



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF DENVER

October 18, 2007

Mr. George E. Matsoukas,
Executive Director
Orthodox Christian Laity
P.O. Box 6954
West Palm Beach, FL 33405-6954

Dear Mr. Matsoukas,

Please accept my sincere thanks for your most kind invitation to be with you and all the members and friends of the Orthodox Christian Laity, as you gather in Chicago to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the OCL. Unfortunately, circumstances prevent me from being with you on November 2 and 3 of this year.

However, I did want to express my greetings to you for a successful gathering.

I was the chancellor of the Chicago Diocese when initial meetings took place which resulted in the formation of the Orthodox Christian Laity. I am pleased to say that I considered all who participated in this endeavor as friends, and I still do. For I saw in each one of them a commitment to move our holy Church forward in this country. All those who made this decision to establish such a ministry have always been faithful members of the Chicago area parishes and some are still serving on our parish councils.

These dedicated members of the Church saw what many of our clergy continue to witness—a stifled parochialism among many parishes with no desire to introduce our holy faith to others. Even now there are some parishes which insist in having this clubhouse mentality and having no interest even toward sister parishes. Unfortunately the only changes we have witnessed in the life of the Church as of late are the increasing number of divorces among our clergy and a preference on the part of a limited number of other clergy in abnormal lifestyles which will prevent them from entering the Kingdom of God.

Unfortunately today the holy priesthood for some is just another profession attained by academic credits, rather than the holy vocation in response to the Lord's invitation for devoted laborers in His Vineyard, the Church.

Yet in the face of this, we remain positive in spirit knowing that the Church has undergone truly tragic experiences in Her two thousand year history and continues to survive.

The agenda for your 20th Anniversary is a formidable one, when one realizes that our holy Ecumenical Patriarchate has proposed the need for a Great and Holy Council

since the early 1920's. As you may know, the Patriarchate in the 1970's asked for and received excellent papers by theologians on the proposed council. The fact remains that there does not appear to be any definitive activity on this issue at this time.

One of the reasons for the apparent inactivity can be attributed to the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century from which we are still experiencing negative repercussions, even with the recent Orthodox immigrants who have come here due to geopolitical realities in Europe and the Near East. Our Patriarchate saw this danger from as early as 1872 when, at a Holy Synod held at the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the scourge of ethnophyletism was condemned as inimical to the spirit of Orthodoxy.

For this reason I mention to you that your agenda is formidable. But you must not lose hope nor the intense desire to keep alive this concept, for the sake of keeping our Orthodox Christian faith above any and all ethnic banners which identify with the world. Our Lord clearly states that His followers are in the world, but not of the world.

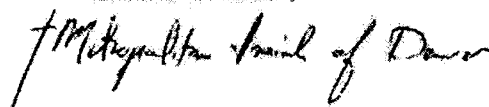
How will you be successful? Your president, Mr. Peter Petkas, speaks of love in his invitation. This is the answer. Through agape/love all things are possible. When you speak in love and work in love, you will see great things happening in the Church. Negative criticism and the spirit of divisiveness has no room in the OCL, if you wish to succeed in this ministry.

Certainly we can publicize problems the Church is now facing in our society due to human frailties and sinful shortcomings on the part of some. But what good would come of this, other than to weaken the faith of our weaker brothers and sisters?

My hope is that the Orthodox Christian Laity will exercise goodwill and the love of Christ in projecting the true spirit of our holy faith. My expectation is that the OCL will be instrumental in keeping alive the desperate need for all our jurisdictions to be more active in pan-Orthodox endeavors of all kinds. The Standing Conference of Canonical Bishops in the Americas is a beginning in this direction; but much more must be done. A few years ago at a clergy-laity congress the motto was "America is ready for Orthodoxy." The Orthodox Christian Laity is the only active organization at this time that can demonstrate that Orthodoxy is ready for America.

May our Lord's blessings abide with all of you for a successful gathering, and may the OCL be that shining light which will raise our holy Orthodox faith to new heights to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, His One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and for the salvation of many.

With love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

+Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver