

DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST
DELEGATES MEETING
General Assembly
October 21, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 1:50 pm by Kyra Pelachik, Fellowship President. Fr. Timothy Baclig led us in an opening prayer.

The **Teen SOYO** Report was given by President Lauren Malouf. Their General Meeting was very successful. They are still meeting one more time later today! John Mahfouz is the new Youth Director. Teens are very involved with doing outreach programs--OYO. There was much discussion about the workshop-leadership conference done during the Summer Meetings. She gave a big thanks to all the churches that support the teens. She hopes they continue to encourage trips to OYO and to monasteries. Irene motioned to approve the Teen SOYO Report. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Youth Camp Director Katrina Bitar spoke about St. Nicholas Camp. Camp is about fullness of Christ in life, and this year was successful. On November 11th at 9am, children grades 2nd-12th may attend a "Camp at Home" Day. Cost is \$25 for the day. They may pay upon arrival. It begins with Orthros at 9am, includes a whole day of camp and ends with a gong show at 8pm! See what camp is like - at home. Bring people in who need to see it. Winter Camp is January 19-21st. The speaker is Fr. James Coles on "I Got Soul and I Am a Soldier!" See www.antiochianladiocese.org for fliers.

The **Antiochian Women's** Report was given by President Samia Habib. Today they had a good meeting with sixteen parishes represented. There is still space for the Women's Fall Retreat in November. In February, the Board will attend our Winter Meetings. The Spring Women's Retreat is April 20-22nd with Fr. Josiah Trenham on the topic: "White Hairs and White Hearts". One of the current projects is buying Orthodox books to place in the public

library. They are getting ready for the next phase of fundraising for the Retired Clergy Fund. They raised 250K in the first phase. Our goals are to minister to the parishes and to be active in our groups. During Women's Month: usher and get support in this effort. The youth have a month, and March is our month. Let's thank our hosts: St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church in Whittier.

The **Fellowship of St. John the Divine** Report was given by Treasurer Claire Kruse. She gave the report for Kyra, who felt she'd give someone else a chance to speak. In the General Meeting, the status of the Missions Fund and new appropriations were discussed. We gave reports on the three retreats put on in our diocese this year: one in Edmonton, Alberta Canada, Spokane Washington and San Francisco, CA. This year we will add one in Tucson, Arizona. We had over sixty participants in two of these. This year we also had the first Young Adult Conference in San Francisco which was well-attended.

The **CPCC** Report was given by Coordinator Lew Malouf. He formed a Diocesan committee that plans and implements the Parish Life Conference weekend. Ed Malouf was Coordinator for 2006, so he said a few words about this conference.

2006 PLC San Diego, CA

The parish extends their thanks to you for your support. Their inexperience was not a problem. They made 18K- a great accomplishment.

2007 PLC Portland, OR

Susy Hadeed, Vice Chair of the PLC informed us about the upcoming PLC. Portland's nickname is the City of Roses--a beautiful place. Come a few days early to see more. The theme is "Building up the Body of Christ Until We All Come to the Unity of Faith." The Light-Rail system is great. It's a free line that goes all around downtown,

and then there is the free streetcar called the MAX. Frederica Mathewes-Green will be the speaker. The Double Tree Hotel rate is \$99. Reserve early because there are only 125 rooms available right now. Other hotels are within walking distance and on the Max line. Across the street from the hotel is the largest shopping mall in the state and there is no sales tax! There is a 10% discount on certain airlines. If you buy the Early Bird ticket book and stay at the hotel, you will receive six free meals. You will have Breakfast and Lunch for three days free. Online registration is available in a couple of weeks on www.stgeorgeportland.org. Visit for more info.

2008 Fred Milkie is hosting the PLC at St. Nicholas Cathedral. \$109 a night. There will be special deals, but Portland is a hard act to follow.

2009 PLC will be hosted by St. Stephen in Campbell and held at the Marriott in Santa Clara.

2010 PLC is in Tucson at the 4 Star Resort Hotel for \$119.

2011 PLC will be hosted by St. Mark in Irvine and St. Barnabus in Costa Mesa.

The 2007 Delegates Meeting will be hosted by St. Athanasius in Sacramento.

