



■ By George Matsoukas,
Executive Director of OCL

Orthodox Christian Laity Celebrates 25 years of Service

Beginning on the Thursday of the last weekend in October 2012 through Saturday Orthodox Christian Laity celebrated its 25 Anniversary in Washington, D.C. hosting discussions on Our Orthodox Past, Our Orthodox Present and Our Orthodox Future. The theme of Orthodox Christian Unity in the United States was the focus of these meetings. OCL is a grassroots movement established in 1989 based on the principles that the laity has legitimate responsibilities as part of the conciliar governance process of the church and laity need to exercise their responsibly; Accountability to all members of the church is the rule for church governance; Transparency in matters of governance goes hand and hand with accountability; Orthodox Unity is essential for the survival of the church in the U.S. and for it to fulfill its mission to our beloved homeland.

The first weekend event was a special Hierarchical Divine Liturgy of thanksgiving celebrated by His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, Primate of the Romanian Episcopate of America, Locum Tenens of the Orthodox Church in America, truly The Servant of All, assisted by Bishop Mark of Baltimore, OCA, Father Valery Shemchuk and Deacon Metuzak and other area clergy. OCL business and annual meetings followed. Susan W. Haikalis, Walnut Creek, CA was elected the twelfth president of OCL. Dr. Gayle E. Woloschak, Professor in the Departments of Radiation Oncology, Radiology and Cell and Molecular Biology at North Western University, Chicago, IL and Father Ireneaus Scott Watson, Western Rite Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, ROCOR, Putnam, NY was elected to the Advisory Board.

One of the many highlights of the



OCL Celebrates 25 years of Service: President Susan Haikalis and His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel Primate Romanian Episcopate, Locum Tenens OCA cut Anniversary Cakes. Father Joseph Rahal, St George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Washington, DC.



Bishop Maxim, Serbian Orthodox Church Western Diocese-Anaheim, CA presenting keynote address "Ecclesiology of community and the need for tangible Unity in North America".



Archbishop Nathaniel Primate Romanian Episcopate of America –Locum Tenum-Orthodox Church in America – The Servant of All - celebrating Divine Liturgy at St Nicholas Cathedral highlight of 25th OCL Anniversary.

weekend was the Friday morning private tour of the Library of Congress and special exhibit prepared by the staff of the Library and approved by James H. Billington, The Librarian of Congress. Rare manuscripts and prints related to Orthodox Christian History, as well as special manuscripts from the Russian Imperial Collection were on display. The participants were able to interact with the curators. One of many treasures on display was the recent translation Rhema English-English-Malayalam Bible Dictionary. Malayalam is a Dravidian language spoken in South India. Many of its speakers are Christians and some belong to churches that still use Syriac in their liturgy.

Following the special LOC tour OCL held a reception in the Whittall Pavilion which showcases the musical instruments that are part of Library's Collection. It was here that the DVD of the 25 Year History of OCL, written and narrated by OCL Executive Director George Matsoukas was presented. Founding Members George Karcazes and George Pontikes, answered questions. You may view the video on the OCL web site www.ocl.org. A history of OCL in the words of its formers presidents was compiled and presented and is part of the historical record of OCL.

Nicholas Marinides, on leave as the Bliss Prize Junior Fellow in Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks and in his final Malayalam is a Dravidian language spoken in South India. Many of its speakers are Christians and some belong to churches that still use Syriac in their liturgy. PhD academic year Department of History, Princeton University summarized his thoughts in paper Piety of the Laity in Byzantium. His paper is an important summary of the dualism that exists between living in the world and living a monastic life. It could be the basis for future discussions. You can read this paper on the OCL web site.

A package of the publications of OCL was presented to the Library of Congress.

Orthodox Unity and our Orthodox Past

The focus on the theme of the 25th Annual Meeting began on Friday evening at St George Antiochian Orthodox Church



Participants interacting with Library of Congress curators examining Special Exhibit of Orthodox Christian Collection prepared by the LOC Staff for OCL Members.



