Hristos a înviat!
Adevărât a înviat!
Christ is risen!
Truly he is risen!
March 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With the blessing of His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel, the Auxiliaries of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America invite you and your family to this year’s Family Life/All-Auxiliaries Conference being held June 26–29, 2014 at Vatra Romaneasca. Last year, we began this new way of gathering as a Church family. It was incredibly successful, and we hope it will be so again. This year, the conference will feature a special tribute to our long-time leader, Archbishop Valerian of blessed memory, commemorating the 100th anniversary of his birth.

In addition to the annual meetings of the Episcopate Auxiliaries—ARFORA, the Brotherhood and our youth (AROY), the conference includes activities for the entire family. The Planning Committee has prepared a program that includes workshops on a variety of themes and for all stages in life, a series of workshops particularly for Clergy and those interested in Christian education, a reprise of the spirited “Bible Challenge” competition, tours of the Vatra (our “hearth”) as well as a rich array of worship services, community building events, and opportunities to socialize and enjoy the company of our family and friends. Come and enjoy the Opening Picnic with activities for the whole family on Thursday, June 26th, the Tribute Night to Archbishop Valerian on Friday evening, a semi-formal Dance on Saturday evening, and a Festive Banquet after celebrating the Divine Liturgy together on Sunday. Overall, we have tried to create an event that honors our past while also meeting the needs of our present.

The conference registration packet is available at www.roea.org (click on the purple “Family Life” button). It includes:

- Program of the Conference
- Bible Challenge Information

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COVER: Icon of the Resurrection of Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ from Dionysiou Monastery on Mount Athos, 1547.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16
Losing our Religion: On “Retaining” Young People in the Orthodox Church

By Seraphim Danckaert
Blog: Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy – Doctrine Matters

A recent article [“An Important Challenge for Greek Orthodox Christianity” (http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/marriage/interfaith/guest-writers/challengeforGOC)] on the challenge of interfaith marriage in Greek Orthodoxy has been circulating widely on Facebook.[1] One reason for the article’s popularity is its startling claim that 90% of Americans with Greek roots are no longer in communion with the Orthodox Church. Similarly dismal statistics are likely true for most Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States, but the article in question concerns only the Greek Archdiocese.

The article assumes (but does not show) that the reason for this mass apostasy is two-fold: (1) the inevitable rise of interfaith marriages in America’s multicultural, religiously pluralistic, and secular society; and (2) the Greek Orthodox Church’s failure to respond to the “critical and immediate need for a broad religious outreach; to make room for interfaith families,” and thereby follow St. Paul’s example in extending “Christianity’s outreach to all nations.”

The article is vague when it comes to solutions for the obvious crisis of mass apostasy, so I may have misunderstood its argument, but it appears to suggest that if the Church were more sensitive, accepting of religious difference, and in tune with modern sensibilities, she would have a shot at retaining interfaith families in a secular age—and thereby find a means to stem the tide of apostasy.[2]

Such a conclusion is contrary to all evidence I am aware of, both from the sociology of American religion and from the Orthodox Church’s own experience throughout the ages.

A few points to consider:

1. Jesus did not tell the apostles to extend Christianity’s outreach to all the nations, but to make disciples of all nations. The distinction is critical. The Church attracts “retains” people only when she discipless them.

2. The article uses various statistics to describe a problem, but employs no statistically rigorous studies to find a solution. The implied solution is a guess or intuition, and does not necessarily follow from the studies invoked. In fact, as we shall see, the relevant studies that do exist suggest a very different solution.

3. Sociological studies of the ancient world (a highly interpretive but legitimate discipline) are very clear why the early Church grew: Christians took care of widows, orphans, and the sick and impoverished.[3] It’s that simple, at least on the sociological and statistical plane.

The early Church did not focus on “retaining” her own. On the contrary, she sacrificed her own, serving all people in the name of Christ, especially widows, orphans,
2014 FAMILY LIFE/ALL-AUXILIARIES CONFERENCE
JUNE 26–29, 2014

WITH A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO ARCHBISHOP VALERIAN
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 100TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH

Weekend Preview...

What: Family Life/ All-Auxiliaries Weekend
When: June 26–29, 2014 (Thursday-Sunday)
Where: Vatra Romaneasca
Theme: “With Faith and Love, Draw Near”

EVENTS:

- Worship services: Morning and Evening Prayers, Memorial Service, Divine Liturgy
  - Auxiliary Meetings: ARFORA, Youth/AROY, Brotherhood

- Additional Gatherings: Clergy, Clergy Wives, Christian Educators

- Possible Thematic Workshops/Discussion Groups for Personal, Family, and Parish Enrichment:
  - Keeping Ourselves and Our Kids in the Faith
  - Balancing our Church, Professional and Personal lives
  - Making God Real in the Orthodox Christian Home
  - Drawing Nearer to God in Liturgy
  - Archbishop Valerian and the Episcopate Auxiliaries
  - And more...

- Service Project
- Bible Challenge – Explore the Gospel of Matthew
  - Teams (3 persons/ea)
  - Church School and Adult Education curriculum possibilities
  - Study guides available: www.orthodoxyouth.org/Matthew
  - **Prizes for the Contestants and Winning Teams

- Luncheons (with Speaker)—ARFORA and AROY/Brotherhood
- Family Community Building Activities and Children’s Program
- Youngster Activities—Arts and Crafts, Prosphora/Coliva making, Vatra Scavenger Hunt, and more...
- Opening picnic
- Displays, Vatra and Heritage Center Tours, and more...

Friday Evening Program
A Tribute to the Life and Ministry of Archbishop Valerian
Commemorating the 100th year of his Birth.

Saturday Evening
Dinner & Dance

Sunday
Hierarchical Liturgy followed by
Festive Banquet
Saint John Chrysostom advises that formation of the youth should start readily and early, so that the young soul may be cultivated with goodness, because: “the time of youth is wild and has need of many vigilant teachers, guides, pedagogues, loving care givers, and nourishers... The youth is like a wild horse, a wild beast, but if from the beginning and from the early age of the childhood we can put good boundaries, then we will not need many efforts, but the habit will become itself law. We must not let them do that which is pleasing to them, which can harm them, also not to satisfy their every want or let them do as they please, but always guide them towards the wholeness of wisdom and balance, because, otherwise, abuse in any direction loses the youthfulness more than anything.”
RESURRECTION PASTORAL LETTER 2014

+ NATHANIEL

By the Mercy of God and the Will of the People,
Archbishop of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate
of the Orthodox Church in America

To our beloved clergy, monastics and pious faithful of our God-protected Episcopate,
Grace, Mercy and Peace from God, and from us our fatherly love and hierarchal blessing.

CHRIST IS RISEN!

“The day of resurrection! Let us be illumined, O people! Pascha of the Lord, O Pascha. For Christ God has brought us from death to life, we who sing the song of victory! Christ is risen from the dead!”
Canon of the Resurrection: Ode I

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

The Day of Resurrection is the day of universal joy for all; as universally all men are born, so also universally shall all men die. What was alive, dies. What was dead, lives! Resurrection means, “the un-doing of death!” The universality of birth and death and new-birth or resurrection includes all humanity. Thus, the illumination that Death is no longer to be feared, gives each person liberty to live free of the passions which pressure us to live as though there were no personal responsibility for our lives. For the believer, nay rather all humanity, lives in the presence of the Creator and is responsible for the actions taken in life. “For certainly the reason of a resurrection is only in order to judgment; and therefore it is necessary that the bodies which have been instrumental to the actions should be the same bodies which are summoned from the grave to judgment, ‘that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or whether it be evil’.” (Tertullian, The Apology, 48).

St. Gregory Nazianzus urges us: “Let us sacrifice ourselves to God, or rather offer sacrifice every day and in every movement. Let us accept all things for Christ the Word” (On Pascha 23); and further, he says: “We needed a God made flesh and made dead, that we might live. We were made dead with him [in baptism] that we might be purified. We have risen with him since we were made dead with him. We were glorified with him since we rose with him” (On Pascha 28).

While for the very young, death is only a word, for those who become aware that all men die, the reality of death has a profound personal meaning: “All men die; others have died; I will die.” In time, each of us knows that to each is given a limited time of living on earth. Thus, it is the understanding that death is the universal reality that shapes our thoughts, deeds and thus our existence. We act as we do, because we know that we will die; and once we acknowledge this, we believe either that we will be resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ, or we believe that our personal existence is erased at death. Personal death is a reality for all. Believers, however, live trusting that there is to be a universal resurrection for all humanity. “...So ought we also to await the time of our resurrection prescribed by God and foretold by the prophets, and so, rising, be taken up, as many as the Lord shall account worthy of this privilege” (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 5:31:2).

