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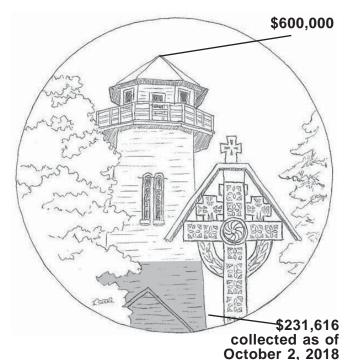
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HIS ALL-HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW CLARIFIES THE SITUATION OF THE UKRAINIAN CHURCH

On Monday, September 3, 2018, before the entire Hierarchy of Metropolitans and Bishops of the Church of Constantinople, who were meeting in the Queen of Cities for the Synaxis of the Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne on the feast of Indiction, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew delivered an important address on the status of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, clarifying and reiterating numerous key points concerning the unity of the Holy Orthodox Church and the role within it of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

This instructive address followed a two-and-a-half hour private discussion on Friday, August 31, between His Beatitude Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on matters of inter-Orthodox concern.

His All-Holiness gave an address full of theological wisdom and historical insight, speaking "as the guardian of the holy and sacred traditions of Orthodoxy, as well as of the dogmas alike of the Holy Seven Ecumenical Councils and other local councils, but also of the teachings of the Holy Fathers," noting that "the Ecumenical Patriarchate exists as 'the small flock' (Luke 12.32), which seeks neither worldly renown or secular power, passionately loves 'the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ' (Rev. 1.2), enjoys canonical jurisdiction and all apostolic privileges in its responsibility for safeguarding the unity and communion of the local Churches but also for the overall journey of Orthodoxy in the contemporary world and history."

Turning his attention to the situation of the Ukrainian Church, His All-Holiness pointed out that "no matter how much some wish to embellish the situation in Ukraine, history proves them wrong and presents indisputable arguments demonstrating that the origin of difficulties and reactions in Ukraine are neither a recent phenomenon nor something created by the Ecumenical Patriarchate." His All-Holiness also reminded the assembled hierarchs of the unfortunate fact that "already from the early 14th century, when the see of the Kievan Metropolis was moved without the canonical permission of the Mother Church to Moscow, there have been tireless efforts on the part of our Kievan brothers for independence from ecclesiastical control by the Moscow center. Indeed, the obstinacy of the Patriarchate of Moscow was instrumental in occasionally creating repeated mergers and restorations of ecclesiastical eparchies, uncanonical elections of Bishops as well as schisms, which still afflict the pious Ukrainian people."

His All-Holiness also noted that "a study of the matter in the light of the sacred canons does not justify any intervention whatsoever by the Church of Russia." This is because "the Tome proclaiming Moscow as a Patriarchate does not include the region of today's Metropolis of Kiev in the jurisdiction of Moscow." It was only "in the year 1686, our predecessor, the late Patriarch Dionysios IV, following great political pressure from the harrowing circumstances and for peace in the local Church, was obliged to issue a letter granting Moscow the license to ordain the Metropolitan of Kiev on the inviolable condition that every Metropolitan of Kiev would commemorate the name of the Ecumenical Patriarch as his ecclesiastical superior and authority, but also to demonstrate the canonical jurisdiction of Constantinople over this Metropolis."

That is, said His All-Holiness, how the matter remains to this day: "As far as we know, no other act changing the canonical state of Kiev or revision of the condition to commemorate Constantinople has ever occurred; nor of course has there been any such change on the part of the Mother Church ceding Kiev completely to Russia." Consequently, "the uncanonical interventions of Moscow from time to time in the affairs of Kiev and the toleration on the part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in previous years do not validate any ecclesiastical violation." His All-Holiness stated that the Sixth Canon of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea was "precisely valid in this case, as the commentator Aristinos observes: 'Each patriarch should be satisfied with his own privileges and not snatch the privileges of another eparchy, which does not lie within or under the authority of his jurisdiction. For this is the conceit of worldly power."

Regarding the present situation, His All-Holiness pointed out that "the occasional deliberate efforts of the Church of Russia to resolve this matter failed. Thus, since Russia, as the one responsible for the current painful situation in Ukraine, is unable to solve the problem, the Ecumenical Patriarchate assumed the initiative of resolving the problem in accordance with the authority afforded to it by the Sacred Canons and the jurisdictional responsibility over the eparchy of Kiev, receiving a request to this end by the honorable Ukrainian Government, as well as recurring requests by 'Patriarch' Philaret of Kiev appealing for our adjudication of his case."

These appeals to the Ecumenical Patriarchate were in accord with those Sacred Canons, as His All-Holiness

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STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH REGARDING THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN UKRAINE

The Statement was adopted at an extraordinary session of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on 14 September 2018 (Minutes No. 69).

With profound regret and sorrow, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church learned about the statement made by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople concerning the appointment of its two "exarchs" to Kiev. This decision was taken without an agreement with the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine – the only canonical head of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. It constitutes a flagrant violation of the ecclesiastical law and an intervention of one Local Church in the territory of the other. Moreover, the Patriarchate of Constantinople presents the appointment of the "exarchs" as a stage in the implementation of a plan aimed at granting "autocephaly" to Ukraine. This process, according to the statements of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, is irreversible and will be carried through.

Trying to justify the claims of the Throne of Constantinople for renewing its jurisdiction over the Kiev Metropolia, the Phanar representatives allege that the Kiev Metropolia has actually never been transferred to the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. Such allegations are untrue and completely contradict the historical facts.

The Russian Orthodox Church and its first see – the Kiev Metropolia – constituted a whole for centuries, despite various political and historical tribulations which at times shattered the unity of the Russian Church. The Patriarchate of Constantinople, that originally had jurisdiction over the Russian Orthodox Church, consistently defended its unity until the middle of the 15th century, as was later reflected in the title of the Metropolitans of Kiev – "of All Russia." And even after the Primatial see had been transferred from Kiev to Vladimir and then to Moscow, the Metropolitans of All Russia were still called Metropolitans of Kiev.

The temporary division of one Metropolia of All Russia into two parts was caused by the dire consequences of the Council of Ferrara-Florence and the beginning of the Unia with Rome, which the Church of Constantinople first accepted, and the Russian Church immediately rejected. In 1448, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Church, without the blessing of the Patriarch of Constantinople who was in the Unia at the time, elected St. Jonah as Metropolitan. At that moment, the autocephalous life of the Russian Orthodox Church began. However, ten year later, in 1458, the former Patriarch of Constantinople, Gregory

Mammas, who was in the Unia and lived in Rome, consecrated an independent metropolitan for Kiev – Gregory the Bulgarian, a Uniate, and submitted to him the territories which are now parts of Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Russia.

By the decision of the Council of Constantinople of 1593, in which all four Eastern Patriarchs participated, the Moscow Metropolia was elevated to the status of Patriarchate. This Patriarchate united all Russian lands, as is evidenced by a letter sent by Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople to Patriarch Nikon of Moscow in 1654. In this letter, Patriarch Nikon is called "Patriarch of Moscow, Great and Little Russia."

The reunification of the Kiev Metropolia with the Russian Church took place in 1686. It was done in a form of the Act signed by Patriarch Dionysius IV of Constantinople and members of his Synod. The document says nothing about the temporary nature of the transfer of the Metropolia, contradicting the current groundless allegations of Constantinople's hierarchs. No statements concerning the temporary transfer of the Kiev Metropolia can be found in Patriarch Dionysius' other two Letters of 1686, addressed to the Moscow tsars and the Metropolitan of Kiev. On the contrary, the Letter sent by Patriarch Dionysius to the Moscow tsars in 1686 provides for the submission of all the Metropolitans of Kiev to Patriarch Joachim of Moscow and his successors. "From henceforth and forever more they shall recognize as most senior and first in rank the current Patriarch of Moscow as having received the office of bishop from him," the Letter reads. The interpretations of the meaning of the abovementioned documents made by representatives of the Church of Constantinople have no justifications in the texts.

Until the 20th century, none of the Local Orthodox Churches, including the Church of Constantinople, had disputed the jurisdiction of the Russian Church over the Kiev Metropolia. The first attempt to dispute this jurisdiction was made when the Patriarchate of Constantinople granted autocephaly to the Polish Orthodox Church which at the time had an autonomous status within the Russian Orthodox Church. The Tomos of the Autocephaly of the Polish Church, granted by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1924 and unrecognized by the Russian Church, groundlessly states: "The original secession from our Throne of the Kiev Metropolia and its dependent Orthodox Churches of Lithuania and Poland, and their joining the Holy

Church of Moscow, did not at all occur in accordance with the canonical regulations."

Regrettably, this is just one of the examples of the intervention of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the canonical territory of the Russian Church in the 1920s and 1930s. At a time when the Russian Church was subjected to the atheistic persecutions unprecedented in its cruelty, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, behind its back and without its consent, took uncanonical actions against its parts - the autonomous Churches in the territory of the young states formed on the borders of the former Russian Empire: in 1923 it transformed the autonomous Churches in the territory of Estonia and Finland into its own metropolias; in 1924 granted the autocephaly to the Polish Orthodox Church¹, and in 1936, proclaimed its jurisdiction in Latvia. Besides, in 1931, Constantinople included in its jurisdiction the Russian émigré parishes in Western Europe without the consent of the Russian Orthodox Church, and transformed them into its own temporary exarchate.

It was particularly unseemly of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to engage in attempts to depose the Holy Confessor Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, canonically elected in 1917. Such attempts were made in the 1920s by the atheistic authorities which artificially created a Renovationist, modernistic schism in the Russian Church with the view of undermining the authority of the Orthodox Church among the faithful, "sovietizing" the Church and gradually destroying it.

In the 1920s, the Renovationists were active in helping arrest the Orthodox bishops and clergymen, in informing on them and seizing their churches. Patriarch Gregory VII of Constantinople openly supported the Renovationists. His official representative to Moscow, Archimandrite Basilios (Dimopoulo), attended the Renovationist false councils, and in 1924, Patriarch Gregory himself called upon Patriarch Tikhon to abdicate the Patriarchal Throne.

