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# SOLIA

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# SOLIA

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**COVER: June 26, 2016: Orthros and Synodal Divine Liturgy at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Chania, Crete.** His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presides over the Orthros and Synodal Divine Liturgy and concelebrates with the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Chania, Crete. PHOTO: © JOHN MINDALA.

## PASTORAL CHANGES

### ORDINATIONS

**CICCIARELLI, Nicholas**, was ordained into the Holy Diaconate on June 9, 2016, by His Eminence, Archbishop NATHANIEL, at Exaltation of the Holy Cross Church, Phoenix AZ, and attached there.

**CICCIARELLI, Deacon Nicholas**, was ordained into the Holy Priesthood on June 12, 2016, by His Eminence, Archbishop NATHANIEL, at Exaltation of the Holy Cross Church, Phoenix AZ, and attached there.

### RELEASED / ASSIGNED

**NICHITEAN, Rev. Fr. Bogdan**, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of St. John the Hozevite Church, Lakewood CO, and assigned Parish Priest of Descent of the Holy Spirit Church, Oregon City OR, effective June 15, 2016.

**SATNOIANU, Rev. Fr. Ionel**, was released from his duties as Assistant Priest of St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland OH, and assigned Parish Priest of St. George Church, Canton OH, effective June 1, 2016.

**TREFF, V. Rev. Fr. George**, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of St. George Church, Canton OH, and assigned Parish Priest of Holy Cross Church, Hermitage PA, effective June 1, 2016.

### RETIRED

**MUNTEAN, Protopresbyter Vasile**, who was suspended on April 14, 2016, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of Descent of the Holy Spirit Church, Oregon City OR and granted retirement, effective June 1, 2016.

**TODEASA, Rev. Dr. Cornel**, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of St. Dimitrie Church, Easton CT, and granted retirement, effective May 16, 2016.

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# FINANCIAL REPORT

## EPISCOPATE SUPPORTER

V Rev Fr Michael & Psa Lillian Lupu, Calgary, AB .....	\$1,000.00
Elaine Luca, Struthers, OH.....	\$50.00
Aldena G Jinar, Ellwood City, PA .....	\$25.00

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M/M Ioan Braescu, Redford, MI .....	\$5.00

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Maria Risca, Oakland, MI .....	\$50.00
(IMO Alexandru Risca, Rev Fr Alexandru & Psa Maria Risca, Ilie & Constantina Calin)	

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Antoinette Scala Robertson, Oakton, VA.....	\$244.20
Rachel Chebeleu, North Wales, PA.....	\$200.00
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Rev Fr/Psa Cosmin Vint, Ft Qu'Appelle, SK .....	\$48.10

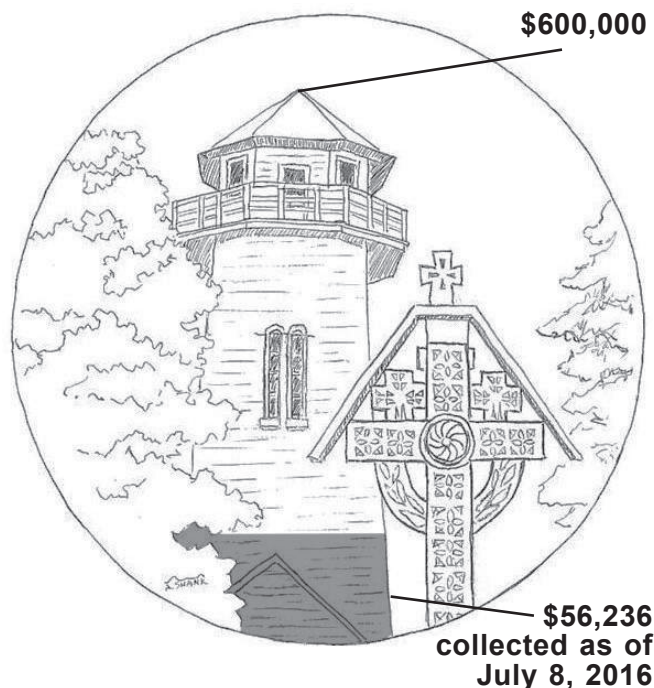
## EPISCOPATE ASSESSMENT

Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL .....	\$10,000.00
St George, Toronto, ON .....	\$6,425.00
Holy Cross, Alexandria, VA .....	\$2,000.00
Holy Ascension, Montreal, QC .....	\$1,675.00
St Mary, Las Vegas, NV .....	\$650.00
Holy Archangels Mission, Haledon, NJ (2015) ....	\$500.00
St George, Canton, OH (2017) .....	\$500.00
St Mary of Magdala, Houston, TX .....	\$270.00
Holy Trinity, MacNutt, SK .....	\$210.00

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# ETHIOPIAN BIBLE IS THE OLDEST AND MOST COMPLETE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE ON EARTH



Written in Ge'ez, an ancient dead language of Ethiopia it's nearly 800 years older than the King James Version and contains 81-88 books compared to 66. It includes the Book of ENOCH, Esdras, Buruch and all 3 Books of MACCABEE, and a host of others that was excommunicated from the KJV.

## World's first illustrated Christian bible discovered at Ethiopian monastery

The world's earliest illustrated Christian book has been saved by a British charity which located it at a remote Ethiopian monastery. The incredible Garima Gospels are named after a monk who arrived in the African country in the fifth century and is said to have copied them out in just one day. Beautifully illustrated, the colours are still vivid and thanks to the Ethiopian Heritage Fund have been conserved. Abba Garima arrived from Constantinople in 494 AD and legend has it that he was able to copy the gospels in a day because God delayed the sun from setting.

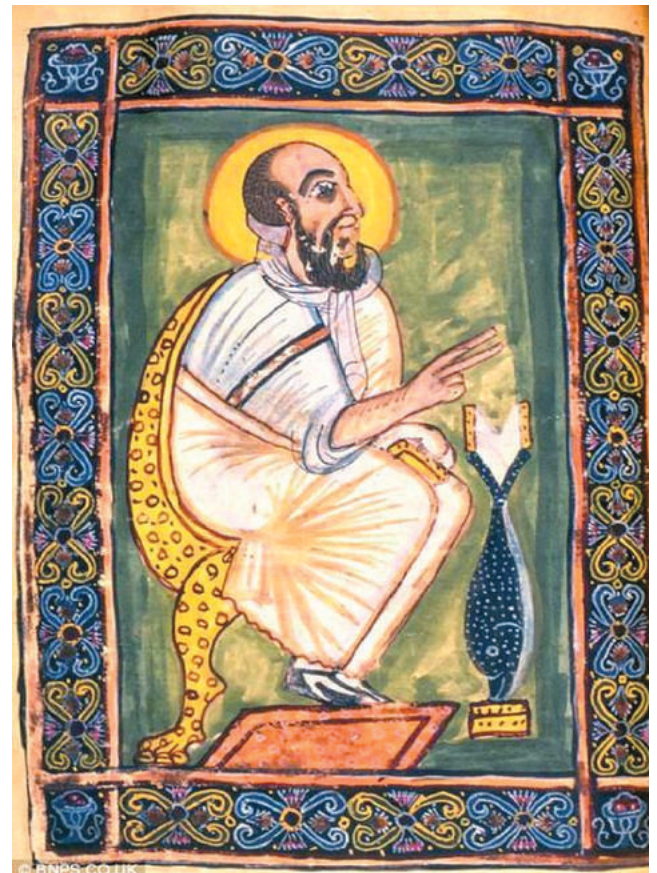
The incredible relic has been kept ever since in the Garima Monastery near Adwa in the north of the country, which is in the Tigray region at 7,000 feet. Experts believe it is also the earliest example of book binding still attached to the original pages. The survival of the Gospels is incredible considering the country has been under Muslim invasion, Italian invasion and a fire in the 1930s destroyed the monastery's church.

They were written on goat skin in the early Ethiopian language of Ge'ez. There are two volumes which date from the same time, but the second is written in a different hand from the first. Both contain illustrations and the four Gospels. Though the texts had been mentioned by the occasional traveller since the 1950s, it had been thought they dated from the 11th century at the earliest. Carbon dating, however, gives a date between 330 and 650 – which tantalisingly overlaps the date Abba Garima arrived in the country. So the

first volume could be in his hand – even if he didn't complete the task in a day as the oral tradition states.

The charity, Ethiopian Heritage Fund, that was set up to help preserve the treasures in the country, has made the stunning discovery. It was also allowed incredibly rare access to the texts so experts could conserve them on site. The incredible relic has been kept ever since in the Garima Monastery near Adwa in the north of Ethiopia. It is now hoped the Gospels will be put in a museum at the monastery where visitors will be able to view them. Blair Priday from the Ethiopian Heritage Fund said: 'Ethiopia has been overlooked as a source of these fantastic things. 'Many of these old Christian relics can only be reached by hiking and climbing to remote monasteries as roads are limited in these mountainous regions. 'All the work on the texts was done in situ and everything is reversible, so if in the future they can be taken away for further conservation, we won't have hindered that. 'The pages had been crudely stitched together in a restoration in the 1960s, and some of the pages

*Cont. on page 10*



A page from the Garima Gospels – the world's oldest Christian book found in a remote monastery in Ethiopia.



# ENCYCLICAL OF THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH — CRETE 2016

## *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*

With a hymn of thanksgiving, we praise and worship God in Trinity, who has enabled us to gather together during the days of the feast of Pentecost here on the island of Crete, which has been sanctified by St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, and his disciple Titus, his “true son in the common faith” (Tit 1.4), and, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to conclude the sessions of this Holy and Great Council of our Orthodox Church – convened by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, by the common will of Their Beatitudes the Primates of the most holy Orthodox Churches – for the glory of His most holy Name and for the great blessing of His people and of the whole world, confessing with the divine Paul: “Let people then regard us thus: as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4.1).

The Holy and Great Council of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church constitutes an authentic witness to faith in Christ, the God-man, the Only-begotten Son and Word of God who, through His Incarnation, through all His work on earth, through His Sacrifice on the Cross and through His Resurrection, revealed the Triune God as infinite love. Therefore, with one voice and one heart we address this message of “the hope that is in us” (cf. 1 Pet 3.15) not only to the sons and daughters of our most holy Church, but also to every human being, “whether near or far off” (Eph 2.17). “Our hope” (cf. 1 Tim 1.1), the Savior of the world, was revealed as “God with us” (cf. Matt 1.23) and as God “for our sake” (Rom 8.32), who “desires that all people may be saved and come to the knowledge of truth” (1 Tim 2.4). Proclaiming His mercy and not concealing His great blessings, in remembrance of the Lord’s words that “heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matt 24.35) and “filled with joy” (1 John 1.4), we announce the Gospel of faith, hope and love, looking forward to that “day without evening, without succession and without end” (Basil the Great, *On the Hexaemeron II*, PG 29.54). The fact that we have “our citizenship in heaven” (Phil 3.20) in no way negates, but rather strengthens our witness in the world.

In this we follow the tradition of the Apostles and of the Fathers of our Church who proclaimed Christ and

the saving experience through Him of the Church’s faith, and who spoke of God in the “manner of fishermen casting a net,” that is to say in an apostolic manner, to the people of every age in order to transmit to them the Gospel of freedom “for which Christ has set us free” (cf. Gal 5.1). The Church lives not for herself. She offers herself for the whole of humanity in order to raise up and renew the world into new heavens and a new earth (cf. Rev 21.1). Hence, she gives Gospel witness and distributes the gifts of God in the world: His love, peace, justice, reconciliation, the power of the Resurrection and the expectation of eternal life.

