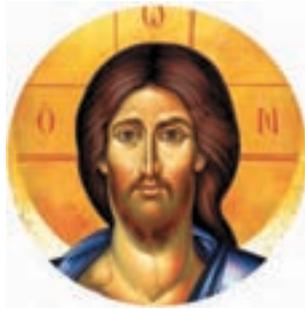


Western American Diocese

2007 Annual

*Dedicated
to the Life,
Work and
Legacy of
Archimandrite
Sebastian*



Western American Diocese
2007 ANNUAL

*Dedicated
to the Life, Work and Legacy
of Archimandrite Sebastian*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introductory Greeting by His Grace Bishop Maxim of Western American Diocese	3
Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich – Serbian Orthodox Apostle to America by Hieromonk Damascene	7
The Enthronement of the New Bishop of Western American Diocese	29
Charting a Vision for Mission, Outreach and Evangelism	30
Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Faith Relations	35
Holy Icons and the Ultimate State of Being by Bishop Maxim	37
Historical Meeting of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops on the West Coast	39
The Future of Orthodoxy in America by His Grace Bishop Atanasije of Hercegovina	43
New Missions of the Western American Diocese	51
The 2007 Clergy Brotherhood Conference and Annual Meeting	55
“What is Christianity?” – 2007 Annual Diocesan Assembly	59
Resolution of the Diocesan Assembly	61
Our Saint Sava Summer Camp 2007	63
First Young Adult Conference held in Los Angeles	64
Sebastian Press of the Western American Diocese – Newest Releases	65
Our Liturgical Wine	68
Our Radio Ministry	69
The Directory of the Western American Diocese	71





MAXIM

By the Mercy of God Bishop Of Western American Diocese
Grace and Peace from Our Lord, God, and Saviour
JESUS CHRIST the Fashioner and Sustainer of Every Creature

Beloved Brethren and Children in the Lord, On September 1st each year, we offer prayers and supplications to the Creator of all, in thanksgiving for the New Ecclesiastical Year (INDIKTOS), and for the great gift of Creation, its protection and salvation. This prayer the natural environment aims to emphasize the significance of the eucharistic and the ascetic ethos of our tradition, which provides an remedial alternative to a consumer lifestyle and the prevailing philosophy of our age. In that spirit, in concord with the Mother Holy Great Church of Christ (The Ecumenical Patriarchate) we invite and urge the entire Christian world all the faithful to admonish themselves and their children to respect and protect the natural environment, Likewise, we ask all those who are entrusted with the responsibility of governing nations to act without delay in taking all necessary measures for the protection and preservation of our beautiful natural creation.

We join with the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in Western America, and joyous proclaim this new liturgical year 2008 *"The year of liturgical renewal"* We call upon everyone to work together, encouraging one another to live an active Christian life, regularly receive the Holy Sacraments, and sincerely participate in the liturgical life of the Church, where we truly come to know the power and love of God for us.

By the grace of the Triune God, we gather for the of the Eleventh Annual Diocesan Days which takes place each Labor Day Weekend at our Saint Sava Mission in Jackson, California. It is on this special weekend that we assemble the faithful from throughout the Diocese to join together in the Eucharist, in brotherly fellowship, and for inspiration in perpetuating the light of the Resurrection.

This year, the Diocese joyously announced a spiritually inspiring and historically unique event: the "return" of Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovic (1863-1940) to America. On Saturday, September 1, 2007, following the celebration of the Hierarchical

Divine Liturgy and memorial service, Fr. Sebastian's remains, transferred from Zica, Serbia, will be interred within St. Sava Church, the first Serbian Orthodox Church in America.

Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovic was born in 1863, the son of one of the earliest known Serbian immigrants to the United States, in San Francisco, California. Upon his ordination in 1887, he became the first American-born Orthodox priest. He was well known for his missionary-apostolic work establishing Orthodox parishes all along the West Coast, including the first distinctly Serbian Orthodox parish in a Jackson, California in 1892; the church building there, still home to an active parish, is now an officially designated National Historical Landmark. Fr. Sebastian produced inspiring homilies in English, Serbian and Russian, as well as several books in English for missionary needs. He went to Serbia to serve as a military chaplain during the Balkan Wars as well as the First World War; by 1940, he retired to the St. Sava Monastery in Zica, Serbia, and after a period of illness fell asleep in the Lord later that year.

This event is the highlight of the Eleventh Annual Diocesan Days Weekend. We welcome all of you, especially all of our visiting hierarchs and our honored guest speaker, His Grace, Bishop Porfirije, PhD., professor of Pastoral Theology at the University of Belgrade.

May the Blessing of God be with all of us, and the prayers of Saint Sava and Father Sebastian Dabovich enable us to maintain unity in the church, forever firm and indestructible. May God grant that our mission of spreading the Good News continues to be fruitful in this new liturgical year and for many years to come!

*With gratitude and Christ's Love,
Right Reverend Bishop Maxim, PhD
Bishop of Western American Diocese*



Fr. Sebastian.
(Photo courtesy Alaska State Library,
Michael Z. Vinokourov Collection P243-1-082.)

Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovic SERBIAN ORTHODOX APOSTLE TO AMERICA

by Hieromonk Damascene

1. AN APOSTLE OF UNIVERSAL SIGNIFICANCE

Born during the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovic has the distinction of being the first person born in the United States of America to be ordained as an Orthodox priest,¹ and also the first native-born American to be tonsured as an Orthodox monk. His greatest distinction, however, lies in the tremendous apostolic, pastoral, and literary work that he accomplished during the forty-eight years of his priestly ministry. Known as the “Father of Serbian Orthodoxy in America,”² he was responsible for the founding of the first Serbian churches in the New World. This, however, was only one part of his life’s work, for he tirelessly and zealously sought to spread the Orthodox Faith to all peoples, wherever he was called. He was an Orthodox apostle of universal significance.

Describing the vast scope of Fr. Sebastian’s missionary activity, Bishop Irinej (Dobrijevic) of Australia and New Zealand has written: “Without any outside funding or organizational support, he carried the gospel of peace from country to country.... Concentrating much of his work in the United States, he ceaselessly traveled back and forth across the American continent, using every available mode of transportation—from stagecoach to railroad to foot. His wider ministry stretched from the Aleutian Peninsula of Alaska, to Russia and Japan, to small Balkan towns on the coasts of the Black and Adriatic Seas.”³

It is said that Fr. Sebastian baptized more people than any other Serbian priest of the Western Hemi-

sphere.⁴ St. Nikolai (Velimirovich) of Zhicha, Serbia, who buried Fr. Sebastian at the Zhicha Monastery when the latter reposed there in 1940, called him “a viceless man” and fittingly designated him “the greatest Serbian missionary of modern times.”⁵

2. PREPARATION FOR APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

Fr. Sebastian was born in San Francisco on June 21 (new style), 1863. His parents, Ilija and Jelena Dabovic, were the first recorded Serbian immigrants to America. In the company of his two older siblings and his father’s brother Nikolai, his parents had originally come from the village of Sasovici near Herceg Novi, at the entrance of the Bay of Kotor, Montenegro. After a long voyage (including crossing the isthmus of Panama on donkeys), they arrived in San Francisco in 1853. Ilija Dabovic opened a store there, and he and his brother Nikolai established a wholesale fruit business. Fr. Sebastian was the fourth of seven children born to Ilija and Jelena, and was given the name Jovan (John). In his later years he would write to a friend: “I am the first male child born of Serbian parents in America. Before me two of my cousins (female) were born to my uncle.”⁶

An Orthodox community had formed in San Francisco six years prior to Fr. Sebastian’s birth, called the “Greek-Russian Slavonian Eastern Church and Benevolent Society.” The community consisted of Russians, Serbs, Greeks, and Syrians who had come to California in the first years of the Gold Rush. Since this

1 Alaskan-born priests were ordained before Fr. Sebastian, but this was when Alaska was still part of Russia.

2 Mirko Dobrijevic (later Irinej, Bishop of Australia and New Zealand), “The First American Serbian Apostle—Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovic,” *Again*, vol. 16, no. 4 (December 1993), pp. 13–14.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

4 John R. Palandech, *Commemorative Book of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Chicago, 1905-1955*. Quoted in Mirko Dobrijevic (Bishop Irinej), p. 15.

