISSION MERGER


St. Nicholas Camp Cont. from page 11

Reader’s Theatre was a half-hour daily evening activity. Each age group picked two short plays, e.g. Jesus Teaches Us to Care for Others (the parable of the Good Samaritan), We Must Forgive, or My Lord and My God (about St. Thomas, the doubting disciple). The students practiced these plays and acted them out on the last evening by the camp fire, with all other campers and staff members watching in the audience.

The Amazing Race was the camp-wide game played for four evenings in a row. Five teams made up of campers from all age groups had to rotate and make sure to cover all of the five stations set up throughout the campsite. Each station was run by a station master who explained to the team members what challenge they have to do and what question they must answer. Challenges were diverse and ranged in difficulty. For instance, at one station, participants were blindfolded and had to taste three different foods and guess what they ate, while at another, they had to climb up the hill and then, carefully, go down the hill with a rock in a spoon. If at one station, for example, they had to hold a feather in the air for 30 seconds by blowing on it, at another they had to do a scavenger hunt (finding five...
On May 2011, Alexandra Adriana REED-Lopez obtained a Juris Doctorate degree from Rutgers School of Law. She is currently studying for the Illinois bar and hopes to practice law in Chicago. Alexandra graduated from the University of Michigan on 2008. She is the daughter of Michael Reed and Dr. Coral Lopez Gomez, and the grand-daughter of Valer and Ileana Pufescu, members of the St. George Cathedral in Southfield, Michigan. Alexandra is a past volunteer at Project Mexico.

CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER COOK, son of David and Adriana Cook, graduated on June 12 from Canton High School in Canton, Michigan, where he played freshman hockey and received several awards in his capacity as a radio announcer. His plans are to enter the University of Michigan (Dearborn), and upon graduation, move to Orlando, Florida to work for the Disney Corporation. Chris plays piano and has entertained us at Saints Peter and Paul Church (Dearborn Heights) with his talent. He was as member of the former AROY Chapter, serving as auditor and president (2 yrs.). Chris is a graduate of the Sts. Peter and Paul Sunday School and serves as altar boy and currently as sacristan. When he can find time, Chris works at a local restaurant as a line cook and dishwasher.

GABRIEL LUPU, son of Dr. Viorel and Dr. Mihaela Lupu, graduated from Cranbrook Kingswood High School on June 8, 2011, where he participated in Tennis and Frisbee and was a member of the State Championship Hockey Team, as well as a member of the Gold Key and Forensic Clubs. His hobby is DJ music. Gabriel will attend the University of Michigan in the fall. He attends Sts. Peter and Paul Romanian Orthodox Church in Dearborn Heights, together with his family.

MIRCEA LUPU, Gabriel’s older brother, graduated Cum Laude on May 28 with a B.A. Degree from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, where he majored in Politics and received departmental honors in Philosophy. Mircea served on the Brooks Quimby Debate Council and the Conduct Review Board. He enjoys soccer, reading, writing fiction and traveling. Mircea’s future plans are to attend U.C.D. (Dublin, Ireland) for a Masters in Philosophy before entering Law School.

Cristian is a past volunteer at Project Mexico.

CRISTIAN MIHALTAN, son of Sorin and Delia Mihaltan, graduated on June 3 from Stevenson High School in Livonia, MI, where he participated in football and track. His hobbies are writing and snowboarding. Plans for the future include Pre-Med at Wayne State University while working as an Emergency Medical Technician with hopes to become and ER doctor. Cristian is a past volunteer at Project Mexico.

ANNA GABRIELLA MOGA is the daughter of Dr. Paul and Kristine Moga and graduated from Salem High School in Canton, Michigan, on June 12. She excelled on the Plymouth-Canton Equestrian Team, as well as the P-C Community Dance Club for ten years. Anna is recipient of the Madonna Crusader Award (a scholarship) and plans to major in History with a minor in Humanities, with intentions to teach at the college level. She enjoys Civil War reenactment and has served as president and treasurer of the Horse Leaders Board, and member of the Brookville Horse Whisperers. A Sts. Peter & Paul Sunday School graduate, Anna continues to sing in the choir, and is a past vice-president of the former AROY Chapter, currently serving as president of the Youth Group.
His final hour, His forgiveness of others, His obedience to the Father. The same will be with us: as the soul is formed by the actions of the body and the body retains the characteristics of the soul (2 Cor 5:10). The two are inseparably interwoven.

Moreover, because Christ ascended, He gave a permanent status to human existence within God Himself. No other person can give this, as no one else can give the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus Christ gives these things. No other person therefore can give such an importance to humanity. Only Jesus Christ can stamp our human existence, words, and actions with the grace of eternity, a permanency which implies a superlative dignity – and therefore responsibility. Because of Jesus Christ, all human actions take on another, transcendent dimension. Jesus is the model of authentic humanity – for He alone taught us what self-sacrifice is, the basis of all love – and God confirmed this in the resurrection and ascension. Therefore, the Ascension teaches us that without Jesus Christ, there is no authentic human culture. Only when Jesus Christ is present – even if only in the horizon – can there be authentic human culture, which is based on communion with God, beauty, eternity, sinlessness, forgiveness, renewal and love.