In the Old Testament (Exodus 12), we read that the Angel of Death passed over the houses of the Hebrews in Egypt, because their homes were identified with the prescribed sprinkling of lamb’s blood. This was the temporary Passover, the escape from the Angel of Death which visited the houses of the Egyptians reaping the lives of the first-born. This event is remembered yearly in Jewish homes around the globe. This, however, is a celebration of a temporary and historical reprieve; it did not deliver mankind from death.
In the New Testament, we hear that Christ’s blood shed on the cross is a sprinkling of blood on all mankind from the beginning to the end of human history. This is the permanent Pascha, the eternal victory of life over death brought about through the sacrifice, not of an unblemished lamb from the field, but of the Lamb of God from the heights of heaven - Jesus himself, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, “the one who receives and who is received, who gives and is given” (Divine Liturgy). Jesus is both eternal God, “born of the Father before all ages,” and in time he who has taken on our human nature, “who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. And he was crucified for us” (The Creed).

Saint Athanasius the Great states: “God became man so that man may become as God.” Further, he says, “It was not his own death that the Savior came to complete, but that of human beings. The Lord was especially concerned for the resurrection of the body that he was able to accomplish; for the trophy of victory over death was this resurrected being, shown to all ”(On the Incarnation 22). Christ the Lord died for us, was buried, and rose, and this is why we “sing a song of victory,” a song celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and a song celebrating the resurrection of all humanity, of our own resurrection at the last day. This is the true joy of today!

“And God calls even the body to resurrection and promises it everlasting life. When he promises to save the man, he thereby makes his promise to the flesh. What is man but a rational living being composed of soul and body? Is the soul by itself a man? No, it is but the soul of a man. Can the body be a man? No, it can but be called the body of a man. If, then, neither of these is by itself a man, but that which is composed of the two together is called a man, and if God has called man to life and resurrection, he has called not a part, but the whole, which is the soul and the body” (The Resurrection 8, Justin Martyr).

Although we sing that it is the Day of Resurrection, by this we do not mean that this is a twenty-four hour day like any other day, but an era in which from the time of Christ’s coming out of the tomb in the garden of Gethsemane, until his Second Coming, we live in the reality that “death no longer holds men captive.” The fruit of the cross and resurrection covers the entire human race from its beginning until the Lord returns; it is, in effect, retroactive. The song of victory that we sing, the song which is always humming in our own hearts, is that “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down Death by death, and bestowing life on those in the graves.” There can be no song more glorious, more joyful than this, which means that with the resurrection, Christ swoops all humanity into eternal life.

How will this be, and in what manner shall we live? Saint Cyril of Jerusalem in the 4th century informs us: “This body shall be raised, not remaining weak as it is now, but this same body shall be raised. By putting on incorruption, it shall be altered, as iron blending with fire becomes fire—or rather, in a manner the Lord who raises us knows. However it will be, this body shall be raised, but it shall not remain such as it is. Rather, it shall abide as an eternal body. It shall no longer require for its life such nourishment as now, nor shall it require a ladder for its ascent; for it shall be made a spiritual body, a marvelous thing, such as we have not the ability to describe” (Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures 18:18).

Dearly Beloved, as we walk, step by step, through the gift of life on this earth, let us respond to the Good News, the Holy Gospel, and to the promptings of the holy Fathers of the Church. Let us walk with Christ who is with us here and now and who is waiting to welcome us in the life to come, he who has brought us from death to life to sing to him a Song of Victory! Christ is risen!

CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY, HE IS RISEN!

Accept our fatherly love and archpastoral blessings on those near and those far away.

+ NATHANIEL, Archbishop
Lenten Retreat at Dearborn Heights Parish

On Saturday, March 22, the parish of Sts. Peter & Paul in Dearborn Heights, Michigan, hosted a day-long retreat entitled “Ascending Towards the Resurrection.” This was an opportunity for parishioners of all ages to come together as a parish family in preparation for the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, to learn more about the Orthodox Christian Faith and how to apply it in our daily lives.

The day began with the Divine Liturgy celebrated by one of the guest presenters, Rev. Fr. Dan Hoarste, the Director of the Youth Department of our Episcopate who came from Vatra Romaneasca in Grass Lake, Michigan. Towards the end of the Liturgy, Fr. Dan was joined by V. Rev. Fr. Romey Rosco (parish priest) and Rev. Fr. Horatiu Balanean (assistant priest) for a general “parastas” memorial service in observance of Memorial Saturday. Immediately following the conclusion of the services, everyone was invited into the parish hall for a Lenten meal provided by the ladies of the parish.

Approximately 100 people in attendance then broke into various groups to hear presentations from the speakers. For the adults, Mother Macrina of Holy Dormition Monastery spoke in the English language on the Prayer of St. Ephraim and our spiritual efforts during Great Lent, while Fr. Horatiu Balanean offered a reflection in the Romanian language on how the Church helps us live our life in the present time and avoid being distracted by earthly cares. Fr. Dan Hoarste talked with the teens about “The Youth and Christ,” the examples of youth in Holy Scripture who encountered Christ, as models for us and icons of our relationship with the Lord. And, Preoteasa Mary Ellen Rosco led activities and discussion with the younger children on the topics of Confession and The 10 Commandments.

Following their individual presentations, the adult groups came together for a questions-and-answers session where participants asked Mother Macrina and the clergy about issues discussed in the presentations and also any other topics of interest related to our spiritual lives.

The events of the day concluded with Great Vespers, during which attendees had the opportunity to participate in the Sacrament of Confession.
**CATHEDRAL PARISH PUTS LOVE INTO ACTION**

*Jesus said, “He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do…” (John 14:12).*

On Sunday, March 23, 2014, the Lord made it easy to take one small step in His direction! A small group from the Diocesan Cathedral of Saint George in Detroit (Southfield), Michigan, went across town to Sts. Peter & Paul (Russian) Orthodox Cathedral, OCA, to take a turn at ministering to the needy. At the initiative of (Subdeacon) John E Lazar, and led by our clergy, Fr Laurence Lazar and Fr Sabin Pop, our group included Preoteasa Anita Lazar, Adrian and Angela Muntean, Robert and Mihaela Charlier, Goldie Kalugar, Dorothy Aldea, Michael Schester and Michael Schester Jr. Each of us came away with much more than we gave!

The parish there has experienced a drastic decline in recent decades, but holds the distinction of the oldest Orthodox parish in the city, and has stood as a landmark structure in the southwest neighborhood for generations. As part of an outreach to the economically-depressed neighborhood, made up mostly of Hispanic residents, the parish donates the use of their hall to Orthodox Detroit Outreach, which coordinates this program each week to provide a complete hot meal for the hungry, the homeless, the troubled and the poor. Various parishes, groups and individuals from around the Orthodox community volunteer to take a turn in hosting (cooking, preparing, serving, and cleaning up). What a joy it was to wash and set tables, to serve individuals as individuals, to talk and laugh and joke with people we did not know and may never see again, and to clean up afterwards with a lightness of spirit that comes from glimpsing -- for one small speck of time -- what it means to do the work of the Lord in ministering to strangers in need.

The drive down took us through neighborhoods of burned-out buildings, graffiti and trash, blocks of depression and deprivation. Detroit is a very proud and internationally renowned city that is beginning to experience a true, very exciting rebirth. However, it is clear that many of its neighborhoods, like those in other big cities, are quite underserved and battered. With these thoughts in mind, surely, each of us had our “predetermined expectations”, and not a little trepidation, of what we would encounter once we reached our destination. But, prepared for the worst, we found the best!

Received with joy, we were able to provide, in our own small way, the opportunity for those of God’s children whom the world often neglects or shuns, to partake of a delicious hot meal, to enjoy camaraderie and fellowship with us and with each other, and to “come in out of the cold” to share the warmth of the building and even more importantly, the warmth of knowing someone cares. The respect and gratitude of those who come to eat, far outshines anything we, who have comparatively so much, ever think to show ourselves!

Our teen and young adult organizations have aided Orthodox Detroit Outreach since its inception a few years ago, by gathering to make up to 600 bag lunches in one session that are then distributed to the hungry. The youth have been a real example of taking a “hands on” approach to true Christian charity that is becoming more a part of the ministry of the Cathedral parish. The underlying feeling is that there is always someone in need, and there is always something we can do (individually and collectively) to better live our (Romanian) Orthodox Faith by joyfully reaching out a helping hand and a loving heart.

Perhaps our next parish dinner should be held down on Gilbert Street, inviting the neighbors in to show us how to sit at table with those we usually avoid, to enjoy being together and feel God’s presence where there is no judging, no complaining, no disrespect, where “many hands make light work,” since everyone cleans up after themselves! And, where those who receive, give back so much more!