In the same year of 1924, the Renovationists published excerpts from the minutes of the sessions of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which they received from Archimandrite Basilios (Dimopoulo). According to an excerpt of 6 May 1924, Patriarch Gregory VII, "at the invitation of the church circles of the Russian population," took upon himself the task, submitted for his consideration, "of conciliating the distempers and discords of recent times in the brotherly church by establishing a special patriarchal commission for this purpose." The "church circles of the Russian population," mentioned in the minutes, represented not the suffering Russian Church subjected at that time to severe persecutions by the theomachist authorities, but the schismatic groups which cooperated with those authorities and actively supported the persecution of the Holy Patriarch Tikhon initiated by those authorities.

The reasons why the Church of Constantinople sup-

ported the Renovationist schism and took the side of the communist regime in the fight against the Russian Church were openly explained by the abovementioned Archimandrite Basilios (Dimopoulo) in his letter sent on behalf of "all the proletariat of Constantinople" to one of the senior officials of the theomachist regime. "Having defeated all its enemies, overcome all the obstacles and gained strength, Soviet Russia can now respond to requests of the proletariat of the Middle East who are well-disposed towards it, and thus win even more of their favour," the letter reads; "It is up to you... to make the name of Soviet Russia more popular in the East than it was earlier, and I fervently ask you, as a strong and firm government of a powerful nation, to do a great service to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, especially given that the Ecumenical Patriarch, recognized in the East as the head of all the Orthodox people, has demonstrated by his actions that he is well-disposed towards the Soviet authorities which he has recognized." In his other letter to the same Soviet official, Archimandrite Basilios explained what "service" he meant: it was to give back to the Patriarchate of Constantinople the building that had earlier belonged to Constantinople's representation in Moscow and annually brought profit to the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Having learned of Constantinople's decision to send the "patriarchal commission" to the territory of the Russian Church, its only legitimate head, Patriarch Tikhon of All Russia, expressed his resolute protest against the uncanonical actions of his brother. The words that he said a hundred years ago are relevant now as well: "It troubled and surprised us greatly that the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the head of the Church of Constantinople, without first contacting us as the legitimate representative and the head of the whole Russian Orthodox Church, interferes in the life and internal affairs of the autocephalous Russian Church... Sending any commission without contacting me as the only legitimate and Orthodox First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, behind my back, is illegal. It will not be tolerated by the Russian Orthodox people and will not bring comfort but even greater distemper and schism into the life of the longsuffering Russian Orthodox Church." The arrival of the "commission" would have meant not just an interference, but a direct intervention in the affairs of our Church, which is happening now.

At the cost of bloodshed by thousands of new martyrs, the Russian Church survived in those years, trying to cover with love this sad page in the history of its relationships with the Church of Constantinople. However, in the 1990s, in a period of new ordeals for the Russian Church caused by great geopolitical tempests, the Church of Constantinople once again showed its unbrotherly behaviour to the full extent.

For instance, despite the fact that in 1978, Patriarch

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METROPOLITAN TIKHON PRESIDES AT THE 80th Anniversary of the Vatra



L-R: Archbishop Michael, Archbishop Nathaniel, Metropolitan Tikhon, Archbishop Benjamin

GRASS LAKE, MI. For 80 years, Vatra Românească-"vatra" means "hearth" in the Romanian language—has been a gathering point for the faithful of the Orthodox Church in America's Romanian Episcopate. The Vatra houses the Episcopate's administrative headquarters, episcopal residence and museum and is the site of numerous programs, retreats, conferences and summer camps. The center of life at the Vatra,

however, is the Chapel of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, at the invitation of His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate, presided at the celebration of the 80th Anniversary of the Vatra September 6-8, 2018 in conjunction with the Episcopate's 86th annual Church Congress.

The history of the Vatra is closely tied to the arrival in 1935 of the first Romanian Orthodox bishop in North America—His Grace, Polycarp [Morusca]. Upon his arrival, he found no designated episcopal residence. Soon, however, a group of energetic faithful from Detroit facilitated the purchase of Grey Tower Farm in Grass Lake Township, Jackson County, MI. On July 3-4, 1938, the property renamed "Vatra Românească"/"The Romanian Hearth"—was dedicated Hawaiian Myrrh-Streaming Icon of the and a cornerstone was laid for the

Iveron Mother of God

chapel. Once the ancestral home of the Ottawa and Chippewa Tribes, the site was part of a 1,000 acre holding of the Boland Family, originally from Scotland, who came to the US in 1710 and settled the land on a grant by President Andrew Jackson. From Native Americans to Scotch settlers to Romanian Americans, the land has a rich history, and the "Vatra" remains a well-known local landmark.

The clergy arrived on Thursday morning, September 6, for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy

followed by brunch. They then proceeded to the Valerian D Trifa Romanian-American Heritage Center for the annual Clergy Conference. Following the Clergy Conference, a Trisagion service for deceased clergy was served followed by Vespers and Supper. The Episcopate Council then met for the pre-Congress session, and many of the Deaneries had informal meetings of the Deanery clergy. Metropolitan Tikhon was warmly

> welcomed upon his arrival at the Vatra on Thursday. The following day, he addressed the Congress' plenary session.

> "We recently concluded the 19th All-American Council with the theme, 'For the Life of the World,'" Metropolitan Tikhon observed. "I personally was reinvigorated every day of the Council and encouraged by the lively discussions that took place in the forums and in my one-on-one interactions with the delegates. It was all inspiring and, in a very concrete way, life-giving. "I was also encouraged by the positive response to the document I had prepared, Of What Life Do We Speak?," Metropolitan Tikhon continued. "The subtitle to that work is 'Four Pillars for the Fulfillment of the Apostolic Work of the Church,' and it was clear to me, especially from the inspiring testimonies offered by each of our



Metropolitan Tikhon presented the Order of Saint Innocent to Archbishop Nathaniel, the Senior Bishop on the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of his ordination.

dioceses in their video presentations, that this apostolic work is, in fact, already firmly established in our parishes and dioceses.... It is clear to me that we are a Church not only prepared to take up our apostolic work with a renewed zeal, but that in every corner of the Orthodox Church in America that zeal has been encouraged, nurtured and is already in bloom."

Later the same day, the Hawaiian Myrrh-Streaming Icon of the Iveron Mother of God arrived at the Vatra, where it remained throughout the anniversary celebration and the services marking the chapel's patronal feast, the Nativity of the Mother of God, on Friday evening and Saturday morning.

On Saturday, September 8, Metropolitan Tikhon concelebrated the festal Divine Liturgy with Archbishop Nathaniel and His Eminence, Archbishop Michael of New York and New Jersey and His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Tikhon awarded the Order of Saint Innocent, Gold Class, to Archbishop Nathaniel "in celebration of over 50 years of ordained service to Jesus Christ, 38 years of episcopal ministry and 34 years as ruling bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America; and in grateful recognition of his tireless ministry as chief shepherd for his flock, zealous proponent of Orthodox unity in North America, and faithful preacher of the resurrection to the world." Metropolitan Tikhon also delivered a stirring homily. Following the festive banquet in the Tower Pavillion which was filled to capacity, Metropolitan Tikhon and Archbishop Michael departed.

On Sunday, September 9, Archbishop Nathaniel and

Archbishop Benjamin concelebrated the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy in the Chapel of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the presence of the Hawaiian Myrrh-Streaming Icon of the Iveron Mother of God. Videos of some of the services are available on the Episcopate's Facebook page (The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America [https://www.facebook.com/ROEofA]) and YouTube channel (RomanianDioceseROEA [http://www.youtube.com/user/Romanian-DioceseROEA]).

The Episcopate is sincerely thankful to Subdeacon Nectarios for bringing the Iveron icon of the Mother of God to the Vatra for veneration by so many faithful from across the North American continent. Her presence during the Episcopate Congress and after was a great blessing on the anniversary of this holy place dedicated to the glory of God!

A LETTER FROM ARCHPRIEST DIMITRIE VINCENT

"With Gratitude & Thanksgiving"

Dear Romanian Orthodox Episcopate Family, I am blessed by God to be back at home and at the church doing the Lord's work.

It is with heartfelt gratitude and thanksgiving that I take this opportunity to thank you for all your beautiful expressions of love and assistance after my paralyzing spinal cord injury last fall (November 25, 2017) and through the difficult and challenging months of my ongoing recovery that followed. The healing of damaged vertebra and spinal cord takes much time and hard work.

Your love, prayers, words of comfort and acts of mercy have strengthened me during this time of healing. In humility, I ask for your continued prayers as I work to recover and return to greater health during the coming months and year ahead. I shall pray for you.

During my return to health, I am reminded, time and time again, that the Gift of Life is precious and fragile, and your kindness and love is priceless. This Pearl of great price is a gift to be guarded at all cost!

I am forever grateful for all that you have done in taking an active role in my recovery. It is Divine Love that unites us, one to another, enriches our souls and transforms sickness and suffering from death to life.

May Our Jesus Christ, the Physician of souls and bodies, keep you and your loved ones always in His everlasting Care, Mercy and Grace.

With eternal gratitude and thanksgiving, I remain, Faithfully Yours,

Archpriest Dimitrie Vincent

Statement of the Holy Synod ...

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Demetrios of Constantinople made void the Tomos of 1923 concerning the transfer of the Estonian Orthodox Church to the jurisdiction of Constantinople, in 1996, the Patriarchate of Constantinople uncanonically spread its jurisdiction over Estonia. For that reason, the Moscow Patriarchate was forced to temporarily break off Eucharistic communion with it.

At that time, the Patriarchate of Constantinople first made attempts to interfere in the Ukrainian church affairs. In 1995, Constantinople received in its jurisdiction the Ukrainian schismatic communities in the United States and in the countries of the Diaspora. The same year, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople gave a written promise to Patriarch Alexy that these communities would not "cooperate or have communion with other Ukrainian schismatic groups."

