2014 EPISCOPATE CONGRESS

Clergy with the Hierarchs following the Divine Liturgy.
Pastoral / Parish Changes

CLERGY

ANTONESCU, Rev. Fr. Cosmin, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of St. Mary Church, Portland, OR and assigned Parish Priest of Holy Cross Church, Alexandria VA and St. Andrew Mission, Pottomac MD, effective November 1, 2014.

CAPSA, Rev. Fr. Constantin Iustin, who had been transferred to the Church of Romania effective February 6, 2012, was accepted by the Episcopate Council into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America from the Church of Romania, effective September 5, 2014, and attached to Holy Trinity Church, Los Angeles CA.

HOARSTE, Rev. Fr. Dan, who is attached to St. Mary Chapel, Grass Lake MI, was approved by the Episcopate Congress on September 6, 2014 as a Vicar of the Episcopate and assigned to the newly-established Vicariate of Canada.

IOAN, Rev. Fr. Codrut, who was assigned Parish Priest of Holy Brancoveanu Martyrs Mission, Montreal QC, was released from his duties, effective May 25, 2014, and remains unassigned.

MUNCEAN, V. Rev. Archimandrite Longhin, was accepted by the Episcopate Council into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America from the Church of Romania, and assigned to Holy Archangels Michael & Gabriel Mission, Haledon NJ, effective September 5, 2014.

MUNTEANU, Rev. Fr. Alin, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of Elevation of the Holy Cross Mission, Alexandria VA and St. Andrew Mission, Pottomac MD, effective November 1, 2014.

MUNTEANU, Rev. Fr. Alin, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of Holy Nativity Church, Chicago IL, effective October 15, 2014.

OANCEA, Archdeacon David, who is attached to St. Mary Chapel, Grass Lake MI, was approved by the Episcopate Congress on September 6, 2014 as a Vicar of the Episcopate and assigned to the newly-established Vicariate of Canada.
OCA Holy Synod Issues Preliminary Response to Canonical Restructuring Proposals

[Syosset, NY] A Preliminary Response of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America to proposals with regard to canonical restructuring, a topic of discussion at the fifth meeting of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America in Dallas, TX, September 15-19, 2014, was issued and distributed to all bishops on September 17.

The text of the Preliminary Response reads as follows.

PRELIMINARY RESPONSE OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA TO THE PROPOSALS FOR CANONICAL RESTRUCTURING

September 17, 2014

“The light of Orthodoxy was not lit to shine only on a small number of men. The Orthodox Church is universal; it remembers the words of its Founder: ‘Go ye unto all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature….’” [Mark 16:15]. We ought to share our spiritual wealth, our truth, light, and joy with others who are deprived of these blessings, but often are seeking them and thirsting for them…” [St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and Enlightener of North America Homily for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1903, San Francisco].

The fourth gathering of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in North America (ACOB) took place on September 17-19, 2013 in Chicago, Illinois. At that meeting, the Committee for Canonical Regional Planning presented a Proposal for Canonical Administrative Restructuring, which was discussed in detail at several sessions by the assembled bishops.

According to the minutes of Assembly IV, “there was a general sense that there was no agreement on the proposed model at this time, but that the model was a good starting point for further discussion and development.” In addition, the suggestion was made that, “following the conclusion of Assembly IV, there should be discussion within each jurisdiction about the proposals.”

More recently, the Committee for Canonical Regional Planning forwarded to all the bishops of the Assembly an updated proposal for canonical restructuring in our region along with a second unsolicited proposal from an interested group outside of the Committee. These are being discussed at our Assembly gathered here in Dallas. Several jurisdictions have already offered responses to the most recent proposals or expanded on the comments they have made about last year’s Proposal.

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America is presently considering its own fuller and more comprehensive contribution to the present discussion but offers the following points as an outline of some principles which we feel should be considered by the brothers of the Assembly:

1. The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America remains committed to the work of the Assembly of Bishops and is grateful to the Most Holy Patriarchs and Primates for initiating the process that has taken us from the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan Orthodox Conference in Chambésy, Switzerland in June of 2009 to our present expectation of a Great and Holy Council in 2016.

2. We likewise remain supportive of the efforts of the Assembly of Bishops within our region, which has met now for five years in a row, in a spirit of mutual love and respect, with a view to fulfill the mandate of the “swift healing of every canonical anomaly” in our region and to propose, by consensus, a plan for canonical reorganization to be submitted in time for the Great and Holy Council [Message of the Patriarchs 3.12].

3. In particular, we offer sincere thanks to Archbishop Nicolae, the Chairman of the Canonical Regional Planning Committee, along with all its members and consultants, for their excellent initiative and work to date. We recognize the exhaustive research and complex reflection that were required to address the issue of canonical organization in our region. We also acknowledge the many hours of discussion and review that have gone into the drafting of the initial 2013 proposal and the subsequent proposals presented to this Assembly.

4. We also would like to acknowledge the concerns expressed on the two proposals that we are considering here in Dallas, including those referring specifically to the canonical implications of the
GRASS LAKE, MI - The 82nd Annual Episcopate Congress of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, a Diocese of the Orthodox Church in America, took place on September 5-7, 2014 at the Diocesan Center “Vatra Romaneasca” (Romanian Hearth). This year marked 100 years since the birth of His Eminence, Archbishop Valerian and the 30th Anniversary of the Enthronement of His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel as Ruling Hierarch of the Episcopate. Sts. Peter & Paul Parish, Dearborn Heights, Michigan, hosted the Congress.

The three days of events began on Friday, September 5 in St. Mary Pioneer Chapel with the Akathist Hymn to Bishop Policarp. The Clergy Conference followed at the Valerian D. Trifa Romanian-American Heritage Center. After the meeting, Vespers was celebrated in the Chapel. At 7:00 pm, the Episcopate Council met in session in the Chancery Office to review the Report to Congress and other matters related to the Congress Sessions to take place the following day, as well as the usual work of the Council.

On Saturday, September 6, the Congress began at 9:30 a.m. with the Invocation of the Holy Spirit, followed by Roll Call and the Verification of Mandates, the Call to Order and Appointment of Secretaries and Tellers. Following lengthy discussion and motions on the seating of particular delegates, the assembled delegates voted to accept Holy Archangels Michael & Gabriel Church, Haledon NJ, as a new Mission of the Episcopate. Approval of the Agenda for the 82nd Congress and of the Minutes of the 81st Congress followed. Following introductory comments by Protopresbyter Laurence Lazar on the 30th Anniversary of Archbishop Nathaniel’s Archpastorate, His Eminence presented his Address to the Congress, after which he presented a special medallion, designed by V. Rev. Fr. Laurence Lazar, to all the delegates in commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Archbishop Valerian. The narrative reports in the Report to the Congress were then reviewed and passed, as were the Financial reports. The session then recessed for a memorial service in St. Mary Cemetery followed by lunch in the Tower Pavillon.

After lunch, the Congress resumed and the CPA-audited financial reports were accepted. The Episcopate Council’s Finance Committee, headed by Rev. Fr. David Subu, then reported its findings after having completed a ten-year (2004-2013) analysis of Episcopate income and expenses. Essentially, due to many factors [annual per capita assessments ($60) have remained the same; number of communities (especially missions) has increased but overall reported membership has remained the same; U.S. inflation has increased 21%; Congress mandated addition of new staff positions without providing a means to pay salaries], the Episcopate has been forced to use reserve funds to cover the increased expenses, with an average deficit of $25,000 per year for the last ten years. Conclusion: With reserve funds nearly depleted, the Episcopate is no longer able to conduct business as usual without increasing revenue. Recommendation to the Episcopate Congress: 1) Parishes - An immediate increase of per capita assessments of $15 for 2014 (thus, $75 per capita due in January 2015). 2) Missions established for 5 or more years will be assessed at the same rate as parishes ($75 per capita due in January 2015), and upon payment, upgraded to parish status with all the rights and obligations pertaining thereto. Additionally, the Episcopate Council is working toward a long-term solution by: a) Implementing simple but meaningful
financial reporting procedures for all parishes and missions (a financial report form will be sent out to be completed for 2014 finances). b) Transitioning towards a percentage-based assessment (instead of per capita) for all parishes, once a fair rate can be established. The Finance Committee concluded its report by noting that the recommendations were incorporated into the Proposed 2015 Budget, so that approval of that budget would constitute acceptance of the recommendations and would allow the Episcopate to do the following: 1) Fund Congress-mandated staff positions, the Dept. of Missions and the Dept. of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. 2) Restore Episcopate financial reserves, reduce debts and rebuild future potential. 3) Fulfill the vision of the founders, faithful hierarchs Policarp and Valerian of blessed memory, and their spiritual children. 4) Make overdue and necessary repairs and capital improvements to Vatra Romaneasca, so that it may be the spiritual center of our Episcopate for generations to come. Lively discussion followed the presentation, with several speakers in support of a percentage-based assessment.

Under New Business, Archbishop Nathaniel presented a recommendation that the Episcopate Council had approved at its meeting the night before: the reformulation of the existing eight Deaneries into four Vicariates. The Archbishop explained that the Deanery structure does not allow for frequent enough visits to the parishes due to the fact that the Deans have their own parish responsibilities on Sundays. Therefore, each Vicariate would have a Vicar to care for the parishes in that region: West, Central States, East and Canada. The recommendation was passed. Archbishop Nathaniel then explained that Bishop Irineu would be in charge of the West, and he (Archbishop Nathaniel) would oversee the East. To cover the other two regions, Central States and Canada, he proposed the appointment of Archdeacon David Oancea and Rev. Fr. Dan Hoarste, members of the Chancery staff, as Vicars. The proposal was passed.

Next on the agenda was the Proposed Budget for 2015 which includes the increase in dues of $15 per capita for parishes and $45 per capita for Missions which have been established for over five years and will be upgraded to Parish status. Delegates were informed that approval of this budget would be an approval of the increases as a whole for the sake of efficiency and clarity of what the final figures would look like. After discussion, the Congress approved the 2015 Budget.

The final motion of the day was made by Rev. Deacon Dan Chirtu: “The Congress acknowledges and

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proposals, the duty of the Mother Churches to pastorally care for the flock of their particular ethnic and cultural heritage and the need to address current variations in pastoral and ecclesiastical practice. These are legitimate concerns that must be carefully addressed in any plan that is put forward. We also emphasize that the principle of consensus, which has been operative on the global level through the Synaxes of the Holy Patriarchs and the Chambésy process, as well as within our own Assembly, must be preserved as we look to finalize our Assembly’s proposal to the Great and Holy Council.

5. We note that the two proposals most recently distributed to the bishops articulate two different approaches to the question of canonical restructuring. The first (from the Committee) proposed a 10-year path towards a potential autocephaly via an interim status of autonomy to be overseen by all the Primates of the Orthodox Churches. The second (from an unsolicited source) proposes a similar 10-year plan but with the emphasis on common and concerted joint local effort of the members of the Assembly in addressing a number of specific areas (pension, theological education, missions, etc.).

6. Although both plans present concrete solutions, the Holy Synod of the OCA feels that both options require further discussion and analysis both within the Assembly and within each of our respective jurisdictions. Nevertheless, in terms of a principle of approach, we remain committed to the vision of a fully functioning and canonical local Church in our region. Therefore, we continue to maintain the principle that the best solution for this region is a canonically and administratively united local Church with a properly functioning Holy Synod.

7. We acknowledge that the status of the Orthodox Church in America as an autocephalous Church is not universally recognized within the Orthodox world. We likewise re-affirm that we do not consider our autocephaly as an obstacle to a broader autocephaly, which is, in fact, envisioned within the Tomos of Autocephaly, granted to us by the Russian Orthodox Church. In the words of His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri, of blessed memory, who was bishop here in Dallas: The Orthodox Church in America is autocephalous not in order to be self-sufficient and isolated, but in order to be in living communion and close contact with all Orthodox Churches... The Orthodox Church in America received autocephaly not in order to be master of Orthodox unity in America but in order to be a servant of this unity.

8. At the same time, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America fully acknowledges that attention needs to be legitimately directed to the question of the pastoral and administrative care of particular ethnic/cultural groups; the cooperative work that has been undertaken by all the brothers gathered here, not only through the work of the Assembly, its Committees and Agencies, but for many decades before. We are confident that the universal dimension of the Orthodox Church, reflected in the beautiful diversity of the Orthodox presence in the United States, should remain a hallmark of our Church here. Is it not possible that an administratively united Church might offer a more effective means to collectively and in brotherly fashion assist the bishops of the Assembly in the care of the diversity of our faithful?

9. As such, we ask our brothers of the Assembly to consider a broader question: For what purpose has God, in His infinite Wisdom and Providence, brought us together in this country? Is our answer a positive response to the Lord’s commandment to “preach the Gospel to every creature”? Is our answer to look to the model provided by St. Tikhon at the turn of the last century, and to “share our spiritual wealth … with others who are deprived of these blessings”? In His High Priestly Prayer in St. John’s Gospel, our Lord Jesus Christ prays to the Father and asks that “they may be one, as we are”. How is this to be realized if we place limits on our responsibility to be the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church? St. Paul tells the Galatians that “There is neither Jew nor Greek … for you are all one in Christ Jesus” [Gal. 3:28]. Does this not direct us to see no difference between the immigrant from Russia and the one from Indonesia, between the one from Africa and the one from Central America? Does this not direct us to see the Agnostic, the Protestant, the Buddhist or Taoist in the same way we see the Jew nor Greek … for you are all one in Christ Jesus” [Gal. 3:28]. Does this not direct us to see the Agnostic, the Protestant, the Buddhist or Taoist in the same way we see the marginal Orthodox Christian?

For these reasons, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America strongly urges that all efforts continue to be made by the Assembly to fulfill the expectation of the Most Holy Primates, as re-iterated by His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew, in his inspiring address to us this morning, that we offer a proposal which “moves beyond words to actions” and which “puts our theology into practice.” We submit that the most clear and direct path to this goal is the establishment of a local autocephalous Orthodox Church here in our region and recommend this to the Assembly for their consideration as the most effective way to fulfill the exhortation of His All Holiness: “To move beyond what is mine and yours, to what is ours.”