Lucy Hanna made a motion to approve the CPCC Report. Irene seconded. MOTION PASSED. Suzy thanked Fred Milkie for his support.

His Grace Bishop JOSEPH entered the room at 2:30 pm and addressed the Assembly.

“In the past few months, I have experienced pain, surgery and uncertainty. The pain started 8/6, Sunday after church. I suffered a lot for one week. The surgery was 8/15. During my favorite feast,

the Dormition, I had to be gone for a few hours that day. The Holy Virgin is my healer; Christ is also our healer, our physician. I also believe in the healing power of the Theotokos. When I was in pain, she comforted me. When depressed, she brought joy and peace. To live in Balamand in the 60's where there was no power, and the food was horrible was another very hard time. Bad experiences coincided and collided. They were not the good soil for seed. Fr. Michael and I stayed seventeen years there. We have overcome all difficulties, despite all.

So when you pray to the Mother of God, you do not automatically have the answer. You have to submit yourself to someone, especially her. She is the Panagia. If you surrender your life to her, be patient--maybe she is busy with someone else. Millions are asking for her healing. Maybe your prayer is not coming from your broken heart. I went to the hospital without any fear--death is nothing new for me. If it happens, let it happen. Some die when they are infants, mid-age. The last few faces I saw before the surgery were Fr. Wayne, Fr Paul, and Fr. Jon Braun. After the surgery, I said, 'of course, I remember you were there.' Thank God for her intercessions, and I am back today for my first appearance. I didn't want to miss your gathering. I appreciate all the delegates being here, yet I need more time. I cannot serve yet. Maybe Nov. 1st, after my cat scan and all is normal, I can start visiting churches again. But I can't serve. My legs are still too weak.

A few remarks to understand: I'm not involved in politics or business. We have enough money, power, and material things. But we need holiness. Holy clergy. If we keep on business, we cannot save people and our own souls. Otherwise it is a waste of time. Christ did not have a place to put his head; He chose ignorant, uneducated fisherman. When they left the world, they didn't miss anything. Their hearts were not into the bank, money and business. We need money in the church, but not everyone should be involved with it.

When you make judgments, be careful. Don't expect me to be different, because I gave up all those things and listen to His teaching

and am His servant. We need holiness more than anything else. For two months, I have not been to any churches-- there are steps, and I cannot go down. I miss the altar. My whole being is behind it. They bring it to me (communion) , but it's different. I have double pain-- physical and spiritual. Please understand this kind of teaching. Please don't ask me to be a business man. It will not happen with me. It's not my choice. I wrote some words for the Ladies meeting, so I'll repeat the words I gave them.

Please let us emphasize three things: **unity, education, and charity.**

Unity. The Orthodox Church is suffering because there is no unity. I recently attended a SCOBA meeting: we all need to be there - not just one of us. The feeling is that SCOBA has accomplished nothing so far. It's not dead! Don't lose faith; we pray 'for the union of the whole church': are we for unity or not? When Peter asked Jesus if he could join Him on the waves, He said 'Go, walk', and he did. When he did watch Christ, he walked on water. So Christ is our hope for unity--if Jesus didn't want us to be united, no power on earth could unite us. But we don't obey him, and we don't get united.

When we say politics- not the government kind, but Greek, OCA, Antiochian, we mean keeping busy with our things and forgetting about the purpose. The purpose is Christ. The more we love Him, we become united. Through Him and in Him, we are united. Unity is possible on one condition: if Jesus is the purpose of that agreement. So let us talk about unity, and bring a good understanding of that unity. A definition: unity doesn't mean I forget my heritage or language. We accept each other the way we are. Look at Jesus more than all of that. We have to be ready for unity. Unity is when I see Jesus in every person around me.

Education. We are here to educate ourselves. People get offended when they hear me say I am a student. If I have a chance to comment, to say a few words, that's secondary. More importantly, I am blessed

to learn myself. I want to learn more and more. Trying to improve this community and our parish. If blind lead the blind-- you know what happens. We invite speakers and listen to others. About the Nov. 10th retreat, I will have to miss this one. I have never missed one in eleven years---why? Just to be there and be quiet! Education is so important. If the church has nothing to teach, we have to shut it down and do something else.