Christ’s Ascension reveals to us our human destiny, for our own resurrection and transformation (1 Cor 15:51-2) will be followed by our own ascension, for St Paul clearly says we will “meet the Lord in the air” (1Thess 4:17). Christ’s final act, His exodus from this world not in death but in glory, occasions – albeit in bodily absence – the presence of a power (the Holy Spirit) to continue His work. The Ascension shows us that the end of His work is not a book, nor a philosophy, nor any social, earthly utopia, but a new and everlasting human existence, filled to the maximum extent possible with the Holy Spirit. Such an existence can begin even now, in the Eucharist and our life in the Holy Spirit; and it is given to us uniquely by only one man, Jesus Christ.

May God continue to bless our young graduates (and their families) and grant them success in future endeavors.

MARK JOHN RADU, son of John and Maria Radu, graduated from Grosse Ile High School in Grosse Ile, Michigan, on June 2, where he participated in soccer, lacrosse and the Spanish Club, and enjoyed skateboarding. Mark was awarded a Scholar Athlete Honorable Mention, and plans to attend the University of Michigan (Dearborn) and major in Business. He served as secretary of the former AROY Chapter and is currently an active member of the Sts. Peter and Paul Youth Group. A Sunday School graduate, he was a dedicated altar boy since age 7, and now helps in the altar as sacristan.

MATTHEW JOHN STANULET, son of John and Maria Stanulet, graduated Summa Cum Laude with honors in English and Spanish from South Lyon East High School in South Lyon, Michigan, on June 11. He is a member of the Matthew John Stanulet International Honor Roll Society and participated for three years in Varsity Tennis and helped organize Red Cross blood drives. Matthew is also a member of the National Thespian Society and starred in three high school plays. Matthew plans to attend the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) College of Engineering this fall, majoring in Computer Science. His hobbies include playing drums and reading. At Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Matthew is a Sunday School graduate, served faithfully as altar boy since early childhood (now as sacristan), and actively participates in the Youth Group.

What is the Meaning ...

Cont. from page 7

His final hour, His forgiveness of others, His obedience to the Father. The same will be with us: as the soul is formed by the actions of the body and the body retains the characteristics of the soul (2 Cor 5:10). The two are inseparably interwoven.

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May God continue to bless our young graduates (and their families) and grant them success in future endeavors.

St. Nicholas Camp Cont. from page 13

hidden objects). After the challenge, each team had to work together and come up with the right answer to the question asked in order to be able to move to the next station. All questions were related to the day’s morning lesson about the Holy Liturgy.

The most special and touching moments were felt, I believe, at the last evening prayers on Friday night, when, after the service, Fr. Cosmin Vint turned off the lights, leaving only the candles and vigil lamps lit. He asked all of us to remember this light and keep it
different activities were offered: a rousing game of Capture the Flag; a slide presentation on Holy Places in World Orthodoxy; a film on the Shroud of Turin; a water balloon fight; a “mini-Olympics” competition in the large pavilion; an anonymous question and answer session on various pertinent topics of society, spiritual life and Orthodoxy; and to wrap up things on Friday night, a campfire with singing and spontaneous skits.

Everyone participated in the Mysteries of Confession on Friday evening and Holy Communion at the Saturday morning Liturgy, where we were blessed to have His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel present with us. Many thanks to the Camp Director Fr. Calinic (Holy Cross, Hermitage PA), who was assisted by Fr. Ioan Bogdan (St. Dimitrie the New, Boulder CO) and Fr. David Wey (Ss. Constantine & Elena, Indianapolis IN), with staff help from Liz Young, Dr. Sandra Constantinidi and Martha Dooley, and camp counselors Kevin Mellis and Elena MacDonald. We give thanks to God for another safe, fun, memorable and spiritually profitable camp experience.

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**Camp Vatra ... Cont. from page 5**

The following students are recipients of the $1000 Stanitz-ARoy Scholarship:

- **Ashley M. Neumann**
  
  During her first year at Miami University, Oxford, OH, Ashley Neumann built upon her outstanding high school achievements and excelled academically and in community and church activities. In addition to a heavy course load, she held down a job at a restaurant, participated in Pre-Pharmacy Club, Residence Hall Community Council, Orthodox Christian Fellowship, Alpha Omicron Pi sorority and KidsFest. During the summer, she worked as an intern to the Mayor of the City of Lakewood. When she returns to Miami University in the fall, she will enter a training program to become a restaurant student manager and will be a Resident Assistant, one of 125 students selected. She plans to pursue a degree in Business Management with a goal to earn a Master’s Degree in Healthcare Management. Ashley is a member of St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH.

- **Anthony Persichino**
  
  Was awarded the team’s most valuable player award. In Varsity Baseball, he helped lead the team to the final four in the State Playoffs. In the fall, Anthony will attend Oakland University, Rochester, MI and enter the Kinesiology program with the goal to obtain dual degrees in order to become a physical education teacher and personal fitness trainer. Along with his family, Anthony is an active member of St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI.

