

Metropolitan Tikhon welcomes Serbian Bishop Irinej to OCA Chancery

On Tuesday, November 8, 2016, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon hosted His Grace, Bishop Irinej [Dobrijevic] of the [Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Eastern America](#) to the Chancery here.

Elected in May 2016 by the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, replacing His Grace, Bishop Dr. Mitrophan, Bishop Irinej was enthroned at Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Cathedral, Pittsburgh, PA on October 1. Born and raised in Cleveland, OH to parents who left the former Yugoslavia at the conclusion of World War II, Bishop Irinej had previously served for a decade as the Serbian Orthodox Bishop of Australia and New Zealand. Bishop Irinej is a graduate of both [Saint Tikhon's Seminary](#), South Canaan, PA and [Saint Vladimir's Seminary](#), Yonkers, NY.

Accompanied by his secretary, Milovan Jovanovic, Bishop Irinej was welcomed to the Chancery by Metropolitan Tikhon; Archpriest John Jillions, Chancellor; Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, Secretary; Protospesbyter Leonid Kishkovsky, Director of [External Affairs](#); and Alexis Liberovsky, [Archivist](#).

In Saint Sergius of Radonezh Chapel, the hierarchs venerated the relics and icons of the North American Saints. Metropolitan Tikhon formally welcomed Bishop Irinej before the hierarchs exchanged gifts.

“On behalf of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, I offer you my sincere congratulations on your enthronement as Bishop of the Eastern American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church and I look forward to working with you on the Assembly of Bishops level and in whatever other ways our Churches might collaborate,” Metropolitan Tikhon said in his welcoming remarks. “You are very familiar with the Orthodox Church in America, having graduated from both Saint Tikhon’s and Saint Vladimir’s Seminaries, and we are familiar with you from your good relations with our clergy and faithful over the years. As you mentioned on Saturday evening, there have historically been good relations between the Serbian Orthodox in America and the Metropolia, and those good relations continue today.

“I myself find great inspiration in the great Serbian saints, beginning with Saint Sava and continuing through to the newly glorified Saint Sebastian and Saint Mardarije, who were active in the American Mission,” Metropolitan Tikhon continued. “I have

especially high veneration for Saint Nicholai [Velimirovic], who spent his last years at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery and remains a source of inspiration for the monastics and seminarians and many others throughout the Orthodox Church in America.

“I am certain that our Lord, Jesus Christ will strengthen you with His grace for the heavy cross of archpastoral leadership that now lies on your shoulders,” he concluded. “I am also certain that the strong spirit of the Serbian Church will likewise sustain you, so that you may faithfully offer your service to God in the tradition of Saint Sava and Saint Nicholai. May you continue to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ on this North American continent.”

Metropolitan Tikhon presented a hand-carved wooden panagia to Bishop Irinej, who in turn gave a beautiful book, *The Christian Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija*, which documents the tragic history of the region in which over 100 historic churches have been destroyed in recent years, to Metropolitan Tikhon.

Mr. Liberovsky offered a presentation on original holdings in the OCA Archives concerning the recently canonized Serbian missionary saints of North America, Mardarije [1889-1935] and Sebastian [1863-1940], both of whom served in the North American Mission before the establishment of the Serbian Diocese.

According to Father Jillions, Metropolitan Tikhon and Bishop Irinej discussed a variety of matters, including the recent Council in Crete, at which Bishop Irinej was present; the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA; pastoral challenges facing the Church in countries outside traditional Orthodox lands; and theological education in America. Metropolitan Tikhon also spoke fondly of his 2006 visit to Serbia’s Soko Monastery, where he had been the guest of His Grace, Bishop Lavrentije.

Bishop Irinej was feted at a luncheon in the Chancery dining room.

In related news, on Saturday, November 5, Metropolitan Tikhon and his secretary, Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, were among Bishop Irinej’s guests at a gala fundraiser in New York for the benefit of Manhattan’s Saint Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral, which was destroyed by fire on Pascha 2016. [See [related story](#).] On behalf of the Orthodox Church in America, Metropolitan Tikhon presented a check for \$1,000.00. Among those also in attendance were His Grace, Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and His Grace, Bishop John of the Diocese of Worcester of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of America.

A photo gallery of both events is available on the OCA [web site](#) and [Facebook page](#)



Bishop Paul Blessing the Litya at the Vigil for St John of Chicago.