*"The rich and the poor have met one another; the Lord is the Maker of them both” (Proverbs 22:2).*
A Conversation with Metropolitan Kallistos Ware on the Sacramental Life, Part III


Part I appeared in the November/December issue of Solia-The Herald, pp. 8-9, 12; Part II appeared in the January/February issue, pp. 8-10.

Prologue: Ancient Faith Radio welcomes you to this special edition of the Illumined Heart with Kevin Allen. Today, Kevin’s guest host on the program is Father Steve Tsichlis, Senior Pastor of St. Paul’s Greek Orthodox Church in Irvine, CA, and Father Steve’s special guest for this exclusive Illumined Heart interview is His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos Ware. Their topic will be: Understanding the Sacraments. St. Paul’s recently hosted His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos to Southern California for a two-day packed house seminar to the general public titled, “Drawing Closer to the Saviour: The Sacramental Life.” CDs of this seminar are available for purchase by calling St. Paul’s church office at 949-733-2366.

Metropolitan Kallistos is probably the best known Orthodox teacher and scholar in the world today. His books, The Orthodox Church and The Orthodox Way have become standards of introduction to the life and faith of the Christian East. He has also served as a translator of Liturgical texts, as well as translating the Philokalia, the classic collection of Orthodox writing on spirituality, asceticism, and the Jesus Prayer. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press has also published the first volume of Metropolitan Kallistos’ collected works, The Inner Kingdom.

In Part III of the conversation, His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos touches on ecology, Lent, prayer, fasting, acts of compassion, and joy.

Fr. Steve Tsichlis [ST]: You know, Your Eminence, that sense of Christ’s presence in the world, that sense of the world as sacrament, does that have ecological implications for how we should be living, and what would you say those would be?

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware [KW]: It certainly has ecological implications. We are to feel constantly, day by day, that the world round us, the environment, the material things we use, the other persons in the world, but also the animals, the trees, the grass, the air, water – all of this is a gift from God. It is not our absolute possession to use as we think fit. We are responsible before God for the way we use material things, as well as for the way we behave towards our fellow humans. So, a sense of the presence of God everywhere in the world – which the Jesus Prayer can help to induce – is indeed fundamental to the whole question of the ecological crisis. Only through prayer can we recover a right relation with material things round us. Only through prayer can we rediscover the world as sacrament. And this is something that we need to do urgently. The technical experts assure us that perhaps it is already too late; already we have done irreparable damage to this cosmic temple in which God has given to us to dwell. But, perhaps it is not too late. Let us set to work now. And a vital first step is to make a distinction between what I need and what I want. Between the fundamental needs that I have in order to be a healthy, active person in the world, and on the other side all my desires, all the things after which I lust – all the desires for luxuries and different pleasures which are not essential for my well-being as a balanced, creative human being. So let us start by distinguishing what I need from what I want.

[ST]: Your Eminence, we’re about to enter the season of Lent. And as you know, we enter into a period of prayer and fasting. But fasting can sometimes be confusing for many, many Orthodox Christians. Can you say a few words about the discipline of fasting and how that’s to be understood in our Church?

KW: Yes. We are close now to what the Liturgical books of the Church refer to as the springtime of Lent. In the services in this coming week, the week before Lent, we shall say the springtime of the fast has come; the flower of repentance has begun to open. So Lent is not just a time for somber self-discipline. It’s a time to rejoice before God and to experience a renewal within ourselves. Repentance is not self-flagellation. It is an opening flower.

Now many people when they think of the Lenten fast, think of abstinence in food and drink. And this
is indeed an essential part of Lent. There should be a real element of sacrifice in Lent. We shouldn’t make things too easy for ourselves. We should be willing out of love for Christ to give up things which we mind doing without in order that we may value them at their true worth.

When I fasted in Lent and when I celebrated the Paschal midnight service – the Divine Liturgy – and it’s time to break my fast, I think very often how very good it will be to have a hard-boiled egg and a little bit of cheese. Food which might seem commonplace, but when you’ve fasted for seven weeks, it is felt as a real blessing from God, this very simple food. So fasting enhances our sense of wonder before God’s gifts. Fasting then is essentially part of Lent along with prostrations and other physical disciplines.

But, that’s not the whole of Lent. Fasting should go with prayer. Jesus speaks of the two together. And if we only fast without praying, that will simply make us irritable. There is someone who, however strictly we fast, fasts very much more strictly than us, because he never eats at all, and that person is the Devil. And a fast without prayer, a fast without love, is the fast of the Devil. So, fasting must go with prayer. We must give more time in Lent to our daily prayers, and more attentiveness. And we must make the effort to participate in the special Lenten services that are offered in our parishes, such as the Liturgy of the pre-sanctified gifts and the Akathistos hymn.

But there’s also a third element in the Lenten fast of which the early Christian writers speak, and that is what in Greek is called elaimosini, often translated as almsgiving. But it doesn’t just mean giving money. It means all forms of practical compassion towards others round us. Not just giving money, though that’s important, but giving time; not just giving what we have but giving what we are. To find time to visit persons in hospital, house-bound, people who would love to see us, and we haven’t had time to go and see them. In Lent, I try to catch up writing letters, not business letters, but personal letters to people who perhaps would welcome a word from me, who want to be in touch. So the third element in Lent is acts of compassion. As Saint John Chrysostom says, give bread and receive paradise.

So there is a triad here: fasting, prayer, acts of compassion.

[ST]: Your Eminence, thank you for being with us this evening. Is there anything you’d like to say to close this evening?

[KW]: I would like to end with some words of a great Russian saint of the early 20th century, Saint John of Kronstadt: Prayer, he said, is a state of continual gratitude. Let us always keep before us the element of thanksgiving, of joy, in our prayer. Yes, there has to be heartfelt repentance, we are to feel genuine sorrow for our sins. Yes, we must pray for others, grieve over their sorrows and their difficulties; make their burdens our own when we pray. But above all, prayer means offering the world and ourselves with it and each other, offering the world back to God with thanksgiving. At the beginning of our prayers... we say, Glory to You O God, Glory to You. At the beginning of the Liturgy, we say: “Blessed is the Kingdom.” We rejoice before God in the first words of the Liturgy because of the beauty of the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity. So let us keep this element of joy in our prayer - not empty optimism, not bland cheerfulness, but joy which often goes hand-in-hand with sorrow. Through the Cross, joy has come to all the world, we say in Sunday Matins; and so the Cross goes with joy, but the Cross goes with the Resurrection, and all our sorrow can and should be transfigured by joy.

[ST]: Your Eminence, thank you for being with us. Thank you so much.

[KW]: God bless.

THE END

A NEW MONASTIC COMMUNITY OF THE EPISCOPATE

Holy Resurrection Orthodox Christian Monastery
Temecula, California

The Episcopate Council, meeting in full session on March 30, 2014, at the Chancery at the Vatra, heard the request of the Holy Resurrection Monastic Community, Temecula, California, to be affiliated with the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America as per the By-Laws, and it unanimously approved of the request.

The Chancery received the letter of request written on the Feast of the Annunciation. In it, the founders, Reverend Hieromonk Dionisie (Rodila) and Reverend Hierodeacon Neonil (Furdui), stated that they had both been given a blessing to leave the Holy Ascension Monastery, Clinton, Michigan, to found an English-language monastery on the West Coast. Both Fathers were monastics in Romania and came to be part of a Romanian-monastic presence in North America.

Since the time of their arrival in California, the monks have been well received by the hierarchs in that part of the country. They have served with some of the hierarchs; and at their request, they temporarily served in parishes in need of services. The Community had a temporary location in Chatsworth, California, where there was an offer of a site for the community; but since then, they have found a permanent location in Temecula. The Community has been incorporated in the State of California and has an Employer Identification Number.
Losing Our Religion ...

Continued from page 3

and the sick and impoverished. Without a similar public witness to Christ expressed through substantial acts of sacrificial mercy, the Church is not being faithful to her own divine identity and calling—and, as long as such is the case, she will struggle to grow in and through the Holy Spirit, ultimately failing miserably to retain even her own.

4. Just as telling as the Church’s historical experience are the insights of modern-day sociology of American religion. Rigorous studies on what makes American young people and emerging adults retain their family’s religious traditions do exist; and the studies suggest an entirely different solution than accommodation to the trends of the modern American family.

If we are speaking on the scale of statistical relevance (not just pastoral care in individual cases), the data are clear: patterns of religious conviction and observance are set far before one’s 20s or 30s. Simply put, if clergy are trying to play triage nurse at the point of marriage and starting a family, the Church has already lost the war and probably the battle as well (except by the grace of the Holy Spirit, of course!).

Data collected and interpreted by sociologists of religion in a major project called the National Study of Youth and Religion show that there are three main factors that contribute to a young person retaining their religious tradition into adulthood:

1. The young person’s parents practiced the faith in the home and in daily life, not just in public or churchly settings.