**2011 Stanitz-ARoy Scholarship Recipients**

Graduated cum laude from Stevenson High School, Sterling Heights, MI on June 11, 2011, Anthony Persichino completed an outstanding academic and athletic high school career. He especially excelled in hockey and baseball which he started playing at the age of five. During his senior year on the Varsity Hockey team, he was the leading goal scorer in the MAC division and was awarded the team's most valuable player award. In Varsity Baseball, he helped lead the team to the final four in the State Playoffs. In the fall, Anthony will attend Oakland University, Rochester, MI and enter the Kinesiology program with the goal to obtain dual degrees in order to become a physical education teacher and personal fitness trainer. Along with his family, Anthony is an active member of St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI.

**OCL 24th - Annual Meeting**

**OCTOBER 7-8, 2011**

**Theme:**
Honoring CEOYLA Members and Movement

**Marriott Courtyard**
5308 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15224
412-683-3113

Program to take place at Holy Assumption of St Mary Church (South Side), 105 South 19th Street, Pittsburgh, PA - Hieromonk Patrick Carpenter, Pastor

The 24th Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL) Annual Program Meeting will honor the work and memory of the “greatest generation” of Orthodox Christian lay activists who comprised the Council of Eastern Orthodox Youth Leaders of the Americas movement (CEOYLA), which was formally established in 1954.

Contact OCL at 877-585-0245 or via email at ocladmin@ocl.org.
ARFORA National Board (2011-2013) with His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel

the Vatra and houses the ladies that work at the summer camps. Since more monies are needed to complete the improvements, His Eminence asked for pledges from Ladies auxiliaries as well as individuals.

In closing, Fr. Ian Pac-Urar presented to the Congress the new ARFORA Board for 2011-2013: President Lucy Pop, Vice President Adela Price, Secretary Deborah Moga; Treasurer Esther Pora; Auditors Dorina Popa and Mary Sankey, Members at Large: Louise Gibb, Marilyn Francu, Georgie Washington, Corina Phillips and Adelina Balog. The host for the 64rd Congress in 2012 will be the “St. George” parish in Canton, OH. The session was adjourned with a prayer and blessing by Fr. Ian Pac-Urar.

The day was concluded with a Parastas and Great Vespers, celebrated by His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel, assisted by Fr. Ian Pac-Urar and Deacon Wayne Wright. After Great Vespers, all present were invited to the dinner banquet.

Archbishop Nathaniel celebrated the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning followed by a farewell lunch. Heartfelt thanks are offered to Fr. Ian Pac-Urar and Psa. Mary Lynn, the Congress Chairperson, Karen Pascu, and all the ladies and parishioners of the Presentation of Our Lord parish for hosting the 63rd National A.R.F.O.R.A. Congress.

Axinia Lucia (Lucy) Pop
National ARFORA President

St. Nicholas Camp Cont. from page 15

burning in our hearts all year long. A minute of silence followed, everyone rejoicing at the bliss of the moment. A while later, it was so moving to see some campers stand up and apologize to the ones they had offended in any way at camp. A feeling of mutual forgiveness filled the air, and peace surrounded us all.

We praise God and give thanks to Him for all the wonderful blessings He continuously bestows upon us. On behalf of the Department of Religious Education (Canada), we extend our gratitude to all those who volunteered their time, energy and talents to make Saint Nicholas Orthodox Summer Camp possible again this year. May God bless you all!

Psa. Mihaela Vint, DOREC Chairperson
IN MEMORY

THE VERY REV. FR. VICTOR RUNCANU, Parish Priest of Three Hierarchs Church, Ridgewood, New York, fell asleep in the Lord on June 22, 2011 after a recent illness. Services were held at Descent of the Holy Spirit Church, Ridgewood NY. On June 24, the Holy Liturgy and Funeral Service for a Priest was celebrated by His Grace, Bishop Irineu followed by a Memorial meal. Fr. Runcanu was buried in his native village in Romania according to his wishes. Victor Runcanu was born on January 14, 1925 in Miculeț, Gorj, Romania. He graduated from the Theological University in Sibiu. He married Ileana Celea on May 1, 1949. They have two children: Mariana and Dumitru. He was ordained a Deacon on August 1, 1949 and a Priest on August 10, 1949, in both instances by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan. He served various parishes in the Metropolitanate of Oltenia. From 1979-1986, he served St. Nicholas parish in Craiova. He immigrated to the United States in 1987. He temporarily served Holy Cross Mission, Portland, OR for several months while being attached to Holy Trinity Church, Los Angeles, CA. Since October 1988, Fr. Runcanu has served as Parish Priest of Three Hierarchs Church, Glendale (now Ridgewood), NY. May God forgive him and give him rest and give comfort to Preoteasa Ileana and the family. Memory eternal!