5 Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovich), “Father Sebastian Dabovic,” in *Serb National Federation Commemorative Book, 1951*.

6 Letter of Fr. Sebastian Dabovic to Archimandrite Georgije Kodzich. Quoted in Mirko Dobrijevic (Bishop Irinej), pp. 13–14.

community was not yet chartered as a parish and a priest had not yet been assigned to it, the spiritual needs of the Orthodox faithful in San Francisco were served by chaplains of the Russian Imperial Navy. In 1863 one of these chaplains, Hieromonk Kyrill from the Tikhvin Monastery in Russia, baptized the infant Jovan—the future Fr. Sebastian—in a chapel on the Russian warship *Bogatyr*, which was then anchored in the San Francisco Bay.

In 1868, a year after the United States purchased Alaska from Russia, a Russian priest was assigned to the San Francisco Orthodox community. The new pastor, Fr. Nikolai Kovrygin, had been transferred from the Russian Orthodox cathedral in Sitka, Alaska, along with an assistant, Reader Vasily Shishkin. The community in San Francisco now began to hold church services in the home of a local Serb, Peter Sekulovich, located on Mission Street, which was at that time con-



Photograph of the Dabovic family in San Francisco, ca. 1900, showing Fr. Sebastian, his mother, and all six of his brothers and sisters with their families. In the center, seated in the chair, is Fr. Sebastian's mother Jelena (his father Ilija had reposed in 1887). The clergyman at left is Fr. Sebastian. The clergyman at right is Fr. Theodore Pashkovsky, whom Fr. Sebastian married to his niece Ella in 1897. Fr. Theodore would later become Metropolitan Theophilus, chief hierarch of the American Metropolia.

"Eventually," Fr. Sebastian wrote many years later, "the Russian ships weighed their anchors. And there were no more priests here. It would seem that, left without a church or a priest, this Orthodox community should have disappeared from the face of the earth, especially in the rush for gold, for wealth. Through the mercy of God, however, this did not happen. The Orthodox—Serbs, Greeks, and Russians—lived at that time in concord, and supported each other in a brotherly manner. On all major feasts, they gathered together with those who had families, and sang religious and folk songs."⁷

⁷ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic, "*Pravoslavnyaya Tserkov v Kaliforniye*" (The Orthodox Church in California), *Amerikanskii Pravoslavnyi Vestnik* (American Orthodox Herald), nos. 15–16 (April 1898). Written by Fr. Sebastian in San Francisco, Feb. 12, 1897. Translated from Russian by Robert A. Parent.

sidered to be outside of town. The Dabovic family attended services regularly in this house chapel, known as the "Prayer House of the Orthodox Oriental Church."

Jovan Dabovic was a serious, quiet, and somewhat frail child, whose piety was manifest from an early age. He later recalled the first Divine Liturgy that Fr. Nikolai celebrated at the Sekulovich home, which was evidently the first Liturgy celebrated on land (not on a ship) in San Francisco. At the time he would have been four or five years old:

"I remember that first service, to which I went with my mother. We had to walk a long way along unpaved streets. Furthermore we were mercilessly drenched by rain. At last we reached a small house; we crossed over a ditch (or temporarily excavated gutter) on a plank and entered the church. The 'church'

was set up in a divided room. At the end, opposite the entrance, the Holy Antimension lay on a covered table. A little table in a corner served as the table of oblation. I remember two icons on the walls: the Savior and the Mother of God. There were approximately twenty communicants at that Liturgy.”⁸

In 1872, when Jovan was nine years old, the newly consecrated Russian bishop of Alaska and the Aleutians, John (Mitropolsky), transferred his residence from Sitka, Alaska to San Francisco. Since he was the only Orthodox bishop for the American continent, this move marked the transfer of the entire American diocesan administration to California.

Bishop John was proficient in the English language, and came from Russia to America with the intention not only of serving the needs of the Orthodox Native Americans and Russians in Alaska, but also of bringing the Orthodox Faith to the heterodox on the North American continent. This was the primary reason why he moved the diocesan residence to California. In the midst of the large American population in



San Francisco, he believed, the Orthodox Church would be able to reveal her truth to the non-Orthodox Christian confessions and to American society in general with greater effect and impact.⁹ It is likely that Bishop John’s desire to bring Americans from other Christian confessions into the Orthodox Church was passed on to Jovan Dabovic even at that early period of his life, for it became Jovan’s lifelong desire, also.

In coming to San Francisco, Bishop John erected a church on Pierce Street and consecrated it as the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. As often as there was a service at the cathedral, young Jovan was there. Having become wholly dedicated to the Church, he deeply loved the beauty and solemnity of Orthodox worship, and desired with all his heart to serve God and his fellow man at the holy altar. As he later affirmed, it was his intention from childhood to become a priest, and he never thought of anything else.¹⁰

With this in mind Jovan attended the Saturday church school and the “Graeco-Russian Seminary” (also known as the Mission School) that Bishop John had transferred from Sitka to San Francisco. At the small seminary he studied alongside Aleut natives

⁹ Constance J. Tarasar and John H. Erickson, eds., *Orthodox America 1794–1976: Development of the Orthodox Church in America* (Syosset: New York: The Orthodox Church in America), p. 29.

¹⁰ “An Ordination Service Held at the Greek-Russian Church Yesterday Morning,” *The [San Francisco] Morning Call*, Monday, August 29, 1892, p. 2. Reprinted in the *Holy Trinity Cathedral Life*, vol. 1, no. 6 (February 1994).

Jovan Dabovic as a young man in San Francisco.
(Photo courtesy Alaska State Library,
Michael Z. Vinokourov Collection P243-1-076.)

⁸ Ibid.

who had come from Alaska. There he became proficient in Church Slavonic and also gained a fair knowledge of Greek. Recalling those days in San Francisco, Fr. Sebastian wrote:

“From the time of the arrival of the Right Reverend John, priests, after his example, began to proclaim the word of truth to the flock in San Francisco. A Saturday school for the children of parishioners was opened where they were taught the Catechism and the Russian language... Michael Vladimirov was choir director and singing teacher. He also taught mathematics at the [mission] school. Besides the clergymen that taught at the school, Vladyka himself also had seven classes a week, in Holy Scripture and the Slavonic language. A native Greek, Dimitrios Frankiades, from the University of Athens, was teacher of the Greek and English languages.”

“At the time of the Right Reverend John as many as sixteen pupils studied at the bishop’s school in San Francisco. Of that number five are now serving in various positions of the local diocese. The Right Reverend John loved his school, one might say, with a singular love.”¹¹

As he grew to young manhood, Jovan Dabovic became known not only for his love for the Church but also for his selflessness and abstinence. As Bishop Irinej writes: “Those who knew him best invariably tell of his lack of ostentation and his disdain for personal wealth or possessions. A modern St. Nicholas, Jovan felt deeply the plight of the poor and helpless, identifying so readily with them that he preferred to wear only modest apparel and eat the simplest of meals—often nothing more than milk or a little cheese—rather than to eat expensive meals and dress lavishly while others did without. Frequently he simply gave his possessions away to those in need—a pattern that persisted throughout his life.”¹²

After graduating from high school, Jovan served at the cathedral as a reader and teacher. In 1884 he was assigned to assist at St. Michael’s Cathedral in Sitka, which had been established in 1848 by the great enlightener of Alaska, St. Innocent. During his stay in Alaska, Fr. Sebastian decided to further his theological education in preparation for the holy priesthood. Thus, in 1885 he traveled to Russia, where he spent three years studying at the St. Petersburg and Kiev Theological Academies. In 1887 he was tonsured as a monk and given the name Sebastian in St. Petersburg,



Wall painting of Archimandrite Sebastian in the Saint Sava Monastery in Libertyville, Illinois by iconographer Miloje Milinkovic

and shortly thereafter he was ordained as a deacon in the same city.¹³

Hierodeacon Sebastian returned to San Francisco in June of 1889. There he served as a deacon under Bishop Vladimir (Sokolovsky), who in 1888 had been appointed to the American diocese by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. Bishop Vladimir had previously served in the Japanese Orthodox Mission under St. Nicholas of Japan, and he brought his Japanese cell-attendant with him to San Francisco. It is likely that this connection with the Orthodox Church in Japan planted the idea in Fr. Sebastian of visiting Japan, which he did later in life.