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PRAY AND WORK FOR ORTHODOX UNITY IN NORTH AMERICA

SOLIA SEPT/OCT 2014
**Presentation Church Serves the Needy in Akron, Ohio**

On Sunday September 7, 2014, the members of AkROY (Akron Romanian Orthodox Youth) joined by their parents and a host of the members of The Presentation of Our Lord Parish gathered in the social hall to assemble over 700 lunch bags to be served at the 9th Annual Summit County Stand Down For Homeless Veterans in the Akron/Summit County Ohio community.

Members of the Stand Down Committee arrived to assist and were totally amazed at what our young members and the families of our parish were able to accomplish. In less than 45 minutes, all of the sandwiches were prepared, the lunch bags were assembled (with a sandwich, fresh fruit, a bag of snacks and condiments for the sandwiches) and placed in containers for delivery to the Stand Down site.

This year’s Stand Down, held on September 9, realized the largest number of veterans in need of assistance, 462 veterans served with 21 of those being women. An array of clothing, boots, coats, undergarments for men and women, blankets, toiletries and personal hygiene supplies. A great number of the personal grooming/hygiene items were provided through the efforts of one of the AkROY members, Mr. Zachary Codrea; and his efforts were recognized in our local newspaper, The Akron Beacon Journal.

The Presentation of Our Lord parish takes great pride in our young members who have undertaken to serve both “The Copley Fairlawn Share-a-Christmas” for those in need in our local community and the homeless veterans. Our young members spearheaded a Pancake Breakfast five years ago and have donated $5,373.50 in that time to each of these worthwhile community services.

**Pastoral/Parish Changes**

Continued from page 2

of the Episcopate and assigned to the newly-established Vicariate of the Central States.

**PAUN, V. Rev. Fr. Dumitru**, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of St. Andrew Mission, Potomac MD and granted a medical leave of absence effective August 27, 2014.

**PELIN, Rev. Fr. Cezar**, was accepted by the Episcopate Council into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America from the Church of Romania, effective September 5, 2014, and assigned to Holy Hierarch Varlaam, Metropolitan of Moldova Mission in New Brunswick, Canada, a mission in the process of formation.

**PETRESCU, V. Rev. Fr. Aurel**, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of St. Philothea of Arges Mission, Hagerstown MD, and temporarily assigned to serve Holy Cross Church, Alexandria VA, effective March 15, 2014. He was released from his temporary assignment to Holy Cross Church, Alexandria VA, effective October 31, 2014, and awaits reassignment.

**PROCA, Rev. Fr. Dumitru**, was accepted into the ranks of the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America by the Episcopate Council on September 5, 2013, and attached to St. Elias Mission, Anjou QC. On May 25, 2014, he was assigned Parish Priest of Holy Brancoveanu Martyrs Mission, Montreal QC.

**SATNOIANU, Deacon Ionel**, was ordained into the Holy Priesthood by His Eminence, Archbishop NATHANIEL, on January 5, 2014, at St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland OH, and assigned Assistant Parish Priest there.

**URSICA, Hierodeacon IOAN**, assigned to Ascension of the Lord Monastery, Clinton MI, was suspended from all diaconal functions, effective April 19, 2014.

**PARISHES**

**St. Athanasius the Great Mission, Naperville IL**, was accepted as a Mission under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America by the Episcopate Council on March 29, 2014.

**Holy Archangels Michael & Gabriel Mission, Haledon NJ**, was accepted as a Mission under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America by the Episcopate Council on September 5, 2014.

**St. John the Evangelist Mission, Claremont CA**, was closed, effective November 1, 2014.
Following a meeting with a local representative of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Program, Mary Thorne, now president of the Parish Council of the Saint George Orthodox Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, volunteered to be the advisor for the youth in the parish desiring to participate in this program.

The Award Program was developed by Prince Philip of England. Its aims are: to encourage and stimulate self-reliance and self-discipline, perseverance and determination, initiative and creativity, community involvement and social responsibility, spirit of adventure, fitness of body and mind, life skills, international understanding and awareness. There are four components of the Award: physical fitness, skills, community service and adventurous journey. There are three levels: bronze, silver and gold.

In fulfilling their commitment, the youth have: raised thousands of dollars for the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) and other charities; helped out in a food kitchen; collected food for Christmas hampers and a food bank; visited veterans and children in hospitals.

The following is an account by Mary Thorne of a recent skills and adventurous journey component exercise (Note: She was assisted by her husband, David Thorne, her sister Tamara MacLellan, her brother Timothy MacLellan, and Mitchel Driver, a father of one of the youths).

Protopresbyter Mirone R. Klysh

Camp – 2014

We all were up early on Tuesday morning, not knowing what the day would bring. Most of the campers had never canoed before; or, if they did, not on a trek that we were about to embark upon. I am sure the owners of the canoes were covering their eyes as they watched the six canoes take off from the shore. It took a bit to adjust to our partners in the canoes and to get the handle on how to keep the canoe relatively straight. However, before long, we reached the first tunnel. This is one of the prettiest canoe routes in Manitoba; and, I would go out on a limb to say, even in Canada. It took us through wild rice fields, which some of us had difficulty getting out of. Then, we went through the second tunnel, also a cool experience. When it started to rain, we headed for the first available island and camped out.

We returned to Caddy Lake the next day and stayed at the provincial campground. We needed to get our sleep, as we had a long trek ahead of us on the Trans-Canada Trail from Caddy Lake to Falcon Lake. It is about twenty-four kilometers of up and down terrain, but, also very beautiful. We survived setting up and taking down camp every day. It reminded me of what it would have been like for the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land. A new word was
created during our trip: “E-lent” or fasting from the use of electronic equipment. I don’t think that the E-gadgets were missed, as we were pretty tired by the end of the day.

This is our third year of camping together. I cannot believe that we are the same group that started out at Bird’s Hill with one tent and a meal plan that consisted of kolbasa, bacon, eggs and bread. We have come a long way, especially in how the youth have become true leaders. On this trip, I never set up a tent or cooked or cleaned; and, I never had to tell anyone to do it. The gang pitched in and helped and worked until the work was done. I didn’t hear any complaining, even when we were so tired of canoeing and the rain was pouring, and Tim had tipped Tammy, while she was still in the canoe. So many virtues can be practiced without people even realizing what excellence we displayed as Christians. We cleaned up campsites better than we found them. The canoes were returned clean and with all the equipment inside. We prayed together every morning and every night. It was awesome!

We also learned one of the best lessons of all on the trip. Tim shifted in the canoe and his and Tammy’s stuff got dumped into the lake. Tim very quickly grabbed Tam’s stuff and then his, and we dumped the water out of the canoe. I found out afterward that Tammy’s stuff stayed dry. However, everything that Tim brought was on the clothesline soaking wet, except for one pair of socks. Tim had given her those socks, as they were the only dry things that he had to give. What a lesson in brotherly love!

Mary Thorne
“Wannabee Voyageur”

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The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America concluded its fifth annual meeting on September 18, 2014, in Dallas, Texas. The Assembly issued a Message to the Faithful and a Statement on the Middle East (see texts below).

In other business, the Assembly reviewed and approved the 2015 budget. Assembly VI will be held September 15-17, 2015. The location is to be determined.

Documents pertaining to Assembly V, including the minutes, 2015 budget and committee reports, will be forthcoming on the Assembly’s website (assemblyofbishops.org).

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**Message to the Faithful**

To our beloved Orthodox Christian faithful throughout the United States of America:

*Let us* maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4.3).