AURELIU (RELI) D. CIUFECU, age 88, of Fairfield, Connecticut, passed away on May 23, 2011. Born in Pleasa, Albania, Reli was raised in Romania and educated in Italy before coming to the United States in 1953 where he was a Bridgeport and Fairfield Town resident. He was Professor of Languages and also taught History for the Gateway Community College of New Haven and over the years also taught at Yale New Haven University, the University of Bridgeport, Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University. Professor Ciufecu was a longtime member of the St. Dimitrie Romanian Orthodox Church, a past president of both the St. Dimitrie Church Council and the Society Farsarotul. He was an Honorary Consul for the Romanian Consulate and was the organizer for the bi-annual Macedonian-Romanian Cultural Congress. In his youth, Reli was an avid tennis player and later enjoyed the times that he spent coaching soccer for the former South Central Community College. He was also a fan of the theater and music. Survivors include: his son, Mita Ciufecu and his wife Lisa, daughters Catrina Ciufecu and Valeria Ciufecu Broadley of Milford, grandchildren Raymond and Amanda Ciufecu and Michele Broadley. He leaves behind his sisters Stella Berlovan-Ciufecu of Italy and Liza Puiu of Romania as well as several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his brothers Leti and Todi Ciufecu. Funeral services were held on May 27 at St. Dimitrie Romanian Orthodox Church, Easton with burial at Lakeview Cemetery. May his memory be eternal!

PREOTEASA MARY CRISTIA SAMOILA, age 93, of North Canton, Ohio, passed away in the presence of her family on April 12, 2011. She was born on June 11, 1917, in Canton, Ohio and was a lifelong resident. Psa. Mary was employed for many years by the former Wilson Rubber Company and the former Clicks Department Store. She was a member of St. George Romanian Orthodox Church in Canton and a member of the Circle 2 and Credinta Society of St. Nicholas Romanian Orthodox Church, Alliance, Ohio. She is survived by: her husband of 71 years, the V. Rev. Fr. Raymond J. Samoila; two sons, Raymond L. (Ellen) Samoila and Richard A. Samoila; three granddaughters, Lisa M. Zona, Kathy L. (Dean) Lipster, and Michelle R. (Doug) Fliger; four great-grandchildren, Lindsey and Lexi Lipster and Kasey and Jake Fliger; a sister, Florence Arnold; and a brother, George Cristia. She was preceded in death by: her parents, Paul and Mary (Dan) Cristia; two brothers, Nick and John Cristia; and two sisters, Victoria Gramoy and Ann Blume. Funeral Services were held on April 15 at St. George Romanian Orthodox Church in Canton, concelebrated by V. Rev. Frs. George Treff and Panteleimon Stanciu in the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (Grass Lake, Michigan). Interment was at North Lawn Cemetery. May her memory be eternal!

Psa. Mary C. Samoila
Iubiti Frați Preoți și Iubiti Credincioși.


Prin urmare, de câte ori faci un lucru pe care știi că Dumnezeu nu-l vrea, de câte ori calcă o lege a lui Dumnezeu, o poruncă a lui Dumnezeu, pe care o cunoști ca poruncă a lui Dumnezeu, de atatea ori faci un păcat. Păcatul îmulțindu-se, repetându-se, duce la deprinderi păcăioase, iar deprinderile păcăioase sunt patimile. Nu tot așa stau lucrurile când este vorba de crește. Crește este și ia o deviere de la voia lui Dumnezeu, dar pe care omul nu o știe ca îndevări deviere de la voia lui Dumnezeu, ci o înțelege ca pe un lucru bun sau ca un lucru indiferent. Dar când știi atrea atenția asupra faptului că el creștește, atunci nu rămâne în crește. O recunoaște ca crește ști nu mai face. De pildă: nu știi cineva că în 14 Septembrie la Ziua Crucii e zi de post, și nu poștește. Însă, dacă știi că spune că e zi de post, îi pare rău că nu a postat și altă dată e atent ca să poarteacă. Se știi că înțelepealul nu mai creștește și două oară după ce i-s-a atras atenția asupra faptului că ceea ce a făcut el e crește.

Deosebirea între păcat și crește este că păcatul îl face omul știind că-i păcat. De exemplu, există o poruncă a lui Dumnezeu, “Să nu furi”, ș i tu furi; sau există poruncă lui Dumnezeu “Cîntește pe tatăl tău și pe mama tă” și, totuși, nu-i cîntește. În cazul acesta faci păcat. Crește, însă, nu i se opune lui Dumnezeu nu se opune bineului cu deplină voință și știință. Dar zice Arghezi: “însegle că crește să fie o crește adevărată pe care o recunoști ca crește când știi că s-a atras atenția ca e crește - dar dacă crește s-a făcut în tine așezare și adevăr”.

Ce înseamnă aceasta: “așezare și adevăr”? Adică, s-a repetat mereu, a ajuns să fie deprinderi și nu numai că a ajuns deprinderi, dar și justiﬁci, și găsești niște temeuri, zici că așa facea toată lumea. “În cazul acesta” – zice el –” crește nu mai e crește, ci este păcat de moarte”. Ce înseamnă “păcat de moarte”? Păcat de moarte înseamnă un păcat care te omoară, te duce în situația de a te deîmpărta de Dumnezeu. Te face neînțețitor față de Dumnezeu, te face nepăsător față de Dumnezeu.

POCAȚI-VĂ!.. SPOVEDIȚI-VĂ!