As Fr. Sebastian recalled, “The bishop paid special attention in the temple to preaching the word of God in English, which was the language commonly understood. To this end the bishop himself, although not completely familiar with the English language, improvised talks in English, which the people readily heard.”¹⁴ Bishop Vladimir also assigned Fr. Sebastian,

¹¹ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic, “The Orthodox Church in California.”

¹² Mirko Dobrijevic (Bishop Irinej), p. 14.

¹³ Tarasar and Erickson, p. 96.

¹⁴ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic, “The Orthodox Church in California.”



Fr. Sebastian with other missionaries. Left to right: Fr. Dmitri Kamnev; Abbot Innokenty (Pustynsky), future auxiliary bishop of St. Tikhon in America; St. Alexis (Toth); Deacon Vladimir Alexandrov; Abbot Sebastian Dabovic. Standing: General Skliarevich, a Russian engineer.

as a native English speaker, to be the English-language preacher at the San Francisco cathedral.

Fr. Sebastian had great admiration for Bishop Vladimir, seeing in him a true shepherd who gave his life for the sheep (cf. John 10:11). The bishop was a man of refined, gentle character who had no regard for his personal needs, living a highly ascetical life and observing a sparse monastic diet. Musically talented, he formed a superb choir at the cathedral. Under his direction Orthodox services were translated into English and set to traditional Russian melodies. It is likely that Fr. Sebastian was called upon to assist with these translations.

In holding beautiful services in English at the San Francisco Cathedral, Bishop Vladimir was the first bishop in America to attempt the transition of Orthodox liturgical life into the English language. His efforts attracted many people to the cathedral, which by that time had moved to Powell Street, so that it soon became filled beyond capacity.¹⁵ In 1888 he enlarged, remodeled, and magnificently adorned the cathedral and dedicated it to St. Nicholas. When, in 1889, this cathedral was destroyed by fire, Bishop Vladimir had a new cathedral built in honor of St. Basil the Great. Fr. Sebastian served as deacon in the consecration of the new cathedral.

A missionary-minded hierarch like his predecessor Bishop John, Bishop Vladimir was the first Orthodox bishop to traverse the American continent, which he did three times in search of Orthodox com-

¹⁵ Tarasar and Erickson, p. 30.



Interior of St. Sava's Church, Douglas, Alaska. (Photo courtesy Alaska State Library, Michael Z. Vinokourov Collection P243-2-026b.)

munities and of non-Orthodox people to bring into the Faith. In 1891 he traveled to Minneapolis, Minnesota in order to receive a Uniate (Eastern-rite Roman Catholic) priest, Fr. Alexis Toth, and his entire parish into the Orthodox Church. In this way he began the return of American Uniates to Orthodoxy, a movement which would bring forth an abundant harvest in the years to come.

Fr. Sebastian, in serving under Bishop Vladimir during his formative years as a deacon, undoubtedly caught some of the bishop's missionary zeal, just as he had been formed by the missionary vision of Bishop John.

3. THE BEGINNING OF HIS APOSTOLIC LABOR

Bishop Vladimir was replaced by Bishop Nicholas (Ziorov) in 1891. On the day after the Feast of Dormition¹⁶ in 1892, Bishop Nicholas ordained Fr. Sebastian to the holy priesthood in the St. Basil the Great Cathedral. On the following Sunday Fr. Sebastian gave his first sermon as a priest, on the theme "Love according to Christian Doctrine."¹⁷

Before his ordination, Fr. Sebastian had submitted a report to Bishop Nicholas in which he estimated that there were some 1,500 Orthodox Christians residing in the states of California and Oregon, and in the then-territory of Washington. He asked that he be

¹⁶ August 16/28, 1892. At that time there was a difference of twelve days between the old-style and new-style calendars.

¹⁷ "An Ordination Service," p. 2.

assigned to minister to these believers; and Bishop Nicholas, seeing in Fr. Sebastian the apostolic zeal that was to become the hallmark of his life, granted this request.¹⁸ Thus, the newly ordained Hieromonk Sebastian was appointed as missionary priest for California and the Pacific Northwest. Losing no time in fulfilling the task given him, within a week after his ordination he left on a missionary tour of the West Coast of the United States. He traveled as far north as Vancouver, British Columbia, and as far south as San Diego, eventually covering over 3,000 miles.¹⁹

On this missionary journey Fr. Sebastian found poor Orthodox immigrants of many ethnic backgrounds who lived far from Orthodox churches and clergy. As he wrote in a letter to Bishop Nicholas, some of these believers had come under the influence of Protestant churches, and yet they welcomed the opportunity to return to the Church of their youth. He also found many Uniates who, although they called themselves Orthodox, had acquired what he termed questionable practices resulting from their ecclesial ties to Roman Catholicism.²⁰

While in the Northwest Fr. Sebastian performed baptisms, both of children and adults, and offered the other Mysteries of the Church to the isolated Orthodox Christians. Extremely grateful to the missionary priest, these believers began to cherish hopes that Orthodox churches would be founded in their region.

In Oregon Fr. Sebastian decided that Portland was the best site for a chapel. While he regretted that there were few Orthodox in the city itself, Portland was a central location for believers in the area. For example, a population of Greek fishermen had settled along the Columbia river and in the port city of Astoria.

In Seattle Fr. Sebastian saw even more possibilities, for there he found a core group of dedicated Orthodox Christians who were eager to form a parish. Seattle, he wrote to Bishop Nicholas, “promises to be the center of a lively parish.” He also found Orthodox Christians in the communities of Tacoma, Gig Harbor, and Wilkeson, Washington, and in Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia. In Gig Harbor he baptized the

¹⁸ Brigit Farley, “Circuit Riders to the Slavs and Greeks: Missionary Priests and the Establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church in the American West, 1890–1910,” *Occasional Paper 276* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2000), p. 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, referring to the letter of Fr. Sebastian Dabovic to Bishop Nicholas, Nov. 17, 1892, Alaskan-Russian Church Archives, *Records of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of North America—Diocese of Alaska* (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, 1984), container D511/13, reel 520.



Bishop Vladimir of the Aleutians and Alaska.
(Photo courtesy Alaska State Library,
Michael Z. Vinokourov Collection P243-1-004.)

American Indian wife of a pious Serbian man from Herzegovina; this couple and their large extended family later became founding members of the first Orthodox church in Seattle.²¹

Although he was of Serbian ancestry, Fr. Sebastian knew his task was to minister to Orthodox Christians of all ethnic backgrounds, and to minister and reach out to the non-Orthodox as well. Being fluent in English, Serbian, and Russian, and knowing some Greek as well, Fr. Sebastian was a bridge between the New World and the ancient Faith of traditional Orthodox lands. In the words of Bishop Irinej: “By every report Sebastian Dabovic was not one to ask about jurisdictional or national affiliation before setting out on long journeys to minister to Orthodox Christians in mining communities, lumber camps, or far-distant towns or villages. He offered his pastoral services

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 4–5, and the letter of Fr. Sebastian Dabovic to Bishop Nicholas, Nov. 17, 1892.



Bishop Nicholas of the Aleutians and Alaska.
(Photo courtesy Alaska State Library,
Michael Z. Vinokourov Collection P243-1-008.)

with a free hand to anyone who was in need. Just as he gave no thought to his own comforts as a youth, caring more for the needs of others than for his own concerns, Fr. Sebastian denied himself all worldly comforts of home, family, or earthly possessions, so that he could provide for the spiritual needs of the Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek, Syrian, or Arab Orthodox Christians who required his aid."²²

While Fr. Sebastian was serving as a missionary in the Northwest, the above-mentioned Fr. Alexis Toth was traveling from his former Uniate parish in Minneapolis to Uniate communities in Wilkes-Barre and Mayfield, Pennsylvania. Soon he succeeded in bringing these communities into the Orthodox Church as well. An outstanding missionary through whose influence and example nearly thirty thousand Uniates were eventually united to the true Church of Christ, Fr. Alexis was canonized by the Orthodox Church in America in 1994 as St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre.