Keynote speaker Bishop Maxim, Serbian Orthodox Church and Professor Christos Yannaras, Columnist for the daily Kathimerini in Athens, discussing Ecclesiology of Community and Need for Tangible Unity in North America.

at 4335 16th Street NW Washington DC and continued with a full day Panel Discussion Saturday at George Washington University, Mt. Vernon Campus, Foxhall Road NW Washington, DC. OCL brought together a wide range of Orthodox thinkers including hierarchs, clergy and laity to address the theme of the meeting. In fact there were 15 speakers in all who addressed these topics. It was refreshing to be in the company of this intergenerational

panel of Orthodox Christians of different groupings all addressing the issues in truth and love.

A beautiful, well attended, vesper at St George hosted by a very gracious parish community and hospitable pastor serving the Church for over 40 years Father Joseph Rahal with Bishop Maxim, Serbian Orthodox Church, Western Diocese, Alhambra, CA presiding started our formal program meetings. The keynote address "Ecclesiology of community and need for tangible Unity in North America" was delivered by his Grace Bishop Maxim at the 25th Anniversary Dinner Celebration which took place at St George Catering Center following the vesper. His Grace gave a well-reasoned discussion of the topic which was videotaped and can also be seen and heard on the OCL web site. But the most poignant moments were when he asked Professor Christos Yannaras, theologian, professor, journalist, historian to respond to a question. His Grace translated the response of his professor and you felt the respect that each had for one another. His Grace Maxim is one of our youngest hierarchs and a thoughtful, learned, servant hierarch. He is also a member of the Secretariat of the Assembly of Bishops. This interaction was most meaningful to me.

Protodeacon Peter Danilchick presen-

ted a thorough overview of the work of the Assembly of Bishops. This too was videotaped and will soon be posted on the OCL web site. Father Danilchick is a liaison to the Canonical Regional Planning Committee and facilitator to the Finance Committee of the Assembly of Bishops. He has spent his adult life working for Orthodox Christian Unity. It was the consensus of the audience that the work of the Assembly of Bishops is not filtering down to the parish level and local parish priests are not discussing the work of the Assembly. Most Orthodox Christians of all groupings are not aware of the work of the Assembly. It was also agreed that the laity must ask questions of the hierarchs and parish clergy and local clergy associations to get the details of the work of the Assembly down to the local level.

The Saturday Discussions were extraordinary in content, scope, facts and figures presented. The quality and the excellence of the presenters were extraordinary. The presenters included: Our Orthodox Past-Dr. John J. Yiannias, Byzantinist and Professor Emeritus Art History University of Virginia and author; Dr.

Andrew H. Walsh, Assistant Director of Leonard Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life, Trinity College, Hartford, CT; Nicholas Chapman, Managing Director, Holy Trinity Publications (Jordanville, NY) and member and writer for the Society of Orthodox Church History in the Americas. George Karcazes, OCL board member, moderator. Our Orthodox Present: His Grace Bishop Mark-OCA Bishop of Baltimore; Khouria Frederica Mathews- Green, author, commentator, lecturer; Georg Pontikes, attorney, churchman, founder of OCL and grandfather, Chicago IL. Peter J. Petkas, OCL board member moderator Our Orthodox Future: Nicholas Gvosdov, Professor U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.; Marilyn Rouvelas, author, speaker, on the topic of Greek Orthodoxy, John Sitalides, Principal Trilogy Advisors LLC, Manages professional development program for senior US Diplomats in Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey, Member of US-Qater Business Council and Wilson Council, Member of Board Trustees IOCC; Michael Tsakalos, business professional, active layman and board member of IOCC. Dr. Elizabeth

Prodromou, guest lecturer Harvard University Academic Year 2012-2013, Associate Professor of International Relations, Boston University, Appointed U.S. Commission of International Religious Freedom, moderator.

A summary of the weekend program was presented by His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel who is a member of the advisory board of OCL and who truly is The Servant to All, the title of a publication prepared for him on the celebration of his 30 years to the Episcopacy.

You can hear and see the panel discussions on the OCL web site.

Conclusion: When the responsibilities of the Church pass on to this new generation of Church leaders and the gerontocracy of church leaders decides to listen, serve and be a united mission to all - Orthodoxy in America may move forward. The census facts and figures show a declining Orthodox Church. The spiritual needs of so many are unattended. The duplication and waste of resources cannot go on. The Church needs to become more inclusive and unified. Unified church leadership is a first step.

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