Se pune întrebarea: care este cel mai mare păcat? Și la întrebarea aceasta se răspunde diferit. De pildă, unul dintre cele mai mari păcăți, poate, cel mai mare păcat este necredința în Dumnezeu. Șiți că în scripătură se spune: “Cel ce va crede și se va boteza, se va mântui, iar cel ce nu va crede se va osândi”. Sfântul Antonie cel mare, în Filocalie, are un cuvânt: “Nu există o boală mai rea decât necredința în Dumnezeu și nerecunoaștere lui Dumnezeu”. Fără îndoială că păcatul necredinței e un păcat mare pentru că dacă nu ai o legătură cu Dumnezeu ești în situația de a face multe feluri de păcate, n-aș zice toate păcătele. Vin unii la spovedit și zic: Preasfințite, am făcut toate păcătele. Și eu le răspund așa: Să știi nu poate face nimeni toate păcătele! Ii întreb: bani cu camăta ai dat? ș i omul zice NU. Vezi că nu le-ai făcut pe toate? Atunci spune pe cele pe care le-ai făcut! Aceasta înseamnă pocăință: să-ți mărturisești păcătele, să spui pe acele pe care le-ai făcut. Nu să găsim o formulă din aceasta cuprinzătoare, să spui formulu aceea și restul să nu-l mai spui. Important este să spui păcătele pe care nu le vrei să le mai faci, care nu țin de o viață superioară. Trebuie să le spui, să le mărturisești ca păcate, ș i mărturisindu-le ca păcate, e o dovadă că nu vrei să le ai în continuare ș i e o dovadă de pocăință, să-ți recunoaști neputință ș i neștiință ș i că ai vrea să fii alții decat ești, ai vrea să părăsești păcatul.

Sunt creșteni care nu cred în Spovedanie, binețelese nu creștenii ortodocși. Sunt și creșteni care zic că sunt ortodocși, dar care nu cred în Spovedanie pentru că se spovedesc foarte rar sau nu se spovedesc deloc. Eu n-am încredere în spovedania celor care se spovedesc o singură data pe an, în Postul Paștilor. Cei mai mulți dintre credincioșii noștri ș i aici în America ș i în România vin la spovedit în Postul Paștilor. Or, poruncă Bisericii este să te spovedești în toate posturile, în cele patru posturi ș i binețeles te că te poți spovedi ș i mai des. Când dorești să te spovedești, te poți spovedi, dacă ai la îndemână un preot care să te asculte ș i care să-ți dea dezlegarea păcătelor. Binețeles că nu trebuie să facem nici parade din spovedanie, dar oricum, să fim cu mai multă grijă ș i să folosim acest dar de la Dumnezeu.

Cont. la pag. 20
**ÎNTREBĂRI ŞI RĂSPUNSURI**

**ÎNTREBARE:**

S-a vorbit mult despre OZN-uri și civilizații extratereștre. Soțul meu mi-a spus că în Biblie am găsi referințe la existența lor. În vedenia lui Iezechiel (1, 4-28) ar fi vorba de o navă cosmică și în Geneză (6, 2-6) despre “fiii lui Dumnezeu” care au coborât din ceruri și s-au căsătorit cu “fiicele oamenilor”. Suntem noi, oamenii singura civilizație din univers?

**F.C., New York, NY**

**RĂSPUNS:**

I. “Descoperirea” unei nave de “extratereștri” în Iezechiel nu șochează absolut deloc. Orice lucru scos din context poate fi interpretat în orice fel. Dacă nu am și, de exemplu, despre Picasso și cineva ne-ar arăta pentru prima dată o pictură de a-l însoțit pe ochii și ochii pe țeștă cu am putea să-l contazicem, cu ce argumente, că nu e vorba de o “vedenie” a unui extraterestru? La fel cu profetul Iezechiel. El are o vedenie a slavei lui Dumnezeu care apare într-un car dumnezeiesc. Dumnezeu nu poate fi descris printr-un cuvânt omogen, de aceea Iezechiel, ca și ceilalți profeti, se folosește de simboluri. Carul e precedent de un “vânt-vârtej care venea dinspre miazănoapte” (Iz. 1, 4). Acesta nu e zgomotul motoarelor, ci imaginea e folosită de mai multe ori în Biblie ca venire și prezență a Sfântului Duh. Comparăm cu pogorarea Duhului Sfânt la Cincizeci: “și fără de veste s-a făcut din cer un vuet cât de sufletre de vânț ce vine repede...” (FA 2, 1) Mai mult chiar, în limba greacă “pnevma” înseamnă spirit, duh, vânt, sufletre așa cum e folosit în Geneză.

Roțile și “obezile celor patru (care) erau pline de ochi de jur-împrejur” (Iz. 1, 18) din vedenia lui Iezechiel nu au nimic de a face cu beculețele unui tablou de comandă, după cum nici “heruviimii cei cu ochi mulți” și “serafimii cei cu multe aripi” din preajma lui Dumnezeu nu au nimic de a face cu o navă cosmică a divinității dacă mergem cu acest fel de interpretare ridicolă. Profetiții nu descriu pe Dumnezeu, pentru că e imposibil, ci doar sugerează atributii divine prin diferite simboluri și alegorii. Dumnezeu este infinit și veșnic, iarroastea este simbolul infinitului sau veșniciei, pentru că nu are început și sfârșit, nu are un “capăt”. Ochii este simbolul văzului, iar reprezentarea lui când se referă la divin înseamnă că Dumnezeu este omniprezent și atotputernic.