The promise that representatives of the Ukrainian episcopate of the Patriarchate of Constantinople would not get in contact and concelebrate with the schismatics was not fulfilled. The Patriarchate of Constantinople took no steps to develop their canonical awareness and was drawn by them into an anti-canonical process of legitimizing the schism in Ukraine by means of establishing a parallel church structure and by granting autocephalous status to it.

The position on the issue of autocephaly, which the Patriarchate of Constantinople is expressing now, contradicts completely the concerted position of all the Local Orthodox Churches, worked out as the result of the difficult discussions within the framework of the preparations for the Holy and Great Council and affirmed in the document on Autocephaly and the Means by Which It Is Proclaimed, signed by representatives of all the Local Churches, including the Church of Constantinople.

While no official request for autocephaly came from the episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Bartholomew took into consideration the request coming from the Ukrainian government and schismatics, which completely contradicts his own position expressed until recently on repeated public occasions. For instance, in January 2001, in an interview for the *Nea Ellada* Greek newspaper, he said, "Autocephaly and autonomy are granted by the whole Church through a decision of the Ecumenical Council. Since for various reasons, an Ecumenical Council cannot be convened, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as the coordinator of all Orthodox Churches, grants autocephaly or autonomy, provided that they give their approval."

Lying behind Patriarch Bartholomew's latest unilateral actions and statements are ecclesiological notions alien to Orthodoxy. Recently, addressing the synaxis of hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople,

Patriarch Bartholomew said that "Orthodoxy cannot exist without the Ecumenical Patriarchate," that "the Ecumenical Patriarchate is, for Orthodoxy, a leaven 'which leavens the whole lump' (cf. Gal. 5.9) of the Church and of history." It is difficult to see in these assertions something other than an attempt to reform Orthodox ecclesiology in accordance with the Roman Catholic model.

The Russian Orthodox Church was particularly grieved to learn about the recent decision of the Holy Synod of the Church of Constantinople to allow a second marriage for clerics. This decision constitutes a violation of the sacred canons (Canon 17 of the Holy Apostles, Canon 3 of the Council in Trullo, Canon 1 of the Council of Neocaesarea, Canon 12 of St. Basil the Great), as well as tramples on the pan-Orthodox accord, and, in fact, rejects the results of the Council held in Crete in 2016, the recognition of which the Patriarchate of Constantinople actively tries to gain from the rest of the Local Churches.

The Patriarchate of Constantinople, in its attempts to assert authoritative powers in the Orthodox Church, which it has never had, is now interfering in the church life in Ukraine. In their statements, the hierarchs of the Church of Constantinople go so far as to call Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine "uncanonical," based on the fact that he does not commemorate the Patriarch of Constantinople. Meanwhile, earlier, during the Synaxis of the Local Orthodox Churches in Chambésy in January 2016, Patriarch Bartholomew publicly called Metropolitan Onufry the only canonical Primate of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. On the same occasion, the Primate of the Church of Constantinople gave a promise that neither during the Council in Crete nor afterwards would he make any attempts to legalize the schism or grant autocephaly to anybody on a unilateral basis.

We have to state with regret that this promise has now been broken. The unilateral, uncanonical actions of the See of Constantinople in the territory of Ukraine, committed while ignoring completely the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, indicate a direct support for the Ukrainian schism. It constitutes a great temptation among the millions-strong flock of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that the Patriarchate of Constantinople, considering itself to be the Mother Church for the Ukrainian Church, gives to its daughter a stone instead of bread and a serpent instead of a fish (cf. Lk. 11:11).

The deep concern of the Russian Orthodox Church over the erroneous and distorted notions of the Church of Constantinople concerning the situation in Ukraine was personally conveyed by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to Patriarch Bartholomew on 31 August 2018. However, as further developments showed, the voice of the Russian Church was not heard, and in one week after the meeting, the Patriarchate of Constantinople published the uncanonical decision regarding

the appointment of its so-called "exarchs" to Kiev.

In this critical situation, when Constantinople has practically refused to resolve the matter by means of dialogue, the Moscow Patriarchate is forced to suspend the liturgical prayerful commemoration of the Patriarch of Constantinople and with profound regret suspend the concelebration with hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, as well as break off the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Episcopal Assemblies and in the theological dialogues, multilateral commissions and any other structures chaired or co-chaired by representatives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

In the event that the Patriarchate of Constantinople will continue to carry out its uncanonical activities in the territory of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, we will be compelled to completely break off Eucharistic communion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. All of the responsibility for the tragic consequences of this division will lie personally with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and the hierarchs supporting him.

Being aware that the current situation puts in jeopardy the whole world Orthodoxy, we at this hour of hardship ask the Local Autocephalous Churches for support and call upon the Primates of the Churches to fully realize our shared responsibility for the fate of world Orthodoxy and initiate a fraternal pan-Orthodox discussion on the church situation in Ukraine.

We call upon the plenitude of the Russian Orthodox Church to pray ardently for the preservation of the unity of Holy Orthodoxy.

1 – Impelled by a sincere desire to support Orthodoxy, which is in the minority and sometimes in rather difficult circumstances, the Moscow Patriarchate, in turn, in 1948, granted autocephalous rights to the Orthodox Church in Poland and confirmed the autonomous status of the Orthodox Church in Finland, granted by His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon in 1921, having agreed in 1957 to consign to oblivion all canonical disputes and misunderstandings between the Orthodox Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, to recognize the Archdiocese of Finland in its current status, and to transfer the New Valamo Monastery to its jurisdiction, after which prayerful and canonical communion was restored.

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His All-Holiness ... Cont. from page 3

pointed out that the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon "honored the exceptional privilege of 'the right to appeal' (ekkliton) of the Throne of Constantinople with the decrees of its 9th and 17th Canons. Numerous instances of the exercise of this right to appeal by Hierarchs and clergy of other jurisdictions have been recorded through the centuries in the historical journey of the Mother Church."

His All-Holiness observed that "in times of greater or lesser historical challenge, our Patriarchate – faithful to its vocation and ministry – neither says nor does anything unrelated to the incarnate Word. Its mission is not comprised of imposing some new ecclesiological principles but preserving truths of faith, precious traditions and inspired patristic teachings established many centuries ago. The Mother Church does not create or shape its own church management; nor does it complete the Gospel, like the Grand Inquisitor of the renowned Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky. As the First Throne of Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate exercises a prophetic ministry, extending the mystery of the Catholic Church in Christ Jesus throughout the world in each era."

In exercising that ministry, the Ecumenical Patriarchate must confront heresies. "The great temptation of the second millennium," His All-Holiness stated, "which was also bequeathed to the millennium we have now entered, is the status of jurisdictions. The source of this problem is ethnophyletism, the propensity to expansionism and the disregard of the boundaries defined by the Patriarchal and Synodal Tomes. The Ecumenical Patriarchate bears the responsibility of setting matters in ecclesiastical and canonical order, because it alone has the canonical privilege as well as the prayer and blessing of the Church and the Ecumenical Councils to carry out this supreme and exceptional duty as a nurturing Mother and birth-giver of Churches. If the Ecumenical Patriarchate denies its responsibility and removes itself from the inter-Orthodox scene, then the local Churches will proceed 'as sheep without a shepherd' (Matt. 9.36), expending their energy in ecclesiastical initiatives that conflate the humility of faith and the arrogance of power."

The Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle, Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, expresses our gratitude to His All-Holiness for the wisdom and piety of this address, and for the clarification it offers on this controversial issue. We pray that all the hierarchs and faithful of the Holy Orthodox Church around the world will consider carefully and heed the words of His All-Holiness, and that Almighty God will bestow upon His Church a renewed unity and peace.

In the Service of the Ecumenical Patriarchate,

Anthony J. Limberakis, MD

Archon Aktouarios

National Commander

METROPOLITAN TIKHON ISSUES ARCHPASTORAL LETTER CONCERNING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN UKRAINE

SYOSSET, NY [OCA] On Wednesday, September 26, 2018, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon addressed an Archpastoral Letter to the clergy, monastics and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America in reference to recent developments with regard to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine.

Archpastoral Letter of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon in Reference to Recent Developments Regarding the Orthodox Church in Ukraine

09.26.2018 09/016

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America:

Christ is in our midst!

I write in reference to recent developments respecting the Orthodox Church in Ukraine which have received much media attention. The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America has been closely following these developments inasmuch as they have an impact in our own communities. Many of our parishes have been affected by the painful historical ecclesiastical divisions that have existed in Ukraine for decades. In recent years, these ecclesiastical divisions have been overtaken by significant violent geopolitical conflict, and our Church has consistently called for the offering of prayers for the healing of such division and the peaceful and just resolution of all conflict.

Our Holy Synod has been apprised of initiatives by His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, to address this painful situation and has noted the various preliminary responses offered by other Orthodox Churches. In particular, we have received with sorrow, yet with understanding, the decision of the Moscow Patriarchate to cease liturgical commemoration of the Ecumenical Patriarch and suspend concelebration and participation by bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate in inter-Orthodox contexts.

We are deeply aware of the pain and trauma in the life of Orthodox people caused by ecclesial schism which weakens Orthodox witness and evangelism in society. Such pain and trauma have been wounds in the life of Orthodox Christians in Ukraine for several decades. Schism, division, and mutual antagonism are not only canonical problems—they are pastoral and spiritual challenges demanding the healing power of Christ and Christian faith. We are mindful of the Russian Orthodox Synod's call to the local autocephalous Churches to "understand the common responsibility for the fate of world Orthodoxy and to initiate a fraternal all-Orthodox discussion of the church situation

in Ukraine."

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America supports the need for regular dialogue at every level and appeals to all local Orthodox Churches to address the current crisis in Ukraine through the convening of a Pan-Orthodox synaxis, or similar conciliar process, wherein an authentic solution can be found to this problem. We are prepared to participate in such fraternal discussions and will be reviewing the on-going developments of this situation at our Fall Session.