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

We, the members of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, gathered in Dallas, Texas, for our fifth annual meeting on September 16-18, 2014, greet you with paternal love, as we offer glory and thanks to our Triune God.

Thirty-eight bishops convened in the unity of our holy Orthodox faith, mindful of our responsibility to each other and to the whole Church as the Body of Christ. We opened our Assembly with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and the sharing of the Holy Eucharist at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Dallas TX as guests of our host, Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver. Even as our Church honors the holy and precious Cross, we celebrate the universal and definitive victory of God over evil, sin and death.

We express our deep gratitude to all those who labored for this fifth annual Assembly Meeting. We recognize the new First Vice-Chairman of the Assembly, Metropolitan Joseph, Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, recently elected to succeed Metropolitan Philip of blessed memory. May our Lord Jesus Christ grant eternal repose to our brother and concelebrant Metropolitan Philip. The Assembly also welcomes its Second Vice-Chairman, newly consecrated Bishop John of Naro-Fominsk, Administrator of the Patriarchate of Moscow’s parishes in America, and expresses its thanks to Archbishop Justinian, who has returned to Russia. Finally, we greet the latest member of our Assembly, Bishop Saba, representing the parishes of the Patriarchate of Georgia in the USA.

In the opening session, our chairman Archbishop Demetrios underlined our responsibility as bishops in witnessing to the Gospel and manifesting God’s love in our world. Therefore, in our conversations carried out in a spirit of mutual trust and fraternity, we focused on issues related to the role of our Church in society, such as the advancement of religious education and relations with other churches and religions. We heard reports from the directors of the Assembly’s seven agencies, with an overview of their history and current activities. The agencies include the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), Orthodox Christian Network (OCN), Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF), Orthodox Christian Education Commission (OCEC), Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM), and Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting (EOCS).

In particular, we recognized our responsibility to address primarily domestic but also, by extension, global issues as the Orthodox Christian community of a nation that plays a decisive role in our world. We are cognizant of this vocation and obligation,
especially as we await the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches scheduled for the Spring of 2016 in Istanbul. Over the next months, we shall have the opportunity to submit specific recommendations and proposals for consideration by the Synod, through its special Pan-Orthodox Preparatory Committee, with a view to overcoming existing canonical anomalies in the United States. We reaffirm our commitment to the decisions of the Primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches and the Pan-Orthodox Preconciliar Conferences. In this regard, we engaged in constructive deliberation on the vision of our Church in the United States in light of Orthodox ecclesiology and canon law, but also in view of recent immigration developments and trends.

In declaring our common faith and professing our pastoral witness, we pray for the families of our faithful, who face unprecedented and unfathomable challenges from diverse contemporary societal trends, especially as a result of the increasing eclipse of the Christian family and its traditional values. Therefore, we emphasize the primacy and priority of the family in Christian life, remembering that the first man and woman created in the image and likeness of God constituted a family, that the Incarnate Word was born into a family, and that the crucified Lord was concerned about His family on the precious and life-giving Cross.

Finally, we agreed on the following resolutions:

1) We unanimously agreed on our fervent support for the convocation of the Holy and Great Council in 2016 and entreat all those responsible for its realization to work in a spirit of unity and harmony in order to bring this blessed occasion to fruition without any delay or hindrance.

2) We deplore the ongoing violence and extreme bloodshed throughout the world. In the Middle East, hostility and brutality are occurring among members of different religions, sometimes supposedly in the name of religion. We pray for peace and justice in this region, for protection of Christian and other minorities in the ancient lands of Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, as well as for the cessation of racial discrimination, partisan extremism, and religious fanaticism. We especially decry the violence of the so-called Islamic State, condemning our brothers and sisters in the region to work as apostles of peace.

3) In Ukraine, we have watched for months with mounting dismay and grief the armed conflict and unjustifiable bloodshed among our own brothers and sisters. We appeal to a humanitarian response to the innocent victims of this conflict. We call upon all parties to deepen the present truce; may church and government leaders in the region be a force of restraint and reconciliation. We pray for dialogue and understanding in this land, whose Christian roots date to over one thousand years ago. May God bring unity and peace to the church and people in Ukraine.

4) We fervently appeal once again for the release of our brother bishops in Syria, the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Paul Yazigi (brother of His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch) and the Syriac Orthodox Archbishop John Ibrahim, as well as of all kidnapped persons.

5) Moreover, we regret that our brother Archbishop Jovan of Ohrid remains imprisoned in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and we implore the authorities in FYROM for a prompt and fair resolution to this issue.

6) We are deeply concerned about the reported dramatic rise of those who label themselves as religiously indifferent, agnostic or atheist. We commit ourselves to raising greater awareness and striving to more ardent preaching of the Christian gospel, while calling upon our faithful to increase their vigilance and continue growing in their understanding of our Church’s teaching and tradition.

In conclusion, we ask for the prayers of our precious and beloved Orthodox faithful, as we continue the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, who went about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people (Matt. 4.23). May the abundant blessings of our merciful God be with you all.

Statement on the Middle East

Blessed are the peacemakers (Matt. 5.9).

We, the members of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, gathered in Dallas, Texas, on September 16-18, 2014, prayed “for the peace of the whole world” (from the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom) and decried the brutal and bloody violence in the Middle East.

The barbarity perpetrated against Christians, Muslims and vulnerable communities in the Middle East by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as well as other jihadist groups has claimed numerous innocent lives and driven countless people from their homes. It has also threatened the existence of Christian communities, which enjoy an uninterrupted presence there for over two thousand years. Recent hostility not only against Christians and Yazidis, but also against Muslims, has shocked the entire civilized world.

Echoing the statement of His Beatitude Patriarch John X of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East as well as the other Patriarchs of the East (August 14, 2014), we lament and denounce the egregious and barbarous incidents in the area,

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including religious intolerance and fanaticism, that
erode the social fabric and unity of the region, de-
stroying churches, shrines and monuments, which are
the common heritage of all Christians and, indeed,
all humanity.

Along with His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch
Bartholomew, “we cannot remain indifferent or silent
before such irrational persecution, cultural intolerance
and appalling loss of life, especially when caused
by religious hatred and racial hostility” (August 13,
2014). The recent horrific events in Iraq and Syria,
Libya and Egypt, and especially in Palestine and Leb-
anon, demonstrate the dire consequences of remaining
complacent in the face of evil.

In this regard, we affirm the Message of the Primates
of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches (March 9,
2014), which called “for the immediate cessation of
military action, liberation of captives, and establish-
ment of peace in the region through dialogue,” stressing
“that Christians in the Middle East are a leaven of
peace” and emphasizing that “peace for all people
also means peace for Christians.”

Therefore:

1) We affirm our solidarity with and pray for the
safety of Christians in the Middle East, committing
ourselves to work for peace and justice in the region.

2) We support international efforts to resolve the
Israel-Palestine issue, ensuring the security, freedom
and human rights of their peoples, and bringing peace
to the Holy Land.

3) We encourage all people of good will to support
agencies, already hard at work throughout the region,
in their efforts to assist the displaced populations in
order that they may return to their homes.

4) We urge governments and authorities to insist
upon the fundamental human rights and religious
freedom of all, urgently establish the rule of law, and
immediately desist from supporting extremist groups
and oppressive governments whether through financial
means or military arms.