His Beatitude Met. Tikhon & Bishop Mstislav of Tikhvin, Russia at Vigil for St John of Chicago



Bishop Mstislav of Tikhvin, Russia

Celebration of the Feast of St. John Kochurov at Chicago's Holy Trinity Cathedral. (10/29 and 10/30)



His Grace Bishop Paul & His Grace Bishop Demetrios of the Metropolis of Chicago



Greek Bishop Demetrius venerating Icon of St John of Chicago

St John Con't

In his pastoral zeal to provide Christians with a better understanding of Holy Scripture, St John employed hermeneutics, an interpretation and analysis of the Word of God (i.e. exegesis). Among his exegetical works are commentaries on entire books of the Holy Scripture (Genesis, the Psalter, the Gospels of Matthew and John, the Epistles of the Apostle Paul), and also many homilies on individual texts of the Holy Bible, but also instructions on the Feastdays, laudations on the Saints, and also apologetic (i.e. defensive) homilies (against Anomoeans, Judaizers and pagans). As a priest, St John zealously fulfilled the Lord's command to care for the needy. Under St John, the Antiochian Church provided sustenance each day to as many as 3,000 virgins and widows, not including in this number the shut-ins, wanderers and the sick.

St John began his commentary on Genesis at the beginning of Great Lent in 388, preaching thirty-two homilies during the forty day period. During Holy Week he spoke of how Christ was betrayed, and about the Cross. During Bright Week, his pastoral discourse was devoted to the Resurrection. His exegesis of the Book of Genesis was concluded only at the end of October (388).

At Pascha in the following year the saint began his homilies on the Gospel of John, and toward the end of the year 389 he took up the Gospel of Matthew. In the year 391 the Antioch Christians listened to his commentary on the Epistles of the holy Apostle Paul to the Romans and to the Corinthians. In 393 he explained the Epistles to the Galatians, the Ephesians, Timothy, Titus, and the Psalms. In his homily on the Epistle to the Ephesians, St John denounced a schism in Antioch, "I tell you and I witness before you, that to tear asunder the Church means nothing less than to fall into heresy. The Church is the house of the heavenly Father, one Body and one Spirit."

The fame of the holy preacher grew, and in the year 397 with the death of Archbishop Nectarius of Constantinople, successor to St Gregory the Theologian, St John Chrysostom was summoned from Antioch, and elected to the See of Constantinople.

St. John con't

At the capital, the holy archpastor was not able to preach as often as he had at Antioch. Many matters awaited the saint's attention, and he began with the most important -- the spiritual perfection of the priesthood. He himself was the best example of this. The financial means apportioned for the archbishop were channeled by the saint into the upkeep of several hospices for the sick and two hostels for pilgrims. He fasted strictly and ate very little food, and usually refused invitations to dine because of his delicate stomach.

The saint's zeal in spreading the Christian Faith extended not only to the inhabitants of Constantinople, but also to Thrace to include Slavs and Goths, and to Asia Minor and the Pontine region. He established a bishop for the Bosphorus Church in the Crimea. St John sent off zealous missionaries to Phoenicia,

to Persia, and to the Scythians, to convert pagans to Christ. He also wrote letters to Syria to bring back the Marcionites into the Church, and he accomplished this. Preserving the unity of the Church, the saint would not permit a powerful Gothic military commander, who wanted the emperor to reward his bravery in battle, to open an Arian church at Constantinople. The saint exerted much effort in enhancing the splendor of the church services: he compiled a Liturgy, he introduced antiphonal singing for the all-night Vigil, and he wrote several prayers for the rite of anointing the sick with oil.

The saintly hierarch denounced the dissolute morals of people in the capital, especially at the imperial court, irrespective of person. When the empress Eudoxia connived to confiscate the last properties of the widow and children of a disgraced dignitary, the saint rose to their defense. The arrogant empress would not relent, and nursed a grudge against the archpastor. Eudoxia's hatred of the saint blazed forth anew when malefactors told her that the saint apparently had her in mind during his sermon on vain women. A court was convened composed of hierarchs who had been justly condemned by Chrysostom: Theophilus of Alexandria, Bishop Severian of Gabala, who had been banished from the capital because of improprieties, and others.

This court of judgment declared St John deposed, and that he be executed for his insult to the empress. The emperor decided on exile instead of execution. An angry crowd gathered at the church, resolved to defend their pastor. In order to avoid a riot, St John submitted to the authorities. That very night there was an earthquake at Constantinople. The terrified Eudoxia urgently requested the emperor to bring the saint back, and promptly sent a letter to the banished pastor, beseeching him to return. Once more, in the capital church, the saint praised the Lord in a short talk, "For All His Ways."

The slanderers fled to Alexandria. But after only two months a new denunciation provoked the wrath of Eudoxia. In March 404, an unjust council was convened, decreeing the exile of St John. Upon his removal from the capital, a fire reduced the church of Hagia Sophia and also the Senate building to ashes. Devastating barbarian incursions soon followed, and Eudoxia died in October 404. Even pagans regarded these events as God's punishment for the unjust judgment against the saint.

In Armenia, the saint strove all the more to encourage his spiritual children. In numerous letters (245 are preserved) to bishops in Asia, Africa, Europe and particularly to his friends in Constantinople, St John consoled the suffering, guiding and giving support to his followers. In the winter of 406 St John was confined to his bed with sickness, but his enemies were not to be appeased. From the capital came orders to transfer St John to desolate Pityus in Abkhazia on the Black Sea. Worn out by sickness, the saint began his final journey under military escort, traveling for three months in the rain and frost. He never arrived at his place of exile, for his strength failed him at Comana.