\*\*\*

## *I. The Church: Body of Christ, image of the Holy Trinity*

1. The one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is a *divine-human communion in the image of the Holy Trinity*, a foretaste and experience of the eschaton in the holy Eucharist and a revelation of the glory of the things to come; and, as a continuing Pentecost, she is a prophetic voice in this world that cannot be silenced, the presence and witness of God’s Kingdom “that has come with power” (cf. Mark 9.1). The Church, as the body of Christ, “gathers” the world (Matt 23.37) to Him, transfigures it and irrigates it with “the water welling up to eternal life” (John 4.14).

2. The tradition of the Apostles and Fathers – following the words of the Lord, the founder of the Church, who at the Last Supper with his disciples, instituted the sacrament of the holy Eucharist - highlighted the Church’s characteristic as the “body of Christ” (Matt 25, 26; Mark 14.22; Luke 22.19; 1 Cor 10.16-17; 11.23-29), and always connected this with the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. In this spirit, emphasis was always placed on the indissoluble relation both between the entire mystery of the divine Economy in Christ and the mystery of the Church, and also between the mystery of the Church and the mystery of the holy Eucharist, which is continually confirmed in the sacramental life of the Church through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

*The Orthodox Church*, faithful to this unanimous apostolic tradition and sacramental experience, *constitutes the authentic continuation of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church*, as this is confessed in



the Symbol of faith and is confirmed in the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. Thus, she is conscious of her greater responsibility not only to ensure the authentic expression of this experience in the ecclesial body, but also to offer a trustworthy witness to the truth to all humankind.

3. The Orthodox Church, in her unity and catholicity, is *the Church of Councils*, from the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15.5-29) to the present day. The Church in herself is a Council, established by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, in accord with the apostolic words: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15.28). Through the Ecumenical and Local councils, the Church has proclaimed and continues to proclaim the mystery of the Holy Trinity, revealed through the incarnation of the Son and Word of God. The Conciliar work continues uninterrupted in history through the later councils of universal authority, such as, for example, the Great Council (879-880) convened at the time of St. Photios the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, and also the Great Councils convened at the time of St. Gregory Palamas (1341, 1351, 1368), through which the same truth of faith was confirmed, most especially as concerns the procession of the Holy Spirit and as concerns the participation of human beings in the uncreated divine energies, and furthermore through the Holy and Great Councils convened in Constantinople, in 1484 to refute the unionist Council of Florence (1438-1439), in 1638, 1642, 1672 and 1691 to refute Protestant beliefs, and in 1872 to condemn ethno-phyletism as an ecclesiological heresy.

4. The holiness of man (*anthropos*) cannot be conceived apart from the Body of Christ, “which is the Church” (cf. Eph 1.23). *Holiness proceeds from the One who alone is Holy*. It is participation of mankind in the holiness of God, in “the communion of the Saints,” as is proclaimed by the words of the priest during the Divine Liturgy: “The Holy Gifts for the holy,” and through the response of the faithful: “One is Holy; one is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.” In this spirit, Saint Cyril of Alexandria underscores that Christ, “Being holy by nature as God (...) is sanctified on our behalf in the Holy Spirit (...) and (Christ) performed this on our behalf, not on his own behalf, so that from him and in him, who first received this sanctification, the grace of being sanctified may thus pass to all humanity ...” (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 11, PG 74, 548).

According to St. Cyril, Christ is our “common person” through the recapitulation in his own humanity of the entire human race, “for we were all in Christ, and the common person of humanity comes to life again in him” (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, XI, PG 73. 157-161), and hence also he is the sole source of man’s sanctification in the Holy Spirit. In this spirit, holiness is man’s participation both in the sacrament of the Church and also in her sacred mysteries, with the

holy Eucharist at the center, which is “a living sacrifice, holy, and pleasing to God” (cf. Rom 12.1). “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But rather, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom 8.35-37). The saints embody the eschatological identity of the Church as an eternal doxology before the earthly and heavenly Throne of the King of Glory (Ps 23.7), providing an image of the Kingdom of God.

5. The Orthodox Catholic Church comprises fourteen local Autocephalous Churches, recognized at a pan-Orthodox level. The principle of autocephaly cannot be allowed to operate at the expense of the principle of the catholicity and the unity of the Church. We therefore consider that *the creation of the Episcopal Assemblies in the Orthodox Diaspora*, comprising all the recognized canonical bishops, who in each area are appointed to their respective assembly, and who remain under their canonical jurisdictions, represents a positive step towards their canonical organization; and the smooth functioning of these assemblies guarantees respect for the ecclesiological principle of conciliarity.

## ***II. The mission of the Church in the world***

6. *The apostolic work* and the proclamation of the Gospel, also known as *mission*, belong at the core of the Church’s identity, as the keeping and observation of Christ’s commandment: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28.19). This is the “breath of life” that the Church breathes into human society and makes the world into Church through the newly-established local Churches everywhere. In this spirit, the Orthodox faithful are and ought to be Christ’s apostles in the world. This mission must be fulfilled, not aggressively, but freely, with love and respect towards the cultural identity of individuals and peoples. All Orthodox Churches ought to participate in this endeavor with due respect for canonical order.

Participation in the holy Eucharist is a source of missionary zeal for the evangelization of the world. By participating in the holy Eucharist and praying in the Sacred Synaxis for the whole world (*oikoumene*), we are called to continue the “liturgy after the Liturgy” and to offer witness concerning the truth of our faith before God and mankind, sharing God’s gifts with all mankind, in obedience to the explicit commandment of our Lord before His Ascension: “And you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1.8). The words of the Divine Liturgy prior to Communion, “Dismembered and distributed is the Lamb of God, who is dismembered and not divided, ever eaten, yet never consumed,” indicate that Christ as the “Lamb of God” (John 1.29) and the “Bread of Life” (John 6.48) is offered to us as eternal Love, uniting us to God and to one another. It teaches us to distribute

God's gifts and to offer ourselves to everyone in a Christ-like way.

The life of Christians is a truthful witness to the renewal in Christ of all things – “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor 5.17) – and an invitation addressed to all people for personal and free participation in eternal life, in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the love of God the Father, in order to experience the communion of the Holy Spirit in the Church. “For the mystery of salvation is for those who desire it, not for those who are being coerced” (Maximus Confessor PG 90.880). The re-evangelization of God's people in contemporary secularized societies, as well as the evangelization of those who have not yet come to know Christ, is the unceasing duty of the Church.

### **III. The Family: Image of Christ's love towards the Church**

7. The Orthodox Church regards the indissoluble loving union of man and woman as a “*great mystery*” ... of Christ and the Church (Eph 5.32) and she regards the family that springs from this, which constitutes the only guarantee for the birth and upbringing of children in accord with the plan of divine Economy, as a “*little Church*” (John Chrysostom, *Commentary of the Letter to the Ephesians*, 20, PG 62.143), giving to it the appropriate pastoral support.

The contemporary crisis in marriage and the family is a consequence of the crisis of freedom as responsibility, its decline into a self-centered self-realization, its identification with individual self-gratification, self-sufficiency and autonomy, and the loss of the sacramental character of the union between man and woman, resulting from forgetfulness of the sacrificial ethos of love. Contemporary society approaches marriage in a secular way with purely sociological and realistic criteria, regarding it as a simple form of relationship – one among many others – all of which are entitled to equal institutional validity.

Marriage is a Church-nurtured workshop of life in love and an unsurpassed gift of God's grace. The “high hand” of the “conjoining” God is “invisibly present, harmonizing those being joined together” with Christ and with one another. The crowns that are placed on the heads of the bride and groom during the sacramental rite refer to the dimension of sacrifice and complete devotion to God and one another. They also point to the life of the Kingdom of God, revealing the eschatological reference in the mystery of love.

8. *The Holy and Great Council addresses itself with particular love and care to children and to all young people.* Amid the medley of mutually contradictory definitions of childhood, our most holy Church presents the words of our Lord: “Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 18.3) and “whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not

enter it (Luke 18.17), as well as what our Savior says about those who “prevent” (Luke 18.16) children from approaching Him and about those who “scandalize” them (Matt 18.6).

To young people, the Church offers not simply “help” but “truth,” the truth of the new divine-human life in Christ. Orthodox youth should become aware that they are bearers of the centuries-old and blessed tradition of the Orthodox Church and also the continuers of this tradition who will courageously preserve and will cultivate in a dynamic way the eternal values of Orthodoxy in order to give life-giving Christian witness. From among them will come the future ministers of the Church of Christ. The young people thus are not simply the “future” of the Church, but also the active expression of her God-loving and human-loving life in the present.

### **IV. Education in Christ**

9. In our time, new tendencies can be observed in the realm of upbringing and education in regard to the content and aims of education as well as in the way childhood, the role of both teacher and student and the role of the contemporary school are viewed. *Since education relates not only to what man is, but also to what man should be* and to the content of his responsibility, it is self-evident that the image we have of the human person and the meaning of existence determine our view of his education. The dominant secularized individualistic educational system that troubles young people today is of deep concern to the Orthodox Church.

At the center of the Church's pastoral concern is an education that looks not only to the cultivation of the intellect, but also to the edification and development of the whole person as a psycho-somatic and spiritual being in accordance with the triptych, *God, man and world*. In her catechetical discourse, the Orthodox Church caringly calls on the people of God, especially the young people, to a conscious and active participation in the life of the Church, cultivating in them the “excellent desire” for life in Christ. Thus, the fullness of the Christian people finds an existential support in the divine-human communion of the Church and experiences in this the resurrectional perspective of *theosis* by grace.

### **V. The Church in the face of contemporary challenges**

10. The Church of Christ today finds herself confronted by extreme or even provocative expressions of the ideology of secularization, inherent in political, cultural and social developments. A basic element of the ideology of secularization has ever been and continues to be the full autonomy of man from Christ and from the spiritual influence of the Church, by the arbitrary identification of the Church with conservatism and by the historically unjustified characterization of the Church as an alleged impediment to all progress and

*Cont. on page 11*

# IN LOVING MEMORY

## BLAISE CHRISTIAN HEBERT



**Blaise Christian Hebert**

“The living owe it to those who no longer can speak to tell their story for them.” - Czeslaw Milosz (quoted by Blaise in March 2015).

God blessed Christina (Cocora) and Scott Hebert with their first child, Blaise Christian, on February 16, 1996. Fr. Romey Rosco started Blaise in the altar at the age of 4. He was very attentive, always watching what the priest was doing and very glad to be there.

Blaise was a committed member of the Sts. Peter and Paul Youth Group, serving as President for the past 2 years. He especially promoted charitable works among the young people. Some people say he looks like his late uncle, Nick Cocora Jr. They shared a desire to help people in need, especially with holiday baskets of food, and deliver them personally. They showed that same sense of service to others. So, their resemblance was more than skin-deep. On the diocesan level, Blaise attended the Vatra Summer camps for several years both as a student and then as a counselor. Blaise also represented his church (together with his grandfather - ‘Mosu’ Nick Cocora Sr.) at the local Council of Orthodox Church’s monthly meetings. Blaise was one of the youngest Episcopate Supporters for a number of years. His photo also appeared for many years in the “Solia Calendar.”

Blaise graduated from Divine Child High School in Dearborn, Michigan, on May 18, 2014 with many honors. While attending high school taking honors classes, he was dual-enrolled at the University of Michigan taking classes earning even more college credits. His high school activities included marching, symphonic, jazz, pep bands and pit orchestra. As a member of the Forensic Team, he placed 3rd in the State Final for Extemporaneous Speaking. He was also a member of the International Thespian Society. Blaise achieved Eagle Scout status with his footbridge project completed in the wetland area at the University of Michigan - Dearborn. Blaise chose to attend Eastern Michigan University where he was accepted into the Honors College. Blaise pursued a double major in History and Computer Science with a minor in Political Science. He was a proud and dedicated member of the EMU Eagles Marching Band. Living on campus in the honors dorm allowed him to spread his *wings*.