5) We urge the United Nations and the international
community, and especially the government of our
United States of America, to establish policies that
promote peace and justice for all in the region, while
refraining from all forms of violence.

6) We firmly reiterate our call for the immediate
release of our brothers, the Greek Orthodox Metropol-
itan Paul Yazigi and the Syriac Orthodox Archbishop
John Ibrahim, both of Aleppo in Syria, who were
kidnapped on April 22, 2013, as well as the release
of all innocent captives.

Finally, above and beyond our appeal and prayer
for peace and justice, mindful that “what is impossi-
ble with men is possible with God” (Luke 18.27), we
place our ultimate hope in “God, who is the source
of peace” (Rom. 16.20).

Evangelism on
the Train

If I were to meet you on a train and ask you,
“What is the center of the Christian message?”,
how would you succinctly put that?

“I believe in a God who loves humankind so
intensely, so totally, that he chose himself to become
human. Therefore, I believe in Jesus Christ as fully
and truly God, but also totally and unreservedly
one of us, fully human. And I would say to you,
the love of God is so great that Christ died for
us on the cross. But love is stronger than death,
and so the death of Jesus was followed by his
resurrection. I am a Christian because I believe
in the great love of God that led him to become
incarnate, to die and to rise again. That’s my faith.
All of this is made immediate to us through the
continuing action of the Holy Spirit.”

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware
Interview in “Christianity Today,” July 6, 2011

82nd Episcopate Congress ...

Continued from page 5

condemns the persecution and killing of Christians and
other people on a large scale throughout the world.”
The motion passed. The meeting was adjourned.

After Vespers and Dinner, the Delegates assembled
in St. Mary Chapel for a commemorative program in
celebration of the 100th Anniversary since the birth
of Archbishop Valerian (Trifa) of blessed memory. Re-
marks were made by: Protopresbyter Laurence Lazar,
Archpriest Remus Grama and Dr. Dennis Ghindia,
followed by an Address by His Eminence, Archbishop
Nathanial. Choral selections were performed by an
Ensemble of the “Archbishop Valerian” Choir of the
Diocesan Cathedral of Saint George, directed by John
Eugene Lazar as well as a Clergy Choral Ensemble
directed by Rev. Fr. Cosmin Antonescu. Attendees
enjoyed the tasteful program and received a beautiful,
pictorial album to commemorate the event. Following
the program, some delegates remained to enjoy dancing
in the Tower Pavillion.

On Sunday morning, the traditional procession of
the hierarchs preceded by the cross, banners of the
National Auxiliaries, the Choir and clergy wound from
the Bishop’s Residence to the Chapel where the Hierar-
chical Divine Liturgy was concelebrated by Archbishop
Nathaniel and Bishop Irineu, assisted by the priests
and deacons. Following the Liturgy, the Archbishop
introduced the clergy and then all processed to the
Tower Pavilion for the closing banquet.
IOCC Conference Cultivates Service Leadership of Orthodox Youth

Baltimore, MD (IOCC) — When record rainfall drenched the Midwest in July and triggered massive flooding of communities across Minnesota and Iowa, teen volunteers from St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church in Minneapolis were among the dozen members of an International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) Orthodox Action Team who traveled to the hard-hit Iowa town of Rock Rapids to help an elderly flood survivor clear away waterlogged debris from his home. Orthodox Christian youth across the U.S. also have a history of eagerly volunteering their time and energy to assist IOCC in helping families rebuild and repair storm-damaged homes, and assemble emergency kits for disaster survivors.

IOCC is fostering this philanthropic spirit among Orthodox youth with the launch of its inaugural Serv-X-Treme! Youth Leadership Conference, held recently in Minneapolis. More than two dozen teen delegates, appointed by their respective hierarch and representing the pan-Orthodox community from around the country, came together for a week to engage in meaningful opportunities to serve others while developing a better understanding of Orthodox Christian philanthropy and diakonia, or service.

Along with workshops led by Orthodox community leaders, including a keynote address by the well-known Orthodox author, Reverend Anthony M. Coniaris, the teens also spent time in the community participating in hands-on service projects. A highlight of the service projects came on a day when the participants helped construct a home with Habitat for Humanity and had the opportunity to interact with the homeowners, new Minnesota residents from Ethiopia and Ukraine. The week concluded with each participant signing a pledge committing them to continue seeking out service opportunities and encouraging others to do the same, within the framework of an Orthodox understanding of such diakonia.

Serv-X-Treme Conference coordinator and IOCC U.S. Country Representative, Dan Christopulos, says the conference, made possible with the generous support of an IOCC donor, was designed to promote youth service leadership through community service activities and instruction focused on building a better understanding of Orthodox ethics as well as practical approaches to community outreach. “Our intention is for these Orthodox youth to take this newfound knowledge, return to their parishes with a zeal for diakonia, and take the lead in building a strong network of service throughout our country’s Orthodox Christian community,” said Christopulos.

Participants Christianna Konstans and Kamal Hourani reflected on the week-long gathering and the opportunity to learn more about improving communities. “During my time at the IOCC Serv-X-Treme conference, what impacted me most were the various ways that I could serve that I had never thought of, as well as better ways to serve in things I had already been doing. The incredible fellowship with people that were willing to serve was unlike anything I had ever experienced,” said Konstans. “The Serv-X-Treme Conference reignited my desire to serve those who are suffering and sharpened my awareness of the demands of effective social work.” added Hourani. “It was a true blessing to share in this conference with fellow Orthodox teens from different states, jurisdictions, and backgrounds. They all have become dear friends and my co-laborers’ in Christ’s vineyard.”

The Serv-X-Treme! Youth Leadership Conference is part of a broader effort by IOCC to develop the Orthodox Christian Action Network (Orthodox CAN!), a US-based initiative to nurture and activate the Orthodox community’s value of philanthropy through volunteerism across all age groups. The multi-pronged program also promotes and supports an Orthodox Christian Emergency Response Network (ERN) of more than 100 clergy and laity members, trained through a grant from the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Endowment, to respond in times of disaster, and the development of volunteer opportunities through parish-based community service projects such as emergency kit assembly and emergency preparedness.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

IOCC is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. Since its inception in 1992, IOCC has delivered $488 million in relief and development programs to families and communities in more than 50 countries. IOCC is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of more than 140 churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy, and a member of InterAction.

Continued on page 15
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*Continued on page 15*
Reflections on the IOCC Youth Leadership Conference
by Teofil Munteanu

Exaltation of the Holy Cross Mission, Phoenix AZ

I’d like to thank Archbishop Nathaniel for granting me the opportunity to attend this year’s International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) Youth Leadership Conference in Minneapolis. Over the course of this week, I was blessed with the opportunity to learn many things about service in the Church. I made countless friends, and I’ve been instilled with a deep sense of hope for the future of the Orthodox Church in America.

I had arrived on Sunday night and was picked up by one of the counselors, Justin Theodotou. Justin is a long-time, experienced volunteer of IOCC who was extremely courteous and knowledgeable about what he was doing. Upon arriving at the hotel, we were formally introduced to the other diocesan representatives and to the staff. Judging by the fashion in which we were received, I knew I would have a great time.

For the remainder of the first day, we stayed at the hotel and had a series of discussions & activities pertaining to service in the Orthodox Church. We also got to meet Dan Christopolous, the Director and U.S. Representative of IOCC. Over the course of the week, Mr. Christopolous set an outstanding example for the young diocesan representatives through his wonderful lectures and actions.

This conference was held in the period of the Dormition Fast, and we had a 30-minute prayer service every morning and evening. A series of priests came to the hotel conference room and served there. On Wednesday, I had the blessing to serve in the altar at Saint Mary’s Greek Orthodox Cathedral for the duration of the Divine Liturgy, at the request of Father Anthony Coniaris. The ecclesiastical services, especially the Divine Liturgy, were an aspect of the conference that all the diocesan representatives looked forward to. Throughout the week, we had a series of discussions about service leadership with a diverse group of people. We got to meet Father Anthony Coniaris, the author of “Daily Vitamins for Spiritual Growth” and many other books; we even got a free copy of one of his books. Since this was a conference for the youth, we also went to places like the Mall of America, the Lake, etc., so as to bond with one another. To teach us about humanitarian service, the staff organized three trips for us: helping build a home with Habitat for Humanity; serving at a Christian soup kitchen; and helping clean up the local FOCUS mission center.

All of these wonderful service opportunities enabled me to appreciate all the things God has blessed me with, and to come to the realization that I don’t need most of the things I use in my daily life. This has been a gargantuan blessing for me, and I am striving to “water the seeds” which were sown in me during this conference.

I thank you once again for bestowing upon me this wonderful opportunity to learn how to live out my faith through service leadership.
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NOV. 30, 2014
Moment Istoric la Montreal
Aniversarea Centenară a Catedralei “Buna Vestire”

Cu ajutorul Bunului Dumnezeu, Parohia „Buna Vestire” din Montreal, a sărbătorit aniversarea de 100 de ani de la înființare în zilele de 18-19 octombrie 2014. Pe durata celor 2 zile de sărbătoare, parohia noastră a trăit momente înălțătoare la frumoasele sluțbe ce s-au slujit și ne-am bucurat duhovnicește de prezența în mijlocul nostru a Inaltpreasfințitului Arhiepiscop Nathaniel, care a venit la Montreal pentru această ocazie aniversară. Din delegația ierarhului au facut parte, părintele arhidiacon vicar David Oancea și părintele vicar Dan Hoarște.

Sărbătoarea a debutat sâmbătă seara, 18 octombrie 2014, cu sluțba Vecerniei Mari cu Litiie după care a urmat pomenirea ctitorilor, a preoților slujitori, a donatorilor și ostenitorilor, din timpul celor 100 de ani de existență. În continuare, după sluțba serii, Arhiepiscopul a binecuvântat sălile de claselor de religie și biblioteca parohială, care au fost recent renovate.


Soborul slujitor și credincioșii prezenți, au înconjurat biserică, iar ierarhii au sproțit-o cu aghiazmă după care toți cei prezenți au fost invitați la “Casa Română” pentru masa festivă și programul artistic.

Am amintit contribuția înaintașilor nostri, care au ridicat pe langă un sfânt locaș împunător, cultura, tradițiile și valorile românești, la loc de cinște, marcând pozitiv comunitatea română existență astăzi în Montreal. Pentru munca, cinștea și contribuția înaintașilor nostri, suntem primiți ca un popor cu nume existent, cu o credință și o istorie vizibila, în lumea în care trăim.

La ceasul de pomenire a fraților nostri, preoții și

Cont. la pag 21
SĂ NE ADUCEM AMINTE DE BINEFĂCTORII NOȘTRI: 100 DE ANI DE LA NAȘTEREA VREDNICULUI DE POMENIRE DR. NICOLAE MLADIN MITROPOLITUL ARDEALULUI 1914-2014 MARE CĂRTURAR, MARE IERARH ROMÂN ÎN CARE A BÂTUT O INIMĂ DE MOŢ

Nu puteam să trec cu vederea și să uit vreodată pe vrednicul de pomenire, marele om de cultură și de o bunătate rară, Înalpreasfințitul Mitropolit Dr. Nicolae Mladin al Ardealului, de la a cărui naștere se împlinesc anul acesta 100 de ani.

Născut în Țara Moților, la Abrud pe 18 Decembrie 1914, din părinții Gheorghe și Letiția Mladin, aproape de satul în care s-a născut și Înalpreasfințitul Valerian Trifa și din același județ (Alba), cu Preasfințitul Policarp Morușca, primul nostru Episcop român aici în America. Încă din copilărie, familia sa se mută pe Valea Jiului, unde tatăl său Gheorghe Mladin a muncit în mină. Rămâne de timpuriu orfan de tată, în grija mamei Letiția, femeie cu o viață religioasă și credință rară. Datorită credinței ei de mamă, Dumnezeu mai târziu a ajutat-o să-și vadă fiul Mitropolit al Ardealului. A cunoscut viața grea și sărăcia vremurilor de atunci, și poate datorită vremurilor grele și ale acestor încercări, tânărul Nicolae Mladin se străduiește să ajungă pe cele mai înalte culmi ale culturii și pregătirii teologice, fiind înzestrat și de Dumnezeu cu o inteligență scipioasă. Nu se rușina să afirme mereu: “sunt fiu de muncitor minier și m-am ridicat din fumul negru al cărbunelui”.

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A fost binecuvâtuit cu o minte ageră și scipioasă, fiind premiat în pregătirea sa teologică. Chiar îmi amintesc pe unul dintre vorbitoare la funerarile Mitropolitului Nicolae care spunea: “când tânărul profesor de atunci Nicolae Mladin și-a susținut doctoratul la Facultatea de Teologie din București, în fața sa era o masă pe care fiecare condus candidat poate să-și asezează material din care să se înspire în timpul susținerii, la Mitropolitul Nicolae Mladin masa era goială, avea totul în cap”.


A funcționat timp de 25 de ani ca profesor la
„DUPĂ CE ESTE PĂRĂSIT DE SUFLET, DE CE SĂ MAI DĂM VREO CONSIDERĂȚIE TRUPULUI?”

(...)Un fost ministru și profesor universitar, Tran-
cu-Iași, murind, a lăsat să fie incinerat, fiind întovârășit
la crematoriu de numeroși foști și actuali miniștri, de
profesorii universitari și de o mare mulțime de inte-
lectuali și de studenți. S-au șimulat cu ocazia aceasta
cuvântări, scotându-se în relief personalitatea celui ce
avea să fie peste câteva minute mistuit de flăcări, o
companie de fecioară români, îmbrăcați în haine militare
pentru o altă misiune, cu mult mai sfântă, a dat onorul.

Câte suflete mai naive, impresionate de asemenea
vorbii și de asemenea cinstirii, nu vor fi râmas cu
hotărârea să urmeze și ele la moartea pilda unei asemenea
„personalități”? Și, mai ales, ce vor fi zis în sufletul
lor atâția oameni din popor despre credința domnirii
noștri și ce concluzii vor fi tras pentru necesitatea lor
dea mai crede?

Să te iași incinerat, când Biserica osândește acest
lucru și când nu-ți acordă, prin preoții ei legiți, asi-
stența și rugăciunile ei, echivalează cu o nesocotire a
Bisericii și deci și a creștinismului.

Nici în Vechei Testament, nici în cel Nou, nici în
istoria creștinismului nu se practică și deci nu se
aproba incinerarea. Ea nu se conciliază cu considerația
ce-o dă creștinismul trupului omenesc. Trupul este,
in credința creștină, chipul sufletului și este creat
după-un act de atenție deosebită. El nu este o închisoare
regretabilă a sufletului, ci un suflet ce mi-a fost drag și respectat? Prețuiești o
haină veche, un obiect de care te-ai servit odată tu
sau cei apropiați; cum să nu prețuiesti trupul care
are și nu dă vreo considerație truPului?”

Cont. la pag 20
RUGĂȚI-VĂ ȘI LUCRAȚI PENTRU UNITATE ORTODOXĂ ÎN AMERICA DE NORD

SOLIA SEPT/OCT 2014  21

“Această casă Tatâl a zidit-o; această casă Fiul a întărit-o; această casă Duhul Sfânt a înnoit-o, a luminat-o și a sfințit sufletele noastre”.

Pentru credincioșii bisericii “Sfântul Nicolae” din Troy, Michigan, ziua de 31 august 2014, a fost, cum avea să menționeze părintel paroh Gheorghe Carstea, “o zi deosebită, când dragostea Mântuitorului s-a revărsat din plin, prin faptul că i-am avut ca oaspeți distinși pe Înaltpreasfințitul Arhiepiscopul nostru Nathaniel și pe Preasfințitul Episcopul nostru Irineu.”


Duminica dimineața, la revârsatul zorilor, aceiași harnici slujitori ai Domnului au purcă către sfântul locaș, purtând pe chipurile lor emoția, truda jertfelnică, dar și bucuria lucrului împlinit. Biserica, această preafrumoasă mireasă, aștepta clipa îmbăierii în lumea și harul sfântilor al Sfântului Duh. Credincioșii, Biserica cea vie îngrijită cu dăruire de către preotul paroh Gheorghe Cărstea, umpluseră deja sfântul locaș. Binecuvântarea bisericii nu este doar evenimentul preo-

Moment Istoric la Montreal ...

Cont. de la pag 17

credincioșii, gândurile de promisiune ne încearcă, pe fiecare dintre noi. Sunt gândurile care ne spun să cinstim trecutul, să respectăm prezentul și să promitem viitorului, ca vom încerca să fim asemenea lor. Abia atunci vom fi una cu ei și cu noi!

Să ne ajute Bunul Dumnezeu, să continuăm această lucrare, să oferim urmașilor noștri, darurile și bogățiile sufletești moștenite și implinite, de încă o generație de ortodocși creștini.

Așa să ne ajute Dumnezeu!

Pr. Liviu Alexandrescu
Catedrala Buna Vestire
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Cu ocazia recentei serbări a celei de-a 110-a unele materiale au fost donate de guvernul României bisericii din Cleveland şi anume parohiile Sfânta Maria, cea mai veche parohie ortodoxă română din Statele Unite, înfiinţată încă din anul 1904. Părintele Ioan Truţa şi enoriaşii săi le-au adus cu mare cheltuială în oraşul de pe malul Lacului Erie, cu scopul zidirii noii biserici. Începutul celui de-al doilea război mondial şi anii grei care au urmat, precum şi înmagazinarea improprie au cauzat distrugerea multora dintre acestea. Abia în anul 1960, când s-a zidit noua biserică, în stil maramureşan modern, unele din acele materiale şi lucrări de artă, cum au fost mozaicurile lui Jean Steriade şi friza istorică a lui Mac Constantinescu, grilaje de fier forjat şi marmora slefuită aduse din țară, au fost elegant integrate în complexul spiritual şi cultural al bisericii.

După alţi 50 de ani, Părintele Remus Grama, care de 25 de ani păstrează pe enoriaşii din Cleveland, ajună în 1960, când s-a zidit noua biserică, în stil maramureșan modern, unele din acele materiale şi lucrări de artă, cum au fost mozaicurile lui Jean Steriade şi friza istorică a lui Mac Constantinescu, grilaje de fier forjat şi marmora slefuită aduse din țară, au fost elegant integrate în complexul spiritual şi cultural al bisericii.

MURDARE ŞI DETERIORATE DE PLOI, GERURI ŞI CĂLDURI, PRIN GRIJA PREOȚULUI, ÎN 1990, VITREGITELE BUCĂȚI DE MARMURĂ AU FOST READUSE LA BISERICĂ. UNELTE ERAU CRĂPATE, DAR PAIRINTERE LE-A REMARCAT FRUMUSEȚEA ŞI LE-A APRECIAT VALOAREA CULTURALĂ. AŞTEPTĂ, CU COLABORAREA ŞI SPIRIJULNUL POETULUI MIRCEA ȘTEFAN, UN BUN CUNOSCĂTOR AL PIERTEI, LE-A RESTRĂUT, IAR APOI LE-A INSTALAT ÎN CENTRUL CULTURAL ROMÂNESC, ADĂPOSTIT ÎN LUMINOASĂ ŞCOALĂ A BISERICII.


Originea baladescă a acestor heraldice simboluri naționale se pierde în adâncurile istoriei, însă prin vecurile al XII-XIV-lea. Între ele se remarcă: vulturul cu crucea în cioc, reprezentând Muntenia; Bourul cu luna şi luceafărul (Moldova), cei doi Delfini (Dobrogea) şi Leul care este stema Banatului. Vulturul bizantin, cu două capete, metaforă pentru Stat şi Biserică, stă mărturie a direcţiei istorice şi culturale a străvechii culturi ortodoxe a României. Din nefericire, stema Ardealului şi a Basarabiei lipsesc, fiind probabil distruse sau furate în timp. Se știe că vechea sală bisericii a ars până în temelii într-un devastator incendiu în anul 1973. Din nefericire, atunci s-au pierdut multe valorile.
Dumnezeu m-a ajutat să-i fiu alături chiar atunci când toți l-au părăsit și uitat. Timp de șase ani am fost zi și noapte alături de marele Mitropolit, am avut bucurii și necazuri, am încercat din toate puterile să-I fiu “Sa-marineanul cel milostiv” și să-i leg rănile. Îi rămăsese numai bunătatea, veselia, nevinovăția, deseori oftatul și dezamăgirea, dar niciodată nu a cârtit împotriva voinței lui Dumnezeu.

Spunea mereu cuvintele Dreptului Iov: "Domnul a dat Domnul a luat, fie numele Domnului binecuvântat". Nu pot uita vreodată pe cel care a semnat binecuvântarea și recomandarea mea pentru înscriere la Seminarul Teologic din Cluj, iar dacă astăzi sunt cea ce sunt, îi datorez în mare parte și Înalțului Mitropolit Nicolae Mladin.

A plecat la Domnul în data de 1 Iunie 1986, în chilia sa de la Stăreția veche, la vremea vecerniei. S-a stins ca o lumânare care va lumina și de dincolo, din veșnicie.

La slujba de înmormântare, Preasfințitul Justinian Chira care era pe vremea aceea Episcop Vicar al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America, Stareț al Mănăstirii ”Înălțarea Domnului” din Clinton, MI - USA a spus printre altele, evocând personalitatea Înalț Preasfințitului, "Luceafărul după ce intră în eclipsă, tot luceafăr rămâne, cu atât strălucește și luminează mai mult".