²² Mirko Dobrijevic (Bishop Irinej), p. 15.

In 1893, St. Alexis wrote to Bishop Nicholas requesting an assistant priest for St. Mary's Orthodox Church in Minneapolis, so that he could return to Pennsylvania and complete his work of bringing the Wilkes-Barre community more fully into the Orthodox ethos and way of life. Granting this request, Bishop Nicholas sent Fr. Sebastian to serve at St. Mary's Church in Minneapolis.

While at St. Mary's, Fr. Sebastian continued the work of St. Alexis, striving to help former Uniates enter more deeply into the life of the Orthodox Church. He preached eloquent sermons and taught at the parish's missionary school. The choir director of the parish and the music director of the school, Paul Zaichenko, has provided for us this valuable portrait of Fr. Sebastian in the early days of his priestly ministry:

"Fr. Sebastian Dabovic succeeded Fr. A. Toth as parish priest. He was a quiet and pensive monk, always considerate, conscientious, modest. He performed his duties sincerely, and taught the Bible class of the parish school with enthusiasm. He was a tire-



St. Mary's Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

less and unselfish worker, a humble and a just man before his Lord. He was one of the most worthy workers in the Mission.

“I knew him back in San Francisco. At that time he sang in the cathedral choir, of which I was a choir-master. His aim was his betterment in religious life. As in San Francisco, so too in Minneapolis, he was the example of virtuous living; he always considered it his duty to avoid an evil step. Leading a quiet monastic life, he found great happiness in reading religious books and in teaching students the Holy Bible. He loved children and was always considerate of his parishioners. Notwithstanding his short stay in Minneapolis, he was loved by his flock. He was a bright torch of love, kindness, and sincerity.”²³

While serving at the parish in Minneapolis, Fr. Sebastian made his first visit to Chicago, where he gathered the local Orthodox Serbs and celebrated the first Divine Liturgy for them. He organized a church board, found a house, and converted it into a chapel. Years later he would build upon the foundation he had laid for Serbian Orthodox Christians in the Chicago area.



The missionary school at St. Mary's Church in Minneapolis.

After less than a year of serving in Minneapolis, Fr. Sebastian was recalled to the West Coast in order to resume his missionary work there. He arrived back in San Francisco in December of 1893. Shortly thereafter he went to baptize a Serbian infant in Jackson, California, a gold-mining community near the “mother

²³ *Golden Jubilee Album*, St. Mary's Russian Orthodox Church (Minneapolis, 1937), p. 44. In Tarasar and Erickson, p. 96.



St. Alexis (Toth) of Wilkes-Barre.

lode.” Seeing that many Serbian miners had settled with their families in Jackson and in neighboring towns, Fr. Sebastian immediately recognized the need to build an Orthodox church there, and he urged the local Serbs to begin planning one. The Serbs acted quickly, purchasing land for both a cemetery and a church.

In February of 1894, Bishop Nicholas came to Jackson to bless the church property; in May of the same year the first burial in the cemetery occurred; and by December the church was completed. It was a small but beautiful church, situated prominently atop the tallest hill in the town, and surrounded by the cemetery. Bishop Nicholas had bells for the church sent down from Alaska.

On December 16, Bishop Nicholas, assisted by Fr. Sebastian, consecrated the new church, dedicating it to St. Sava of Serbia. Although the service of consecration was in the Slavonic language, Fr. Sebastian—always the missionary—translated portions of the service for the non-Serbian locals in attendance.²⁴ The

²⁴ Leslie McLaughlin, “St. Sava Celebrates 110 Years in Amador,” *Ledger Dispatch* (Oct. 28, 2004).

new church in Jackson, founded by the first Orthodox priest ordained in the United States, became the first Serbian Orthodox church consecrated in the Western Hemisphere.

While remaining based in San Francisco, Fr. Sebastian regularly went to Jackson to serve at the new parish. He also continued his missionary travels throughout the western United States. In February 1895 he visited Portland and Seattle, where he had helped to organize Orthodox communities three years before. In Seattle an Orthodox church, dedicated to St. Spyridon and consisting of Russian, Greek and Serbian immigrants, was already being built, and was soon to receive its first priest, Fr. Amvrosios Vetta. In Portland, a chapel had recently been built by an Alaskan of mixed Native-Russian ancestry. Fr. Sebastian served the first Divine Liturgy in this chapel, dedicating it in the name of the "Holy and Life-giving Trinity." At that time, the small congregation consisted of six Syrians, four Serbs, and two Russians. By 1907, the community had grown to about eighty believers.²⁵

In his travels Fr. Sebastian again visited Orthodox communities in Victoria, British Columbia, and Wilkeson, Washington, laying the foundations for the Orthodox churches that would later be established there. He also met with groups of Serbs in Angels Camp (near Jackson), California; in Fresno, California (and in the nearby towns of Visalia and Hanford); and in Bisbee, Arizona. These visits also bore fruit, for in all of these places Serbian Orthodox churches were eventually built.²⁶

In recognition of Fr. Sebastian's missionary labors, in 1895 Bishop Nicholas awarded him with the gold cross. Although this award was normally given in the Russian Church only after ten years of priestly ministry, Fr. Sebastian received it not even a full three years after his ordination to the priesthood. The reason for this was explained by Bishop Nicholas in his address to Fr. Sebastian:

"With the blessing of the Most-holy Ruling Synod of All Russia and by the assent of the Most-pious Emperor, this high sign of distinction is now bestowed upon you, my beloved brother in the Lord. It is granted to you not only as a reward for your devout ministry in the lower ecclesiastical ranks, but even more so as an encouragement in the ever greater labors and heroic tasks which you will continue to face in your missionary ministry...



St. Basil's Cathedral on Powell St., San Francisco.

"You were not forced to pick up the cross of a monk and a missionary, but did it of your own free will, for your and others' salvation. This made you not your own but Christ's (cf. Gal. 3:29); now you should seek not your own (cf. I Cor. 13:5) but the things which are Jesus Christ's (cf. Phil. 2:21)."²⁷

In 1896 Fr. Sebastian made a trip to his ancestral land of Serbia, where he studied theology for several months. When he returned to San Francisco in November of the same year, he was assigned as pastor of St. Basil Cathedral and as a teacher in the church school. This new position did not prevent him from carrying on his missionary work throughout the western United States. He continued to visit the new communities he had formed and organized, tending to their spiritual needs, making the Holy Mysteries available to them, and ensuring their survival.

When the St. Sava Church in Jackson, California had received full parish status, Bishop Nicholas had wanted it to be chartered as Russian Orthodox, since it was under the Russian diocese. Fr. Sebastian defended the desire of the parishioners to have their charter read "Serbian Orthodox," but also indicated that the parish would still be under the omophorion

²⁵ Tarasar and Erickson, p. 35.

²⁶ Farley, p. 2.

²⁷ Bishop Nicholas (Ziorov), "A Message to Hieromonk Sebastian (Dabovic) as He Is Awarded a Gold Pectoral Cross from the Office of His Majesty." Translated from the Russian. First published in English in *Holy Trinity Cathedral Life*, Dec. 20, 1992.

of the Russian bishop for the American mission.²⁸ Thus Fr. Sebastian defended the right of the Serbian community to retain its ethnic identity, and at the same time upheld the authority of the local diocesan bishop.