Blaise worked part-time at EMU’s College of Business for the Dean. He also began working part-time nearby doing accounting for a catering company. Blaise would return home

most weekends to attend church and serve in the altar and participate in the Youth Group activities. He also enjoyed finer clothing, so he chose to work yet another part-time job on the weekends in a men’s clothing store where he had his suits made for himself. Still, he was always able to make time for his church and faith. He was a fifth generation member of Sts. Peter & Paul Romanian Orthodox Church.

Some of the Honors he received include the following: Advanced Placement Scholar with Distinction; Michigan Competitive Scholarship; President’s Education Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement; Alma College Dean’s Scholarship; Alma College Venture Funds; Wayne State University Green Scholarship; Winner of Achievement as an Outstanding Thespian - placed 1st in Michigan for sound technology; Winner of Outstanding Achievement as a National Honor Thespian; Winner of Outstanding Achievement in Band; Eastern Michigan University Emerald Scholarship; Varsity Letter and Award in Band, Theater, and Debate; Michigan Interscholastic Forensics Association Regional and State Level Finalist in Extemporaneous speaking; Dearborn Police Explorers Post #1177, where he served as quartermaster sergeant from 2012 to present; Eagle Scout (BSA Troop #1151) earning the Alpha Omega religious award for Orthodox Christians in 2009, as well as the World Conservation Award and the Order of the Arrow in 2010-2014. He also earned the Student Leadership Award from 2010-2014 at Divine Child High School.

Blaise Christian Hebert, age 19, fell asleep in the Lord, unexpectedly, on Thursday, May 21, 2015 (Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven and the Feast of Sts. Constantine & Helen). These two feast days rarely occur together – the last time was over 100 years ago!

He is survived by his parents Scott & Christina; Brother, Nathaniel Lazarus; sister, Stephanie & family Nasii, John & Connie Surducun and family; Godson; Xavier James; Grandfather, James Hebert; ‘Mosu’ Nick Sr. & ‘Baba’ Flora (Subu) Cocora; great-uncle Julian Subu & family and many beloved aunts, uncles, cousins and friends from all walks of life. He was predeceased by his Uncle Nicholas E.P. Cocora Jr.; great-Uncle Attorney George Nickolas Subu; and great-Aunt Mary (Subu) Lapadat.

Visitation and Saracusta took place on May 29, 2015 at the John N. Santeiu Funeral Home, Garden City, Michigan. The Funeral service was held at Sts Peter & Paul Romanian Orthodox Church, Dearborn Heights, MI, on May 30, in the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel. Special appreciation to V. Rev. Father Romey Rosco, Rev. Father Horatiu Balanean, V. Rev. Father Laurence Lazar, cousin Rev. Father David Subu, V. Rev. Father Dimitrie Vincent and John Eugene Lazar.

*Cont. on page 11*



# 68<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL A.R.F.O.R.A. CONGRESS

The 68<sup>th</sup> Annual ARFORA Congress was held at the VATRA, on June 23-26, 2016. This is the fourth year we held an All Auxiliaries Conference in conjunction with the Family Life Conference (FLC). This year, the Conference initiated the Special Episcopate Project “VATRA GENERATIONS”, which is a call to the Romanian Orthodox faithful to support the restoration of the “Hearth” of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The theme of the celebration was: Honor the PAST, Serve the PRESENT, Prepare for the FUTURE. This was the opportune time to initiate the appeal for funding of this most worthy project.

In addition to the annual meetings of the Auxiliaries, the Conference focused on activities for the entire family. The program included workshops on a variety of family-oriented themes, worship services, and opportunities to socialize with family and friends. The weekend sessions began with an Executive Board meeting on Thursday afternoon, followed by an Opening Prayer Service and an informal picnic.

On Friday morning, Rev. Fr. Florin Soare, ARFORA Spiritual Advisor, opened the Congress with a prayer. His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel welcomed the delegates to the VATRA. The Auxiliaries represented were: “Holy Cross”, Hermitage, PA; “Holy Nativity”, Chicago, IL; “St. Athanasius the Great”, Naperville, IL; “Presentation of Our Lord”, Fairlawn, OH; “Holy Trinity”, Youngstown, OH; “St. George” Cathedral, Southfield, MI; “Falling Asleep of the Ever-Virgin Mary” Cathedral, Cleveland, OH. We were very pleased to welcome Rev. Fr. George Treff, “Holy Cross”, Hermitage, PA and Rev. Fr. and Ps. Daniel Pop, Grand Rapids, MI.

The guest speaker at the ARFORA Luncheon was Mother Christophora, Abbess of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA. Her topic was “A Tribute to Mother Abbess Alexandra: Romanian Princess and Monastery Foundress”, on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of her repose. Mother Christophora’s presentation was most informative and inspirational.

The focus of the Conference was the Special Episcopate Project “VATRA GENERATIONS”.

ARFORA declared this the most opportune time to initiate the appeal for funding of this most worthy project. The Delegates donated \$2400.00. The ARFORA team (Lucy Pop, Adelina Balog, Corina Ghertan) in the BIBLE CHALLENGE donated their 2<sup>nd</sup> Place winnings of \$500.00. The Appeal will continue to all our Auxiliaries in the Episcopate.

After a lengthy discussion, Fr. Florin proposed that ARFORA create a FACEBOOK page. The session adjourned with a prayer and blessings by Fr. Florin and His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel. The day was concluded with evening prayers and an Informal Dinner. Saturday continued with the closing sessions

SOLIA MAY/JUNE 2016

of the Auxiliaries and a Memorial Service for all Deceased. A Formal Dinner followed by the “VATRA Generations” Cultural Evening and Fundraiser was enjoyed by all.

The Hierarchal Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Sunday morning, followed by a Dinner.

Steve Maxim, FLC Co-Chairman, was MC. He called on all Clergy and Auxiliary Presidents to say a few words. Corina Phillips concluded the program with the presentation of the A.R.F.O.R.A. Scholarship winners. The two Undergraduate recipients of \$1000.00 each, were Marina Thetford, “St. Elias” Church, Ellwood City, PA, and Samantha Breaz, “St. Dimitrie”, Church, Easton, CT. The Martha Gavrilu Graduate Scholarship of \$1000.00 was awarded to Ingrid Vatamanu, “St. Mary” Cathedral, Cleveland, OH.

Special thanks are offered to Rev. Fr. Ioan Lupescu and Ps. Ana and their entire staff, from “Holy Nativity”, Church, Chicago, IL, for hosting all the delicious meals for the weekend. We also thank Ps. Loredana, and the Ladies Auxiliary, “St. Athanasius the Great” Church, Naperville, IL, for hosting the Coffee Shop. Lastly, we thank the entire FLC committee for their hard work and dedication to the fourth Family Life Conference.

Our special appreciation is offered to His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel and to Rev. Fr. Florin Soare, our Spiritual Advisor, for their constant guidance and encouragement. And we especially thank His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel and the entire VATRA Staff for their gracious welcome and hospitality.

**Adela M. Price**  
National A.R.F.O.R.A. President

## SAYINGS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS IN THE DESERTS OF EGYPT

A brother asked an old man, saying: “How shall I be able to avoid despising my brother?” The old man said to him: “We and our neighbor are two faces. Now if we provide the mirror of prayer, we shall see the beam in our own eye, and we shall also see in the mirror the face of our brother, polished and pure.”

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A brother asked an old man and said: “What shall I do? For there is no feeling in my soul, and I have no fear of God.” The old man said to him: “Seek out a man who fears God, and then cling closely to him; and from him you will learn to fear God.”

# 84TH ANNUAL EPISCOPATE CONGRESS

Thursday, Sept. 1 – Sunday, Sept. 4, 2016  
Vatra Romaneasca, Grass Lake, Michigan

## SCHEDULE

### Thursday

Clergy Conference / Episcopate Council Meeting

### Friday & Saturday

Episcopate Congress Sessions

### Sunday

Hierarchal Divine Liturgy / Closing Banquet

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## HOTEL INFORMATION FOR 2016 CONGRESS

(MENTION ROEA CONGRESS FOR RATE)

**All hotels in Michigan are now non-smoking**

**Holiday Inn - Jackson (517) 789-9600**  
2696 Bob McClain Dr., Jackson (behind  
MEIJER, North side of I-94 @ Airport Rd.)  
**Deadline: 08/08/2016**

(Single King bed; 2 Queen beds)  
Rate for both is \$119.00/night + 11% taxes.  
(Single King Suite)  
Rate is \$124.00/night + 11% taxes.  
Fitness center, business center, indoor pool, free Wi-Fi.

**Holiday Inn Express - Jackson (517) 788-6400**  
3506 Oneil Dr., Jackson  
(South side of I-94 @ Airport Rd. exit)  
**Deadline: 08/08/2016**  
(Single King bed; 2 Queen beds; Suite w/whirlpool)  
Rate is \$119.00/night + 11% taxes.  
(If booking online use code RCG, this hotel only)  
Free breakfast, indoor pool, free Wi-Fi.

**Fairfield Inn - Jackson (517) 784-7877**  
2395 Shirley Dr., Jackson  
(East side of US-127 near Red Lobster)  
**Deadline: 07/31/2016**

(2 Queen beds)  
Rate is \$119.00/night + 11% taxes.  
Free hot breakfast, free Wi-Fi, indoor pool.

**Hampton Inn - Jackson (517) 789-5151**  
2225 Shirley Dr., Jackson  
(East side of US-127 near Red Lobster)  
**Deadline: 07/31/2016**

(2 Queen beds)  
Rate is \$149.00/night + 11% taxes.  
Free hot breakfast, free Wi-Fi, fitness center, indoor pool.

**Comfort Inn - Jackson (517) 768-0088**  
2435 Shirley Dr., Jackson  
(East side of US-127 near Red Lobster)  
**Deadline: 07/31/2016**

Std. Room (2 Queen) Rate: Single or Double occupancy \$100/night + 11% taxes  
Suite (2 Queen) Rate: Single or Double occupancy \$105/night + 11% taxes  
Free breakfast, indoor pool, fitness center.

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## Ethiopian Bible ... *Cont. from page 4*

wouldn't even turn. And they were falling to pieces. 'The Garima Gospels have been kept high and dry which has helped preserve them all these years, and they are kept in the dark so the colours look fresh.

'This was the most astounding of all our projects; and the Patriarch, the head of the Ethiopian Church, had to give his permission. 'Most of the experts did the work for nothing. 'We are currently undertaking other restoration programmes on wall paintings and religious texts. 'We believe that preserving Ethiopia's cultural heritage will help to increase visitor revenue and understanding of the extraordinary history of this country.

*Originally posted by Ancient-Origine.com on June 27, 2016.*

## ADDRESS CHANGE

Send your change of addresses to:  
SOLIA, PO BOX 185  
GRASS LAKE, MI 49240 USA  
or [solia@roea.org](mailto:solia@roea.org)

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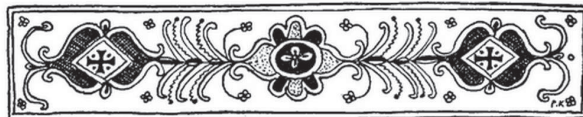
## In Loving Memory ...

*Cont. from page 8*

As the pallbearers were taking Blaise out of the church, the Divine Child Band played "Amazing Grace." Also, the Eastern Michigan University Band played beautifully. The 100 car procession to Woodmere Cemetery, Detroit, Michigan, proceeded to the family's gravesites. After the prayer service, the Eastern Michigan University members gathered, hand-in-hand, around Blaise's final resting place, singing the school's Alma Mater. What a touching tribute by so many from all walks of life. Our deepest gratitude to all for the love, concern and kindness expressed on our deep, deep loss.

May Blaise's path to the Holy Priesthood continue in Heaven! Always in our hearts and prayers. May God rest his soul. Memory eternal.

*Christina (Cocora), Scott and Nathaniel Lazarus Hebert; Nicholas & Flora (Subu) Cocora*





## Encyclical ... *Cont. from page 7*

development. In contemporary secularized societies, man, cut off from God, identifies his freedom and the meaning of his life with absolute autonomy and with release from his eternal destiny, resulting in a series of misunderstandings and deliberate misinterpretations of the Christian tradition. The bestowal on man from above of freedom in Christ and his advancement “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4.13) is thus seen to go against man’s tendencies for self-salvation. Christ’s sacrificial love is regarded as incompatible with individualism while the ascetic character of the Christian ethos is judged as an unbearable challenge to the happiness of the individual.

The identification of the Church with conservatism, incompatible with the advancement of civilization, is arbitrary and improper, since the consciousness of the identity of the Christian peoples bears the indelible imprint of the diachronic contribution of the Church, not only in their cultural heritage, but also in the healthy development of secular civilization more generally, since God placed man as steward of the divine creation and as a co-worker with Him in the world. *The Orthodox Church sets against the ‘man-god’ of the contemporary world the ‘God-man’ as the ultimate measure of all things.* “We do not speak of a man who has been deified, but of God who has become man” (John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* iii, 2 PG 94.988). The Church reveals the saving truth of the God-man and His body, the Church, as the locus and mode of life in freedom, “speaking the truth in love” (cf. Eph 4.15), and as participation even now on earth in the life of the resurrected Christ. The divine-human character [“not of the world” (John 18.36)] of the Church, which nourishes and guides her presence and witness “in the world,” is incompatible with any kind of conformation of the Church to the world (cf. Rom 12.2).

**11.** Through the contemporary development of science and technology, our life is changing radically. And what brings about a change in the life of man demands discernment on his part; since, apart from significant benefits, such as the facilitation of everyday life, the successful treatment of serious diseases and space exploration, we are also confronted with the negative consequences of scientific progress. The dangers are the manipulation of human freedom, the use of man as a simple means, the gradual loss of precious traditions, and threats to, or even the destruction of, the natural environment.

Unfortunately, science, by its very nature, does not possess the necessary means to prevent or address many of the problems it creates directly or indirectly. *Scientific knowledge does not motivate man’s moral will*, and even though aware of the dangers, he continues to act as if unaware of them. The answer to man’s serious existential and moral problems and to the

eternal meaning of his life and of the world cannot be given without a spiritual approach.

**12.** In our age, there is a very prevalent enthusiasm for the impressive developments in the fields of Biology, Genetics and Neurophysiology. These represent scientific advances, the wide-ranging applications of which will, in all likelihood, create serious anthropological and moral dilemmas. *The uncontrolled use of biotechnology at the beginning, during, and at the end of life, endangers its authentic fullness.* Man is experimenting ever more intensively with his own very nature in an extreme and dangerous way. He is in danger of being turned into a biological machine, into an impersonal social unit or into a mechanical device of controlled thought.

The Orthodox Church cannot remain on the sidelines of discussions about such momentous anthropological, ethical and existential matters. She rests firmly on divinely taught criteria and reveals the relevance of Orthodox anthropology in the face of the contemporary overturning of values. Our Church can and must express in the world her prophetic consciousness in Christ Jesus, who with His Incarnation assumed the whole man and is the ultimate prototype for the renewal of the human race. She projects the sacredness of life and man’s character as a person from the very moment of conception. The right to be born is the first of human rights. The Church is a divine-human society, in which each human constitutes a unique being destined for personal communion with God; and she resists every attempt to objectify man, to turn him into a measurable quantity. No scientific achievement is permitted to compromise man’s dignity and his divine destination. Man is not defined only by his genes.

*Bioethics* from an Orthodox point of view is founded on this basis. At a time of conflicting images of man, Orthodox bioethics, in opposition to secular autonomous and reductionist anthropological views, insists on man’s creation in God’s image and likeness and his eternal destiny. The Church thus contributes to the enrichment of the philosophical and scientific discussion of bioethical questions through her scriptural anthropology and the spiritual experience of Orthodoxy.

**13.** In a global society, oriented towards ‘having’ and individualism, the Orthodox Catholic Church presents the truth of life in and according to Christ, the truth freely made incarnate in the everyday life of each man through his works “till evening” (Ps 103), through which he is made co-worker of the eternal Father [“We are co-workers with God” (1 Cor 3.9)] and of His Son [“My Father is working still, and I am working” (John 5.17)]. The grace of God sanctifies in the Holy Spirit the works of the hands of the man who works together with God, revealing the affirmation in them of life and of human society. Christian asceticism is to be placed within this framework; this differs radically from all dualistic asceticism that severs man from life and from his fellow man. *Christian asceticism and the*

*exercise of self-restraint*, which connect man with the sacramental life of the Church, do not concern only the monastic life, but are characteristic of ecclesial life in all its manifestations, as a tangible witness to the presence of the eschatological spirit in the blessed life of the faithful.

**14.** *The roots of the ecological crisis are spiritual and ethical*, inhering within the heart of each man. This crisis has become more acute in recent centuries on account of the various divisions provoked by human passions – such as greed, avarice, egotism and the insatiable desire for more – and by their consequences for the planet, as with climate change, which now threatens to a large extent the natural environment, our common “home”. The rupture in the relationship between man and creation is a perversion of the authentic use of God’s creation. The approach to the ecological problem on the basis of the principles of the Christian tradition demands not only repentance for the sin of the exploitation of the natural resources of the planet, namely, a radical change in mentality and behavior, but also asceticism as an antidote to consumerism, the deification of needs and the acquisitive attitude. It also presupposes our greatest responsibility to hand down a viable natural environment to future generations and to use it according to divine will and blessing. In the sacraments of the Church, creation is affirmed and man is encouraged to act as a steward, protector and “priest” of creation, offering it by way of doxology to the Creator – “Your own of your own we offer to You in all and for all” – and cultivating a Eucharistic relationship with creation. This Orthodox, Gospel and Patristic approach also turns our attention to the social dimensions and the tragic consequences of the destruction of the natural environment.

#### ***VI. The Church in the face of globalization, the phenomenon of extreme violence and migration***

**15.** The contemporary *ideology of globalization*, which is being imposed imperceptibly and expanding rapidly, is already provoking powerful shocks to the economy and to society on a world-wide scale. Its imposition has created new forms of systematic exploitation and social injustice; it has planned the gradual neutralization of the impediments from opposing national, religious, ideological and other traditions and has already led to the weakening or complete reversal of social acquisitions on the pretext of the allegedly necessary readjustment of the global economy, widening thus the gap between rich and poor, undermining the social cohesion of peoples and fanning new fires of global tensions.

In opposition to the levelling and impersonal standardization promoted by globalization, and also to the extremes of nationalism, the Orthodox Church proposes the protection of the identities of peoples and the strengthening of local identity. As an alternative example for the unity of mankind, she proposes the articulated organization of the Church on the basis

of the equality of the local Churches. The Church is opposed to the provocative threat to contemporary man and the cultural traditions of peoples that globalization involves and the principle of the “autonomy of the economy” or “economism,” that is, the autonomization of the economy from man’s essential needs and its transformation into an end in itself. She therefore proposes *a viable economy founded on the principles of the Gospel*. Thus, guided by the words of the Lord, “man shall not live by bread alone” (Luke 4.4), the Church does not connect the progress of mankind only with an increase in living standards or with economic development at the expense of spiritual values.

**16.** The Church does not involve herself with politics in the narrow sense of the term. Her witness, however, is essentially political insofar as it expresses concern for man and his spiritual freedom. *The voice of the Church was always distinct and will ever remain a beneficial intervention for the sake of humanity*. The local Orthodox Churches are today called to promote a new constructive synergy with the secular state and its rule of law within the new framework of international relations, in accordance with the biblical saying: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (cf. Matt 22.21). This synergy must, however, preserve the specific identity of both Church and state and ensure their earnest cooperation in order to preserve man’s unique dignity and the human rights which flow therefrom, and in order to assure social justice.

*Human rights* are today at the center of political debate as a response to contemporary social and political crises and upheavals and in order to protect the freedom of the individual. The approach to human rights on the part of the Orthodox Church centers on the danger of individual rights falling into individualism and a culture of “rights”. A perversion of this kind functions at the expense of the social content of freedom and leads to the arbitrary transformation of rights into claims for happiness, as well as the elevation of the precarious identification of freedom with individual license into a “universal value” that undermines the foundations of social values, of the family, of religion, of the nation and threatens fundamental moral values.

Accordingly, the Orthodox understanding of man is opposed both to the arrogant apotheosis of the individual and his rights, and to the humiliating debasement of the human person within the vast contemporary structures of economy, society, politics and communication. The tradition of Orthodoxy is an inexhaustible source of vital truths for mankind. No one has honored man and cared for him as much as the God-man Christ and his Church. A fundamental human right is the protection of the principle of religious freedom in all its aspects--namely, the freedom of conscience, belief, and religion, including, alone and in community, in private and in public, the right to freedom of worship



and practice, the right to manifest one's religion, as well as the right of religious communities to religious education and to the full function and exercise of their religious duties, without any form of direct or indirect interference by the state.

**17.** We are experiencing today an increase of violence in the name of God. The explosions of fundamentalism within religious communities threaten to create the view that fundamentalism belongs to the essence of the phenomenon of religion. The truth, however, is that *fundamentalism*, as "zeal not based on knowledge" (Rom 10.2), *constitutes an expression of morbid religiosity*. A true Christian, following the example of the crucified Lord, sacrifices himself and does not sacrifice others, and for this reason is the most stringent critic of fundamentalism of whatever provenance. Honest interfaith dialogue contributes to the development of mutual trust and to the promotion of peace and reconciliation. The Church strives to make "the peace from on high" more tangibly felt on earth. True peace is not achieved by force of arms, but only through love that "does not seek its own" (1 Cor 13.5). The oil of faith must be used to soothe and heal the wounds of others, not to rekindle new fires of hatred.

**18.** The Orthodox Church follows with much pain and prayer and takes note of the *great contemporary humanitarian crisis*: the proliferation of violence and military conflicts; the persecution, exile and murder of members of religious minorities; the violent displacement of families from their homelands; the tragedy of human trafficking; the violation of the dignity and fundamental rights of individuals and peoples, and forced conversions. She condemns unconditionally the abductions, tortures, and abhorrent executions. She denounces the destruction of places of worship, religious symbols and cultural monuments.

The Orthodox Church is particularly concerned about the situation facing Christians, and other persecuted ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East. In particular, she addresses an appeal to governments in that region to protect the Christian populations – Orthodox, Ancient Eastern and other Christians – who have survived in the cradle of Christianity. The indigenous Christian and other populations enjoy the inalienable right to remain in their countries as citizens with equal rights.

We therefore urge all parties involved, irrespective of religious convictions, to work for reconciliation and respect for human rights, first of all through the protection of the divine gift of life. The war and bloodshed must be brought to an end and justice must prevail so that peace can be restored and so that it becomes possible for those who have been exiled to return to their ancestral lands. We pray for peace and justice in the suffering countries of Africa and in the troubled country of Ukraine. We reiterate most emphatically in conciliar unity our appeal to those responsible to

free the two bishops who have been abducted in Syria, Paul Yazigi and John Ibrahim. We pray also for the release of all our brothers and sisters being held hostage or in captivity.

**19.** The contemporary and ever intensifying *refugee and migrant crisis*, due to political, economic and environmental causes, is at the center of the world's attention. The Orthodox Church has always treated and continues to treat those who are persecuted, in danger and in need on the basis of the Lord's words: "I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, and was a stranger and you took me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to me", and "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these my brethren, you did for me" (Matt 25.40). Throughout its history, the Church was always on the side of the "weary and heavy laden" (cf. Matt 11.28). At no time was the Church's philanthropic work limited merely to circumstantial good deeds toward the needy and suffering, but rather it sought to eradicate the causes which create social problems. The Church's "work of service" (Eph 4.12) is recognized by everyone.

We appeal therefore first of all to those able to remove the causes for the creation of the refugee crisis to take the necessary positive decisions. We call on the civil authorities, the Orthodox faithful and the other citizens of the countries in which they have sought refuge and continue to seek refuge to accord them every possible assistance, even from out of their own insufficiency.

### ***VII. Church: witness in dialogue***

**20.** The Church manifests sensitivity towards those who have severed themselves from communion with her and is concerned for those who do not understand her voice. Conscious that she constitutes the living presence of Christ in the world, the Church translates the divine economy into concrete actions using all means at her disposal to give a trustworthy witness to the truth, in the precision of the apostolic faith. In this spirit of recognition of the need for witness and offering, *the Orthodox Church has always attached great importance to dialogue*, and especially to that with non-Orthodox Christians. Through this dialogue, the rest of the Christian world is now more familiar with Orthodoxy and the authenticity of its tradition. It also knows that the Orthodox Church has never accepted theological minimalism or permitted its dogmatic tradition and evangelical ethos to be called into question. Inter-Christian dialogues have provided Orthodoxy with the opportunity to display her respect for the teaching of the Fathers and to bear a trustworthy witness to the genuine tradition of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The multilateral dialogues undertaken by the Orthodox Church have never signified, and do not signify, nor will they ever signify, any compromise in matters of faith. These

dialogues are a witness to Orthodoxy, grounded on the Gospel message “come and see” (John 1.46), see, namely, that “God is love” (1 John 4.8).

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In this spirit, the Orthodox Church throughout the world, being the revelation of the Kingdom of God in Christ, experiences the entire mystery of the divine Economy in her sacramental life, with the holy Eucharist at its center, in which she offers to us not nourishment that is perishable and corruptible, but the very life-streaming Body of the Lord, the “heavenly Bread” which “is a medicine of immortality, an antidote for not dying but living in God through Jesus Christ, and a purgative expelling evil” (Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 20, PG 5.756). *The holy Eucharist constitutes the innermost core also of the conciliar functioning of the ecclesial body, as well as the authentic confirmation of the Orthodoxy of the faith of the Church*, as Saint Irenaeus of Lyon proclaims: “Our teaching is in accord with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist confirms our teaching” (*Against Heresies*, 4. 18, PG 7.1028).

Proclaiming the Gospel to all the world in accord with the Lord’s command and “preaching in His name repentance and remission of sins to all the nations” (Luke 22.47), we have the obligation to commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God and to love one another, confessing with one mind: “Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Trinity consubstantial and undivided.” Addressing these things in Council to the children throughout the world of our most holy Orthodox Church, as well as to the entire world, following the holy Fathers and the Conciliar decrees so as to preserve the faith received from our fathers and to “uphold good ways” in our daily life in the hope of the common resurrection, we glorify God in three hypostases with divine songs:

**“O Father almighty, and Word and Spirit, one nature united in three persons, God beyond being and beyond divinity, in You we have been baptized, and You we bless to the ages of ages.”** (*Paschal Canon*, Ode 8).

† Bartholomew of Constantinople, Chairman

† Theodoros of Alexandria

† Theophilos of Jerusalem

† Irinej of Serbia

† Daniel of Romania

† Chrysostomos of Cyprus

† Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece

† Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland

† Anastasios of Tirana, Durres and All Albania

† Rastislav of Presov, the Czech Lands and Slovakia

**Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate**

† Leo of Karelia and All Finland

† Stephanos of Tallinn and All Estonia

† Elder Metropolitan John of Pergamon

† Elder Archbishop Demetrios of America

† Augustinos of Germany

† Irenaios of Crete

† Isaiah of Denver

† Alexios of Atlanta

† Iakovos of the Princes’ Islands

† Joseph of Proikonnisos

† Meliton of Philadelphia

† Emmanuel of France

† Nikitas of the Dardanelles

† Nicholas of Detroit

† Gerasimos of San Francisco

† Amphilochios of Kisamos and Selinos

† Amvrosios of Korea

† Maximos of Selyvria

† Amphilochios of Adrianopolis

† Kallistos of Diokleia

† Antony of Hierapolis, Head of the Ukrainian Orthodox in the USA

† Job of Telmessos

† Jean of Charioupolis, Head of the Patriarchal Exarchate for Orthodox Parishes of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe

† Gregory of Nyssa, Head of the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox in the USA

**Delegation of the Patriarchate of Alexandria**

† Gabriel of Leontopolis

† Makarios of Nairobi

† Jonah of Kampala

† Seraphim of Zimbabwe and Angola

† Alexandros of Nigeria

† Theophylaktos of Tripoli

† Sergios of Good Hope

† Athanasios of Cyrene

† Alexios of Carthage

† Ieronymos of Mwanza

† George of Guinea

† Nicholas of Hermopolis

† Dimitrios of Irinopolis

† Damaskinos of Johannesburg and Pretoria

† Narkissos of Accra

† Emmanouel of Ptolemaidos

† Gregorios of Cameroon

† Nicodemos of Memphis

† Meletios of Katanga

† Panteleimon of Brazzaville and Gabon

† Innokentios of Burudi and Rwanda

† Crysostomos of Mozambique

† Neofytos of Nyeri and Mount Kenya

**Delegation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem**

† Benedict of Philadelphia

† Aristarchos of Constantine

† Theophylaktos of Jordan

† Nektarios of Anthidon

† Philoumenos of Pella

**Delegation of the Church of Serbia**

† Jovan of Ohrid and Skopje

† Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral

† Porfirije of Zagreb and Ljubljana

† Vasilije of Sirmium

† Lukijan of Budim

† Longin of Nova Gracanica



† Irinej of Backa  
 † Hrizostom of Zvornik and Tuzla  
 † Justin of Zica  
 † Pahomije of Vranje  
 † Jovan of Sumadija  
 † Ignatije of Branicevo  
 † Fotije of Dalmatia  
 † Athanasios of Bihac and Petrovac  
 † Joanikije of Niksic and Budimlje  
 † Grigorije of Zahumlje and Hercegovina  
 † Milutin of Valjevo  
 † Maksim in Western America  
 † Irinej in Australia and New Zealand  
 † David of Krusevac  
 † Jovan of Slavonija  
 † Andrej in Austria and Switzerland  
 † Sergije of Frankfurt and in Germany  
 † Ilarion of Timok

#### **Delegation of the Church of Romania**

† Teofan of Iasi, Moldova and Bucovina  
 † Laurentiu of Sibiu and Transylvania  
 † Andrei of Vad, Feleac, Cluj, Alba, Crisana and Maramures  
 † Irineu of Craiova and Oltenia  
 † Ioan of Timisoara and Banat  
 † Iosif in Western and Southern Europe  
 † Serafim in Germany and Central Europe  
 † Nifon of Targoviste  
 † Irineu of Alba Iulia  
 † Ioachim of Roman and Bacau  
 † Casian of Lower Danube  
 † Timotei of Arad  
 † Nicolae in America  
 † Sofronie of Oradea  
 † Nicodim of Strehaia and Severin  
 † Visarion of Tulcea  
 † Petroniu of Salaj  
 † Siluan in Hungary  
 † Siluan in Italy  
 † Timotei in Spain and Portugal  
 † Macarie in Northern Europe  
 † Varlaam Ploiesteanul, Assistant Bishop to the Patriarch  
 † Emilian Lovisteanul, Assistant Bishop to the Archdiocese of Ramnic  
 † Ioan Casian of Vicina, Assistant Bishop to the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas

#### **Delegation of the Church of Cyprus**

† Georgios of Paphos  
 † Chrysostomos of Kition  
 † Chrysostomos of Kyrenia  
 † Athanasios of Limassol  
 † Neophytos of Morphou  
 † Vasileios of Constantia and Ammochostos  
 † Nikiphoros of Kykkos and Tillyria  
 † Isaias of Tamassos and Oreini  
 † Barnabas of Tremithousa and Lefkara  
 † Christophoros of Karpasion  
 † Nektarios of Arsinoe  
 † Nikolaos of Amathus

† Epiphanius of Ledra  
 † Leontios of Chytron  
 † Porphyrios of Neapolis  
 † Gregory of Mesaoria  
**Delegation of the Church of Greece**  
 † Prokopios of Philippi, Neapolis and Thassos  
 † Chrysostomos of Peristerion  
 † Germanos of Eleia  
 † Alexandros of Mantinea and Kynouria  
 † Ignatios of Arta  
 † Damaskinos of Didymoteixon, Orestias and Soufli  
 † Alexios of Nikaia  
 † Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Aghios Vlasios  
 † Eusebios of Samos and Ikaria  
 † Seraphim of Kastoria  
 † Ignatios of Demetrias and Almyros  
 † Nicodemos of Kassandreia  
 † Ephraim of Hydra, Spetses and Aegina  
 † Theologos of Serres and Nigrita  
 † Makarios of Sidirokastron  
 † Anthimos of Alexandroupolis  
 † Barnabas of Neapolis and Stavroupolis  
 † Chrysostomos of Messenia  
 † Athenagoras of Ilion, Acharnon and Petroupoli  
 † Ioannis of Lagkada, Litis and Rentinis  
 † Gabriel of New Ionia and Philadelphia  
 † Chrysostomos of Nikopolis and Preveza  
 † Theoklitos of Ierissos, Mount Athos and Ardameri

#### **Delegation of the Church of Poland**

† Simon of Lodz and Poznan  
 † Abel of Lublin and Chelm  
 † Jacob of Bialystok and Gdansk  
 † George of Siemiatycze  
 † Paisios of Gorlice

#### **Delegation of the Church of Albania**

† Joan of Koritsa  
 † Demetrios of Argyrokastron  
 † Nikolla of Apollonia and Fier  
 † Andon of Elbasan  
 † Nathaniel of Amantia  
 † Asti of Bylis

#### **Delegation of the Church of the Czech lands and Slovakia**

† Michal of Prague  
 † Isaiah of Sumperk  
 † Jeremy of Switzerland, Chief of the Panorthodox Secretariat of the Holy and Great Council

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# IN MEMORY: CORNELIA BOGDEN



**CORNELIA RACATAIAN BOGDEN**, a devoted and loving wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother, went to her eternal home with the Lord on April 1, 2016 at the age of 96 in Rancho Santa Fe, California at the home of her daughter, Irene Keehner. Family and friends gathered at Chapel of the Oaks at Eternal Valley Memorial Park in California on April 6, 2016, where Father Constantin Alecse

held the Romanian Orthodox service. She was laid to rest next to her beloved husband, Nick and daughter, Patricia Lambert.

Cornelia Bogden was born October 15, 1919 in Warren, Ohio, to Rozalia and John Racataian. She and her late husband, Nick Bogden, were married at Holy Resurrection Romanian Orthodox Church in Warren, Ohio in 1938 and were happily married for 73 years.

