

Introduction

PREFACE

The Board of Directors of Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL) presents the Project for Orthodox Renewal, (seven studies of key issues facing Orthodox Christians in America) written for the good of the Church. This publication enables OCL to fulfill its educational mission of providing the "royal priesthood" of believers, clergy, hierarchy, and other interested Christians with information that fosters meaningful discussion on renewal of the Orthodox Church in the United States.

The summaries and recommendations of the Board have been placed by the editors in the beginning of the book to stimulate the reader to become engrossed in the Project for Orthodox Renewal.

The development of OCL discussion papers was suggested by Stephen J. Sfekas, Esquire, in a letter written to the Board in July, 1990. The seven topics approved by the membership at the Third Annual Meeting in Chicago, October, 1990, were:

Faith, Language and Culture
Spiritual Renewal
Orthodox Women and Our Church
Mission and Outreach
Selection of Hierarchy
Administration and Accountability
Orthodox Unity

Stephen J. Sfekas was appointed to the Board of Directors and became Task Force project chairman. Topics were assigned and six of them were completed and presented at the Fourth OCL Annual Meeting in Baltimore, October 1991. Twelve hundred draft copies were distributed to members, annual meeting participants, clergy, hierarchy, theologians and lay leaders of the Orthodox Church at that time.

At the Fifth Annual Meeting in St. Louis, October 1992, the Board voted to publish the revised papers in a formal book format. Board member, George Matsoukas, an educator, was appointed co-editor and fund raiser for the project.

The papers represent the independent scholarship of the authors, their committees and individual members who offered suggestions and comments. They are not necessarily official OCL viewpoints. The seven papers are interrelated in the fact that all the authors share a love of and concern for the Orthodox Church and its mission of bringing those created in the image of God closer to Him. The discussion papers exist to raise relevant questions and generate thoughtful debate within the Body of Christ so that Christian ends can be achieved. The RECOMMENDATIONS, on the other hand, are official OCL Board approved suggestions to be considered and incorporated into Church policy in order to further the renewal of our Church.

The OCL board believes this entire project, process, and product bears a powerful witness to our Orthodox Christian faith established in the United States by our immigrant ancestors. It is a testament to their progressive thinking and concern for the religious future of our people. The project reinforces

their example of active lay participation in the continuous development of the Orthodox Church. Prayerfully, this "Project for Orthodox Renewal" can be utilized to strengthen the Orthodox Church in the United States as we begin the third millennium of our Orthodox Christian witness to the Resurrection of Christ.

George Matsoukas
Co-Editor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Editors thank the Orthodox Christian Laity Board members 1990-93 who encouraged and supported the development and completion of the "Project for Orthodox Renewal." Their vision to undertake such a monumental project with such limited resources is testimony to their love of the Orthodox Church.

The dedicated and hard-working authors and task force members, who helped in the preparation of the seven topic areas, are commended for their patience and scholarship. The members of the OCL and others who offered written and oral comments, and participants of the Fourth Annual Meeting (Baltimore, 1991) who also served as critical listeners of the information presented in workshop sessions, are acknowledged for their contribution to the successful completion of the project.

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There was an initial publication of 1,200 copies of the Commission Papers for Workshop distribution, October 1991, made possible by the support of OCL Board member George Coupounas.

The final format you are reading is the result of the generous contribution and matching grant offered by OCL member Helen Datel, Washington, D.C. Her generous contribution was matched by individual OCL Board members and others to whom we are grateful.

Finally, the editors acknowledge Marian S. Valerio who served as secretary and word processor during the three-year period it took to complete the manuscript. In addition to her technical skills as typist, formatter and editor, she was confidant, conflict resolver and a Christian inspiration. Her patience and good cheer held this project together.

We also thank you, the reader. We pray that the insights offered herein create constructive dialogue and contribute to creating renewal within the Orthodox Church in America.

George Matsoukas
Stephen J. Sfekas
July 1, 1993