At the crypt of St Basiliscus (May 22), St John was comforted by a vision of the martyr, who said, "Despair not, brother John! Tomorrow we shall be together." After receiving the Holy Mysteries, the hierarch fell asleep in the Lord on September 14, 407. His last words were, "Glory to God for all things!"

The holy relics of St John Chrysostom were solemnly transferred to Constantinople in the year 438. The disciple of St John, the venerable Isidore of Pelusium (February 4), wrote: "The house of David is grown strong, and the house of Saul enfeebled. He is victor over the storms of life, and has entered into heavenly repose."

Although he died on September 14, St John's celebration was transferred to this day because of the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross. St John Chrysostom is also celebrated on January 27 and January 30.



Holy, All-Praised Apostle Philip Commemorated on [November 14](#)

The Holy and All-praised Apostle Philip, was a native of the city of Bethsaida in Galilee. He had a profound depth of knowledge of the Holy Scripture, and rightly discerning the meaning of the Old Testament prophecies, he awaited the coming of the Messiah. Through the call of the Savior (John 1:43), Philip followed Him. The Apostle Philip is spoken about several times in the Holy Gospel: he brought to Christ the Apostle Nathaniel (i.e. Bartholomew, April 22, June 30, and August 25. See John. 1:46). The Lord asks him where to buy bread for five thousand men (John. 6: 5-7). He brought certain of the Hellenized Jews wanting to see Jesus (John. 12:21-22); and finally, at the Last Supper he asked Christ to show them the Father (John. 14:8).

After the Ascension of the Lord, the Apostle Philip preached the Word of God in Galilee, accompanying his preaching with miracles. Thus, he restored to life a dead infant in the arms of its mother. From Galilee he went to Greece, and preached among the Jews that had settled there. Some of them reported the preaching of the Apostle to Jerusalem. In response, some scribes arrived in Greece from Jerusalem, with one of the Jewish chief priests at their head, to interrogate the Apostle Philip.

The Apostle Philip exposed the lie of the chief priest, who said that the disciples of Christ had stolen away and hidden the body of Christ. Philip told instead how the Pharisees had bribed the soldiers on watch, to deliberately spread this rumor. When the Jewish chief priest and his companions began to insult the Lord and lunged at the Apostle Philip, they suddenly were struck blind. By his prayer the Apostle restored everyone's sight. Seeing this miracle, many believed in Christ. The Apostle Philip provided a bishop for them, by the name of Narcissus (one of the Seventy Apostles, January 4).

From Greece the Apostle Philip went to Parthia, and then to the city of Azotus, where he healed an eye affliction of the daughter of a local resident named Nikoklides, who had received him into his home, and then baptized his whole family.

From Azotus the Apostle Philip set out to Syrian Hieropolis (there were several cities of this name) where, stirred up by the Pharisees, the Jews burned the house of Heros, who had taken in the Apostle Philip, and they wanted to kill the apostle. The apostle performed several miracles: the healing of the hand of the city official Aristarchus, withered when he attempted to strike the

apostle; and restoring a dead child to life. When they saw these marvels, they repented and many accepted holy Baptism. After making Heros the bishop at Hieropolis, the Apostle Philip went on to Syria, Asia Minor, Lydia, Emessa, and everywhere preaching the Gospel and undergoing sufferings. Both he and his sister Mariamne (February 17) were pelted with stones, locked up in prison, and thrown out of villages.

Then the Apostle Philip arrived in the city of Phrygian Hieropolis, where there were many pagan temples. There was also a pagan temple where people worshiped an enormous serpent as a god. The Apostle Philip by the power of prayer killed the serpent and healed many bitten by snakes.

Among those healed was the wife of the city prefect, Amphipatos. Having learned that his wife had accepted Christianity, the prefect Amphipatos gave orders to arrest St Philip, his sister, and the Apostle Bartholomew traveling with them. At the urging of the pagan priests of the temple of the serpent, Amphipatos ordered the holy Apostles Philip and Bartholomew to be crucified.

Suddenly, an earthquake struck, and it knocked down all those present at the place of judgment. Hanging upon the cross by the pagan temple of the serpent, the Apostle Philip prayed for those who had crucified him, asking God to save them from the ravages of the earthquake. Seeing this happen, the people believed in Christ and began to demand that the apostles be taken down from the crosses. The Apostle Bartholomew was still alive when he was taken down, and he baptized all those believing and established a bishop for them.

But the Apostle Philip, through whose prayers everyone remained alive, except for Amphipatos and the pagan priests, died on the cross.

Mariamne his sister buried his body, and went with the Apostle Bartholomew to preach in Armenia, where the Apostle Bartholomew was crucified (June 11); Mariamne herself then preached until her own death at Lykaonia.

The holy Apostle Philip is not to be confused with St Philip the Deacon (October 11), one of the Seventy.