S-au creat tot felul de interpretări legate de viața Înalț Prăfășințitului Mitropolit Nicolae, și chiar am fost mâhnit că unii care i-au fost colaboratori și s-au considerat ucenici, au dat tot felul de declarații nefondate, în revista ”Formula AS”, legate de motivele de retragere la Manastire, dar cred că nimeni nu știe mai bine decât cei care i-am fost aproape și l-au ajutat în perioada grea de suferință. Atunci când scrii anumite lucruri despre cineva, trebuie să le ai bine întemeiate, altfel ele pot deteriora personalitatea și memoria persoanei respective. Dumnezeu să ne ierte pe toți!

Sunt convins că după toată suferința pe care a avut-o în ultimii ani ai vieții, Dumnezeu a vrut să-l curețe de orice greșelă făcută ca om și să-l așeze în latura drepților.

Aici, departe de țară, nu am uitat și nu voi uita vreodată pe cel de care m-am legat sufletește, și pe care l-am iubit și prețuit foarte mult. La toate Sfintele Liturghii pe care le săvârșesc pe Continentul Nord American, numele Înalțului Nicolae Mladin este pomenit cu voce tare alături de Episcopul Policarp și Arhiepiscopul Valerian, trei “falnici moți” care au făcut cinstie Bisericii și neamului românesc.

Anul acesta când se împlinesc 100 de ani de la nașterea Înalț Prăfășințitului Părinte Dr. Nicolae Mladin, Mitropolitul Ardealului, noi fiiii lui duhovnicești nu l-am uitat, și cu recunoștință și iubire, rugăm pe Părintele Luminilor să odihnească în pace sufletul marelui Mitropolit al Ardealului Nicolae, care și-a făcut datoria deplin, îmbinând în mod fericit altarul, amvonul, catedra și condeul.

Veșnică să-I fie pomenirea, și amintirea binecuvântată!

+IRINEU
Episcop Vicar al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America,
Stareț al Mănăstirii “Înălțarea Domnului” din Clinton, MI - USA

**MĂRTURISIRE A ADEVĂRULUI**

Dacă ar fi să te întâlnesc în tren și să te întreb: Care este sinteza învățăturii creștine – cum ai răspunde scurt și cuprinzător?

Eu cred într-un Dumnezeu care iubește omenirea așa de intens, așa de mult, încât El însuși a ales a deveni om. Deci, eu cred în Iisus Hristos, adevărat și întreg Dumnezeu, dar în același timp, unul ca și noi, total și fără reținere, om desărvârșit. Și aș mai spune: Dragostea lui Dumnezeu este atât de mare încât Hristos a murit pentru noi pe cruce. Dar dragostea este mai mare decât moartea, pentru că moartea lui Iisus Hristos a fost urmată de Inviere. Sunt creștin pentru că eu cred în marea dragostea a lui Dumnezeu care a dus la întruperea, la moartea și la invierea Sa. Aceasta este credința mea. Și toate acestea ne sunt date nouă acum prin lucrarea continuă a Duhului Sfânt.

**Mitropolitul Kallistos Ware**
Interviu în Christianity Today – 6 iulie 2011
adevărată incursiune în istoria şi cultura românească.

În 1960, Muzeul bisericii Sfânta Maria a fost bine-
cuvântat de Arhiepiscopul Valerian. De această dată, în
11 octombrie, 2014, când această biserică românească
de peste Ocean şi-a serbat jubiile an de la
întemeiere, panglica inaugurală a noului exponat a
fost tăiată de Înaltpreasfinţitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel
şi Preasfinţitul Irineu, Episcop Vicar. Părintele Remus
Grama a oferit o prezentare introdventă a acestei
„piese de conversaţie”, apoi, a mulţumit voluntarilor
 care l-au ajutat, după care a invitat pe oaspeţi la o
recepţie festivă. Sprijinind viziunea preotului gazdă,
Înatpreasfinţitul Nathaniel a îndemnat pe credincioşi
tsă sprijine ideia zidirii unei clădiri adecvate pentru
muzeul românesc din Cleveland. Acest îndemn a
fost reafirmat iarăşi duminică, 12 octombrie în cadrul
programului marii aniversări, care s-a desfăşurat sub
sfera de lumină a frizei naţiunii Române a artistului
român Mac Constantinescu.

De acum expoziţia blazoanelor româneşti din Cle-
veland intră în circuitul cultural al neamului, dar nu
numai atât. Suntem încredinţaţi că ea va atrage şi atenţia
presei apusene. Astfel, pe lângă celelalte valori cultu-
rale prin care comunitatea românească din Cleveland
prezintă interesul României, secularul noastre
steme vor vorbi despre gloria şi suferinţele noaştilor
noastră. Generaţiile tineri de Români-americani vor
bea şi ei binecuvântarea să înveţe şi să-şi descoperă mai
profund moştenirea, evocând mai departe tumultoasa
noastră istorie la mii de kilometri de ţară.

Muzeul românesc din Cleveland îşi reînoieşte acum
apelul către cei ce sunt binecuvântaţi şi pot să sprijine
perpetuarea şi menţinerea activităţii acestuia. Părintele
Grama vorbeşte adesea de pilda preotului Zosim Oancea,
care a lăsat în România un muzeu de icoane pe sticlă,
la Sibiel. În statul Missourri, un alt preot ortodox, de
culoare, a înfiinţat un muzeu al sclaviei. În această
ligă şi poate una chiar mai înaltă se numără muzeul
bisericii din Cleveland, unde pictura şi sculptura dau
mâna cu chipuri istorice ale neamului. Străinii sunt
impressionaţi de ceea ce văd şi revin frecvent în fiecare
an la acest centru cultural.

Părintele Grama şi credincioşii
bisericii se străduiesc să înalţe o clă-
dire adecvată pentru care are deja atât
proprietatea, cât şi exponatele. Într-
ele se numără piele istorice de valoar-
re: picturi din clasici şi impresioniştii,
precum şi stampe, desene de epocă,
icoane, veşminte, covoare şi statui de
artişti români recunoscuţi. Desigur, nu
este uşor, deoarece muzeul nu bene-
ficiază de nici un sprijin de la statul
Român sau American. Ne-am bucura de orice încredere, de la mecenă sau

Învăţăm de la Sfintii Părinţi...

CE SĂ FACI ATUNCI
CÂND ÎTI DAI SEAMA
CA EŞTI BĂRFIT...

Să ştii că aceia care ne chinuie prin batjocură, toc-
mai aceştia sunt vrăjmaşii noştri. Şi la ei s-a gândit
Domnul când a poruncit: „Iubiţi pe vrăjmaşii voştri”.
Ei ne fac binele neştiind ce fac.

Amârându-ne şi strâmtorându-ne, ei aprind în noi
torţa înflăcărării dumnezeiești. Bârându-ne pe la
spate atunci când mergem la biserică, ei ne mâna mai
aproape de Dumnezeu. Făcându-ne pământul supărător,
ei ne fac Cerul drag. Gerul şi vântul nu vor binele
copăcelului, însă şi fără să vrea îi aduc binele. Aşa
şi vrăjmaşii tăi, ţie.

Drept aceea, ia-ţi-le lor, şi binecuvânta-i, şi ro-
agă-te lui Dumnezeu pentru ei, şi - ceea ce e culmea
a toate - iubeşte-i ca pe cei mai mari binefăcători ai
tăi după Dumnezeu.

Pr. dr. Remus Grama