In the meantime, we call on our clergy, monastics, and faithful to offer their support and fervent prayers for His Beatitude, Metropolitan Onufry, and all the bishops, clergy, monastics, and faithful of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church. May the Lord grant them continued strength and wisdom in their endeavor to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Relying on the healing power of Christ, we exhort all in the Orthodox Church in America to be steadfast in faith, hope, and love, maintaining collaboration and eucharistic communion with both the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Patriarchate of Moscow, thus offering a sign of unity in the face of current threats to unity.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter and Spirit of Truth, grant to all parties the wisdom, peace, and humility to solve the problems that exist in Ukraine, so that working in unity all may turn their energy and attention to the singular and true mission of the Church, the preaching to the world of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All American and Canada

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UNITY IN NORTH AMERICA	11

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

A.R.F.O.R.A. Undergraduate Scholarship



Julia M. Kalugar, the daughter of Michael J. and Laurie A. Kalugar of Beverly Hills, Michigan, is the recipient of a \$1,000 ARFORA Undergraduate Scholarship. She is a member of St. George Romanian Orthodox Cathedral in Southfield, MI. She is attending Wayne State University in Detroit, MI where she is studying for a degree in Marketing and a minor in

Business Administration. Julia is actively involved in the Orthodox Christian Fellowship chapter at Wayne State and was recently chosen to do an interview on Detroit's Own Orthodox Radio. Her involvement in parish life includes being a choir member, volunteering at banquets and fundraisers, and also involved in church youth activities. She has been volunteering at the Vatra Summer Camps for the past 8 consecutive years. Julia's future plans include continuing to achieve her Masters Degree in Business Administration and plans to give back to her community. A.R.F.O.R.A. congratulates Julia on her outstanding achievements.

A.R.F.O.R.A. Martha Gavrila Graduate Scholarship

Cristina M. Ocrainiciuc, the daughter of Honore and Liliana Ocrainiciuc of North Canton, Ohio, is the recipient of a \$1,000 ARFORA Martha Gavrila Graduate Scholarship. She is a member of St. George Romanian Orthodox Church in Canton, OH. She has received her Bachelor of Science in Biology and minor in German from Ohio State University, Columbus, OH. There she was an ODI Scholar, Certified



Mentor, and ASDA Member. She is an ASDA District 6 Cabinet Member. Cristina is currently a participant in the Summer Research Program and the Co-Chair of the Ohio State College of Dentistry Mentorship Program. Her accomplishments in extra-curricular, volunteer, leadership, and honors are so great and so many that we are unable to list them all. She is continuing her post-graduate studies at Ohio State University College of Dentistry in Columbus, Ohio. She is fluent in Romanian, English and semi-fluent in German. A.R.F.O.R.A. congratulates Cristina on her outstanding achievements.

William R. Stanitz / AROY Scholarship

Julia Marie Kalugar (see photo at left) of Beverly Hills, Michigan and member of St. George Cathedral, Southfield, Michigan, is a recipient of the William R. Stanitz AROY Scholarship of 2018. Julia received her high school diploma from Groves High School and has completed her freshman year at Wayne State University, majoring in marketing with a concentration on advertising and marketing communication. While in high school, she had the opportunity to volunteer at Greenfield Elementary School in Beverly Hills, Michigan, where she assisted the preschool program and helped the teachers prepare their activities. During both her Junior and Senior year, she was the captain of her varsity volleyball team and received an honorable mention for commemoration of sportsmanship and dedication. She was also a member of both the Groves Show Choir and Concert Chorus and was voted as choir president her senior year. During the summer of her freshman year and continuing through her sophomore year, she has had the opportunity to be an intern at the Detroit Institute of Art as a Marketing Analyst. Since she was baptized, she has attended church at St. George Cathedral in Southfield, assisting in banquets and fundraisers for the church and singing in the church choir. Julia has attended the Episcopate's Vatra Camps for eight consecutive years as both a camper and a dining room hostess. During her freshman year at Wayne State, she participated in the university's Orthodox Christian Fellowship chapter and has also been on the Detroit's Own Orthodox Radio, where she called upon other students to get involved in their local OCF chapter. Julia's family has been a great support for our Episcopate for many generations from her grandmother working the camps for many years to her being a young parish member advocating for a strong youth and inclusion. Congratulations to Julia Marie Kalugar and may she continue to be Dedicated to Orthodoxy through Faith, Knowledge and Good Works.

Ioana Alexandra Moldovan of Wethersfield, Connecticut and daughter of V. Rev. Fr. & Psa. Daniel Moldovan of Holy Transfiguration, Manchester, Connecticut, is a recipient of the William R. Stanitz AROY Scholarship for 2018. Ioana received her high school diploma from Wethersfield High School and is currently a senior at Boston University. She is



Cont. on page 14



PANORTHODOXY

CLEVELAND, THE PAN ORTHODOX CITY

A FORUM SPONSORED BY THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN LAITY

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

THE VERY REVEREND CHAD HATFIELD
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TOPIC: "PAN ORTHODOXY - TRUTH OR FICTION"

DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2018

TIME: SATURDAY MORNING, 9:00AM TO 1:00PM

WHERE: SAINT MARY ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

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SUNDAY MORNING - HIERARCHAL LITURGY:

HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP NATHANIEL...CELEBRANT
RULING HIERARCH OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE OF AMERICA

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN LAITY

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Scholarship ... Cont. from page 12

dual majoring in Spanish and Biology with a cellular, molecular and genetics specialization and has made the Dean's List of the College of Arts and Sciences. While attending Wethersfield High School, she was a part of the National Honor Society, Vice President of the National English Honor Society and Treasurer of the National Spanish Honor Society. She was also President of the WHS Interact Club and received the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers Award of Excellence in Spanish. Since her start at Boston University, she has been involved in many university clubs and extracurricular activities. She volunteered at the University of Connecticut Health Center in the Dental Health Administration Department and Pediatric Clinic. Ioana currently volunteers at Building Healthy Families, where she supervises children while they interact with Imagination Playgrounds, and also at Faith Care, where she performs patient intakes at free health screenings and helps overcome the language barrier for Spanish-speaking patients. She is also the Secretary of the Boston University Choral Society, President of the Boston Rotaract Club, Ambassador of the Kilachand Honors College and an International Peer Mentor. This young professional is an advocate at Boston Health Leads where she works with the Boston Medical Center to find proper resources and care for patients and their families. She also is a Research Assistant for the Women in Control 2.0 Study, where she assists a research team in the diabetes self-management study at Boston University Medical Center Family Medicine. During the Fall of 2016, she had the opportunity to travel to Madrid, Spain and study abroad at the Madrid Science Program at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. In the summer of 2017, Ioana also participated in a Medical Internship at the Hospital Materno Infantil de San Isidro in Buenos Aires, Argentina. As the daughter of a priest, Ioana grew up in the church and found the church has become her home. She taught Sunday school and wanted to help grow her parish from a mission. She wanted to do so in teaching the youth about Christ and help them form an interest in continuing to follow and learn about him. She also participates in the parish choir both at her home parish or while at university at St Mary's Orthodox Church. Congratulations to Ioana Alexandra Moldovan on receiving this scholarship and graduating in the Spring of 2019. Thank you for being dedicated to Orthodoxy through Faith, Knowledge and Good Works.

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Som. o	r

THE HERESY OF PAPISM

by George Demacopoulos

The three-way dispute between Ukrainians, Russians, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over the possibility of Ukrainian ecclesiastical independence is shaping up to be the greatest challenge to Orthodox Christian unity of our generation. From a purely political perspective, Ukrainian autocephaly would represent an unmitigated disaster for the Russian Orthodox Church. Not only would it deprive the Russian Church of one third of its parishes and undermine its *Russkiy Mir* project, but it would dramatically belie the claim of the Moscow Patriarchate that it is the leader of the Orthodox Christian world.

In a desperate effort to thwart the independence movement, the Moscow Patriarchate and its surrogates are pushing a host of rhetorical and historical arguments, but none is more belligerent or ridiculous than the accusation that the Ecumenical Patriarchate has succumbed to the "heresy of papism." While this is not the first time that the charge of "papism" has been leveled in an inner-Orthodox dispute, the uncritical consumption of this charge reveals both a broad theological illiteracy and the potency of anti-Catholic rhetorical smears within inner-Orthodox polemic.

Even a cursory understanding of Orthodox Christian history or canon law reveals that there is nothing inherently heretical about the papacy. Many saints of the Byzantine era, including John Chrysostom and Theodore the Studite, recognized the administrative seniority of the bishop of Rome and appealed to the super-jurisdictional authority of the popes of their day. The fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council even affirmed the legendary connection between St. Peter and the papacy.

But more importantly, heresy is a specific and technical theological term that refers to a deliberate break from the Church's dogmatic (i.e. creedal) belief in Christ and the Trinity. Disputes over practice or administrative organization might indicate a break from tradition or canonical order, but they do not constitute heresy. St. Basil famously explained this distinction in a letter to Amphilokios in the fourth century.

Because the question of Ukrainian independence has nothing to do with the dogma of the Church, the category of heresy is not applicable.

Indeed, the Ukrainian "question" is a dispute about jurisdictional authority, the boundaries of independent churches, and who gets to decide when a local church is granted autocephalous status. As I've argued elsewhere, these kinds of disputes go back to the late-ancient world and largely mirror broader geopolitical transformations.

Although I would not do so, one might make the case that the Ecumenical Patriarch is overstepping his authority. Or, one might contend that it is not pastorally prudent for the Ecumenical Patriarch to grant autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church at this time. But neither of those positions would be akin to the slanderous accusation that the Ecumenical Patriarch has succumbed to the heresy of papism.

