



METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

2011 METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY:
"ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Champaign, IL: The Metropolis of Chicago Clergy-Laity Assembly was held at Champaign, IL, October 5-8, hosted by the Three Hierarchs Greek Orthodox Church, with 58 of 59 parishes represented. The event coincided with the Metropolis Philoptochos Society Conference.

His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos of Chicago presided over the assembly, with Mr. George Vourvoulias, Vice Chairman of the Metropolis Council appointed as the meeting chair. Metropolis Chancellor Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos, with host parish priest Fr. Michael Condos, worked closely with the Three Hierarchs parishioners, led by Assembly chairs Lou Laros (Parish Council President) and Foti Kutil, to present the Metropolis faithful an inspiring three days of workshops, fellowship events, and the plenary session that adopted resolutions for the good order of the Metropolis and the parishes.

"Orthodox Christianity in the Contemporary World" served as a unifying theme for the three days where workshops, special guest speakers and fellowship events focused on emerging and innovative ministries of the Metropolis, including the new Saint Iakovos Retreat Center (near Kenosha, WI); the *Philoxenia* House ministry at Rochester, MN (serving the needs of patients and families of Mayo Clinic and operated by the local Holy Anargyroi Church); and the OCF (Orthodox Christian Fellowship) House of the University of Illinois, the first student housing establishment on a major U.S. campus designed to provide an Orthodox Christian living environment for college students.

Prior to the official opening Thursday, on Wednesday the Metropolis parish clergy held their customary Clergy Syndesmos meeting, followed by a joint Parish Priest-Parish Council Presidents meeting to discuss financial commitments of parishes for 2012 and



beyond, including means to ensure the financial support of the new Saint Iakovos Retreat Center. The Metropolis Philoptochos Board likewise held meetings prior to the official start of their conference. Following a joint dinner where Archons of the Metropolis joint clergy, parish council presidents and Philoptochos members, Fr. Peter Spiro, pastor of the St. Athanasios Church of Aurora, IL, and a Chaplain Deputy of the Kane County Sherriff's Office, delivered a presentation on "Church scams, Internet, and email fraud."

The joint clergy-laity assembly and Philoptochos Conference participants were surprised at the official opening breakfast Thursday by one of the main highlights of the event: a video conference with His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. He spoke in both Greek and English to all those present, and received the greetings and prayers of all through His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos.

The keynote address was delivered by Rev. Deacon John Chryssavgis, Ph.D., a noted author, theologian, educator and clergyman of the Ecumenical Patriarchate originally from Australia. Deacon John delivered an inspiring discussion of the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch and overview of the tenure of Patriarch Bartholomew who celebrates his twentieth anniversary on the Ecumenical Throne this year.

Other noted speakers of the Assembly on Thursday included Rev. Mark Arey, Archdiocesan Officer of Inter-Orthodox, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Relations who gave a spirited talk on the history, status and future of the Saint Nicholas Church of New York, the only religious house of worship destroyed on September 11, 2001. The church is not yet rebuilt but Fr. Arey is optimistic that this will be resolved in the near future. Fr. Arey also conducted a workshop for all assembly and Philoptochos Conference participants on the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America (The Episcopal Assembly) established by the autocephalous Orthodox Churches to eventually bring canonical order to Orthodoxy in America.

Additional workshops were led by Archdiocesan Council member and Stewardship Commission Chair George Matthews of Atlanta, GA ("Parish Leadership: A New Perspective"); Eva Kokinos, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries of the Metropolis of Detroit ("I-Pray: Orthodoxy and Youth Ministry in a Digital World:"); and Fr. Cyprian Sas, pastor of the St. John the Baptist Church of Cedar Rapids, IA ("The Small Parish: Going from Surviving to Thriving"). All workshops offered new and innovative ideas for participants to bring back to their own parishes to enhance their ministry and administration into the future.



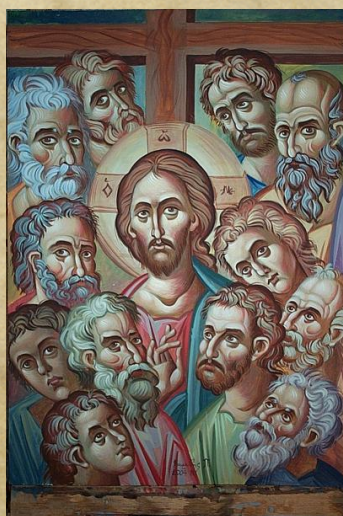
Following Great Vespers at the Three Hierarchs Church, the Grand Banquet allowed His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos to bestow the “Metropolitan Iakovos Service Award” posthumously upon the late Mr. John P. Trebellas, a member of the Archdiocesan Leadership 100 and special benefactor of the Three Hierarchs Church, Holy Cross Seminary (and students), the Metropolises of Chicago and San Francisco, which was accepted by his wife, Mrs. Artemas Trebellas, in his memory.

Friday morning’s session again had the Philoptochos join the assembly for two special guests. Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ-USA, addressed the timely topic of “How Others See Us,” noting how Protestant and others view the Orthodox Church in general, where these perceptions might be accurate or unfair, and was well received by all those present. Eunice Buhler, Social Entrepreneur and Youth Expert on Human Rights in the European Union addressed the assembly via Skype, the internet video telephone service, on the topic, “The Religious Freedom Crisis Threatening the Survival of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Following an afternoon visit to the OCF House, the Assembly began its plenary session with the adoption of a resolution in support of our Archdiocese and the efforts to rebuild the Saint Nicholas Church. The assembly also adopted a policy to ensure the Saint Iakovos Retreat Center will meet its operating costs through financial support from all parishes for the next two years, as it is hoped that continued fundraising and usage fees will eventually make direct support from parishes unnecessary, as it has been to this point. Parishes will contribute toward the Retreat Center at total of about \$200,000.00 according to the same percentage used to determine their allocations to the National Ministries of the Archdiocese of America.

Closing just ahead of schedule on Friday evening, participants departed Champaign with high praise for the assembly and conference organizers and their hospitality, as well as a positive outlook on the ministry of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago, the Archdiocese and the Ecumenical Patriarchate well into the future.

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