Interestingly, Bishop Nicholas was not against the idea of having Serbian priests and parishes in the United States subordinate to the Orthodox Church in Serbia, as long as the Serbian Church could support these priests and parishes. In 1897 both Bishop Nicholas and Fr. Sebastian wrote to Metropolitan Mihailo in Serbia, asking if this was possible. Metropolitan Mihailo replied to Fr. Sebastian:

“His Grace Bishop Nicholas has written to Us and asked if We could allocate money for churches, schools, priests and teachers; and if We could, he would have nothing against there being separate Serbian priests subordinate to the Serbian Metropolitanate. And I answered that We could not do this because We could not support so many churches and priests, schools and teachers there.”²⁹

In August of 1897, Fr. Sebastian traveled to Butte, Montana. At that time the center of the nation’s copper-mining industry, the Western boomtown of Butte was the home of a large number of Serbs who had come to work in the mines. On the Feast of the Dormition Fr. Sebastian celebrated the first Divine Liturgy in the history of Butte, and afterwards he met with the thirty-one Serbs in attendance in order to organize a parish there. He followed up on this visit by traveling to Butte four to six times a year to serve the Divine Liturgy and observe the progress of the parish.³⁰

In November of 1897, Fr. Sebastian and Fr. Alexander Hotovitsky—a Russian priest from New York, later canonized as a New Martyr of Russia—accompanied Bishop Nicholas on a trip to Washington, D.C. Fathers Sebastian and Alexander served as translators when Bishop Nicholas met with President William McKinley, thus taking part in the first meeting of an Orthodox bishop with a U.S. president. The bishop expressed his concern to the president over the treatment of Orthodox Christians in Alaska, particularly over the fact that American trading companies were

compelling the faithful to work on Sundays and feast days and had unlawfully taken possession of Church properties; and the president promised to bring the matter before Congress.³¹

4. SERVING UNDER ST. TIKHON

The year 1898 brought a great blessing for Orthodoxy in America, when Bishop Tikhon (Bellavin) was appointed by the Russian Orthodox Church to head the American diocese. A farsighted apostle of Christ, Bishop Tikhon would later become the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, and would eventually be canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church.

On December 23, 1898, St. Tikhon entered his cathedral church in San Francisco. He was at that time the only Orthodox bishop of the North American continent, the head of a multilingual and multinational missionary diocese. Quickly recognizing Fr. Sebastian’s abilities as a missionary, he appointed him as head of the North American Mission Administration.

Fr. Sebastian had by this time become well known as a missionary not only at home but also abroad. In 1899 he received the Order of St. Anne from the Tsar of Russia, Nicholas II. This order had been conferred on him through the influence of Bishop Nicholas, who, on returning to Russia the previous year, had had an audience with the Tsar and had recommended Fr. Sebastian for the award.³²

Two years earlier, in 1897, Fr. Sebastian had been awarded the Order of Daniel from Prince Nicholas of Montenegro, primarily in recognition of the pastoral care he had shown for Serbian immigrants who had come to America from Montenegro, and also for the articles he had written on the province of Montenegro and its struggles against the Turks.³³ According to the testimony of St. Nicholai of Zhicha, Fr. Sebastian was also given awards by the King of Serbia and the Patriarch of Jerusalem.³⁴

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Fr. Sebastian somehow found time, amidst his already abundant labors, to develop one of the first English translations of the Orthodox Divine Liturgy,³⁵ and also

²⁸ Bishop Nicholai (Velimirovich), “Father Sebastian Dabovic.”

²⁹ Serbian Metropolitan Mihailo to Hieromonk Sebastian, Belgrade, Oct. 24, 1897. Quoted in Bishop Sava of Shumadija, *History of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America and Canada 1891-1941* (Kragujevac, Serbia: Kalenich, 1998), p. 23.

³⁰ Reader Alexander Vallens, “Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovic: The First American Serbian Orthodox Apostle” (2005), p. 5. www.transfigcathedral.org/faith/corner/Dabovic.pdf

³¹ “Bishop Nicholas’ Complaint,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 5, 1987. In Tarasar and Erickson, p. 73.

³² “Rev. Sebastian Dabovic Honored by the Czar of Russia,” *The San Francisco Call*, Wednesday, June 17, 1899.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Bishop Nicholai (Velimirovich), “Father Sebastian Dabovic.”

³⁵ Mirko Dobrijevic (Bishop Irinej), p. 15.



St. Tikhon when he was Bishop of the Aleutians and Alaska.

to write three English-language books on the Orthodox Faith: *Lives of the Saints, and Several Lectures and Sermons; Preaching in the Russian Church: Lectures and Sermons by a Priest of the Holy Orthodox Church;* and *The Holy Orthodox Church: The Rituals, Services, and Sacraments of the Eastern Apostolic (Greek-Russian) Church*. In addition, he wrote articles on Orthodoxy in Alaska and California, and on Orthodox traditions surrounding the Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

Published in 1898 and 1899 with money from his own small salary, Fr. Sebastian's books bore witness to the missionary vision of their author. They were intended as basic Orthodox catechisms, written for second- and third-generation immigrants from Orthodox lands, most of whom had English as their first language, and also for non-Orthodox who were interested in the Orthodox Church. While such books are common today, at the turn of the twentieth cen-

tury they were a rarity and far ahead of their time. Anglicans, Episcopalians and others had by then translated and published some English-language books on Orthodoxy, but the Orthodox themselves had published very few expositions of the Orthodox Faith in English. Fr. Sebastian understood that, for the growth of Orthodoxy in America, this situation had to change—that the Orthodox Faith had to be taught and preached, not only in the languages of traditional Orthodox countries, but also in the common language of the new country.

Fr. Sebastian's books also bear witness to his ardent love for Jesus Christ and His Church, to the depth of his knowledge of the Orthodox Faith, to his careful adherence to the teachings of the Church, to his pastoral zeal, to his literary and poetic gifts, and to his profound sense of spiritual beauty. A large portion of the books consists of sermons that he gave in the San Francisco cathedral and in mission churches on various feast days. These sermons reveal him as an inspired preacher whose words could soar to the heights and at the same time strike deeply the hearts of his listeners. Consider, for example, these words from a sermon he delivered on Holy Friday:

"He Who prayed, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, has stretched out His arms on the wood in order to embrace a sinful world. But no mortal knoweth how the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word of God is not bound by death. As a word from the lips dies not entirely away at the moment its sound ceases, but rather gathers new strength, and passing through the senses penetrates the minds and hearts of the hearers, so also the Hypostatical Word of God, the Son of God, in His saving incarnation, whilst dying in the flesh, fills all things with His spirit and might. Thus when Christ waxeth faint and becometh silent on the Cross, then is it that heaven and earth raise their voice to Him, and the dead preach the resurrection of the Crucified, and the very stones cry out."³⁶

Fr. Sebastian sought to introduce Americans to the Orthodox Faith not merely through his books. According to Bishop Irinej, Fr. Sebastian "spoke tirelessly to countless individuals, making friends on all levels of society—from the common man on the street to the highest strata of American social, political, and religious life."³⁷

³⁶ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic, *Preaching in the Russian Church* (San Francisco: Cubery and Company, 1899), p. 130.

³⁷ Mirko Dobrijevic (Bishop Irinej), p. 15.

Ever seeking to reach out to those outside the Church, Fr. Sebastian initiated contacts and discussions with non-Orthodox churches. He made his greatest efforts in the direction of the Episcopalian Church, which, at the turn of the twentieth century, he saw as the most similar to the Orthodox Church among non-Orthodox American confessions, and also as the church most receptive to Orthodoxy. As early as 1865, two years after Fr. Sebastian's birth, the Ober-procurator of the Holy Synod of the Russian Church had noted that an Orthodox church was needed in San Francisco not only to provide for the residents who were already Orthodox but also "to answer to the growing interest in the Orthodox Faith among American Episcopalians."³⁸ Having grown up in San Francisco and having been entrusted with the apostolic



Iconostasis and royal doors of St. Michael's Cathedral, Sitka, Alaska. (Photo courtesy Alaska State Library, Michael Z. Vinokourov Collection P243-1-038.)

ministry of the holy priesthood, Fr. Sebastian now sought to address this need. He met several times with Bishop Charles Grafton, Episcopalian bishop of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and was instrumental in organizing a conference of Orthodox-Episcopalian dialogue in Fond du Lac.³⁹ In November of 1900, Bishop Tikhon, together with Fr. Sebastian and Fr. John Kochurov, rector of the Chicago Cathedral and future New Martyr of Russia, attended the consecration of a

³⁸ Tarasar and Erickson, p. 33.

³⁹ Mirko Dobrijevic (Bishop Irinej), p. 15.



St. Michael's Cathedral in snow, Sitka, Alaska.

vicar for Bishop Grafton.⁴⁰ Three years later Bishop Grafton made a trip to Russia to experience the Orthodox Church there firsthand.⁴¹



St. Sava's Church, Douglas, Alaska. (Photo courtesy Alaska State Library, Michael Z. Vinokourov Collection P243-2-026a.)