So how do we get education? What do we do during the year? We read and we pray. But what about Matins? Let us try to go. Five raised their hands just now, saying they regularly go. My coming here with my pain is just to express my love for your being here. So don't miss Matins. My sermons were always from Matins. There is a lot of substance there. I take the wisdom from the service to make it the subject of my homily. Make every effort; everything else can wait. Matins vs. breakfast? It is a time for educating yourself. You are the students of the gospel! The priest is getting tired as he prepares for the church, so please get tired with him. Six raised their hand to say they usually go to Vespers. It's not enough. We are sailing against the world. We have to refuel our efforts-- even clergy need to meet together and learn from each other. When I asked the clergy if we should meet every other year, in one voice, they said "make the meeting every year!" But, keep learning!! I read everything I put my hands on.

Charity and talents. Think about the parable where men were given talents and one was found negligent to do anything with his. The 2nd one tripled his talents. Be like these people - we call them blessings-- they are numberless. One is having good health. When I was in pain, they were having a war in Lebanon. The smell of death was everywhere. In Palestine, it was the same. My pain has become minor. It counts as nothing. Those people lost everything: their homes, their families, their living. In Cana, Lebanon, twice we had news about widespread massacres. My pain then in my mind became less. This is the spirit of charity. Not only to give \$5. When

someone is suffering--if you can have compassion for them, to bring hope to others, this is the more powerful generosity. Bring hope to humanity. Charity means to love people, to feel their suffering and pain. Comfort them. Make their burden lighter.

Who can do it? Everyone can - youth do it . In a Tucson home where terminally ill children have lost their family members, we sponsored a family. We gave Christmas presents and spoke to them. Young people- we have a lot of ministry for you in the church. And for everyone: for clergy, laity, women, men, young adults, teens and children. We cannot do charity without the other two: unity and education. What we learn as students of the gospel, we put it in action. We put the gospel into actions. We make it visible and real. And we do not pick and choose which state or country to give it to. We don't choose who is our recipient. He is our neighbor--anyone could be our neighbor. Syriac, or Greek or Russian. To be true Christian, in deed, not just word. It's hard, nearly impossible. The Bible is not just a book--we cannot read it. It's pages and lines. It's our actions according to the faith, according to Jesus Christ that bring those words to life. Put the gospel in action--the meaning of charity!"

Questions: Widad Tarazi asked, "**Do you encourage home schooling?**" "Yes, because we don't have Orthodox schools in every place--like in Riverside where they have no building, but potential. Also in Santa Barbara. Eagle River. St. Nicholas Cathedral. A real Orthodox school is there. How many parishes are ready for this kind of program? "

"Should we bring it up in Parish Council?"

"Of course. If you are not educating children, you will lose them for sure."

Bishop JOSEPH left the meeting.

Lew Malouf asked to get new representatives for the CPCC. Please

provide us with one member who can serve two to three years: someone from TEEN SOYO, Antiochian Women and the Fellowship. There will be three evenings to promote the interests of your organization. We would like to hear from you. We want to bring you up to date on everything. It will be baptism by fire.

Fr. Joseph Purpura had a few words next. It is my pleasure to be back here. The teens had a great meeting. Lauren, you did a terrific job today. I want to especially ask for everyone's help now. Several parishes don't have Bible Bowl teams. We have a great prospect of Orthodox Unity on this continent. It will happen! What they did simply by speaking out as orthodox laity was profound. I was only support to them in my part, as I presented their proposition to the Board. They are not alone in Orthodox Unity. What could they do to help Metropolitan Philip. Soon, a group of teens wanted to draft a letter to SCOBA. (**See Resolution Letter attached.**) The Bishops and the President of SCOBA met. The bishops used this same language from the letter throughout the meeting. They took this theme and used it for the PLC in Portland!

Montreal Convention is next summer--please send your teens. Passports are needed early on. Just get one now and save some money for the next ten years of traveling. Try to save your money now. When you know your team has won, book the tickets right away. The Fellowship can help with finances. Rooms are being held for the Bible Bowl winners. So you don't need to book your rooms, only the passport and flight cost are needed. Speaking of price, with a credit card you save money. They will do it at the exchange rate.

The General Assembly adjourned at 3:45pm.