It is, of course, difficult to know if the perpetuators of this slander are theologically obtuse or willfully malicious. And while we have come to expect this kind of behavior in the dark corners of the Internet, it is unsettling to see it actively promoted by the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. But that is precisely what is happening. In an interview posted on the Moscow Patriarchate's official website last week, Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev declared that Patriarch Bartholomew "is taking the decision unilaterally, which contradicts the multi-age tradition of the Church, which is nothing else but the heresy of papism."

In all of this, perhaps, we should not lose sight of the difference between the millennium-long Orthodox critique of an expansion of papal supremacy that began in the Middle Ages, and the rather recent appropriation of the phrase "heresy of papism" as an inner-Orthodox accusation, which is designed to delegitimate the authority of an Orthodox bishop.

The expression "heresy of papism" was first employed by the Old Calendarist schismatics in the middle of the twentieth century as part of a failed propaganda effort to justify their break from the canonical Church. For the Old Calendarists and their sympathizers, the "heresy of papism" was not a critique of specific papal teaching, but rather, a catch-all slander that encompassed everything that they perceived to be wrong with Western Christianity and modernity. Of course, the real target of the Old Calendarists was not the Roman Catholic Church or the bishop of Rome but Orthodox bishops—especially Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras—who they believed had capitulated to the ways of the "West."

Perhaps it is telling that Metropolitan Hilarion has been reduced to employing the rhetorical tactics of a highly sectarian and schismatic community from the last century as he grasps for arguments to prevent something that appears unstoppable at this point. Let us pray that he and others in the Moscow Patriarchate know better than the Old Calendarists that exaggerated rhetorical slanders do nothing to legitimize a self-imposed schism.

Originally published on PublicOrthodoxy.org on September 19, 2018.

George Demacopoulos is the Fr. John Meyendorff and Patterson Family Chair of Orthodox Christian Studies and Co-Director of the Orthodox Christian Studies Center at Fordham University.

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Psa Joan Heifner, Sioux Falls, SD	
Ion Dana, Cleveland, OH	
Eli Nemes, Hubbard, OH	
Jenny Raina, Hanover Park, IL	
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Gabriela Beres, Britton, MI	
Vlad Dalbor, Addison, IL	
Katherine DeSantis, Uniontown, OH	
Vlad & Andreia Filip, Lombard, IL	
Maria Girlig, Parma Hts, OH	
Jeanette Hildreth, Burton, MI	
Tatiana Howard, Monroe, MI	
Mariana Istvan, Joliet, IL	

SEEING CLEARLY

By Monk Raphael (Brown)

ό δὲ θεὸς ὄψεται εἰς καρδίαν

1 Kingdoms (1 Samuel) 16:7 LXX

The world judges according to outward appearance Physical beauty, graceful movements flowing. Strength and power, demanding to be obeyed.

Thrown into the weigh scales of such worldly perceptions

How do the sick, the outcast, the weak, and the broken Measure up to lofty standards such as these?

Do not weep, wail and lament All is not lost.

Hope abounds for each person Because God leaves outward appearance aside Scripture tells us: "God sees into the heart."

[1 Kingdoms (1 Samuel) 16:7]

Frank Kuziak, Stow, OH	\$20.00
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Caroryn Cox, Osseo, Wi	

La Adormirea în Domnul a Preotului Profesor Cezar-Stelian Vasiliu



S-a săvârşit din viață decanul de vârstă al clerului ortodox român din Montreal și profesorul de teologie Cezar-Stelian Vasiliu. Deplângem plecarea dintre noi a confratelui întru slujire, înălțăm rugăciuni pentru sufletul lui și îi aducem, duios, prinosul dragostei și gratitudinii noastre. Împărtășim familiei, de aproape și de departe, cu deosebire fiicei Andreea, cuvânt de mângâiere, făgăduind

rămânerea statornică, în comuniune vie, cu cel răposat.

Am intrat în atmosfera de durere sufletească şi compasiune şi dăm curs datoriei morale de a realiza un necesar şi merituos « restitutio » , cuvenit unui om deosebit, unui apropiat confrate sacerdot şi intelectual creştin de onorabilă reprezentare.

Un om și un preot remarcabil, cu o operă teologică și istoriografică semnificativă, o prezență comunitară prestigioasă, cu bogate vrednicii - toate acestea îndreptățesc deplin și dau argumente pentru neuitarea noastră. A fost un intelectual activ și prolific, cu formație și competențe de cercetător în domeniul Istoriei Bisericești Universale. A marcat însă, deopotrivă, rezonant și punctual, în scrierile sale, mari repere de istorie și cultură, legate de Biserica națională, pentru care i se cuvine, cu asupra de măsură, sincera noastră recunostință. Am avut printre noi un preot cărturar, cu o bogată cultură teologică și umanistă, ce l-a făcut capabil să se confrunte, intelectual, cu cele mai exigente spirite contemporane cu el. Un doctorat în Teologie, obtinut la Institutul Pontifical din Roma si postura de membru activ în Academia Româno-Americană de Arte și Științe (ARA) încununează semnificatv statura sa intelectuală.

Poetul antic latin Horatiu a lăsat posterității, între altele, o sintagmă arhicunoscută, « non omnis moriar » - nu murim cu totul, adică nu se așterne peste noi, curând, uitarea, dacă vom fi lăsat ceva durabil și valoros în urma noastră. Răposatul lasă, ca prețioasă moștenire, o comunitate pe care a întemeiat-o și care a evoluat înfloritor, lasă scrieri și cărți de teologie, ca valoros patrimoniu intelectual, lasă un nume bun, de notorietate și nu în ultimul rând, o memorie duioasă. Dumnezeu i-a hărăzit, ca succesor parohiatului său, un preot vrednic și harnic, cu nume de arhanghel, care i-a vegheat cu zel, cu omenie și iubire ca de fiu, ultimele clipe ale petrecerii sale pământești și care va « proscomidia », suntem siguri, totdeauna, cu grijă și pentru el, la Sfânta Liturghie

Istoria recentă a emigrației românești în Canada-Québec va consemna, cu gratitudine postumă, prezența și lucrarea preotului profesor Cezar-Stelian Vasiliu. Numele și opera, sacerdoțiul și lucrarea sa înseamnă foarte mult pentru urmași.

A îmbinat armonios lucrarea preoțească misionară cu activitatea culturală şi a fost un păstor grijuliu care "şi-a pus sufletul » pentru obștea încredințată lui spre călăuzire duhovnicească. Sacerdoțiul său a respirat totdeauna abnegație, dăruire, jertfelnicie, din convingerea că, împuternicit prin harul preoției, trebuie « să aducă roadă și roada să rămână » (Ioan 15, 16), să fie « lumină lumii şi sarea pământului » (Matei 5, 13-14). A fost un vrednic slujitor al altarului şi al culturii, un caracter optimist, inimos, bine intenționat, voitor şi făcător de bine, « pildă [enoriașilor, semenilor și compatrioților], cu cuvântul, cu învățătura, cu dragostea, cu duhul şi cu căldura credinței » (I Tim. 4,12). A iubit pe Dumnezeu, Biserica Sa, neamul din care a odrăslit și turma pe care a călăuzit-o întru dobândirea mântuirii.

De la semnatarul acestui in « memoriam « a primit răposatul, pentru ultima oară, pe patul suferinţelor, tainele Spovedaniei şi Cuminecării, « merindea veşniciei » – căci a avut, aevea, sfârşit creştinesc, aşa cum s-a rugat de atâtea ori liturghisind. Fără a divulga detalii de spovedanie, vă pot încredinţa că, simţindu-şi sfârşitul iminent, cu dar de la Dumnezeu de aproape 80 de ani de viaţă, a lăsat impresia unei conştiinţe împăcate, cu sine şi cu toţi cu care a relaţionat, dar am sesizat şi resemnarea, faţă de cele rămase neîmplinite, în generosul răstimp al petrecerii pământeşti. O grea încercare a fost - şi aceasta l-a afectat cutremurător - trecerea din viaţă a distinsei sale soţii, prezvitera Zoe, acum opt ani.

La vremea despărţirii de cele pământeşti şi-a însuşit mărturisirea paulină : « Lupta cea bună m-am luptat, călătoria [vieţii] am săvârşit, credinţa am păzit « (II Tim. 4,7), A rostit, de asemenea, precum biblicul, dreptul Simeon : « Acum slobozeşte pe robul tău, Stăpâne, ... în pace », precum şi cu cuvintele Hristosului sfintelor pătimiri : « În mâinile Tale, [Doamne], încredinţez duhul meu » (Luca 23, 46).

La plecarea dintre noi a preotului, frate întru slujire preoțească și a dascălului de teologie Cezar-Stelian ne plecăm fruntea cu evlavie și ne rugăm Milostivului Dumnezeu pentru iertarea lui, de cele ce va fi greșit ca om, ne rugăm pentru răspuns bun la cea dintâi dreaptă Judecată și pentru bună rânduire în ceata aleșilor Săi. Pleacă în veșnicie după ce-și va fi agonisit « aleasă cinstire » (Pilde 11, 6) și îl vor însoți acolo faptele sale frumoase și pilduitoare, « întru nădejdea învierii și a vieții celei veșnice ».

Cont. la pag 21

DIN VIAȚA EPISCOPIEI ...



Aniversarea de 50 de ani de la sfințirea Mânăstirii Schimbarea la Față din Ellwood City, PA - 28 sept. 2018.



Parohia Sf. Maria Magdalena, Houston TX - Aniversarea de 25 de ani - 23 sept. 2018.



 $110\ \mathrm{ani}\ \mathrm{ai}\ \mathrm{Parohiei}\ \mathrm{Pogor}\ \mathrm{\hat{a}}\mathrm{rea}\ \mathrm{Duhului}\ \mathrm{Sfant},\ \mathrm{Merrilleville},\ \mathrm{IN}\ -16\ \mathrm{sept}\ 2018.$



Vizita Arhiereasca la Catedrala Buna Vestire din Montreal, QC - 12 aug. 2018.