II. Nu e de mirare că textul din Geneză 6:1-4, interpretat în afara contextului bibliic, să producă nedumeriri. Să-l citim împreună: “și a fost că după ce au început oamenii a se înmulți pe pământ și li s-au născut fiice, fiți lui Dumnezeu, văzând că fiicele oamenilor sunt frumoase, și-au luat din ele soții, care pe cine și-a ales. Dar Domnul Dumnezeu a zis: „Duhul Meu nu va rămâne pururea în oamenii aceștia, pentru că ei sunt numai trup; așadar, zilele lor vor fi o sută douăzeci de ani!”” în zilele aceleia erau pe pământ uriași, și chiar după aceea, când fiți lui Dumnezeu au întrat la fiicele oamenilor și acestea le dăruiau fiii; aceștia sunt uriașii din vechime, oamenii cei vestiți.” Ca să înțelegem acest text enigmatic să ne închizim scena ca un film la care nu am văzut începutul.


La întrarea noastră în sala de spectacole filmul a ajuns exact la născutea din Geneză 6:1-4. Fără începutul filmului ne închipuim că “fiiii lui Dumnezeu” ar fi îngerii, dar problema e că acești spirituri sunt, deci nu pot avea sex spre a se înmulți. Teoria cu extratereștri e la fel de ridicolă. Din unirea celor două seminții în loc să se nască ființele din OZN - moglaștele cu chelie și capul ca o pară întoarsă - s-au născut cogeamite uriașii! Care Dumnezeu i-ar fi pedepsit pe oameni din cauza unei catastrofe genetice, respectiv uriașii! De aceea și-a zis Dumnezeu: “și fără de veste s-a făcut din cer un vuet cât de sufletre de vânț ce vine repede...” (FA 2, 1) Mai mult chiar, în limba greacă “pnevma” înseamnă spirit, duh, vânt, sufletre așa cum e folosit în Geneză.

Cuvațul de Suflet


Să ajute Dumnezeu prin puterea Lui, să ne fie de folos aceste mișcări de mântuire și înbunătățire, cu rugăciuni și mijlocirile Maicii Domnului și a tuturor Sfinților, să fim mai buni mai credincioși și să-i cerem mereu Lui

*Pr. dr. DUMITRU ICHIM*
CONVOCARE
În conformitate cu Articolul III, Secțiunea 7, a Regulamentelor Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America, chemăm în sesiune

AL 79lea CONGRES ANUL AL EPISCOPIEI
VINERI, 30 SEPTEMBRIE - SĂMBĂTĂ, 1 OCTOMBRIE
la
HOLIDAY INN CHICAGO – NORTH SHORE
5300 W TOUHY, SKOKIE IL 60077
(866) 750-3369 or (847) 679-8900

Toți preotii parohi și asistenți numiți în Parohii de către Episcop, precum și toți delegații mireni aleși legal de către Adunările Generale Parohiale în 2011 și ale căror acreditări au fost verificate de către Comitetul de acreditare al Episcopiei, sunt chemați în sesiune de lucru.

Congresul va fi în sesiune de lucru începând cu ziua de VINERI, 30 Septembrie, orele 9:00 a.m., ora Centrală (Chicago).

Ordinea de zi, după cum este publicată în Raportul Anual al Congresului Episcopiei 2011, va include:
• Citirea / Aprobarea Procesului Verbal al celui de-al 78lea Congres al Episcopiei
• Raporturile Oficiale către Congres
• Raporturi din partea Organizațiilor Auxiliare ale Episcopiei
• Propuneri noi din partea Consiliului Episcopesc

Conform Articolului III, Secțiunea 1, Congresul Episcopiei va fi compus din:
• Episcop
• Episcopul-Vicar
• Vicarul
• Preotul Paroh și Preotul sau Preoții asistenți;
• Doi (2) delegați mireni aleși de Adunarea Generală a fiecărei Parohii pentru Congresul Episcopiei pentru anii 2011-2012
• Doi (2) delegați din partea fiecărei organizații auxiliare a Episcopiei

• Preoții de sub jurisdicția Episcopiei care nu au parohie, diaconi, stareți și starețe, dacă sunt acredități de Consiliul Episcopesc;
• Membrii Consiliului Episcopesc în funcțiune, ca și președinții organizațiilor auxiliare ex officio.

Dacă delegații mireni aleși legal nu pot participa la Congresul Episcopiei, locuitorii lor aleși legal de către Adunarea Generală Parohială a fiecărei Parohii, vor reprezenta Parohia. Nici o adăugare, substituie sau delegație ad-hoc nu vor fi recunoscute de către Comitetul de acreditare.