In all of his meetings with Episcopalians, Fr. Sebastian was sympathetic, respectful and understand-

⁴⁰ Vallens, p. 6.

⁴¹ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic, "The Madonna of Alaska: A Tale of the Greek-Russian Church in Many Lands" [an overview of Orthodox Nativity traditions], *The San Francisco Sunday Call*, Christmas Number, December 20, 1903, p. 2:1.

ing, appreciating the points in which Episcopalian doctrine and practice still reflected the original Orthodox Faith. At the same time, however, he was firmly convinced that he must reveal the Orthodox Church as the one, true Church of Christ. This same approach to the non-Orthodox confessions can be found in his books. In one of the chapters of *Preaching in the Russian Church*, called “The True Church of Christ,” he painstakingly laid out the reasons why the Orthodox Church, and no other, is the true Church. Elsewhere, in an essay entitled “Sincere Religion,” he said it was “foul treachery” for Orthodox Christians to make no distinction between the teachings of the different churches, and to deny that the Orthodox Church alone teaches Christ’s truth purely and completely. “You will say,” he wrote, “shall we then condemn our erring brethren? By no means. Christ forbids us to judge anybody, for only God knows whether our brother culpably holds the error, or whether he believes it to be the truth. But even if he believes his error to be the truth, error remains error, and can never become truth. Therefore, we must always condemn error, though we may not condemn the person erring.”⁴²

Although Fr. Sebastian’s efforts to bring Episcopalians into the Orthodox Church did not prove successful during his lifetime, St. Tikhon later noted that Fr. Sebastian was greatly responsible for making non-Orthodox Christians, particularly Episcopalians, aware of the teachings of the Orthodox Church. According to one biographer of Fr. Sebastian, some of the Western Rite parishes that were received many years later into the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America pointed to these early efforts of Fr. Sebastian as a significant steppingstone in the return of Episcopalians to the Orthodox Church.⁴³

In 1902 St. Tikhon appointed Fr. Sebastian as the Dean of the Sitka Deanery and the superintendent of Alaskan missions. Thus, after an absence of eighteen years, Fr. Sebastian returned to Alaska. He stayed in Alaska for about a year, during which time St. Tikhon elevated him to the rank of abbot. In southern Alaska he evangelized the Tlingit (Kolosh) natives. He also helped to build, and later consecrated, the St. Sava Church in Douglas, Alaska. Part of the money for the construction of the church had come from the Holy Assembly of Bishops in Serbia. Several years later Fr. Sebastian wrote about his work in Alaska:

⁴² Fr. Sebastian Dabovic, *The Lives of the Saints, and Several Lectures and Sermons* (San Francisco: The Murdock Press, 1898), p. 181.
⁴³ Vallens, pp. 7–8.



The old Holy Trinity Church in Butte, Montana.

“My assistants among the Indians—the Kolosh natives Ivan Hlyantich, Pavel Katlyeyan and others—set out for what was then a very small place, now the sizable town of Juneau, and following special instructions from me, they (and other parishioners) spread the Word and Orthodoxy—and the result of that is—the present Church of St. Nicholas in Juneau.

“Then as Diocesan Deputy with the rank of abbot, I built, together with the people—and with Hieromonk Anthony (Deshkevich-Koribut) and the priest Aleksandar Jaroshevich I consecrated—the Church of St. Sava in Douglas, Alaska.”⁴⁴

Upon leaving Alaska in 1903, Fr. Sebastian went to Chicago, Illinois, where he continued the work he had begun a decade earlier of establishing a Serbian parish. Some two hundred Serbian families pledged their support in building a church.

⁴⁴ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic to the Religious Council of the Diocese of North America in New York, Los Angeles, Dec. 2, 1915. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 256.

During the same year Fr. Sebastian also paid another visit to the Serbian community in Butte, Montana, encouraging the parishioners to raise money to build a church and obtain a resident priest. Then, after a brief stay in San Francisco, he left on a trip to Russia and Serbia.

Within four months after Fr. Sebastian's visit, the parishioners in Butte, Montana were able to raise enough money to start building a temple dedicated to the Holy Trinity. The church was completed in the fall of 1904, and on the Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Forerunner, August 29/September 11, Fr. Sebastian served the first Divine Liturgy in the new church, assisted by the Serbian priest Fr. Jacob Odzhich. On Vidovdan, June 15/28, 1905, St. Tikhon consecrated the Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church in Butte, assisted by Fr. Sebastian and by Fr. Jacob, who became the church's first permanent priest.⁴⁵

Since his flock in America was composed of various ethnic groups requiring special attention and leadership, St. Tikhon had by this time begun to restructure the American diocese. In 1904 he consecrated Archimandrite Raphael (Hawaweeny), later canonized as St. Raphael of Brooklyn, as a vicar bishop for the Syro-Arab Orthodox churches in America. He also planned to consecrate a vicar bishop for the Serbian Orthodox Churches in America. With this in mind, in March 1905 he established a Serbian Orthodox Mission in America, centered in Chicago. Anticipating that Fr. Sebastian, like St. Raphael for the Arabs, would become the bishop for this mission, he transferred him to Chicago and placed him in charge of the Serbian Orthodox Mission. On July 4, 1905, Fr. Sebastian consecrated the church he had founded in Chicago, dedicating it to the Holy Resurrection of Christ.

On September 18, 1905, St. Tikhon raised Fr. Sebastian to the rank of archimandrite at the newly consecrated Serbian Orthodox Church in Chicago. In the words he addressed to Fr. Sebastian on this occasion, two things are evident: first of all, the genuine love and concern that this wise hierarch had for the Serbian flock in America, and secondly the great esteem he had for Fr. Sebastian in entrusting to him the spiritual guidance of the entire Serbian Mission. To Fr. Sebastian he said:

"I greet you, most honorable Father Archimandrite Sebastian, with your elevation to the rank of archimandrite and your assignment as head of the Serbian mission in America. You were entrusted by the

diocesan authorities even earlier, as a native Serb, with the administration of one or another of the Serbian parishes here. Now you are being called to a greater ministry: upon you is being laid the care of all the Serbian churches in our extensive diocese and of the spiritual needs of all the Serbs in America. You know how many of them are scattered here, how often they go astray like sheep that have no shepherd, how they end up in a foreign home, and how, having come here for work or to become rich, some of them become spiritually impoverished and, in this heterodox country, lose the great spiritual treasure of the old country: the holy Orthodox Faith, love for the Slavic people, and fondness for their good native customs. Our benevolently solicitous hierarchy, which is always concerned about the needs of the Slavs, who are of one blood with us, desires to have mercy on these people, and is calling upon you now to spiritually guide the Serbs who are living here."⁴⁶

The newly elevated Archimandrite Sebastian served as rector of the church he had founded in Chicago. During his time as head of the Serbian Orthodox Mission, he tended to the needs of the many Serbian communities throughout the country. He also initiated the publication of the *Herald of the Serbian Church in America*, the first Serbian Orthodox newspaper in the United States.

In 1905 St. Tikhon entrusted Fr. Sebastian with the task of procuring written permission from the hierarchy in Serbia for the consecration of a vicar bishop for the Serbian Orthodox Mission. Taking this task very seriously, Fr. Sebastian wrote letters to Patriarch Georgije and to the Holy Synod of Bishops in Serbia, asking for a letter confirming that, as far as they were concerned, there was no obstacle to the appointment of a bishop for the Serbs in North America. The hierarchy in Serbia, however, not knowing firsthand the situation of Serbs in America, and also not being certain of the relationship between the Russian and Serbian hierarchies in the context of America, replied that they were not prepared to send such a letter to the Holy Synod of Bishops in Russia. Meanwhile, some Serbian congregations in America, not wanting to be under the Russian Church even if they could have a Serbian vicar bishop, were appealing directly to bishops in Serbia for archpastoral support and direction.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Slovo Pravoslaviya v Amerike: Propovedi i poucheniya Svyatitelya Tikhona* (The Word of Orthodoxy in America: Sermons and teachings of Holy Hierarch Tikhon) (Moscow: Stretensky Monastery, 2001), pp. 143–144. Translated from Russian.