Vizita Arhiereasca la Parohia Acoperamantul Maicii Domnului, Pierrefonds, QC - 11 aug. 2018.



Sarbatorirea a 30 de ani de la infiintarea Parohiei Sfanta Maria din Falls Church, VA - 30 sept. 2018.



Aniversarea de 25 de ani a Parohiei Sfanta Ana, Jacksonville, FL - 19 aug. 2018.



Tabara de Vara Sfanta Maria a Protopopiatului Canada de Est, Montreal, Quebec, 1-7 iulie 2018.



Tabara pentru Juniori de la Vatra Romaneasca, Grass Lake, MI, 22 iulie - 4 aug. 2018.





Tabară de Vară a Protopopiatului Canadei Centrale Mono, ON - 2018



Tabăra de vară "Sfântul Antonie cel Mare" organizată de Protopopiatul Canadei Centrale, a ajuns deja la a treia ediție. Locația taberei a fost atent aleasă de preoții Protopopiatului nostru încă din anul 2015, pentru a aduce împreună omul, natura și divinitatea. Într-un cadru mirific, la mănăstirea "The Valley of the Mother of God" de lângă Mono, Otario, s-au adunat anul acesta 58 de copii proveniți din parohiile noastre din Ontario, dar și din New Brunswick. Tabăra s-a desfășurat între 1 și 7 iulie sub îndrumarea directorului de tabără, preotul Florian Ene de la parohia "Sfinții 40 de Mucenici" din Aurora și cu participarea părintelui protopop Ionut Maerean de la parohia "Sfântul Ioan Botezătorul" din Kitchener. În deschiderea taberei am avut parte de o frumoasă atmosferă creată de părinții copiilor la un BBQ de Canada Day. Seara s-a încheiat cu o frumoasă surpriză: un foc de tabără și foc de artificii. Fiecare zi ce a urmat a fost plină de activități educaționale și a avut o tematică anume: respect, compasiune, dragoste, iertare, curaj și altruism.

Fiecare zi și fiecare masă a început și s-a terminat cu rugăciunea rostită de copiii care s-au arătat extrem de interesați și de orele de religie. Mâncarea gătită, meniul sănătos ales cu grijă, deserturile preferate ale copiilor și atmosfera frățească din timpul meselor supravegheate de doamna Mariana Bădescu din Aurora, au făcut copiii să se simtă ca acasă, mai ales că au fost cazați într-o cladire nou-nouță, cu aer condițio-

nat și baie cu duș în cameră. Somnul dulce le-a fost vegheat de cea mai îndrăgită voluntară, Maria Pop din Kitchener. Copiii au învătat dansuri folclorice sub îndrumarea instructorului Ion Cornea venit din Kitchener, au participat la orele de Artă sub îndrumarea doamnei Oana Mitsuk din Aurora, au învățat și intonat imnul României, au participat la activități în natură și drumeții prin pădure conduși de Anamaria Teodorescu din Kitchener, au jucat fotbal, volei, basketball, badminton, tenis de masă, foosball, biliard, etc. Zilele toride de vară au fost stinse cu "water balloon games". Meşteşugul olăritului sub îndrumarea doamnei Alina Cristea din Kitchener a fost cu siguranță o activitate îndrăgită de toți copiii. După ziua de miercuri, în care copiii au practicat postul, a urmat Taina Spovedaniei, iar joi de dimineață au primit Taina Împărtășaniei în cadrul Sfintei Liturghii. Tabăra s-a încheiat cu un "Talent Show" și un foc de tabără cu marshmallows și cântece la chitară în jurul focului într-o atmosferă de vis. În această tabără s-a promovat credința noastră strămoșească și graiul dulce românesc, omenia și atitudinea pozitivă, s-au creat multe prietenii și s-au învățat lecții de viață!

Mulțumim pe această cale tuturor voluntarilor și donatorilor care au făcut posibilă această tabără. Cu siguranță, ne vom revedea și la anul!

Participant

"Pune-te în Fața Icoanei și Taci. Şi Încearcă să Auzi, să Asculți ce-ți va Spune ție Dumnezeu"

Nouă nu ne place să ne rugăm, ne irită, ne enervează, și în mintea noastră sună cuvinte cam de felul: "Mântuitorul a spus să nu ne rugăm mult ca păgânii, dar ăștia au făcut acatistiere de 2 kg! Să citesc eu acatistul acesta... am ajuns la icosul 7, înseamnă că am trecut de jumătate, acuş termin!" Suntem fățarnici în fața lui Dumnezeu! Înțelegeți?

Este o mare treabă să ai curajul de a recunoaște tu, nu în fața oamenilor, ci chiar în fața lui Dumnezeu, să recunoști că tu n-ai chef să citești acatistul [nu să fugi de Dumnezeu de rușine]. Este un mare lucru, este o biruință, este o înfrângere a omului vechi, este începutul smereniei, căci îți dai seama că, chiar așa cum ești tu, Dumnezeu te asistă și nu doar te asistă, ci chiar atunci, când vei cădea și vei recunoaște, și vei spune: "Doamne, nu îmi place mie acatistul acesta, ajută-mă, nu prea pot să mă rog, "cred, Doamne, ajută necredinței mele!" va veni la tine.

Avem o grămadă de cazuri [în Scriptură] care toate ne învață să credem anume astfel în Dumnezeu. Dar noi suntem politicoşi cu Dumnezeu: "Oare ce va zice Dumnezeu despre mine dacă eu, de exemplu, în locul acatistului voi citi o catismă din Psaltire sau voi spune "Tatăl nostru", aşa, cu credință, cum a zis Hristos: "Doamne, Tu ai zis să spun "Tatăl nostru", iaca, eu îl spun, am nădejde, că Tu ai zis". Să vedeți că atunci avem mai multă linişte! Şi tot ce facem, să-L avem înaintea noastră pe Dumnezeu pururea. Ce înseamnă asta? Vedeți cum sunt construite rugăciunile Părinților: "Căci Tu ai zis, Cel ce ai zidit lumea, Tu ai zis: nu voiesc moartea păcătosului, deci primeşte-mă". Şantaj! "Tu ai zis să ne rugăm aşa, deci, primeşte rugăciunea noastră".

Şi [aşa] începem a-L trăi pe Dumnezeu cel viu! Aşa se lăudau evreii în faţa noroadelor, că ei cred în Dumnezeu cel viu, dar pentru noi Dumnezeu nu mai este viu, deşi noi ştim foarte bine din cursurile de teologie că noi credem aşa, "ne rugăm în Duh şi-n adevăr", totuşi, ne izbim de o grămadă de formalităţi şi rămânem în ele, nu avem curaj să fim sinceri, nu avem curaj să începem odată, noi nu începem a trăi! Noi încă n-am înţeles de ce Dumnezeu este viu!...

Vine odată o femeie la vlădica Antonie al Surojului şi i se plânge: "Vlădică, citesc acatiste în fiecare seară, canoane, nicio bucurie n-am, mă irită, nu ştiu ce să mai fac, pentru că nu-L simt pe Dumnezeu, nici un semn n-am". Şi atunci vlădica îi spune: "Ştii ceva, încearcă, du-te acasă, pune-te în faţa icoanei şi taci. Şi încearcă să auzi, să asculţi ce-ţi va spune ţie Dumnezeu, pentru că tu, pălăvrăgind atâta, nu-L laşi să-ţi vorbească şi El". Şi s-a dus şi a făcut aşa femeia, şi a venit cu mare bucurie. L-a auzit! Hm!? Parcă atât de puţin, atât de

simplu! Şi învăţăturile astea despre rugăciune şi despre întâlnirea cu Dumnezeu le găsim la toţi Părinţii care au scris despre rugăciune. Spune Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur: nu citi rugăciuni lungi dimineaţa şi seara, mai bine citeşte rugăciuni scurte de mai multe ori pe zi.

La Sfântul... n-are importanță... la Duhul Sfânt [că Sfinții sunt locașe ale Duhului Sfânt] vine un frate și îi prezintă o mare descoperire, pe care a avut-o în materie de rugăciune, pentru că a fost în oraș și a auzit tropare cântându-se. La care Sfântul îi spune: "Oare Antonie o fi știut tropare? Oare avva Amon o fi știut tropare, că ei opreau soarele de pe cer cu câteva cuvinte".

Deci, mai bună este întâlnirea sinceră, după care poţi să adaugi rugăciuni câte vrei, după care este firească setea de rugăciune încât rămâi aşa, ca Sfântul Arsenie, cu soarele la spate când răsare şi [când termini] îţi apune în faţă. Acum, într-o măsură mai mare sau mai mică, tu ai dragostea şi chemare spre rugăciunea asta, pentru că Dumnezeu a devenit viu, acel Dumnezeu pe care l-a descoperit samarineaneanca. De aici încep restul virtuţilor, de aici începe viaţa în Hristos. Ştiţi de ce? Pentru că dacă noi n-am avut încredinţarea că Dumnezeu este viu, că este cu noi şi pentru noi, noi n-avem nici un motiv să facem celelalte fapte bune. Apostolul Pavel spune: "Dacă Hristos n-a înviat, zadarnică este credinţa voastră, zadarnică este propovăduirea noastră".

Dar noi, dacă nu am avut această încredințare că Hristos a înviat, zadarnic ne ostenim, este foarte, foarte greu. Din cauza asta, facem o grămadă de păcate, după care venim şi reproşăm, aşa cu un ton foarte umil lui Dumnezeu, că nu se pot face în ziua de astăzi poruncile astea, sunt alte timpuri, sau poate nu eu, sunt unii născuți aşa, predestinați pentru mântuire.

Părintele Savatie Baștovoi Extras din conferinta "In ce trebuie sa creada un tanar astazi", Bucuresti, 2 aprilie, 2002

La Adormirea ... Cont. de la pag 17

În puţine şi sărace cuvinte am dat mărturie, evocator şi elogios, despre răposat, aducându-i modest omagiu, de reală şi sinceră preţuire. El rămâne în inimile noastre, în inimile multor compatrioţi, foşti enoriaşi şi nu numai, un vrednic păstor şi luminător, cu elan misionar, un strălucit si roditor « om de carte ».