2. The young person had at least one significant adult mentor or friend, other than parents, who practiced the faith seriously.

3. The young person had at least one significant spiritual experience before the age of 17.[4]

One could therefore say that a person is most likely to retain Christian faith throughout adult life if he or she had three meaningful and healthy relationships in their early to mid-teenage years: one with faithful Christian parents, one with a faithful Christian mentor outside of the family, and one with God Himself.

If a young person experiences all three relationships in their childhood and especially in their early teenage years, they are far less likely to drift away from their family’s faith tradition as they transition into “emerging adulthood” and beyond. In addition, while all three relationships are important, what the young person observes in the actions and daily life of his or her parents is the most decisive element by far.

The practical conclusion is rather straightforward: For most people, and when viewed as a sociological trend, unless there is a specific adult in a teenager’s life who shows the teenager by example and in the context of a meaningful, long-term relationship how an adult incorporates Christian faith into daily life, no program, camp, mission trip, youth group, worship style, musical trend, Sunday school, church reform, updated pastoral style, modernization, or even catechetical class will make a statistically significant difference. Further, to retain their faith into adulthood, young people need to experience God’s grace for themselves, preferably before the latter part of high school.

The most important sociologist of religion to develop these findings is Christian Smith, who holds a chair in sociology of religion and directs a research center at the University of Notre Dame. His work should be required reading for every person serving in the Orthodox Church.


Smith’s books are filled with data, carefully footnoted, and eminently scholarly. Other notable scholars have written less voluminous books, based on the very same findings but geared toward a general audience of clergy, youth pastors, concerned parents, and church volunteers. The best in that genre is Kenda Dean, Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church (Oxford University Press, 2010).

One of the major findings of the National Study of Youth and Religion, a point which Kenda Dean brings out very clearly and in entertaining fashion, is that American teenagers are actually very good at practicing the faith that their parents teach them: not what parents say they believe, but what they actually believe as evidenced by actions.

The result is that most American teenagers and emerging adults, including Christians of all traditions, believe in and practice “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism,” not Christianity.[5] Considering this reality, it is hardly surprising that, over time, many emerging adults drift away from their family’s Christian roots, choosing to marry outside their church or even Christian faith itself. Yet their doing so is not actually a departure from or a change in their religious convictions: it is merely an alignment of certain external practices (e.g., what they do on Sundays or Easter) with the actual religious beliefs they have held since their teenage years.[6]

As shocking as such a conclusion may seem, here is the most important point: Teenagers and emerging adults believe in and practice “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” not because their parents and their local church have failed to teach them otherwise, but precisely because that is what their parents and their local church are actually teaching them. As the motto of this website puts it, doctrine matters—and not just the doctrine in a church’s creed, liturgy, bookstore, or pamphlet stand. The actual doctrine of family and local church, as taught to most young people in word and especially deed, ends up driving the next generation from the Church, not because the Church is out of touch with the broader society but because the local church never actually taught and lived by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
tending to the poor, the orphans, and the sick in their
regular witness of ordinary, every-day Christian people
only the last of these three types of “mixed” marriages.
A Christian). Properly speaking, “interfaith” describes
faiths (e.g. a Muslim and a Christian; or an atheist and
Christian traditions; and (3) two people of totally different
ethnic backgrounds; (2) two people of different Chris-
tion over issues such as ethnicity or language. On the
contrary, very Americanized churches, which use only
English in their worship, suffer from the same problem
of apostasy. In other words, the issue is much deeper
than people want it to be, and it requires repentance
and change far greater than switching the language of
the liturgy. In fact, there are studies that indicate that
most American teenagers (and adults) do not understand
the theological or spiritual lessons in hymns or
worship services, regardless of language or style. It
does not actually do anything, in and of itself, to use
all English, to update the music, to use contemporary
worship strategies, etc.

The fundamental problem is far scarier and far harder
to “fix”: the Gospel of Jesus Christ is neither taught nor
followed by the vast majority of Christian parents in
America. Period. The data are unavoidable. Now, the
question arises: Is this fact the parents’ “fault”? On a
certain level, yes; but, at the same time, they themselves
were neither taught nor discipled. It therefore falls to the
whole Church herself, as the Body of Christ—clergy and
lay—we to correct this reality through prayer, example,
and instruction.

Without seriously grappling with the sociological
research that exists on these questions, as well as the
depths of our own Orthodox Christian tradition, which is
replete with wisdom on what it takes to make disciples
of all nations, we will neither understand the problem
of mass apostasy nor find a successful solution to it.

Footnotes:

[1] The original article’s author is a member of my
own Greek Orthodox parish and is undoubtedly a rarity
these days: a true Christian gentleman. I respect him
and his obvious concern for the future of the Church.
But I simply cannot agree with his article’s reasoning
or conclusions, even while I commend him for initiating
an important conversation.

[2] One of the conceptual problems in the original
article is that it does not define what it means by “in-
terfaith” marriage and seems to use “interfaith” as a
blanket term for very different situations. As far as the
Church and sociological or psychological studies are
concerned, one should distinguish among marriages be-
tween (1) two Orthodox Christian people from different
ethnic backgrounds; (2) two people of different Chris-
tian traditions; and (3) two people of totally different
faiths (e.g. a Muslim and a Christian; or an atheist and
a Christian). Properly speaking, “interfaith” describes
only the last of these three types of “mixed” marriages.

[3] Rodney Stark, a sociologist of religion, has made
this point persuasively in a variety of publications: the
regular witness of ordinary, every-day Christian people
tending to the poor, the orphans, and the sick in their
urban communities contributed decisively to Christianity’s
tremendous growth. For Stark’s most popular presentation
of his data-driven research see The Rise of Christianity:
How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became
the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in
a Few Centuries (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University
Press, 1996). In this book, Stark reveals an insufficient
understanding of Second Temple Judaism and some
points of Christian history, but the main idea is correct
and very instructive for contemporary Christianity. For
other relevant historical and theological studies see
Susan R. Holman, God Knows There’s Need: Christian
Responses to Poverty (New York: Oxford University
Press, 2009) and Peter Brown, Through the Eye of a
Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of
Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD (Princeton, NJ:

[4] I have extrapolated these three findings from my
own reading of Christian Smith’s early books (referenced
later in the main body of this article). Speaking during
an interview focused on one of his more recent books,
Smith summarizes his findings on faith and religious
practice amongst “emerging adults” (nowadays, those
18 to around 25, or even older) in two points:

“First, it is common for people to believe that the
religious lives of young people are completely thrown up
in the air during the teenage and emerging-adult years,
that everything is up for grabs, being questioned and
renegotiated. In fact, a main finding from our research
emphasizes the continuity across young people’s lives
when it comes to faith and practice. More often than not,
most young people retain the same religious faith and
roughly at the same levels of belief and practice when
they are 18-23 years-old as when they were teenagers.
There are large minorities of youth who decline in their
religious faith and practice across that time span, and a
smaller minority that increases in religiousness too. But
the majority, whether they go to college or not, look a
lot like they looked as teenagers. So, continuity, not
change, is the dominant story. And that is well worth
knowing. For one thing, it emphasizes the importance
of religious communities establishing solid education,
practices, and commitments earlier in life — since what
gets established at younger ages is the most likely thing
to continue in later years. That’s one part of the story
— stability over change.

Our second finding goes back to our earlier work
on teenagers — the importance of parents forming the
religious and spiritual lives of their children. A lot of
parents think that they don’t matter anymore once their
kid hits teenager years, but their influence still has a huge
impact on their children, for better or worse. Parents
have a lot of responsibility for the religious beliefs and
practices of their children, even when they pass beyond
the teenage years.”

The full interview is available at: http://www.resourc-ingchristianity.org/sites/default/files/ transcripts/interview/Christian_Smith_on_Faith_of_Young_Adults_Interview.pdf.

