

Metropolitan Address Con't

Your visits to our Church have been milestones of the good relations between our Churches. Your messages to our Church, most recently your greeting to our All-American Council in Atlanta, were inspiring and visionary words on the mission of the Orthodox Church in America, a mission transcending ethnic boundaries and lifting up the light of Christ for all to see.

Some years ago Patriarch Ignatius of Antioch reflected on the Orthodox way through history, pointing out the strong Orthodox tendency to turn our attention to the past. He criticized this default tendency, insisting that if we are following the Risen Christ, we are following Him into the future, and not into the past. The Christ of the Transfiguration introduces us to the Christ of the Resurrection. Our response to the Transfiguration and the Resurrection is a response of joy. Let us walk together with joy as we follow the Risen Christ into the future.

Address of His Eminence, Archbishop Leo Church of the Transfiguration of Christ, New Valaam Monastery, Finland

Sunday, February 28, 2016

Your Beatitude, Your Eminence, Reverend Fathers, sisters and brothers:

I wish to express my warmest thanks to Your Beatitude and your delegation for accepting our invitation of last summer to visit the Orthodox Church in Finland. By now you have all been to both the Helsinki and Oulu dioceses, and now you come to our Archdiocese. In this Valaam Monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ we say, as did Saint Peter on Mount Tabor, "it is good for us to be here" [Luke 9,33].

The Orthodox Church in America and the Orthodox Church in Finland have a long common history. The late, venerable Archbishop Paul was present at the canonization of Saint Herman in Alaska in August 1970. When this church where we are now was consecrated in the summer 1974, Bishop Theodosius, who eventually served as your Metropolitan, concelebrated with our Archbishop Paul. A delegation of the Orthodox Church in Finland, under my leadership, paid a visit to Your Church and particularly to Alaska ten years ago in 2005. Your Beatitude as a young bishop was part of the group of our hosts in Alaska.

An important bond between our Churches has been Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, where several young Finns have studied over the years. We wish

to mention the special gift of the Orthodox Church in America to the whole Orthodox world, and other Christians as well, in the form of books by the ever-memorable Fathers Alexander Schmemmann, John Meyendorff (whose son Professor Paul Meyendorff is also here present) and Thomas Hopko. May their memories be eternal!

Our Churches are similar in many ways. We both function in Western societies. Our administrative systems are transparent. Laity has an active role in Church administration on all levels. Both Churches are ecumenically active and are separated from State structures.

The Great and Holy Synod, which is of enormous importance to all Orthodox Churches, is planned to be held in the Orthodox Academy of Crete this coming June. The Great and Holy Synod, which is of enormous importance to all Orthodox Churches, is planned to be held in the Orthodox Academy of Crete this coming June. Unfortunately churches and dioceses in Western democracies did not have same possibilities as the old patriarchates to take part in it. We are aware of the report to the Synod concerning the concept of autonomy. But question of autocephaly seems to be postponed. We hope that the autocephaly of the local Church in the American continent will soon receive universal solution, because the existence of a local Orthodox Church should always be based on the territorial principle, not an ethnic one.

Your Beatitude! Let us consider some forms of future cooperation for our Churches.

As we mentioned earlier, several Finnish students have studied at Saint Vladimir's Seminary in New York. The last years have been quite quiet. Now we need to find talented youths who could study at your seminaries, and those who could come from the Orthodox Church in America to Joensuu for a couple of months to learn about life of our Church, or to study at the University through existing international student exchange programs.

Since our Churches function in rather similar cultures and conditions, we consider it important to have a dialogue in the field of Orthodox ethics. Topics which are now relevant include an understanding of the family, respect of life both in its early and late phases, and questions of bioethics. In Finland our Church has the opportunity to live in close connection with society. This is rather helpful for proclaiming the Orthodox faith. This situation also raises new questions. We need fresh perspectives stemming from genuine Orthodox thinking to answer these new questions.

As a third prospect we mention the Northern, *Con't page 10*

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so called Arctic region, of which Finland is also a part. Unfortunately Your Beatitude was not able to visit the furthest North this time. But, I trust that the next OCA delegation will see Finnish Lapland. Alaska, certain areas in Canada and the Oulu Diocese in Finland, will be very important in the future. Climate change makes its biggest changes in the Arctic, where people are the least responsible for the changes. The indigenous people living in these areas are important to our Churches. It is also good to remember, that the most significant monasteries of Old Russia emerged in the Northern region. The severe nature (of the North) contributed to the ascetic life of many saints, such as Herman, Juvenaly, Peter, Innocent and Jacob of Alaska; Sergius and Herman of Valaam; Arseni of Konevets; Alexander of Svir; Trifon of Petsenga; Herman, Zosima and Savvati of Solovetsk; Cyril of Beloozero; and many others. Powered by their holy prayers, we need to strengthen our cooperation in our Northern areas.

Finally, let us return to Mount Tabor. A guarantee of the unity of Local Orthodox Churches is the Divine Liturgy, the one Eucharist. The Orthodox Church in America is in Eucharistic communion with the rest of the Orthodox Churches. Thus we also could be taken to Mount Tabor today to celebrate this heavenly sacrament. And even though it would be good to be there, we need to return to the world. It is our task to return to the world and bring light to darkness—that light which this world cannot give. Only this light may enlighten even the darkness of hell. This is our task: to serve, not to be served.

As You, Your Beatitude, will soon be returning home to serve, I am convinced that we here in Finland will have the same experience as did the disciples on the way to Emmaus. We shall also say: Were not our hearts burning when our brothers in Christ were with us? Were not our hearts burning when we stood together before the heavenly altar celebrating this service of sacrifice "for the life of the world?" May our faith in Christ ever warm our hearts, our two Churches of the North.

REFLECTION

People give all sorts of reasons to excuse their lack of charity, their hardheartedness! Some say, "hard times." But if the times are hard for those who have a sufficiency, how much harder are they for the poor? This pretext alone should lead one to give all the more generously.

~ St. Theophan the Recluse ~

Knowing the commandments of the Lord, let this be our way of life: let us feed the hungry, let us give the thirsty drink, let us clothe the naked, let us welcome strangers, let us visit those in prison and the sick. Then the Judge of all the earth will say even to us, "Come, O blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for You."

(Doxastikon of the Lity, Vespers of Meatfare Sunday)

Papavassiliou, Vassilios (2013-01-29). MEDITATIONS FOR GREAT LENT: Reflections on the Triodion

For when one has pity on the poor, he lends to God; and he who gives to the least gives to God--sacrifices spiritually to God an odour of a sweet smell.

St. Cyprian of Carthage *The Lord's Prayer*, 33.
B#41, p.102, 3rd century



ATTN: HIGH SCHOOLERS / YOUNG ADULTS

An Evening w/ Fr. Demetrios Carellas

When: Friday March 11 @ 6:00 pm

Paraklesis followed by Ice Cream Bar & Round table presentation / discussion on the Beatitudes.

Where: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, 2350 E Dempster Street, Des Plaines, IL 60016

Please call 847-827-5510 to tell them you are coming.

1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 (Epistle)

But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.