Requiescat in pace! Dumnezeu să-l odihnească şi să-l aşeze, « unde nu este durere, nici întristare, nici suspin, ci viață fără de sfârșit »!

Pr. Prof. Dr. Nicolae Stoleru Parohia Inaltarea Domnului, Montréal 02 August 2018

Vatra Românească - 80 de ani de la Inaugurare Hramul și Congresul Episcopiei 6-9 Septembrie, 2018

Timp de 80 de ani, Vatra Românească, din Grass Lake, Michigan a fost și este centrul istoric și inima ortodoxiei românești în America de Nord. La Vatra Românească se află sediul administrativ al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America, reședința episcopală și Muzeul/Centrul Arhiepiscop Valerian D Trifa, și este locul numeroaselor activități religioase: programe, retrageri duhovnicești, conferințe și taberele de vară de mai bine de 60 de ani. Cu toate acestea, punctul central al asezământului Vatra Românească, este paraclisul episcopal cu hramul *Nașterea Maicii Domnului*.

Începuturile asezământului Vatra Românească este strâns legat de sosirea în 1935 a primului ierarh ortodox român din America de Nord — Episcopul Policarp Moruşca. La sosirea sa, nu a găsit nici o reședință episcopală și ca urmare a trebuit achizitionat un loc care sa fie centrul administrativ al noului ierarh. Cu ajutorul unui grup energic de credincioși din Detroit s-a achiziționat Ferma Grey Tower din satul Grass Lake, Michigan. Pe 3-4 iulie, 1938, proprietatea — redenumită "Vatra Românească" — a fost inaugurată, de către Episcopul Policarp Morușca și Arhiepiscopul grec Atenagora, viitorul Patriarh Ecumenic.

După cum menționa la acea vreme, ziarul local Jackson Citizen Patriot, acesta a fost unul dintre cele mai diversificate evenimente văzute până atunci în această zonă: ceremonii grandioase, solemnitate, "demnitari ai bisericii cântând, evenimente care au culminat cu prezența fastuoasă a episcopului Policarp". S-a estimat atunci participarea a peste trei mii de oameni la festivitățile acelui sfârșit de săptămână. Tot la acea dată a fost pusă și o piatră de temelie pentru o biserica, care a fost construită mult mai târziu pentru nevoile liturgice ale centrului eparhial.

Istoria "Vetrei", ca forță activă a Episcopiei, începe odată cu păstorirea Înaltpreasfințitului Arhiepiscop Valerian. Înainte de se afla acesta la conducerea ei, "Vatra" nu era decât o fermă, a cărei existență era pur financiară; fără prezența unui episcop, aceasta nu ar fi prezentat niciun interes deosebit pentru episcopie. Abia în anul 1952, atunci când părintele Vasile Hațegan a protestat, afirmând că nu a călătorit 500 de mile doar pentru a auzi polemici despre animale și recolte, Congresul, și implicit Episcopia, a început să ia în serios "Vatra", schimbându-i, începând de atunci, cursul. Odată cu venirea celui de-al doilea ierarh, Episcopul Valerian Trifa, Vatra Românească a devenit un centru de interes, un punct de legătură, un adevărat "cămin" pentru românii ortodocși din America. În efect, este vorba despre lucrarea clerului și a credinciosilor, orchestrată și direcționată de către arhiepiscop, pentru armonizarea eforturilor, talentelor și dedicației spre beneficiul Sfintei Biserici Ortodoxe.

O parte din terenul unde astazi se intinde proprietatea Vatra Românească – aproximativ 330 de acri - a fost, conform datelor istorice, pamant locuit de către triburile de nativi Ottawa și Chippewa. Președintele Andrew Jackson ofera prin decret o proprietate de 1000 de acri Familiei Boland, care venise din Scotia. De la nativi americani la coloniști scoțieni, ajuns în proprietatea românilor americani, terenul are o istorie bogată, și "Vatra Romaneasca" rămâne un reper local bine-cunoscut, atat pe plan local, național cât și internațional.

Anul acesta, sărbătoarea organizată la Vatra Românească între 6 și 9 septembrie 2018, a fost marcată printr-o întreită bucurie – hramul paraclisului eparhial (8 septembrie), aniversarea a 80 de ani de la Inaugurarea din 1938 și prezența Icoanei Izvorâtoare de Mir a Maicii Domnului Iveron din Hawaii. La invitația Inaltpreasfințitului Părinte Arhiepiscop Nathaniel, Preaferificul Părinte Tikhon, Mitropolitul Primat al Bisericii Ortodoxe în America a fost prezent si a liturghisit în fruntea soborului de ierarhi și preoți, fiind o sărbătoare cu totul specială pentru Episcopie.

Clerul episcopiei a sosit la Vatra Românească joi dimineața, 6 septembrie. Părintele Vicar Dan Hoarste a slujit Sfânta Liturghie în prezenta Inaltpreasfintitului Arhiepiscop Nathaniel pentru începerea Congresului Eparhial 2018. După prânz, s-a convocat sedința clerului, fiind prezenti peste 60 de preoti si diaconi, unde s-au discutat probleme actuale ale episcopiei si s-au trecut în revistă activitățiile din anul trecut. Părinții protopopi au prezentat fiecare activitățiile din cele 9 protopopiate urmând apoi discuții despre diverse teme pastorale. In cadrul conferinței preoțești, marcând Centenarul Marii Uniri, a fost prezentată cartea "Romanii Americani și Marea Unire din 1918" scrisă de către Părintele Protopop Dr. Remus Grama, parohul Catedralei Adormirea Maicii Domnului din Cleveland, Ohio, care a adus un frumos omagiu istoric românilor-americani din parohiile existente evidentiind "contributia acestor fii ai neamului la realizarea acestui mare act istoric al poporului nostru."

În urma conferinței clerului, joi seara, s-a slujit slujba vecerniei și un parastas pentru preoții și preotesele care au slujit episcopia și au trecut la Domnul. Au slujit Părintele Protosinghel Chesarie Bertea, Protopopul Coastei de Est SUA, Părintele Protopop Gabriel Agoston, protopopiatul de Nord Vest SUA și Părintele Protopop Ionut Măerean, protopopiatul Canada Centrală. Cuvântul de învățătură a fost rostit în limba română de către Părintele Protopop Florin Stoleru – Protoieria de Sud SUA, iar în limba engleză de către Părintele John Konkle, preot slujitor la Mănăstirea Adormirea Maicii Domnului din Rives Junction, MI. După cină, a urmat sedința Consiliului Eparhial unde s-au discutat rapoartele și propunerile care trebuiesc înaintate spre ratificare plenului Congresului Episcopiei de a doua zi. Totodată, unele dintre protopopiate au avut reuniuni informale ale clerului pentru a discuta activitățiile locale. Spre orele serii, a sosit la Vatra Românească Mitropolitul Tikhon unde a fost întâmpinat cu căldură de către Arhiepiscopul nostru și clerul prezent.

A doua zi, vineri, 7 septembrie 2018, în jurul orei 9.30, în deschiderea lucrarilor celui de al 86-lea Congres al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Romane din America, ierarhii, Mitropolitul Tikhon, Arhiepiscopul Nathaniel și Arhiepiscopul Benjamin, au fost întampinați la intrarea în biserică de Părintele Vicar Dan Hoarște cu sfânta evanghelie și de Părintele Laurențiu Lazar, secretarul Consiliului Eparhial, cu traditionala paine și sare. A urmat slujba de Te-Deum săvârșită de către Inaltpreasfințitul Părinte Arhiepiscop Nathaniel. Inainte de convocarea sesiunii de lucru a Congresului, Inaltpreasfințitul Părinte Nathaniel a urat bun venit înalților oaspeți și a prezentat pe fiecare dintre aceștia. A fost urmat un scurt cuvânt din partea Arhiepiscopului Benjamin de San Francisco, al Diocezei de Vest a Bisericii Ortodoxe din America, care a felicitat episcopia noastră pentru aniversare și a încurajat clerul și delegații în misiunea de creștini ortodoxi pe care toți o avem în comun.

Preafericitul Părinte Mitropolit Tikhon a adresat clerul și credincioșii delegați cu un cuvânt ziditor despre misiunea noastră ca Biserca Ortodoxă aici in Nord America evidențiind, tema "pentru viața lumii" a celui de al 19-lea Congress al Bisericii Ortodoxe în America, recent convenit în luna iulie 2018 în St. Louis, Missouri. Părintele Mitropolit a expus lucrarea pe care a scris-o cu aceasta ocazie "Despre ce Viața Vorbim" împărtășind membriilor Congresului că este profund mișcat de reacția pozitivă și încurajatoare pe care mulți dintre clerici si laici au arătat-o pentru acest text, care a captivat, energizat și motivat pe cei care l-au citit și aplicat în pastorație. Din cuprinsul acestei lucrări, Mitropolitul Tikhon a evidentiat, "cei patru piloni ai slujirii" care pot duce la o mai bună împlinire a lucrării apostolice a Bisericii, și anume: "viața duhovnicească, dăruirea/dărnicia, relațiile cu semenii noștri și ieșirea la propovăduire/evanghelizarea."

