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LAY ADVOCACY • TRANSPARENCY • ACCOUNTABILITY • UNITY

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CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF SERVICE 1987-2017

May 10, 2017

Dear Supporters and Friends of Orthodox Christian Laity,

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Thirty years ago, a group of Orthodox Christian men and women were invited to meet in Chicago by Jim Koulogeorge, of blessed memory. Coming from throughout the U.S., they met in Jim and Mary's home to form Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL): a pan-Orthodox educational and advocacy ministry. Its purpose since 1987 remains unchanged: "To advocate the restoration and strengthening of the historic role of the laity in the conciliar governance of the Orthodox Christian Church in the United States; to support the spiritual renewal and regeneration of the Orthodox Christian Church in the United States in its Apostolic Mission; to advocate and promote transparency and accountability in the governance of the Orthodox Christian Church in the United States; and to advocate and champion the establishment of an administratively and canonically unified self-governing autocephalous Orthodox Christian Church in the United States."

- In November 1989, the official publication of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America Vol 33 No.9 commented: "A group of Greek laymen ...organized the Orthodox Christian Laity identified in its literature as a spontaneous grassroots reform movement.... The significance of the movement lies in the attention it throws on incipient clergy-laity tensions and administrative responsibility. If it survives, a new dimension may be added to Orthodox church life in America."
- In that same year, Archbishop Iakovos of blessed memory commented to the board members of OCL meeting with him in Rye New York.... "I would like to thank the members of the religious movement known as Orthodox Christian Laymen (Laity)...for their genuine eagerness to assist the Church in its painful labors to lead our people to a better and clearer understanding of our place and role within the Church."
- In 1994, an OCL delegation met with His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew at the Phanar. His All Holiness spoke of his goal to call a Holy and Great Council for the first time since the 8th Century, to address issues confronting the Church. We thank God that this council took place last year in Crete. The Hierarchs who met in Crete (and the four who did not), as well as the Assemblies of Bishops throughout the world, must now, in the words of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: "**Move beyond words to action...Putting our theology into practice...Moving beyond what is mine and yours, to what is ours...**"

Since the promising meeting of American bishops in Ligonier, PA in 1994, the Bishops in America appear less inclined to work in unity and conciliarity. The hierarchy has consolidated its power and made lay bodies little more than rubber stamps. Clergy Laity Assemblies are no longer the deliberative bodies they once

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were intended to be. We are no closer to the development of a female deaconate. Many of our jurisdictions are becoming ethnic ghettos once again. Our Church is not growing. Our hierarchs have not confronted the rise of fundamentalism in our Church. We must put aside our apathy and challenge and work with the hierarchy to make our Church, conciliar, accountable, transparent and unified.

To Celebrate our 30th Anniversary OCL will present an outstanding program worthy of this milestone. We have invited the most dynamic thinkers, pastors, teachers, and academics to share ideas so that we can meet the challenges confronting the Church in the USA. Make plans to attend OCL's 30th Annual Program, October 28-29, 2017 in Chicago. Look for updates and specific instructions for making reservations and other details by checking the OCL web site: www.ocl.org.

BECOME A SPONSOR

To insure the success of our 30th Annual Program we need sponsors to defray the cost of travel and housing speakers and hierarchs, and the 30th Anniversary Luncheon. Please consider a sponsorship of \$5,000, \$3,000 or \$1,000 levels.

Please renew your annual support. A return envelope is included for your convenience.

George D. Karcazes, President

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