In Warren, Cornelia was an active member of Holy Resurrection Romanian Orthodox Church, a member of the Women's Auxiliary and a Sunday school teacher. Her father, John Racataian, was a founding member and treasurer of the church during its construction. Cornelia and Nick owned and operated a grocery store and meat market in Warren, and in 1955 moved with their three children to Los Angeles, California, where Nick worked with his cousins, the Voisin brothers, in the aerospace industry. They were longtime active members of the Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church in Los Angeles, and resided in their Northridge, California home for 56 years.

Cornelia was head bookkeeper at Robinson's Department Store for twelve years, and manager of the book department at Broadway Department Store. She excelled at cooking and quilting, leaving a legacy of over sixty handmade quilts for her family and friends to treasure. She was a sports enthusiast, an avid reader and book collector, and she and her husband enjoyed traveling to many countries throughout the world.

She will be missed by her daughter, Irene Keehner and husband Gary of Rancho Santa Fe, California; son, Nick Bogden and wife Mary Jo of Arizona; son-in-law, Bob Lambert of West Hills, CA, and his wife Renee; nine grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her daughter, Patricia Lambert in 2003. Our family is thankful for her long life; her memory will live in our hearts forever.

Donations in Cornelia Bogden's memory may be made to Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church, 3315 Verdugo Road, Los Angeles, CA 90065.

## HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

**HIS EMINENCE, ARCHBISHOP NATHANIEL**

**April 25 – June 30, 2016**

**April 25-30. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Holy Week services. Monday:** Bridegroom Matins. **Tuesday:** Bridegroom Matins. **Wednesday:** Bridegroom Matins. **Thursday:** Hierarchal Vespersal Liturgy of St. Basil. Matins of Holy Friday with 12 Passion Gospels. **Friday:** Royal Hours. Vespers with Placing the Shroud in the Tomb. Matins of Holy Saturday – Lamentations and Entombing of Christ. **Saturday:** Vespersal Liturgy of St. Basil.

**April 30 - May 1. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Holy Pascha. Saturday/Sunday:** Midnight Service. Paschal Matins. Paschal Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

**May 1. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Afternoon.** Paschal Agape Vespers.

**May 2-3. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Monday:** Paschal Matins. Paschal Divine Liturgy. **Tuesday:** Paschal Matins. Paschal Divine Liturgy.

**May 6-8. Easton, CT. St. Dimitrie. Saturday:** Great Vespers. Retirement Dinner in honor of Fr. Cornel Todeasa. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

**May 8-12. Lake George, CO. Protection of the Holy Virgin Monastery. Wednesday:** Divine Liturgy. **Thursday:** Blessing of Foundation for New Chapel, concelebrated with His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin.

**May 14-15. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Saturday:** Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

**June 4-5. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Saturday:** Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

**June 8-12. Phoenix, AZ. Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Wednesday:** Great Vespers. **Thursday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Feast of Ascension. Ordination of Nicholas Ciccirelli into Holy Diaconate. **Saturday:** Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Ordination of Deacon Nicholas Ciccirelli into Holy Priesthood and blessed him to be a Confessor.

**June 13-17. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Holy Synod Retreat.**

**June 18. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Vigil Service for feast for Pentecost.**

**June 19. Warren, MI. Descent of the Holy Spirit. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet.**

**June 24-26. Grass Lake, MI. Vatra Romaneasca. All-Auxiliaries / Family Life Conference. Saturday:** Memorial Service. Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet.

**June 28-29. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Saturday:** Vigil Service for feast of Sts. Peter & Paul. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.





THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA  
**THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE OF AMERICA**

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The Most Reverend Dr. NATHANIEL Popp, Archbishop  
The Right Reverend IRINEU Duvlea, Auxiliary Bishop

July 30, 2016

Clergy and Delegates to the 84<sup>th</sup> Congress of  
The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America  
September 1-4, 2016  
Romanian Vatra, Grass Lake, Michigan

Dear Father,  
Dear Delegate:

In 2015, a Special Electoral Congress was called to consider electing two vicar bishops. This special session was called before His Grace, Bishop Irineu Duvlea came under investigation by ORSMA; and for this reason, the electoral session could not be cancelled.

We had no idea that this investigation would take so long. Given the tense situation caused by the investigation of His Grace Irineu, we do not find it in the best interests of the Episcopate to hold an electoral session until the conclusion of the investigation.

Therefore, the 84<sup>th</sup> Congress is called in conformity with Article III, Section 7, of the By-Laws of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, and will not include an electoral session for the election of bishops. Please read the official Convocation and schedule included in your Delegate package.

We look forward to seeing you at the Congress and ask God to protect you on your journey coming to the Vatra.

With Hierarchal and paternal blessings,

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop

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**Mailing:** PO Box 309, Grass Lake, Michigan 49240-0309 **Shipping:** 2535 Grey Tower Road, Jackson, Michigan 49201-9120  
**Chancery Office:** 517.522.4800 **Department of Finance:** 517.522.3598 **Department of Publications:** 517.522.3656  
**Facsimile:** 517.522.5907 **Email:** [chancery@roea.org](mailto:chancery@roea.org) **Website:** <http://www.roea.org>



# 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 84TH ANNUAL EPISCOPATE CONGRESS Thursday, September 1 - Sunday, September 4, 2016 Vatra Romaneasca, Grass Lake/Jackson, Michigan**

All Priests presently assigned to a parish and all Lay Delegates legally elected by their Parish Assembly in 2015, and whose credentials have been verified by the Chancery, are called into Session.

*The Congress will be in session starting*

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2016 at 2:00 p.m., Eastern Daylight Savings Time  
at Vatra Romaneasca, 2522 Grey Tower Rd, Jackson, MI 49201**

**All clergy and lay delegates are requested to participate until the completion of the Congress which includes Hierarchal Divine Liturgy followed by the Congress Banquet on Sunday.**

*The Agenda, as printed in the Annual Report to the Episcopate Congress 2016, will include: Reading / Approval of the 83rd 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 Parish Priest and Assistant Priest(s)
- Two Lay Delegates elected by each Parish Assembly for Congresses 2015-2016
- 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**

## **SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

### **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1**

10:00 am Divine Liturgy  
12:30 pm Lunch  
2:00 pm Clergy Conference  
5:00 pm Vespers  
6:00 pm Supper  
7:00 pm Episcopate Council Meeting

### **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2**

10:00 am Divine Liturgy  
12:00 pm Registration  
12:30 pm Lunch  
2:00 pm 84<sup>th</sup> Episcopate Congress Convenes  
6:00 pm Vespers  
7:00 pm Supper  
8:00 pm Program

### **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3**

9:00 am Congress Convenes – Session II  
1:00 pm Lunch  
2:30 pm Congress Reconvenes – Session III  
6:30 pm Memorial Service followed by Great Vespers  
7:30 pm Supper  
8:00-11:00 pm Social gathering

### **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4**

8:00 am Matins  
9:30 am Procession of the Clergy  
10:00 am Hierarchal Divine Liturgy  
1:00 pm Congress Banquet & Closing Program





THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA  
THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE OF AMERICA

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The Most Reverend Dr. NATHANIEL Popp, Archbishop  
The Right Reverend IRINEU Duvlea, Auxiliary Bishop

30 Iulie 2016

Către Clerul și Delegații la Congres al 84-lea al  
Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America  
1-4 Septembrie 2016  
Vatra Românească, Grass Lake, Michigan

Dragă Părinte,  
Dragă Delegat:

În anul 2015, a fost convocată o sesiune Electorală Specială a Congresului pentru alegerea a doi episcopi vicari. Această sesiune specială a fost convocată înainte ca Preasfințitul Părinte Irineu Duvlea să intre sub investigarea ORSMA; prin urmare, sesiunea electorală nu a mai putut fi amânată.

Din păcate, nu aveam de unde să știm că procesul de investigare este atât de anevoios. Datorită situației tensionate, generate de investigarea Preasfințitului Irineu, am considerat că nu este spre binele Episcopiei să fie organizată o sesiune electorală până la terminarea anchetei.

Prin urmare, al 84-lea Congres, convocat în conformitate cu articolul III, secțiunea 7 din Statutul și Regulamentul Episcopiei Ortodoxe din America, nu va avea sesiune electorală pentru alegerea de episcopi. Vă rugăm să citiți convocarea oficială și programul Congresului din plicul pe care-l veți primi de la Episcopie.

Cu dorința revederii la Congres, rog pe Dumnezeu să vă binecuvinteze călătoria spre Vatra.

Cu părințești și arhieresti binecuvântări,

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop

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**Chancery Office:** 517.522.4800 **Department of Finance:** 517.522.3598 **Department of Publications:** 517.522.3656  
**Facsimile:** 517.522.5907 **Email:** [chancery@roea.org](mailto:chancery@roea.org) **Website:** <http://www.roea.org>



# CONVOCARE

*În conformitate cu Articolul III, Secțiunea 7, a Regulamentelor  
Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America, chemăm în sesiune*

## **AL 84-LEA CONGRES ANUAL AL EPISCOPIEI Joi, 1 Septembrie – Duminică, 4 Septembrie 2016 la Vatra Românească, Grass Lake/Jackson, Michigan**

Totți preoții parohi și asistenți numiți în parohii de către Episcop, precum și toți delegații mireni aleși legal de către Adunările Generale Parohiale în 2015 și ale căror acreditări au fost verificate de către Cancelaria Episcopiei, sunt convocați în sesiune de lucru.

*Congresul va fi în sesiune de lucru începând cu ziua de*  
**VINERI, 2 SEPTEMBRIE 2016 la 2:00 pm ora Coastei de Est**  
**la Vatra Românească, 2522 Grey Tower Rd, Jackson, MI 49201**

*Ordinea de zi, după cum este publicată în Raportul Anual către Congresul Episcopiei 2016, va include:*  
*Citirea/Aprobarea Procesului Verbal al celui de-al 83-lea 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
- Preotul Paroh și Preotul sau Preoții asistenți
- Doi delegați mireni aleși de Adunarea Generală a fiecărei Parohii pentru anii 2015 și 2016
- Doi delegați din partea fiecărei organizații auxiliare a Episcopiei
- Preoți de sub jurisdicția Episcopiei care nu au parohie, diaconi, stareți și starețe, dacă sunt acreditați 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, alternanții (supleantii) lor, aleși legal de către Adunarea Generală Parohială a fiecărei parohii, vor reprezenta parohia. Nici o adăugare, substituție ori delegație ad-hoc nu vor fi recunoscute de către comitetul de acreditare.