A urmat apoi cuvântul adresat Congresului de către Inaltpreasfințitul Părinte Arhiepiscop Nathaniel care a evocat istoria acestui "venerabil loc" punctând momentele importante din istoria sa de 80 de ani. Părintele Arhiepiscop a notat în cuvântul său aniversarea Centerarului Marii Unirii de la 1918, elogiind personalitatea Regelui Ferdinand și a Reginei Maria cât și a celor care, de aici de departe, din Nord America au sustinut aspirațiile înfăptuirii acestui act important din viața poporului român. A urmat apoi și îndemnul

părintesc ca ierarh la o mai bună dinamizare a vieții duhovnicești în parohii și a misiunii evanghelizare în orașele și zona fiecărei comunități parohiale. O atenție deosebită din partea Arhiepiscopului este grija pentru tineret. Inaltpreasfințitul a încurajat preoții și delegații la susținerea tinerilor și implicarea lor activă în parohie și episcopie și în promovarea activitățiilor acestora prin sprijin concret. In încheiere, ierarhul a mulțumit tuturor pentru prezență și participarea la Congres în acest an aniversar și pentru împreuna bună lucrare a tuturor, cler și credincioși, în Episcopie.

La orele amiezii, la altarul de vară din cimitirul de la Vatra Românească, s-a săvârșit slujba parastasului pentru ctitorii si membrii episcopiei, preoti si credinciosi, adormiti întru Domnul . A slujit Părintele Mitropolit Tikhon, împreună cu Părintele Protopop Liviu Alexandrescu, protopopiatul Canada Est și Părintele George Treff de la Parohia Sfânta Cruce din Hermitage, PA. A urmat apoi prânzul în pavilionul mare unde toata lumea prezentă s-a bucurat de ospitalitatea traditionala a gazdelor de la Parohia Sfintii Apostoli Petru si Pavel din Dearborn Heights, Michigan. In a doua parte a zilei de vineri, a continuat sesiunea plenară administrativă a Congresului fiind discutate rapoartele de activitate ale Cancelariei Eparhiale, ale departamentelor Episcopiei și raportul financiar pe anul 2017, urmând apoi aprobarea bugetului pe următorul an și discuții referitoare la necesitățiile administrației eparhiale și de dinamizare a activitățiilor din cadrul episcopiei. În încheierea Congresului, la propuneea Consiliului Eparhial, s-a dat citire și s-a adoptat în plen rezoluția prin care, întreaga Episcopie - prin delegații săi prezenți clerici și mireni, cinstește și omagiază momentul Marii Uniri la împlinirea a 100 de ani de la înfăptuirea sa.

La ora 5pm, inainte de vecernia mare, ierarhii, clerul și credinciosii au întâmpinat la Vatra Românească, Icoana Izvrâtoare de Mir a Maicii Domnului Iveron din Hawaii. La invitația Inaltpreasfințitului Părinte Arhiepiscop Nathaniel, Fratele Nectarios, custodele icoanei, a adus icoana la festivitățiile de la Vatra Românească ca binecuvântare, multumire și mângâierea pentru întreaga Episcopie. Procesiunea impresionantă, în cântări de laudă, cu clopot și toaca, și peste 60 de preoti și 4 ierarhi, a condus Icoana Maicii Domnului în biserica mare unde a fost primită de un numar mare de credincioși veniți pentru această ocazie. Vecernia praznicului Nașterii Maicii Domnului a fost săvârșită de către Părintele Laurence Lazar, parohul Catedralei Arhiepiscopale Sfântul Gheorghe din Detroit, împreună cu Părintele Protopop Remus Grama, protopopiatul Zonei Great Lakes și Părintele Protopop Nicolae Lăpuste, protopopiatul Canada Vest. Răspunsurile la strana au fost date în limba română și engleză de catre un cor organizat și condus de către Părintele David Wey în limba engleză și Părintele Florian Ene, în limba română. Au urmat apoi cuvinte de învătătura rostite de către Inaltpreasfintitul Părinte Michael, Arhiepiscop de New York şi New Jersey şi de către Parintele Protopop George Ursache, protopopiatul Central SUA.

Toată lumea prezentă ai fost miruită cu mir de la sfânta icoană și au primit ca binecuvântare iconițe special pregătite pentru această ocazie. Dupa cină, spre orele serii, Inaltpreasfințitul Părinte Nathaniel înconjurat un sobor de preoți a săvârșit slujba Acastistului Icoanei Maicii Domnului Portărița în fața icoanei. La sfârșitul Acastitului, custodele icoanei a deschis caseta de lemn în care este păstrată icoana, iar cei prezenți au putut vedea cum curge mir bine mirositor din icoana. Fratele Nectarios a povestit apoi istoria icoanei care a început să izvorască mir în octombrie 2007. A explicat că este o icoană lipită pe lemn, copie a Iconei Maicii Domnului Iveron și care în mod inexplicabil a început să izvorască mir pe raftul din casa sa acum 11 ani. In urma investigațiilor făcute atât de comisia sinodală a ierarhilor Mitropoliei Ortodoxe Ruse din Afara Granitelor cât și de o comisie laică, s-a constatat că aceasta este o lucrare mai presus de puterea omenească si Fratele Nectarie a primit binecuvântarea de a fi custodele ei, pentru a o duce oriunde este primită și dorește să meargă spre binecuvântare și mângăiere.

Sâmbătă, 8 septembrie 2018, la orele 9:45 dimineata a început procesiunea clerului împreună cu sfânta icoana de la reședința episcopală la biserica mare în prezența credinciosilor veniți din parohii ca delegați cât și cei veniți din Detroit, Cleveland și Chicago. Sfânta Liturghie a fost săvârșită de către un sobor de 4 ierarhi în frunte cu Mitropolitul Tikhon împreună cu Arhiepscopul Nathaniel, Arhiepscopul Benjamin, Arhiepiscopul Michael inconjurati de 12 preoți și 3 diaconi în sfântul altar, restul clerului purtând doar epitrahil, asistând sau participând în corul condus de Domnul John E. Lazar. In cadrul Sfintei Liturghii omilia zilei a fost rostită de către Părintele Protopop Remus Grama de la Cleveland, iar la sfârsitul slujbei, Preafericitul Mitropolit Tikhon a predicat despre însemnătatea praznicului Nașterii Maicii Domnului și vocația creștină de slujire.

Inaltpreasfintitul Părinte Nathaniel a multumit tuturor oaspeților și participanților la Congresul Episcopiei, la hramul și sărbătoarea de la Vatra, oferind ierarhilor prezenți câte o icoana a Maicii Domnului "Ocrotitoarea Vetrei" iar tuturor celor prezenți a dăruit iconite Maica Domnului "Bucuria Poporului Român de curând eliberat 1989" și Maica Domnului "Ocrotitoarea Vetrei." Părintele Arhiepiscop a multumit în special Fratelui Nectarie care s-a ostenit pentru a aduce sfânta icoană la Vatra Românească spre bucuria tuturor. Ierarhul i-a oferit o icoană a Maicii Domnului "Octrotitoarea Vetrei," iar Fratele Nectarie, în gest de pretuire deosebită, a oferit Episcopiei o copie frumos împodobită a sfintei icoane, comisionată special pentru această ocazie ca semn al binecuvântării și al prezentei permanente la Vatra Românească a Icoanei din Hawaii.

Un moment important cu ocazia festivitățiilor, a fost conferirea Ordinului "Sfântul Inochentie" Crucea Aurita, Inaltpreasfințitului Părinte Nathaniel de către Mitropolitul Tihkon, fiind cea mai înaltă distincție a Sfântului Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe in America, pentru vrednica misiune în propovaduirea Evangheliei Mântui-

torului Hristos în cei 38 de ani de slujire arhierească și 34 de ani ca ierarh titular al Episcopiei, fiind un susținător zelos al unității ortodoxe din America de Nord, și predicator credincios al învierii lui Hristos. Masa festiva de hram a urmat în pavilionul mare, unde oaspeții au fost serviți cu mâncare tradițională românească în cinstea praznicului.

Dupa amiază, la orele 3pm, a avut loc taina Sfântului Maslu, săvârșită în prezența sfintei icoane de către Inaltpreasfințitul Părinte Nathaniel și Inaltpreafințitul Părinte Benjamin împreună cu un sobor de 12 preoți. Credincioșii au primit binecuvântare de la icoana și s-au făcut rugăciuni de dezlegare pentru cei care au venit cu credință să mulțumească Maicii Domnului și să-i ceară ajutorul. Spre seară, s-a săvârșit Vercenia mare urmată de cină pentru pelerinii rămași.

Duminică, 9 septembrie, zi închinată Sfinților Dumnezeiesti Părinți Ioachim și Ana, Arhiepiscopul Nathaniel și Arhiepiscopul Benjamin au slujit Sfânta Liturghie împreună cu un sobor de preoți în prezența sfintei icoane. Credincioșii au venit și în aceasta ultima zi pentru a se închina la icoana și a primi binecuvântare.

Episcopia mulţumeşte cu sinceritate Fratelui Nectarios pentru aducerea icoanei Maicii Domnului Iveron din Hawaii la Vatra Românească pentru bucuria care a oferit-o clerului și credincioșilor eparhiei noastre cu ocazia evenimentelor istorice de la începutul lunii septembrie.

Aniversarea de 80 de ani reprezintă un moment de reflecție asupra trecutului, un moment în care trebuie să aducem mulțumire lui Dumnezeu pentru piatra de temelie așezată de episcopul Policarp, pentru clădirile ridicate de episcopul Valerian împreună cu ceilalți membri, dar și să cerem de la Dumnezeu ocrotirea și binecuvântările Sale cerești pentru ca "Vatra Românească" să rămână un loc de rugăciune și de educație, un centru al unității Episcopiei, un tribut adus lucrării îndelungate a românilor americani, o "forță de unificare a tuturor." (Din cuvântul Arhiepiscopului Nathaniel din Albumul Comemorativ 2018)

Videoclipuri din slujbele de la hram sunt disponibile pe pagina de Facebook a Episcopiei [https://www.Facebook.com/ROEofA] şi canalul YouTube [http://www.YouTube.com/user/RomanianDioceseROEA]. Totodată, Cancelaria Eparhială a editat un Album Comemorativ cu ocazia aniversării a 80 de ani de la inaugurarea așezământului Vatra Românească, care a fost oferit clerului și credincioșilor delegați la Congres. Slăvit să fie Domnul întru toate!