Continued on page 16
FINANCIAL REPORT

EPISCOPATE SUPPORTER
John Vilcu, Griffin, SK .................................. $905.88
Cornel & Sharon Ivascu, Franklin, MI .............. $300.00
Drs Jeffrey & Felicia Ivascu-O’Connor,
   Birmingham, MI ........................................... $300.00
Sandra Badulescu, Thornhill, ON ................. $90.58
Dorothy Aldea, Royal Oak, MI ....................... $50.00
Violet Kazbas, Farrell, PA .............................. $50.00
Veta Buzas, Allen Park, MI .............................. $40.00
Psa Silva Yova, Fairlawn, OH ......................... $40.00
Sylvia Cantor, Rocky River, OH ....................... $25.00

2014 EPISCOPATE ASSESSMENT
St Mary, Calgary, AB ................................ $3,542.00
Three Hierarchs, Bellevue, WA ....................... $3,000.00
Holy Trinity, Vancouver, BC ......................... $875.00
Sts Peter & Paul, Dearborn Hts, MI ................. $667.00
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Palm Springs, CA ........... $600.00
St Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH ................... $557.00
Holy Forty Martyrs Mission, Aurora, ON ............ $500.00
St Mary, Portland, OR ................................... $489.00
Holy Cross, Westerville, OH ............................ $403.00
St Mary, St Paul, MN ..................................... $400.00
St Dumitru, New York, NY ............................. $340.00
St John Mission, Harlingen, TX ...................... $300.00
St Parascheva Mission, Laval, QC .................... $274.52
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Sacramento, CA ............ $229.00
St George Cathedral, Southfield, MI ............... $178.00
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Merrillville, IN ...... $165.00
Holy Resurrection, Warren, OH ...................... $100.00
Judy Khoury, Cleveland, OH .......................... $100.00
Dorina Popa, Strongsville, OH ......................... $100.00
Emil & Carmen Sicic, Roseville, CA ................. $100.00
Lavinia Cosmin, Westlake, OH ......................... $75.00
Mariana & Christian Spanu, North Olmsted, OH .... $50.00
Sorin & Delia Cuc, Farmington Hills, MI ............ $25.00
Eleanor Stepanski, Troy, MI ............................ $25.00
Adrian Turc, Willowick, OH ............................ $25.00
Dorothy Aldea, Royal Oak, MI ......................... $20.00
Mihai & Veronica Bulat, San Jose, CA ............... $20.00
Ionel & Roxana Satnoianu, Rocky River, OH .......... $20.00
Mariana Tipa, White Lake, MI ......................... $20.00
Kenneth & Jennifer Wansack,
   West Middlesex, PA ................................... $20.00
Michael & Liliana Schuster, Plymouth, MI .......... $10.00
David E Long, Star City, IN ........................... $5.00

GENERAL DONATIONS
Nic & Lucy Muresan, Bellevue WA ................. $4,987.20
Holy Trinity, Miramar, FL (Hierarch Travel).... $1,000.00
St John Mission, Charlotte, NC ..................... $1,000.00
(Hierarch Travel) ........................................... $1,000.00
Sts Constantine & Helen, Indianapolis, IN ..... $1,000.00
(Hierarch Travel) ........................................... $300.00
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Middle Village, NY .... $280.00
(Hierarch Travel) ........................................... $250.00
St George Cathedral, Southfield, MI ............... $250.00
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Ridgewood, NY ...... $250.00
Stephen & Katherine Miroy, Stafford, VA ........ $200.00
(Camp Vatra) ............................................... $200.00
Alexandru & Maria Riscu, Oakland, MI ....... $200.00
(Saint Mary Cemetery) ................................. $200.00
V Rev Fr Virgil Suciu, Peoria, AZ ................... $100.00
Marie Farca, Yardley, PA .............................. $50.00
(Museum Fund – IMO George Palage) ................. $50.00
Marcella Bourean, Warren, MI ....................... $45.00
Lillian Fedorovici, Livonia, MI ...................... $20.00
M/M Viorel Nikodin, Farmington Hills, MI ....... $20.00

MEMORIAM
Dr Gary Scavnicky, Troy, MI ......................... $30.00
(IMO his dearly departed wife, Judy Roman Scavnicky)

2013 EPISCOPATE ASSESSMENT
St Nicholas, Montreal, QC ............................ $2,100.00

2014 SPECIAL ASSESSMENT
St Nicholas, Alliance, OH ........................... $1,000.00
Sts Constantine & Helen, Lilburn, GA ............. $1,000.00

ARCHBISHOP’S CHARITY ENDOWMENT
(VACE) FUND
V Rev Fr Chesario Bertea, Elmhurst, NY .......... $1,000.00
George Matsoukos, West Palm Beach, FL ......... $300.00

SYRIAN CHRISTIANS AID APPEAL
St Mary, Calvary, ITH ................................. $3,542.00
Three Hierarchs, Bellevue, WA ....................... $3,000.00
Holy Trinity, Vancouver, BC ......................... $875.00
Sts Peter & Paul, Dearborn Hts, MI ................. $667.00
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Palm Springs, CA ........... $600.00
St Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH ................... $557.00
Holy Forty Martyrs Mission, Aurora, ON ............ $500.00
St Mary, Portland, OR ................................... $489.00
Holy Cross, Westerville, OH ............................ $403.00
St Mary, St Paul, MN ..................................... $400.00
St Dumitru, New York, NY ............................. $340.00
St John Mission, Harlingen, TX ...................... $300.00
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Sts Michael & Gabriel, Sacramento, CA ............ $229.00
St George Cathedral, Southfield, MI ............... $178.00
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Lavinia Cosmin, Westlake, OH ......................... $75.00
Mariana & Christian Spanu, North Olmsted, OH .... $50.00
Sorin & Delia Cuc, Farmington Hills, MI ............ $25.00
Eleanor Stepanski, Troy, MI ............................ $25.00
Adrian Turc, Willowick, OH ............................ $25.00
Dorothy Aldea, Royal Oak, MI ......................... $20.00
Mihai & Veronica Bulat, San Jose, CA ............... $20.00
Ionel & Roxana Satnoianu, Rocky River, OH .......... $20.00
Mariana Tipa, White Lake, MI ......................... $20.00
Kenneth & Jennifer Wansack,
   West Middlesex, PA ................................... $20.00
Michael & Liliana Schuster, Plymouth, MI .......... $10.00
David E Long, Star City, IN ........................... $5.00

CAMP VATRA MATTRESS PROJECT
National ARFORA ........................................... $300.00
(In Honor of Archbishop Nathaniel & Bishop Irineu)
Debbie Brousseau Moga, Northville, MI ............. $300.00
Rev Fr Cornel & Psa Louisa Todeasa,
   Monroe, CT ............................................. $293.10
William Monroe, Brooklyn, OH ....................... $150.00
Jennifer M Monroe-Sega, Columbus, OH ............ $150.00
John & Lucy Popp, Northville, IL .................... $150.00
(IMO Fr John Toconiuta) ............................... $150.00
Bruce & Joyce Moldovan, Parma, OH ................. $100.00
Viorel & Luminita Nikodin,
   Farmington Hills, MI ................................. $50.00
Olivian C Grama, Berea, OH ........................... $20.00

 Continued on page 15
Clergy/Parish/Monastery Changes

Ordinations

MCDONALD, Subdeacon Paul, was ordained into the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence, Archbishop NATHANIEL, on 23 March 2014, at Sts. Constantine & Helen Church, Indianapolis, IN and assigned Parish Deacon there.

URSICA, Monk IOAN, was ordained into the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence, Archbishop NATHANIEL, on 27 December 2013, at Ascension Monastery, Clinton, MI for service there.

Assignments / Releases / Acceptance

AGOSTON, Rev. Fr. Florentin Gabriel, was appointed Parish Priest of Holy Trinity Church, Youngstown, OH, effective 1 April 2014.

BADAN, Rev. Fr. Valerian, was accepted into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America by the Episcopate Council on 29 March 2014, and is attached to St. Nicholas Church, Montreal QC.

BICA, Rev. Fr. Florin, who was temporarily assigned as Parish Priest of Holy Trinity Church, Youngstown, OH, was released from his duties, effective 31 March 2014, and is attached to St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH, awaiting assignment.

CONSTANTIN, Rev. Fr. Lucian, was appointed Parish Priest of St. Nicholas Church, Regina, SK, effective 22 December 2013.

(FURDUI), Rev. Hierodeacon NEONIL, who was released temporarily from Ascension Monastery, Clinton, MI to form a skete in the Pacific Deanery, was assigned to Resurrection Monastic Community, Temecula, CA, effective 30 March, 2014.

HOARSTE, Rev. Fr. Dan, who is attached to St. Mary Hierarchal Chapel, Grass Lake, MI, is assigned as Chairman of the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, effective 29 March 2014.

NEMES, Rev. Fr. Ilie Geani, was appointed Parish Priest of St. Nicholas Church, Alliance, OH, effective 31 March 2014.

(RODILA), Rev. Hieromnonk DIONISIE, who was released temporarily from Ascension Monastery, Clinton, MI to form a skete in the Pacific Deanery, was assigned Abbot of Holy Resurrection Monastic Community, Temecula, CA, effective 30 March, 2014.

STANCIU, Protopresbyter Panteleimon, resigned from the office of Parish Priest of St. Nicholas Church, Alliance, OH, and was released from his duties, effective 31 December 2013.

Suspensions

LUTAI, Rev. Fr. Claudiu, assigned to Holy Cross Church, Alexandria, VA, was temporarily suspended from all priestly functions, effective 10 March 2014.