+NATHANIEL
Arhiepiscop al Detroitului și al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America

PROGRAMUL

JOI, 29 Septembrie – Biserica Sf. Maria - Chicago
9:00 am Conferința clerului
1:00 pm Prânzul
2:00 pm Conferința clerului sesiunea a 2-a
5:00 pm Vechernia și Meditații
6:30 pm Cina
7:00 pm Ședința Consiliului Episcopesc
8:00 pm Înregistrarea delegațiilor – Holiday Inn

VINERI, 30 Septembrie
Holiday Inn
8:00 am Înregistrarea delegațiilor
9:00 am Rugăciunea de invocare a Duhului Sfânt Deschiderea celui de-al 79lea Congres al Episcopiei
1:00 pm Prânzul
2:00 pm Congresul continuă - Sesiunea a II-a
Biserica Sf. Maria
5:00 pm Vechernia Mare și Meditații
6:30 pm Cina

SĂMBĂTĂ 1 Octombrie – Biserica Sf. Maria
9:00 am Procesiunea Clerului și Sfânta Liturghie Arhierească
12:00 pm Banchetul și Programul de încheiere la Restaurantul Suparossa

Parohia Gazdă:
Biserica Sf. Maria, Chicago, Illinois
4225 N. Central Ave, Chicago, IL 60634-1800
(773) 736-1153

Pentru rezervări la hotel vedeți secțiunea în limba engleză, pag. 3.
Viata Preacuvioasei Maicii noastre Teodora de la Sihla, care, la sfarsitul secolului al XVII-lea, a sosit in patrie in mara, a fost cauta in casatorie de catre parintii ei dintr-o castravete, fiind infirma si nevoinita. Mama sa, al carui nume nu este cunoscut, a inceput sa se ingrijeste de ele pentru casa de buna creștere, in frică de Dumnezeu, pentru cei care apa în Cetatea a Moldovei, Neamț.

Fiica mai tânără s-a mutat curând la Dumnezeu, iar fericita Teodora a fost căsătorită de către părinți, împotriva ostașului, asadar și numele ei arată, fiind Varna - Neamț, din parintii binecredincioși, care au dat foc Schitului Sihla, a celor două fiici, Teodora și Maghița (Marghiolița).

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CATEHEZĂ DESPRE RUGĂCIUNE

1. - Ce este rugăciunea?

Rugăciunea este vorbirea noastră cu Dumnezeu, este ridicarea minții și a sufletului către Creator, este marele dar oferit nouă "de Dumnezeu ca să putem sta în legătură permanentă cu El. Rugăciunea aduce liniște sufletescă și întreține dorul nestins de apropiere și de cunoaștere a vieții divine. Ea deșteleşte sufletele și printre-însa milostivirea cerescului Părinte roaucează uscăciunea inimilor omenești și odrășlește, din pământul lor, laruri de roade bune. Despre puterea și folosul ei, un pusnic glăsuiește "precum vederea este mai mare decât toate simțurile, așa și rugăciunea este mai mare decât toate faptele bune".

Rugăciunea este aripa credinței, roada nădejdiei, oglinda dragostei, pecetea virtuții și zburul pațului. Ea este izvor nescat de sfântenie și de trăire creștinăescă; este pavâza care ne ocrotesc de boldul ispitiș și cheia cu dragostea, pecetea virtuții și zburul pațului. Ea este pe cel zut, măngâie pe cel întărit, îmbrățișează și pe cel ondoinelnic de credință și smerenie Creatorului și cu numele nostru și al întregii popoarelor (Lc. 2, 30-31).

De-acum, rugăciunea doveză "stăriei Ta, care ai găsit-o înaintea fiecărui Lui" (Mt. 6, 14), încrederea în promisiunea lui Dumnezeu.

Urmând exemplul Său, Sfinții Apostoli "într-un cuget stăruiau în rugăciune, dimpreună cu femeile și cu Maria, mama lui Isus, și cu frații lui" (FA. 1, 14), îndemnând pe credincioși "să stăruie în rugăciune" (Colos. 4, 2) și să facă "în toată vremea tot felul de rugăciuni și de cereri și într-o experiență sângeroasă și într-o experiență tristă, rugă-cându-vă pentru toți sfinții" (Efes. 6, 18). Primii creștini "stăruiau în învățătura Apostolilor și în viața fratească, în frângerea păinii și în rugăciune" (FA 2, 41-42).

Rugăciunea nu pune în comunie nu numai cu Dumnezeu, ci și cu semenii noștri, cum vedem din rugăciunea de la Aghiaza mică: "Adu-ți aminte, Doamne de cei ce ne urăsc și de cei ce ne iubesc pe noi... de părinții și frații noștri... de cei ce binecuvântate pricini nu sunt de față..." Rugăciunea pentru viața aproapealui este porunca evanghelică și rânduiială bisericească, Sfântul Ioan spunând "dacă vede cineva pe fratele său păcătind - păcat nu de moarte - să se roage și Dumnezeu va da viața acelui frate" (I Ioan 5, 16).

Dupa cuprinsului ei, rugăciunea este de trei feluri: de laudă, de mulțumire și de cerere.