**+ NATHANIEL**

**Arhiepiscop de Detroit și al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America**

## **PROGRAM**

### **JOI, 1 SEPTEMBRIE**

10:00 am Sfânta Liturghie  
12:30 pm Prânz  
2:00 pm Conferința Clerului  
5:00 pm Vecernia  
6:00 pm Cina  
7:00 pm Ședința de Consiliul Eparhial

### **VINERI, 2 SEPTEMBRIE**

10:00 am Sfânta Liturghie  
12:00 pm Inregistrarea delegaților  
12:30 pm Prânz  
2:00 pm Convocarea celui de al 84-lea  
Congres al Episcopiei  
6:00 pm Vecernia  
7:00 pm Cina  
8:00 pm Program

### **SÂMBĂȚĂ, 3 SEPTEMBRIE**

9:00 am Congresul Episcopiei –  
Sesiunea II  
1:00 pm Prânz  
2:30 pm Congresul Episcopiei –  
Sesiunea III  
6:30 pm Parastas urmat de Vecernia Mare  
7:30 pm Cina  
8:00-11:00 pm Program

### **DUMINICĂ, 4 SEPTEMBRIE**

8:00 am Utrenie  
9:30 am Procesiunea Clerului  
10:00 am Sfânta Liturghie Arhierească  
1:00 pm Masa Festivă și Incheierea  
Congresului



# MESAJUL SFÂNTULUI ȘI MARELUI SINOD AL BISERICII ORTODOXE

*Către poporul ortodox și toți oamenii  
de bună voință,*

Lăudăm și slăvim pe Dumnezeuul „milelor și a toată mângâierea” pentru că ne-a învrednicit să petrecem săptămâna Cincizecimii (18-26 iunie 2016) în Creta, aici unde Apostolul Pavel și ucenicul său Tit au propovăduit Evanghelia în primii ani de viață ai Bisericii. Mulțumim Dumnezeului slăvit în Treime că a binevoit să ducem la bun sfârșit în deplin acord lucrările Sfântului și Marelui Sinod al Ortodoxiei, pe care l-a convocat Sanctitatea Sa Patriarhul Ecumenic Bartolomeu, cu voința comună a Întâistătătorilor Bisericilor Ortodoxe Autocefale locale.

Urmând cu fidelitate exemplul Sfinților Apostoli și al Părinților de Dumnezeu însuflați, am aprofundat din nou Evanghelia libertății, „fiindcă Hristos ne-a făcut liberi” (Galateni 5, 1). La baza căutărilor noastre teologice a stat certitudinea că Biserica nu viețuiește pentru sine. Ea transmite mărturia Evangheliei Harului și Adevărului și oferă întregii lumi darurile lui Dumnezeu: iubirea, pacea, dreptatea, reconcilierea, puterea Crucii și a Învierii și așteptarea veșniciei.

1. Prioritatea majoră a Sfântului și Marelui Sinod a fost **proclamarea unității** Bisericii Ortodoxe. Bazată pe Dumnezeiasca Euharistie și succesiunea apostolică a episcopilor, această unitate trebuie întărită ca să aducă roadă nouă. Biserica cea Una, Sfântă, Universală (Sobornicească) și Apostolică este comuniune divino-umană, pregustare și experiență a celor viitoare în Sfânta Euharistie. Asemenea unei continue Cincizecimi, ea este un glas profetic neconținut, prezența și mărturia Împărăției Dumnezeului iubirii. Fidelă Tradiției Apostolice unanime și experienței sacramentale, Biserica Ortodoxă constituie continuarea autentică a Bisericii celei Una, Sfântă, Universală (Sobornicească) și Apostolică, după cum mărturisim în Simbolul de Credință (Crez) și după cum este confirmată de învățătura Părinților Bisericii. Biserica noastră trăiește taina dumnezeieștii iconomii în viața sacramentală, centrată pe Sfânta Euharistie.

Biserica Ortodoxă exprimă unitatea și universalitatea (sobornicitatea) ei în cadrul Sinodului. Sinodalitatea îi pătrunde organizarea (structura), modul ei de luare a deciziilor și îi determină drumul. Bisericile Ortodoxe Autocefale nu reprezintă o confederație de Biserici, ci Biserica cea Una, Sfântă, Universală (Sobornicească) și Apostolică. Fiecare Biserică locală, aducând Sfânta Euharistie, reprezintă prezența și manifestarea Bisericii celei Una, Sfântă, Universală (Sobornicească) și Apo-

stolică la nivel local. În privința Diasporei Ortodoxe din diferite țări din lume, a fost hotărâtă continuarea funcționării Adunărilor Episcopale, până la aplicarea rigorii canonice (acriviei). Aceste Adunări se compun din episcopii canonici, desemnați de fiecare Biserică Autocefală, care continuă să fie supuși respectivei Biserici. Funcționarea consecventă a Adunărilor Episcopale asigură respectarea principiului ortodox al sinodalității.

În timpul lucrărilor Sfântului și Marelui Sinod a fost accentuată importanța Sinaxelor Întâistătătorilor care au avut loc și a fost făcută propunerea ca Sfântul și Marele Sinod să devină o instituție care să se repete.

2. Împărtășindu-ne din Sfânta Euharistie și rugându-ne pentru întreaga lume, trebuie să continuăm liturghia de după Sfânta Liturghie și să dăm **mărturia credinței** celor de aproape și celor de departe, în conformitate cu porunca clară a Domnului, înainte de Înălțarea Sa: „și veți fi mie martori în Ierusalim și în toată Iudeea și în Samaria și până la marginile pământului” (Faptele Apostolilor 1, 8). Re-evangelizarea poporului lui Dumnezeu în societățile moderne secularizate și evanghelizarea celor care nu L-au cunoscut încă pe Hristos reprezintă datoria neîntreruptă a Bisericii.

3. Ca răspuns la datoria de a mărturisi Adevărul și credința ei apostolică, Biserica oferă o mare importanță **dialogului**, în principal cu creștinii eterodocși. În acest mod, și ansamblul lumii creștine poate cunoaște mai exact autenticitatea Tradiției Ortodoxe, valoarea învățăturii patristice, experiența liturgică și credința ortodocșilor. Dialogurile întreprinse de Biserica Ortodoxă nu implică niciodată compromisul în materie de credință.

4. Explozia fundamentalismului care se observă în sânul diferitelor religii reprezintă expresia unei religiozități morbide. **Dialogul interreligios** dus cu trezvie contribuie semnificativ la promovarea încrederii reciproce, a păcii și a reconcilierii. Uleiul experienței religioase trebuie să fie folosit pentru a unge rănila și nu pentru a reaprinde focul conflictelor militare. Biserica Ortodoxă condamnă fără echivoc extinderea violenței militare, persecuțiile, expulzarea și uciderea membrilor comunităților religioase, forțarea schimbării credinței religioase, comerțul cu refugiați, răpirile, tortura și execuțiile îngrozitoare. Ea denunță distrugerea bisericilor, simbolurilor religioase și monumentelor culturale. În special, își exprimă grija profundă pentru situația creștinilor și a tuturor minorităților persecutate în Orientul Mijlociu și în alte părți ale lumii. Biserica



Ortodoxă face apel la comunitatea mondială pentru protejarea ortodocșilor indigeni, a celorlalți creștini și a tuturor populațiilor din zonă care au dreptul inalienabil de a rămâne în patria lor în calitate de cetățeni cu drepturi egale. Sinodul nostru apelează la toți cei implicați să facă eforturi sistematice, fără întârziere, pentru a încheia conflictele militare din Orientul Mijlociu și de oriunde persistă ostilitățile armate și pentru repatrierea celor expulzați.

Adresăm apelul nostru în special către cei în poziții de putere pentru ca pacea și dreptatea să prevaleze în țările de origine ale refugiaților. Îndemnăm autoritățile civile, cetățenii și creștinii ortodocși din țările în care au găsit refugiu cei persecutați să continue să le ofere sprijin în măsura posibilităților lor sau chiar dincolo de acestea.

5. **Secularizarea contemporană** urmărește autonomizarea omului de Hristos și de influența duhovnicească a Bisericii, pe care o identifică arbitrar cu conservatorismul. Civilizația occidentală poartă, însă, pecetea de neșters a contribuției diacronice a creștinismului. În plus, Biserica subliniază semnificația mântuitoare a lui Hristos, Dumnezeu-Omul, și a Trupului Său, ca fiind locul și modul de viețuire în libertate.

6. Cu privire la abordarea contemporană a **căsătoriei**, Biserica Ortodoxă consideră relația indisolubilă de dragoste dintre bărbat și femeie „*o taină mare... în Hristos și în Biserică*”. În mod similar, numește familia, care rezultă din căsătorie și constituie singura garanție pentru creșterea copiilor, „*biserică mică*”.

Întotdeauna, Biserica a subliniat valoarea **cumpătării**. Asceza creștină, însă, diferă fundamental de orice ascetism dualist care îl desparte pe om de viață și de semenii. Spre deosebire de aceasta, asceza creștină îl leagă pe om de viața sacramentală a Bisericii. Cumpătarea nu se referă numai la viața monahală. Etosul ascetic este caracteristic vieții bisericești în toate manifestările ei.

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Sfântul și Marele Sinod, pe lângă temele specifice asupra cărora a luat decizii, menționează pe scurt și următoarele probleme contemporane importante:

7. În privința relațiilor credinței creștine cu științele naturale, Biserica Ortodoxă evită plasarea investigațiilor științifice sub tutelaj și nu adoptă o poziție cu privire la fiecare problemă științifică. Ea îi mulțumește lui Dumnezeu care dăruiește oamenilor de știință darul de a descoperi dimensiuni necunoscute ale creației divine. **Dezvoltarea modernă a științelor naturale** și a tehnologiei aduce schimbări radicale în viața noastră. Aduce beneficii importante precum facilitarea vieții cotidiene, tratarea unor afecțiuni grave, o comunicare mai facilă, explorarea spațiului etc. Cu toate acestea, are și multe consecințe negative precum manipularea libertății, pierderea graduală a tradițiilor prețioase, distrugerea mediului natural, negarea valorilor morale. Cunoașterea științifică, oricât de repede ar avansa, nu motivează voința omului, nici nu oferă

răspuns la problemele importante de ordin moral și existențial sau la căutarea sensului vieții și al lumii. Aceste aspecte necesită o abordare duhovnicească, pe care Biserica Ortodoxă încearcă să o ofere prin bioetică, știință fundamentată pe morala creștină și învățătura patristică. Pe lângă respectul ei pentru libertatea cercetărilor științifice, Biserica Ortodoxă evidențiază pericolele care se ascund în spatele unor reușite științifice și subliniază demnitatea umană și destinul divin al omului.

8. Este limpede că situația de **criză ecologică** de astăzi se datorează unor cauze spirituale și morale. Rădăcinile sale sunt legate de lăcomie, avariție și egoism, care conduc la utilizarea necugetată a resurselor naturale, umplerea atmosferei cu substanțe poluante dăunătoare și schimbările climatice. Răspunsul creștin la problema aceasta necesită pocăință pentru abuz, cumpătare și gândire ascetică, ceea ce reprezintă un antidot pentru supraconsum și, în același timp, cultivarea conștiinței că omul este „iconom” (administrator) al creației și nu un posesor al ei. Biserica nu încetează să sublinieze că și generațiile viitoare au dreptul la resursele naturale oferite nouă de Creator. De aceea, Biserica Ortodoxă participă activ în diferite inițiative ecologice internaționale și a stabilit data de 1 Septembrie ca zi de rugăciune pentru protecția mediului natural.

9. Ca răspuns la standardizarea egalizantă și impersonală promovată în diferite feluri, Ortodoxia propune **respectul pentru caracteristicile personale** ale oamenilor și popoarelor. Se opune autonomizării economiei din cauza nevoilor umane de bază și transformării acesteia într-un scop în sine. Progresul umanității nu este legat doar de creșterea standardelor de viață sau de dezvoltarea economică, în detrimentul valorilor spirituale.

10. Biserica Ortodoxă nu se implică în **politică**. Vocea ei rămâne distinctă dar și profetică, fiind o intervenție benefică pentru om. Drepturile omului se află astăzi în centrul politicii ca răspuns la crizele și convulsiile sociale și politice, urmărind protejarea cetățeanului de puterea arbitrară a statului. Biserica adaugă la acestea și obligațiile și responsabilitățile cetățenilor, precum și nevoia unei auto-critici constante atât din partea politicienilor, cât și a cetățenilor, în vederea îmbunătățirii substanțiale a societății. În principal, Biserica subliniază că idealul ortodox privind omul depășește orizontul drepturilor omului stabilite și că dragostea „*este mai mare decât toate*”, după cum ne-a descoperit Hristos și au experimentat toți cei care L-au urmat. Insistă, de asemenea, că un drept fundamental al omului este protejarea libertății religioase, adică a libertății de conștiință, de credință, de cult (religie) și a tuturor expresiilor individuale și colective ale acesteia, incluzând și dreptul fiecărui credincios și fiecărei comunități religioase de a-și manifesta credința liber de orice intervenție a statului, precum și dreptul la educație religioasă publică.