Awards

During the Holy Synod Meeting in March 2014, the following clergy received Synodal Awards based on their years of service: Protopresbyter (40+ years): Archpriests Adrian Balcescu, Vasile Barsan, Dumitru Ichim, Nicolae Stoleru. Archpriest (15+ years): Priests Mihai Cociu, Octavian Mahler, Ciprian Pasca, Ioan Fioceanu.

New Monastery

Holy Resurrection Monastic Community, Temecula, CA, was accepted as a monastery under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America by the Episcopate Council on 29 March 2014.

Invitation Saint Elias Orthodox Church

Ellwood City, Pennsylvania
100 Year Anniversary

His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel presiding

Saturday, July 19, 2014
5:00 pm: Supper at Parish Life Center
6:30 pm: Memorial Service
7:00 pm: Great Vespers

Sunday, July 20, 2014
Feastday of Saint Elias
8:30 am: Great Matins
9:30 am: Holy Liturgy
Thanksgiving Service for 100 Years
Parish Photo, Coffee & Pastries
1:30 pm: Festive Banquet

Financial Report Continued from page 14

Department of Missions

Atlantic Deanery, New York, NY ................. $6,307.86
National ARFORA
(2013 St Paraschiva Mission Project) ........... $3,200.00
St George Ladies Auxiliary, Winnipeg, MB ...... $847.20
Transfiguration Mission, Hartford, CT .......... $200.00
Rev Dn Dan & Teodora Chiru, Aurora, ON ...... $200.00
St Anne, Claremont, CA .......................... $200.00
St John Ladies Auxiliary, Woonsocket, RI ...... $150.00
Presentation of Our Lord, Fairlawn, OH ........... $40.00
Helen Leonte, Indio, CA ........................ $25.00

Department of Religious Education

St Dimitrie, Easton, CT ........................... $1,000.00

Stanitz Scholarship Fund

Lynn Ann Nitzu, Schaumburg, IL ................. $25.00
New Monastic Community...

Continued from page 11

The monks state: “God, through the intercessions of His Holy Mother, the Most Blessed Theotokos, has provided for us a monastic site with home, buildings, gardens, orchards and many blessings on which to begin our monastic communal life. We have twenty acres of land, which will help us provide income, in addition to the making of ecclesiastical vestments through the talents of Hierodeacon Neonil. The monastery property was purchased in February with a substantial gift from a major benefactor. We have a mortgage payment, and with God’s grace, we will be able to fulfill our obligation. In addition, there are men who have been in contact with us who are seeking the monastic life, and who plan on becoming a part of our community.”

Anyone wanting to know more about the Holy Resurrection Monastery can write to: Rev. Fr. Dionisie, Holy Resurrection Orthodox Monastery, 48600 Via Vaquero Rd., Temecula, CA 92590. Tel. 951-506-2890. E-mail: resurrectionmonastery@gmail.com.

Family Life Conference

Continued from page 2

• Registration form (with Permission form for Minors)
• Housing Options
• Conference Souvenir/Program Book Ad Contract (Booklet contributions help to defray the expenses associated with the conference.

This year, we are planning to include a number of archival photos of Archbishop Valerian. We invite all to submit their photo contributions. In addition, we have collected a number of photos from the Vatra archives for inclusion in the book. We especially encourage sponsorship of these pages.

So, mark your calendars for June 26–29, 2014! We invite you all to draw near, with faith and love, gathering with us as a Church Family at the Vatra once again this year.

In Christ,

Members of the Planning Committee

Losing Our Religion ...

Continued from page 13


[6] Again, I am speaking in broad, statistically significant trends. The reality is that most young people who drift away from their family’s Orthodox Christian roots do not even try to get married in the Church, much less raise their families as practicing Orthodox Christians. Nevertheless, there are some who do. Personally, I have known many Orthodox Christians who married a Catholic or Protestant person and, over time, managed not only to raise their children in the Orthodox Church but to find unanimity of belief between themselves, with the heterodox spouse converting to Orthodoxy, sometimes after many years. So, it can be done. However, if we are honest, such laudable examples are the exception to the rule, both in our own lives and certainly when viewed on the national level.

Seraphim Danckaert, a graduate of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Amsterdam Centre for Eastern Orthodox Theology within the Faculty of Theology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Some of his other articles are available on his academia.edu page (http://ptsem.academia.edu/SeraphimDanckaert). This article was published with permission from the author.
SĂRBĂTOAREA BISERICII ROMÂNEȘTI
DIN AURORA, ONTARIO - 9 MARTIE 2014

Pr. Ștefan Morariu
Pr. Antonel Dumitru

Martirii Sfântilor Patruzece de Mucenici sunt cunoscuți și sărbătorit în toată lumea creștină. Statonicia credinței lor, puterea făcătoare de minuni a rugăciunilor și jertfelnica desăvârșită au fost pilduite pentru tot clerus și poporul creștin preocupat de dobândearea cununii veșnice ale bunătății purtând în multe rânduri în existența de cinci ani a bisericii noastre, pomenirea lor se bucură de o rânduială liturgică bogată, dar și de multe tradiții populare, specifice mai ales etnografiei românești.

Fiind așa de îndrăgitoare în ortodoxia românească, biserica noastră din Aurora este binecuvântată de Dumnezeu să-aibă ocrotitori pe Sfinții Patruzeci de Mucenici din Sevastia Armeniei. Rugăciunile și mijlocirile sfinților pe lângă Domnul nostru Iisus Hristos s-au văzut în multe rânduri în existența de cinci ani a bisericii noastre. Propovăduirea preotilor slujitori și rugăciunile și dăruirea credincioșilor tot mai numeroși ai bisericii noastre au fost necontenit îndrumate și ocrotite prin grija celor Patruzeci de Sfinți.

La prăznuirea sfinților noștri din acest an, 9 martie 2014, se adaugă încă o bucurie, și anume împlinirea a cinci ani de când a fost întemeiată biserica noastră, cu binecuvântare arhierească. Rugăciunea împreună cu efortul înzestrat al credincioșilor români din Americă pentru desăvârșirea spirituală și închinarea acestor eforturi în viața bisericii ortodoxe de pe pământul american.

Sfânta Liturghie Arhierească s-a bucurat de prezența doamnei Antonella Marinescu, Consulul General al României la Toronto, dar și de numeroși credincioși dornici de comuniune liturgică la singura biserică românească de pe continentul american care îi are ocrotitori și rugători pe Sfinții Patruzeci de Mucenici și care adăpostește precum și Sfântele Moaște. În contextul Duminicii Ortodoxiei, Pr. Dan Hoarște a cuvântat despre închinarea icoanelor, atât de necesară și binefăcătoare oricărei credincioși care să fie pregătită la adorarea acestor ierusalim pentru credincioșii care trec prin viața a fi în deschidere și închinare pentru credincioși care vor să fie pregătiți pentru prietenia cu Dumnezeu din pătraștul bisericii creștine ortodoxe din America.
Scrioare Pastorală la Învierea Domnului 2014

+ Nathaniel

Din mila lui Dumnezeu și Voia Poporului
Arhiepiscop de Detroit și al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America
Biserica Ortodoxă în America

Iubirii noastră cler, monahilor și binecredincioșilor creștini ai de Dumnezeu-păzitei noastre Episcopii,
Har, Milă și Pace de la Dumnezeu, iar de la noi, părintească dragostă și arhieresc binecuvântări,

Hristos a INVIAT!

Ziua Învierii, să ne luminăm, popoare, Paștile Domnului, Paștile! Că din moarte la viață și de pe pământ la cer, Hristos Dumnezeu ne-a trecut pe noi, Cei ce-I cântăm cântare de biruință, Hristos a înviat din morți! (Canonul Inviere, I)

Iubiți întru Hristos,

Ziua Învierii este ziua de bucurie pentru toată lumea! Este bine știut că toți oameni se nasc, iar apoi toți vom muri. Ceea ce a fost viu, moare; iar ceea ce a fost mort, trăiește! Învierea înseamnă distrugerea morții. Universalitatea nașterii, a morții și a învierii include întreaga omenire. De aceea, înțelegând că moartea nu mai poate fi temută, fiecare dintre noi are șansa de a trăi cu adevărat liberi față de parță care neîncetată ne împing să trăiească în lăzi și cu cum nu am fi responsabili pentru viața noastră. Creștinul, și de fapt întreaga omenire, trăiește în prezența Creatorului și trebuie să dăm seama de tot ceea ce face în viață.

“Pentru că adevăratul motiv al învierii este numai pentru judecată; și deci este necesar ca trupurile care au fost părăse fiabile trebui să fie aceleași trupuri care vor fi ridicate din mormânt spre judecată, căci fiecare om primește cele făcute în trup, după ceea ce a făcut, fie că a fost lucru un bun sau unul rău” (Tertulian, Apologia 48).


În timp ce pentru cei mai tineri, moartea este doar un cuvânt, pentru cei care înțeleg că tot omul moare, atunci realitatea morții are un mesaj personal profund: “tot omul moare, alții au murit; și deci și eu voi muri.” Cu timpul, omul începe să înțeleagă că fiecărui îi este dat un timp limitat de a trăi pe pământ. De aceea este bine știut că moartea este realitatea universală care afectează gândirea, faptele și deci existența noastră. Ne comportăm așa pentru că știm că vom muri; și îndată ce înțelegem acest lucru cu adevărat, credem că, fie, vom învia la a Doua Venire a lui Hristos, sau credem că existența noastră personală este ștearsă complet odată cu moartea noastră. Moartea personală a fiecaruia este o realitate și de obște, comună. Dar în același timp creștinii trăiesc cu credință că există și înviere pentru întreagă omenire și deci “trebuie să așteptăm cu toții timpul învierii prescris de Dumnezeu și vestit de profeti, că înviind, să nu ne ridicăm, că toți cei pe care Dumnezeu i-a aflat vrednici de această cinste” (Sf. Irineu, Impotriva Erezilor, 5:31-32).

În Vechiul Testament (Ieșire, cap. 12), aflăm că Îngerul Morții trece pe casele evreilor din Egipt deoarece acestea erau însemnate prin stropirea cu sângele mielului pascal. Acesta a fost, Paștele sau Tre- cerea temporară, adică scăparea sau eliberarea de Îngerul Morții care venea în casele egiptenilor pentru a lua viața celor întâi născuți ai lor ca pedeapsă. Acest lucru este amintit în fiecare an în casele evreilor. Dar aceasta este doar o sărbătoare a unui lucru temporar și istoric; pentru că nu a izbăvit omenirea de moarte.
În Noul Testament, auzim că Sângele lui Hristos, jerfit pe Cruce a stropit întreaga omenire de la început și până la sfârșitul veacului. Acesta este Paștele adevărat și permanent, adică biruința eternă a vieții asupra morții prin jertfa, nu a unui miel neprihănit din turașă, ci prin însuși Mielul lui Dumnezeu din înălțimea Cerului, Hristos, cel care ridică păcatele lumii, “cel ce primește și este primit, cel ce se oferă și este oferit.” Hristos este în același timp, Dumnezeu din veci, “născut din Tatâl mai înainte de veci” și care s-a întrupat în veacul istoric luând fiirea nostră omenească, “pentru noi oamenii și pentru a noastră mântuire s-a pogorât din ceruri și s-a întrupat de la Duhul Sfânt și din Fecioara Maria, și s-a făcut om. Și s-a răstignit pentru noi” ne spune Crezul.

Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare ne mărturisește că “Dumnezeu s-a făcut om pentru ca omul să devină ca Dumnezeu” și continuă zicând că “nu a fost moartea Sa, ceea ce Mântuitorul a venit să plinească, ci aceea a oamenilor. Domnul a plinit în special învierea trupului; pentru că răsplata biruinței asupra morții este ființa umană înviată, arătată tuturor” (Despre Intrupare, 22). Hristos, Domnul nostru, a murit, a fost îngropat, a înviat și de aceea “cântăm cântare de biruință” cântare prăznuind învierea lui Iisus Hristos și cântare prăznuind învierea întregii omeniri, a însăși învierii noastre în ziua din urmă. Aceasta este bucuria cea adevărată din această mare zi.

Și cum va fi aceasta și în ce fel trebuie să trăim și să ne comportăm? Sfântul Chiril al Ierusalimului din secolul al 4-lea ne spune frumos: “Acest trup trebuie înviat, neștiind că astfel îl împreună cu Dumnezeu îl înviat. Prin primirea nestricăciunii, va fi transformat - precum fierul împreunat cu focul devine foc - precum Domnul Cel ce ne înviiază însăși și el. Nu va exista ca un trup veșnic, va fi înviat, dar nu va rămâne cum a fost. Ci va exista ca un trup veșnic. Nu va necesita pentru a viața hrână ca acum, nici scară pentru a urca; pentru că va fi un trup spiritual, un lucru minunat, pe care nu avem posibilitatea măcar să îl descriem” (Sf. Chiril al Ierusalimului, Discursuri Catehetice 18:18).

Iubiții mei, cum pășim înainte pas cu pas în acest mare mar al vieții care îl avem aici pe pământ, trebuie să răspundem chemării Sfintei Evangelhii a lui Hristos și a Îndemnelor Sfinților Părinți ai Bisericii. Să pășim în viața cu Hristos împreună, care este aici și acum cu noi, și care ne așteaptă să ne primească în viața cea veșnică mai întreprinză pentru cei de aproape și pentru cei de departe ai dumneavoastre.

Hristos a Inviat! Adevărat a Inviat!

Primiți ale noastre părintești și arhierești binecuvântări pentru cei de aproape și pentru cei de departe ai dumneavoastre.

+ NATHANIEL, Arhiepiscop
CONFERINȚĂ “VIATA DE FAMILIE SI ORGANIZAȚIILE AUXILIARE ALE EPISCOPIEI” - 26-29 IUNIE, 2014

COMMENORARE SPECIALĂ A ARHIEPISCOPULUI VALERIAN CU OCASIA ANIVERSĂRIII A 100 DE ANI DE LA NASTERE

Programul de weekend...

Va invitam la: un weekend “Viata de Familie si Organizatiile Auxiliare”

Cand: 26-29 Iunie, 2014 (joi-duminica)

Unde: Vatra Romaneasca, Jackson, Michigan

Motto: “Cu credinta si cu dragoste sa va apropiati”

EVENIMENTE:

- Slujbe religioase: Rugaciunile diminetii si rugaciuni de seara, parastas, Sfanta Liturghie
  Sedintele organizatiilor auxiliare: ARFORA (Asociatia Reuniunii de Femei), Tineretul AROY, Brotherhood (Fratia Ortodoxa)

- Alte intalniri: preoți, preotești, educație crestina/scoala duminicala

- Seminarii cu tematica/ discutii in grup, pentru imbogatirea spirituala a persoanelor individuale, a familiilor si a parohiilor
  - Cum sa ne pastram credinta ortodoxa si sa o transmetem copiilor nostri; Cum sa tinem tineretul aproape de biserica
  - Imbinarea vietii personale, profesionale si religioase
  - Primiti-L pe Dumnezeu in casele crestine ortodoxe
  - Apropiati-va de Dumnezeu in timpul Liturghiei
  - Episcopul Valerian si organizatiile auxiliare de pe langa Episcopie
  - Si multe altele...

- Ajutorarea altora – proiect special

- Concurs “Cunosti Biblia” – Din Evanghelia dupa Matei
  - Echipete (3 persoane fiecare)
  - Bibliografie pentru scoala duminicala si adulti
  - Bibliografia a gasiti la: www.orthodoxyouth.org/Matthew
  - **Premii pentru participanti si echipete castigatoare

- Prezentari in timpul pranzului (cu invitatii speciali)— ARFORA si AROY/Brotherhood

- Activitati pentru scolari— lucru manual, pregatirea prescurii si a colivei, “Scavenger Hunt” (descoperirea comorilor de la Vatra), si multe altele

- Serbare campeneasca de deschidere (picnic)

- Exposiții, tururi informative, sanse de a va imbogațit spiritual prin discutii cu prelati, spovedanie si impartasanie...

Programul de Vineri Seara

Sa ne amintim cu piosenie si respect de cel ce a fost Episcopul Valerian la 100 de ani de la nastere.

Sambata Seara

Masa si Dans

Dumineca

Liturghie Arhierescu, urmata de Banchetul Festiv
Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur îndeemnă ca educația să înceapă a se realiza din vreme, formându-se copilului deprinderea cu cele bune, pentru că:
„Tinerețea este sălbatică, având nevoie de mulți priveghetori, dascăli, pedagogi, îngrijitori, de mulți hrănitori […]. Tinerețea este ca un cal sălbatic, ca o fieră sălbatică, și dacă de la început și din cea mai fragedă vârstă a copilăriei îi vom pune niște hotare bune, după aceea nu vom avea nevoie de multe ostenele, ci obișnuința va fi ca o lege. Să nu-i lăsăm să facă ceva din cele plăcute și vătâmătoare, și nici să le facem ca unor copii toateuna pe plac, ci mai ales să-i ținem toateuna în întreaga înțelepciune și cumpătare, fiindcă abuzul în această privință pierde tinerimea mai mult decât orice.“

Departamentul de Educație pentru Tineret al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America

2014 TABERE de VARĂ

13-26 IULIE, 2014 (vârsta 14-17)
Centrul Eparhial la Vatra Românească,
Grass Lake, Michigan SUA
Rev Fr Dan Hoarste, Director
517 522-4800 ext 213
dan.hoarste@gmail.com