Prin rugăciunea de laudă îl premărim pe Dumnezeu, ziditorul tuturor celor văzute și nevăzute, adică dâm grăi cinstirii și închinării înaintea Sa. Când privim crinii cărmului sau bolta înlătata a cerului, ne plecăm cu cunoașterea Creatorului și, în numele nostru și al întregii zidiri, îl lăudăm și îl promitem, cu cântul psalmistului: "Lăudați pe Domnul în înaintea sfinților Lui; Lăudați-L pe El întră tăria puterii Lui; Lăudați-L pe El întră puterile Lui; Lăudați-L pe El după mulțimea slavei Lui... Toată sufletarea să laude pe Domnul" (Ps. CL).

Prin rugăciunea de mulțumire, ne arătăm recunoaștința față de Dumnezeu pentru toate binefacerile Sale. Lui îl datorăm viața, la El aflăm ajutor în primejdie și în suferințe, El ne călăuzește pașii pe cărăriile vieții și ne ocrotesc. De aceea, se cuvine să-l mulțumim pentru toate "ca aceea este voia lui Dumnezeu întru Isus Hristos" (I Tes. 5, 18). Rugăciunea de mulțumire este și mărturia sentimentului de recunoaștință pentru dragostea și purtarea de grijă a lui Dumnezeu către noi.

Prin rugăciunea de cerere prezentăm Domnului dorințele noastre creștinești și pe cele ale semenilor noștri, având încredere că ele vor fi ascultate și împlinite de El. Îi cerem să putem birui ispita și păcatul și să putem rămâne, în mod stoic, pe calea binelui.

Cont. la pag. 24
Încrederea în ajutorul lui Dumnezeu ne-a fost sugerată chiar de Mântuitorul care ne-a spus: “Cereţi și vi se va da; căutați și veți afla; bateți și vi se va deschide” (Mt. 7, 7).

Se cuvine, deci, să ne rugăm pentru tot ceea ce este spre mântuirea sufletelor noastre, pentru părinții și frații noștri, pentru bunăstarea sfintelor lui Dumnezeu biserici și pentru unirea tuturor. Iar Sfântul Apostol Pavel ne îndeamnă să facem cereri, rugăciuni, mulțumiri și mijlociri pentru toți oamenii (I Tim. 2, 1).

5.- Cum trebuie făcută rugăciunea?

Pentru că rugăciunea noastră să fie rug de foc ce urcă spre cer și ca să audă Domnul glasul rugăciunii noastre, în zi și în noapte, la vreme de primejdie și de boală, precum și la orice trebuiență, se cuvine să facem rugăciunea cu lacrimi de pocăință și zдобire de cuget, după cuvântul care zice “dă-mi lacrimi să mă pocăiesc” (Mt. 5, 7). Cu neînțețe căci lsisus a spus “rugați-vă neînțețat” (I Tes. 5,17).

6.- Ce este rugăciunea particulară și cea publică?

După felul ei, rugăciunea poate fi particulară și obștească.

Rugăciunea particulară este făcută de orice credincios, singur sau cu ai săi, în orice loc, în orice timp, citită sau spusă pe de rost. Este o rugăciune făcută “în câmara inimii”, ca raza de lumina ce alungă întunericul tristelui și luminează cărarea vieții. Rostirea ei cu neînțețe, cu evlavie și cu smerenie, însoțită de semnul Sfintei Cruci, sau chiar reducerea ei la cuvintele “Doamne ajutăți neînțețat” (Ps. XLIX) să fie ca și-lai să nu cădeți în ispita (Mt. 26, 41), dar ea este folositoare și la unirea cu Creatorul, la apropierea de oameni și la pacea sufletească.

Pr. Prof. Dr. Cezar Vasiliu

Cuvânt de Suflet Cont. de la pag. 20

Dumnezeu “Sfârșit creștinesc vieții noastre, neînfruntat în pace și răspuns bun la înfricoșătoarea Judecătă a Lui Hristos!”

Cu părintești și arhierești binecuvântări.

+ IRINEU
Episcop Vicar

Sfânta Cuvioasă Cont. de la pag. 22

și arhierești. Așa s-au înstrăinat moaștele Sfintei Teodora din patria ei și se păstrează în catacombele de la Pecerska, așezate în raclă de mult preț, pe care sunt scrise aceste cuvinte în limbile română: Sfânta Teodora din Carpați și slavonă: Sveti Teodora Carpatina.

Aceasta este, pe scurt, viața Sfintei Teodora de la Sihla și acestea sunt faptele ei, prin care a bineplăcut Dumnezeu, numărându-se în cetele sfinților, fiind socotită cea mai aleasă nevoioare pe care a odrăslii-o vreodată țara noastră. Credincioșii din Moldova o cinstesc ca sfântă îndată după adormirea ei și merg în pelerinaj la peștera și chilia ei de la Schitul Sihla.

La 20 iunie 1992, Sfântul Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române a canonizat-o, trecând-o oficial în rândul sfinților, cu zi de prăznuire la 7 august.

Cu ale ei sfinte rugăciuni, Doamne lisiște Hristoase, Fiu lui Dumnezeu, miluiește-ne și ne mântuieste pe noi. Amin!