⁴⁷ Bishop Sava, pp. 29–30.

⁴⁵ Vallens, p. 5.

The Holy Synod of the Russian Church honored St. Tikhon with the title of archbishop in 1905, and two years later assigned him as Bishop of Yaroslavl. Thus, St. Tikhon left America with many of his plans for the American archdiocese unrealized. Before his departure for Russia, he did not neglect to show his appreciation for Fr. Sebastian's many labors. As St. Nikolai of Zhicha records:

"Archimandrite Dabovic could have been a bishop even in 1907. The Russian archbishop wanted to consecrate him as a Russian bishop for the Serbian people. But the Serbs did not want it that way. Archbishop Tikhon was sorry about that. He was eager to show his appreciation to Fr. Dabovic for all his wonderful work. Failing to make him a bishop, he did something else. Once when he celebrated the Holy Liturgy in the Serbian church in Chicago, he presented our archimandrite with a precious mitre, which was worth 1,000 roubles in gold. But Fr. Dabovic quickly sold that precious gift and gave it to the church towards paying its debts. Such a man was he. He was absolutely unselfish."⁴⁸

5. "THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS" (Matt. 24:8)

In 1908 Archbishop Platon (Rozhdestvensky) replaced St. Tikhon as the archbishop of the American archdiocese. Fr. Sebastian hoped that the new archbishop would offer the same support to the Serbian Orthodox Mission as had his predecessor. In September of 1908, he wrote to Archbishop Platon, outlining the needs of the Serbian congregations in America:

"Last Easter in three churches there were no services, a fourth was closed, and many colonies with a fairly dense Orthodox population did not even hear 'Christ is Risen.' It is impossible to obtain priests anywhere, and in most cases people cannot give enough to support a priest properly. Now they have promised me in Belgrade that at the next Assembly of Bishops they will raise the question of allocating two scholarships for the Mission, so that two Serbian lads from America may be educated at a seminary in Serbia. But this presents other problems: finding the money to send these lads to Europe.

"Serbian archpastors in the Old Country with brotherly love expect Your Eminence to organize our part of the Church. The Lord's blessing will doubtless

be given to a continuation of the work begun with wisdom, after six years of responsibility, by His Eminence Tikhon, now Archpastor of Yaroslavl."⁴⁹

During the same year, Fr. Sebastian, while retaining his position as head of the Serbian Orthodox Mission, was transferred from Chicago to the Holy Transfiguration Church in Denver, Colorado, a parish that had been received into the Orthodox Church from Uniatism in 1904. The parish consisted primarily of Russians and Serbs. In September of 1908, Fr. Sebastian wrote to Archbishop Platon: "Here the church is fairly large, there is enough land, the debt is small.... Many children. They want a psalm-reader and teacher, who can direct a choir.... Come, Your Eminence, to Denver."⁵⁰

Since the Cathedral of St. Basil in Fr. Sebastian's native city of San Francisco had been destroyed in the great earthquake of 1906, a new cathedral, dedicated to the Holy Trinity and located at Green and Van Ness, had been built. In July of 1909 Archimandrite Sebastian traveled to San Francisco in order to consecrate the new cathedral.

In the meantime, Fr. Sebastian was experiencing a growing sense of futility as the head of the Serbian Orthodox Mission. Many Serbs in America had made it clear to him that they did not wish to support or be united under the Serbian Orthodox Mission because it was within the jurisdiction of the Russian Church. Some Serbs were even unfavorable toward Fr. Sebastian because he was under the Russian Church and had placed Serbian congregations in America under that Church.⁵¹

As a selfless servant of Christ in His Church, Fr. Sebastian cared first of all for the spiritual well-being and salvation of Christ's flock. He followed the words of His Master: *Feed my sheep* (John 21:16-17). Like St. Tikhon, Fr. Sebastian knew that, for the Serbian flock in America to be fed properly, they needed a Serbian archpastor and Serbian priests who spoke their language and understood their needs. This was the reason behind his attempt, at St. Tikhon's behest, to organize the Serbian Orthodox Mission and to have a Serbian bishop consecrated for America. Fr. Sebastian was also completely open to the possibility of Serbian congregations in America being placed under the Serbian Church; however, as we have seen, at that time

⁴⁹ Archives of the American Orthodox Church, no. 1129, July 23, 1908. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 216.

⁵⁰ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic to Archbishop Platon, Denver, Colorado, Sept. 29, 1908. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 278.

⁵¹ Bishop Sava, pp. 34, 40.

⁴⁸ Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovich), "Father Sebastian Dabovic."

the Serbian Church was not yet ready to take full responsibility for priests and parishes in America. As far as Fr. Sebastian was concerned, the most pressing question was not what Local Orthodox Church—Russian or Serbian—the Serbs in America would be under (as long as they were under a canonical hierarchy), but rather how their spiritual needs would be met, how they would be nourished by the life and grace of the Church.



St. Sava's Church, Los Angeles.

Fr. Sebastian was greatly saddened that, at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the needs of the Serbs were *not* being met properly. For the nineteen chartered Serbian parishes in America (not to mention the smaller Serbian Orthodox communities), there were only eleven canonical priests. Non-canonical priests from Serbia took advantage of this situation, roaming the United States and performing services in Serbian communities without the blessing of any bishop. With no Serbian bishop assigned to America, and with many Serbs not wanting to be in the jurisdiction of the Russian Church, there was little Fr. Sebastian could do to stop this non-

canonical activity.⁵² He was placed in the unenviable position of having to defend the canonical authority of the Russian hierarchy over American Serbs (because that was indeed the canonical authority at the time) despite the fact that many Serbs resented this authority, and despite the fact that he himself knew that the Serbian churches in America were at an impasse without their own bishop.

Seeing that some Serbian priests and congregations were avoiding him because of his connection with the Russian Church, and finding that the Serbian Orthodox Mission was then (as he said) "left without resources, aid and, what is more, goodwill,"⁵³ at the end of 1909 Fr. Sebastian asked Archbishop Platon to relieve him of his duties as administrator of the Mission. At the same time he wrote a letter to the Holy Synod of Bishops in Serbia, informing them of the situation of the Serbian Orthodox churches in America and asking for their aid: "Most Serbs have said that they do not want any other jurisdiction, not even Russian, but their own Serbian Church jurisdiction. On this day I am submitting to North American Archbishop Platon my resignation as administrator of the Serbian Mission, for I am exhausted from the effort and cannot oppose a multitude single-handed.... Once again I caution the Holy Synod that the Serbian Church in glorious, vast America has been left without an administrator and I urge that a Serbian archpastor be sent."⁵⁴

Archbishop Platon reported to the Holy Synod of Bishops in Russia about Fr. Sebastian's request to resign. When the bishops in Russia sent back a Decision to Archbishop Platon granting Fr. Sebastian's request, they felt it necessary to recount the praise that St. Tikhon had given eight years earlier for Fr. Sebastian's accomplishments in America:

"Concerning the Hieromonk Sebastian, His Grace Tikhon of the Aleutians, in his communication to the Holy Synod of June 2, 1902, no. 74, wrote that the appointed Hieromonk, during his service in the Mission, exerted considerable efforts towards 1) building holy churches in America (the construction of churches in Jackson and Seattle, and the decoration of the cathedral church in San Francisco), 2) organizing church-parish life in Minneapolis shortly after the parishioners joined the Orthodox Church, 3) raising religious

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 42, 176–77.

⁵³ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic to Archbishop Platon, Oakland, Calif., Dec. 6, 1909. Quoted in Bishop Sava, pp. 34–35.

⁵⁴ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic to the Holy Hierarchical Synod, Karlovci Patriarchate, Oakland, Calif., Dec. 14, 1909. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 35.

and national consciousness among Slavs scattered across America, 4) acquainting non-Slav Christians (primarily Episcopalians) in America with the teachings of the Orthodox Church, for which purpose he wrote and published, from his meager resources, several books in English, and 5) translating official documents of the Administration into English.”⁵⁵

6. “GO YE THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS” (Matt. 28:19)

After being released from his position as head of the Serbian Mission in 1910, Fr. Sebastian served the Serbian Orthodox communities in California. As he wrote to Archbishop Platon:

“The receipts from modest services performed for the many Serbs in the cities of Los Angeles, Fresno and Oakland, I hope, will be enough to nourish me. The new church in Angels Camp is already finished, and there and to the church in Jackson a new priest, Fr. Jovan Duchich, will soon be coming from Herzegovina.