27 IULIE - 9 AUGUST, 2014 (vârsta 11-13)
Centrul Eparhial la Vatra Românească,
Grass Lake, Michigan SUA
Dna Preoteasa Mary Ellen Rosco, Director
313 562-1521
campvatrajuniors@hotmail.com

28 IULIE - 1 AUGUST, 2014 (vârsta 12-17)
Mân. Maicii Domnului / Victory Bible Camp,
Brownsburg-Chatham, QC, CANADA
Pr Dan Hoarște, Director
517 522-4800 ext 213
dan.hoarste@gmail.com

TABARA SF. NICOLAE
6-12 IULIE, 2014 (vârsta 12-16)
Centrul Protopeniatului (Canadei de Vest) la Fort Qu’Appelle
Saskatchewan, CANADA
PC Diac Dan Chirtu, Administrator
416 564-7503 sau 306 332-5900
dchirtu@hotmail.com
Pr Dan Hoarște, Director
dan.hoarste@gmail.com

TABARA de SENIORI de la VATRA

TABARA de JUNIORI de la VATRA

TABARA SF. MARIA MONTREAL

28 IULIE - 1 AUGUST, 2014 (vârsta 12-17)
Mân. Maicii Domnului / Victory Bible Camp,
Brownsburg-Chatham, QC, CANADA
Pr Dan Hoarște, Director
517 522-4800 ext 213
dan.hoarste@gmail.com

SOLIA MAR/APR 2014 RUGAȚI-VĂ ȘI LUCRAȚI PENTRU UNITATE ORTODOXĂ IN AMERICA DE NORD 21
Iubiți frați Preoții, Iubiți frații și surori în Hristos cel înviat.

Cu prilejul binecuvântat al Sfintelor Paști din acest an și după o lungă perioadă de timp în care nu am mai scris, revin cu mesajul duhovnicesc “Cuvânt de Suflet” care se vede că a plăcut multora și au insistat să revin în viața “Soliei”. Să dea Dumnezeu ca acest mesaj să folosească și să fie de zidire duhovnicească în viețile și sufletele multora.

Înainte de pătrimirea, moartea și învierea Mântuitorului nostru Isus Hristos, știm cu toții din scrierile Scripturii că Mântuitorul a înviat din morți pe prietenul său, Lazăr din Betania. După ce a murit Lazăr, Domnul Hristos s-a dus cu unceonicii săi la Betania și mai întâi L-a întâmpinat Marta, care a zis către Domnul Hristos: “Doamne de-ai fi fost aici, fratele meu n-ar fi murit.” Era încredințată Marta, sora lui Lazăr, că acolo unde Domnul Hristos se arată, este darul lui Dumnezeu și nu se poate întâmpina nicum râu.


Șfântul Isac Sirul spune că lacrimile sunt o manifestație pentru unele sau pentru doamnele și a scris ca: “Nu-ți am spus că dacă vei crede, vei vedea mărirea lui Dumnezeu?”. Nu știm când i-a spus lui Marta cuvintele acestea, dar se vede că Domnul Hristos le-a vorbit cu Marta cândva și despre asta și-a spus: “Dacă vei crede, vei vedea mărirea lui Dumnezeu”. Cel care crede vede mărețiile, că este mort de patru zile”. și Domnul Hristos, la cuvintele acestea ale Martei, a răspuns așa: “Nu-ți am spus că dacă vei crede, vei vedea că vei iubiți frați și surori, la intrarea în Ierusalimul din sufletul nostru. Iubiți frați și surori, la intrarea în Ierusalimul a Domnului Hristos au fost și oameni pătimași și oameni răi, și oamenii împotriviitori, și oameni care ști-au arătat nemulțumiri, aceia însă să-au acoperit cumva și au rămas cei bucurioși de Domnul Hristos, între care suntem și noi. Dacă o vorba numai de prăznuire, cu asta ne-am împlinit datoria, dar nu e
"BUN ȘI FOLOSITOR LUCRU ESTE A NE CUMINECA ȘI ȚIMPĂRĂȘI"

Învățăm de la Sfinții Părinți...

Sfântul Ierarh Vasile cel Mare despre Taina Euharistiei

Primele veacuri care ne deosebesc primordial de creștinii din primele veacuri este frecvența primirii Împărtășaniei. Așa cum am observat și în materialele precedente dedicate subiectului în cauză, creștinii din zilele noastre, să nu putem beneficia de un progres duhovnicesc autentic și la fel de intens precum cel avut de creștinii din primele veacuri.

Unul dintre aspectele care ne deosebesc primordial de creștinii din primele veacuri este faptul că nu există absolut nicio oprește pentru care, în zilele noastre, să nu putem beneficia de un progres duhovnicesc autentic și la fel de intens precum cel avut de creștinii din primele veacuri.

Pozitiv, acest lucru este permis să se împărtășească și fără a seSpoavi de fiecare dată înainte, dacă nu au săvârșit niciun păcat de moarte. Această regulă se întâlnese frecvent în diaspora și în comunitățile mici, unde preotul își cunoaștea și apreciau toate credincioșii și știe că se pot ap- rătă și să nu împiedice decât să demonstrăm că nu există. Spre exemplu, creștinii au dreptul să se prezentă la recâpătarea păcăturii care îi împiedică să împărtășească. În aceeași orice urmă de păcat din propria existență. Desigur, nu trebuie să se ajungă la situații în care credincioșii se împărtășesc cu indiferență sau nevrednică, nesocotind Darul primit. Însă o dreaptă socotelă trebuie să existe, iar acolo unde cazurile o permit, să se îngăduie apropierea mai deasă de Taina Euharistiei, dacă se observă un progres real al cred inciosului în relația cu Dumnezeu și el își dorește să împărtășească mai des pe Hristos în câmara sufletului său, după cum se-a pregătit cum se cuvine.
Bun și folositor ... Cont. de la pag. 23

Sfânta Împărtășanie acasă și de a se cununca singuri oricând voiesc. Acest obicei nu trebuie să ne mire. În creștinismul primar existau doar două categorii de creștini: cei care se împărtășeau la fiecare Liturghie și cei care erau opruși să o facă. Astați, sunt multe trepte intermediare, care nu sunt străine de o anumită indiferență față de primirea Euharistiei, pușă sub masca unui evlavii fanteziste. Încrederea ierarhiei în laici era una atât de mare tocmai pentru că aceștia aveau o viață duhovnicească bogată și se comportau față de Sfânta Împărtășanie nu într-un mod indolent sau respingător, ci cu toată dragostea. Însă acest obicei a trebuit să dispară din cauza unei persoane care au fost oprite de la împărtășire și au continuat să o ia pe ascuns, săvârșind un veritabil sacrilegi, precum și din cauza unor oameni răi, care, prin ipocirie, mascau adevărata lor intenție de a folosi Euharistia pentru acte vrăjitoare sau nu o păstra în condiții adecvate, ci ca pe o simplă pâine stropită cu vin, nicidecum ca pe Trupul și Sângele lui Hristos.

Ceea ce învățăm din acest studiu de caz este că nu trebuie să ne întocăm la toate practicile din trecut. Unele au trecut și nu mai pot fi aduse în prezent - așa cum este exemplul cuminecării acasă de un singur după ce ai primit Euharistia pentru a le împărtăși atunci când doresi. Altele însă - așa cum este cazul împărtășirii frecvente - trebuie încurajate, deoarece ajută foarte mult la creșterea noastră duhovnicească, ne fac practic mult mai „vii”, mai capabili să ne dăm seama de Darul uluitor pe care Dumnezeu L-a dăruit oamenilor. Întreabarea cu care trebuie să rămânem este cea pusă de Sfântul Vasile cel Mare: „Cine se dorință de a fi sufletul Domnului?”. Răspunsul nu poate fi decât unul singur: cel indiferent față de Viața Noastră. Bine și folositor ...

Cuvânt de Suflet Cont. de la pag. 22

vorbă numai de prăznuire, ci e vorba și de cercetare. Adică, prima întrebare în legătură cu aceasta ar fi: Noi cum îl întâmpinăm pe Domnul Hristos? Avem noi dorința de a aduce preamărire? Simțim în sufletul nostru o pornire spre preamărirea Mântuitorului nostru, Iisus Hristos? O facem aceasta numai din ritual sau o facem pentru că n-am putea să o facem când știm despre cele ce le-a făcut Domnul Hristos la intrarea în Ierusalim?

Și încă o cercetare. Așa cum Domnul Hristos a intrat în Ierusalim, tot așa intră și în sufletele noastre, mai ales atunci când ne împărtăşim cu Trupul și Sângele Mântuitorului. Avem noi stări sufletești ca cele ale acelor care au zis: „Osana întru cei de sus! Bine este cuvântat Cel ce vine întru numele Domnului!”.

adriane agachi

(articul preluat din Ziarul lumina, 6 feb. 2014)