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# SFANTUL NECTARIE DE EGINA: AI MUSTRĂRI DE CONȘTIINȚĂ?

Cei care vin la spovedanie din obicei și ca să salveze aparențele, cei care nu își spovedesc sincer păcatele și de rușine le acoperă sau le justifică, cei ce se îndreptățesc pe ei înșiși și îi osândesc pe alții, aceștia Îl batjocoresc pe Dumnezeu, vorbind aiurea. Dar Dumnezeu nu se lasă batjocorit fiindcă El cunoaște toate. Cei care își acoperă păcatele suferă cele asemenea celor bolnavi care își ascund bolile și nu spun adevărul la doctori din pricina rușinii, și dacă e să li se întâmple lor vreo slujire a patimii, li se întâmplă, și aleargă la doctorii cei duhovnicești, dar și trec sub tăcere adevărul.

Acestora David le dă propriul exemplu, zicând: „Fărădelegea mea eu o cunosc și păcatul meu nu l-am ascuns”. Și iarăși: „Că fărădelegea mea eu o voi vesti și mă voi îngriji pentru păcatul meu”. Și iarăși: „Zis-am: «Mărturisi-voi fărădelegea mea Domnului», și Tu ai iertat nelegiuirea păcatului meu”. Și Sirah spune: „Dreptul se învinuiește pe sine când începe să vorbească”.

Și autorul Pildelor zice: „Își ascunde păcatele lui bărbatul, dar în adunare se dă pe față”. Cel care a păcătuit trebuie să nu piardă nici o clipă dacă vrea să-și cruțe sufletul lui, ci îndată să alerge, pocăindu-se, la mărturisire, și va găsi multă tărie să respingă păcatul. „Căci obișnuiește, zice părintele Nil, învățătura duhovnicească să scoată afară fumul ce zace în suflete de la răutate.”

„Demonii vor să ne piardă pe noi, dar noi, dacă ne pocăim și ne mărturisim, aceia greșesc ținta, și se împlinesc Scriptura care zice că «pofa păcătoșilor va pieri»”. Același spune: „Mare lucru este să nu accepți deloc să păcătuiești, dar dacă din răpirea vrăjmașului ți se întâmplă să păcătuiești, trebuie să cauți scăpare la cea mai bună nădejde. Căci înclinațiile oamenilor sunt spre cele potrivnice”.

„Nu este nevoie de timp pentru cel ce vrea să fie mântuit, zice Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, căci nici tâlharul nu a fost mântuit în timp, ci numai crezând, a câștigat comoara necheltuită a împărăției.” „Dacă și-ar pune omul gând în inima lui să se întoarcă la Dumnezeu și dacă i-ar vesti unui om păcatul lui, și va arăta nebunia lui, îi va răbda lui Dumnezeu să nu cadă în moarte, se va înnoi trupul lui ca zugrăveala de pe zid, iar oasele lui se vor umple de măduvă, se va frăgezi trupul lui ca al unui prunc și îl va face la loc bărbat între oameni. Se va ruga Domnului și primite vor fi cererile lui, va intra cu fața curată la rostire (slavoslovie), se va da omului dreptate”.

Didim zice: „Pocăința pentru păcate face mintea curată celui ce se pocăiește”. Iar Sfântul Ioan Scărarul zice: „Cei ce își oblojesc rănilor nu înaintează spre mai SOLIA MAY/JUNE 2016

rău, ci se vor vindeca”. „Nimic nu dă atâta putere demonilor și gândurilor cât a hrăni în inimă cugete nemărturisite.” Acestea și atâtea alte bunătăți ne vin de la mărturisirea grabnică și sinceră.

Ne îndeamnă totuși proorocul Isaia să fim foarte pregătiți: „Căutați-L pe Dumnezeu și când Îl găsiți chemați-L pe El. Căci atunci când se va apropia de voi, să lase nelegiuitul căile sale și bărbatul cel fărădelege voile sale și întoarceți-vă la Domnul și veți fi miluiți, fiindcă va ierta păcatele voastre cu dinadinsul”.

Iar Sfântul Grigorie Teologul învață și modul îndreptării păcatelor: „Încinge gunoiul, lacrimi, suspine [...] îndreptarea și a celei mai de necinste petreceri se face prin mărturisire”. „De nimic nu se bucură atâta Dumnezeu cât de îndreptarea și mântuirea omului, de care se face atâta pricină și pentru care este toată taina.” Mărturisirea totuși cere și aflarea unui doctor potrivit și experimentat. Despre această necesitate inevitabilă, iată ce spune un sfânt părinte: „Așa cum pătimirile trupului nu le descoperă oamenii tuturor, nici la întâmplare, ci numai celor experimentați în vindecarea lor, la fel și mărturisirea păcatelor trebuie să fie la cei ce pot să le tămăduiască”.

Grijă mare, așadar, pentru căutarea doctorilor experimentați care pot să vindece rănilor sufletului rănit de păcate. Grijă urgentă din pricina caracterului acut al rănilor și al feluritelor patimi. Grijă intensă pentru primejdia amară, fiindcă așa cum medicul neiscusit pe mulți îi trimite la porțile iadului, la fel și duhovnicul neînțelept și nepriceput multe suflete va trimite în iad. O! Ce rău înfricoșător este să afle cineva moartea acolo unde caută vindecare! Cine poate să aprecieze mărimea uriașei nenorociri? Cine poate să plângă o asemenea pierzanie! Ochii lui trebuie să se transforme în izvoare de lacrimi, ca să plângă pe măsură nenorocirea. Vai! Vai! Celor ce fac pe duhovnicul și omoară sufletele celor ce se mărturisesc! Vai celor care pretind bani în locul străpungerii și zdrobirii inimii și împăcării cu Dumnezeu prin viață virtuoasă spre iertarea păcatelor. Vai celor ce caută ca în schimbul plății să vândă iertarea faptelor rele! Vai celor fățarnici și celor ce fățarnicesc evlavia spre înșelare și căutarea câștigului, celor ce fac pe evlavioșii pentru bani! Vai celor ce făgăduiesc în schimbul banilor rugăciuni și cereri pentru cei ce păcătuiesc! Vai neguțătorilor de suflete, care vând pentru câteva monede sufletele creștinilor demonilor! Vai celor ce învață minciuna! Partea lor va fi cu tatăl lor diavolul, tatăl minciunii!

Iubite creștine! Dumnezeu nu este nevoiaș, El nu are nevoie de nimic, fiindcă nu este lipsit de nimic.

*Cont. la pag 24*

# Mesajul Sfântului ...

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11. Biserica Ortodoxă se adresează **tinerilor**, care caută deplină viață în libertate, dreptate, creativitate, dar și iubire. Ea îi cheamă să se alăture în mod conștiințios Bisericii Celui care este Adevărul și Viața. Să vină oferind trupului eclezial vitalitatea lor, neliniștile, problematicile și așteptările lor. Tinerii nu reprezintă doar viitorul Bisericii, ci și prezentul dinamic și creativ la nivel local și mondial.

12. Sfântul și Marele Sinod **a deschis orizonturile noastre** către lumea contemporană diversă. Ne-a subliniat responsabilitatea în spațiu și timp, având întotdeauna perspectiva veșniciei. Biserica Ortodoxă, păstrându-și intact caracterul sacramental și soteriologic (mântuitor), este sensibilă la durerea, necazurile și strigătul pentru dreptate și pace al popoarelor. Ea „binevestește din zi în zi mântuirea Lui. Veștește între neamuri slava Lui, între toate popoarele minunile Lui” (Psalmul 95, 2-3).

Să ne rugăm ca „Dumnezeul a tot harul, Care ne-a chemat la slava Sa cea veșnică, întru Hristos Iisus, El Însuși, după ce vom suferi puțină vreme, ne va duce la desăvârșire, ne va întări, ne va împuternici, ne va face neclintii. A lui fie slava și puterea în vecii vecilor. Amin!” (1 Petru 5, 1011).

## PSALMUL LUI PETRU

Să mă încui în piatra cu neumblatul ornice,  
La fluierul din urmă, Grădinii de Te-oi pierde!  
Nu mersul Tău pe ape mi-a fost ca un pistornic,  
Ci nebăuta-Ți zare, tot altuia în verde...

Mă-ncolăciră spinii, că vânt am strâns cu efa!  
Tu îmi cunoști adâncul, înglăsuind genunii.  
Mai dojenește-Ți marea urlând prin mine: Chefa!  
Ca lupul stors de foame în chinga văgăunii.

Îmi putrezește duhul, trei zile-s de când plouă!  
Lichenii cresc la grindă, pe cuib de rândunică.  
Eu Te-am cerșit cu setea-n străinătăți de rouă,  
Dar nimeni nu-i acasă, sunt singur și mi-e frică!

Ascult prin lemnul ușii, osândul să nu-mi scape:  
- Era cu Răstignitul, e pe-undeva, pe-aproape...

**Dumitru Ichim**  
Kitchener, Ontario

# Sfantul Nectarie ...

Cont. de la pag 23

Așadar, să nu aduci rugăciuni străine și cereri pentru satisfacerea dumnezeieștii dreptăți rănite de tine pentru împăcarea lui Dumnezeu cel mâniat, fiindcă nimic nu vei folosi. Ai păcătuit? Simți povara păcatului? Ai muștrări de conștiință? Poartă de grijă ca să te ușurezi, poartă de grijă să înceteze muștrarea de conștiință. Numai duhovnicul este doctor. Caută leacurile mai degrabă decât rugăciunile și cererile altora. Dar chiar dacă le cauți și pe acestea, nu trece cu vederea leacurile. Așa cum atunci când suntem bolnavi, după învățătura Sfântului Apostol Iacov, căutăm rugăciunile, dar ne ungem și cu untdelemn. La fel și aici, caută mai întâi leacul și dacă ești bogat dă sfinților să se roage pentru tine, rugându-te și tu împreună cu ei. Iar rugăciunea celor ce se roagă să fie expresia dorului arzător pentru împăcarea cu Dumnezeu, altminteri nu îți este de nici un folos plata și rugăciunile altora, dacă tu ești nepăsător, fiindcă tu cu nimic nu ai devenit mai bun din punct de vedere moral. Iubiților, este vorba aici de renașterea morală, este vorba despre viața creștină, este vorba despre petrecerea cuvioasă și virtuoasă, este vorba de însușirea a ceea ce este dumnezeiesc. Este vorba despre desăvârșire și sfințenie. Fiindcă astfel devenim părtași vieții veșnice. Dacă noi nu luptăm, nimic nu isprăvim, deșarte sunt și rugăciunile duhovnicului, deșarte sunt și paraclisele pe care le plătim, deșarte și cele 40 de Liturghii pe care le plătim pentru cel ce nu se pocăiește și nu satisface dumnezeiasca dreptate și care încă trăiește în păcat. Să ne mântuim prin zdrobirea inimii și prin adevărată spovedanie.

(Sfântul Nectarie de Eghina, *Studii despre Biserică, despre Tradiție, despre dumnezeieștile Taine și despre slujirea în Duh și adevăr*, Editura Doxologia, 2016)