“The mission in Arizona has been reorganized into a parish, and Fr. Samuel Popovich from the Timisoara Diocese will be coming to build a new church.”⁵⁶

During the previous year Fr. Sebastian had helped to organize the Serbian community in Los Angeles and to begin construction of a church there; and in 1911 the church, dedicated to St. Sava, was completed. Fr. Sebastian hoped to stay there as the resident priest, but this was not to be. When the Balkan Wars broke out in 1912, he felt called to help his suffering Serbian brothers. Thus he traveled to Serbia and served as chaplain in the Serbian army for over a year. During this trip he took the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to the holy places in Kosovo and the other Serbian Orthodox lands. While in Belgrade, as an American citizen he was invited to officiate at the United States Consulate for Thanksgiving Day services.

When visiting Skopje, Fr. Sebastian wrote a letter to Nikola Pashich, President of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade, in which he expressed his hope that a Serbian diocese would finally be created in America, with a Serbian bishop residing there. It is

⁵⁵ Decision no. 4822 of June 22, 1910, Archives of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 36.

⁵⁶ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic to Archbishop Platon, Oakland, Calif., Dec. 6, 1909. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 35.



St. Platon's Orthodox Theological Seminary,
Tenafly, New Jersey.

noteworthy that he named St. Nicholai (Velimirovich) as a candidate for becoming the Serbian bishop for America at that early date, when St. Nicholai was still a hieromonk. As Fr. Sebastian wrote to Nikola Pashich, “You have two candidates in Serbia, Nicholai and Valerian.”⁵⁷ I consider myself a third only if necessary.”⁵⁸

In August of 1913, Fr. Sebastian visited San Francisco and spoke at an Episcopal Church there. When St. Platon's Orthodox Theological Seminary was established by Archbishop Platon in Tenafly, New Jersey that same year, he became one of its first instructors, bringing with him many years of experience of teaching in church schools. There he prepared for ordination several Serbian seminarians, who went on to become much-needed priests for the Serbian parishes in America.⁵⁹

While based on the East Coast, Fr. Sebastian continued to travel to the Serbian parishes that were still without a priest, in order to serve the Divine Liturgy and pastor the faithful. These included not only parishes in the United States, but also in Canada: for a time he served at the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, which was established in 1913. He also continued to be involved in conferences and discussions with the non-Orthodox. Here he took the same charitable yet firm approach that he had always taken in witnessing Orthodoxy to the non-Orthodox, following the words of the Apostle Paul: *Speaking the truth in love* (Eph. 4:15).⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Hieromonk Valerijan Boshnjavkovich.

⁵⁸ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic to Nikola Pashich, Skopje, Nov. 20, 1912. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 49.

⁵⁹ Mirko Dobrijevic (Bishop Irinej), p. 15.

⁶⁰ Fr. Sebastian used these words of St. Paul as the epigraph of his book *Preaching in the Russian Church*: the book in which he included the above-mentioned chapter “The True Church of Christ.”



Left to right: Hieromonk Jacob (Odzhich), Hierodeacon Damjan (Grujich), Archimandrite Sebastian (Dabovic), poet Proka Jovkich, Priest Paja Radosavljevich.

In 1915 Fr. Sebastian met with St. Nikolai (Velimirovich), then an archimandrite, in San Francisco. As St. Nikolai later recalled, Fr. Sebastian met him at the train station, introduced him to many Serbs in the city, and took him to the Holy Trinity Cathedral. A close spiritual kinship developed between these two dedicated missionaries. St. Nikolai was later to describe Fr. Sebastian as follows:

“He was a sincere and convinced believer and a Christian missionary of world-scope. He traveled restlessly and preached and lectured indefatigably. He composed books, wrote articles, epistles, and thousands of private letters to laymen and priests with needed explanations, exhortations and encouragements. He spoke and wrote in Serbian, English, and Russian. His clumsy handbag was always full with New Testaments, religious booklets, printed sermons and tracts. Also with small crosses for boys and girls. All this he distributed freely. He never visited a Serbian family empty-handed. He remembered the apostolic words: *It is more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts 20:35).”⁶¹

By this time all the chartered Serbian parishes in America had elected to leave the Russian Church and to place themselves under the hierarchy of the Serbian Church. The Russian Church did not agree to this, and tensions understandably ensued.⁶² Fr. Sebastian managed to remain relatively uninvolved in the brewing conflict, but still he was not spared being subject-

ed to unjust accusations. Whereas formerly he had been resented by some Serbs for being too pro-Russian, now he was resented by some Russians for being too pro-Serbian. Archbishop Evdokim (Meschersky),⁶³ who as Archbishop Platon’s replacement in America was trying to keep the Serbian parishes under Russian jurisdiction, accused Fr. Sebastian of “agitating against the Russian church authorities in America” and St. Nikolai (Velimirovich) of “spreading dissension among Serbian parishes in America.”⁶⁴ On October 5, 1916, Archbishop Evdokim called an Assembly of Serbian Clergy in Chicago, with the purpose of, as he said, “sorting out the ambitions of the Serbs.”⁶⁵ At this meeting, presided over by the archbishop, Fr. Sebastian was roundly criticized. Afterwards Fr. Sebastian received a letter of sympathy from one of the Serbian priests present, Fr. Matej Stijachich:

“With a feeling of profound pain in my soul, I remembered long after our meeting in Chicago ... that business of ‘bearded children,’⁶⁶ and also the personal attacks on Your person at every opportunity. Believe me, the sympathies of the Serbian clergy were never so much on Your side as they are today.”⁶⁷

Contrary to what was being said about him, Fr. Sebastian’s primary concern was not, as we have seen, the question of Russian or Serbian jurisdiction, but rather the proper shepherding of Christ’s flock. As St. Nikolai wrote, Fr. Sebastian “never engaged in fruitless polemics”; and hence, during this period of controversy, he “went on with his apostolic mission all over America from coast to coast. Thus many times he visited lonely Serbian families in deserts and wildernesses to administer Holy Sacraments and bring consolation.”⁶⁸

World War I was then raging, and Fr. Sebastian felt he could not neglect his suffering brethren in the Old Country. He asked the Holy Synod of the Russian Church to release him so that he could serve the Ser-

63 Archbishop Evdokim arrived in America in May 1915. He returned to Russia in August 1917, where in 1922 he became a metropolitan of the schismatic “Living Church.”

64 “Decree of His Imperial Highness, All-Russian Autocrat and the Host Governing Synod to Aleutian and North American Archbishop Evdokim,” Petersburg, June 18, 1916. Quoting from “Archbishop Evdokim to the Most Holy Governing Synod,” New York, June 15, 1915. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 56.

65 “Svjedjenje” (Testimony), Oct. 18, Archives of the American Orthodox Church. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 60.

66 Evidently an accusation that Serbian priests, who had beards, were behaving like children.

67 Priest Matej Stijachich to Archimandrite Sebastian, Indiana Harbor, Nov. 15, 1916. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 184.

68 Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovich), “Father Sebastian Dabovic.”

61 Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovich), “Father Sebastian Dabovic.”

62 Bishop Sava, pp. 49–61.

bian Church in the land of his ancestors. In 1917 this request was granted, and Fr. Sebastian went to Serbia once again to serve as chaplain in the Serbian army.

Fr. Sebastian met St. Nikolai in America again in February of 1921, this time in New York City. Two years earlier St. Nikolai had been consecrated as a bishop in Serbia, and his visit to America in 1921 marked the first time that any Serbian hierarch had come to the New World. Here is how St. Nikolai remembered his meeting with Fr. Sebastian during that trip:

“His poverty amazed me when I met him.... I invited him to lunch. Blushing, he said, ‘Thank you; I just bought a roll of bread with my last five cents.’ And salary? None. He lived on people’s freely given donations. And still, even with empty pockets, he planned new journeys to Alaska, to Japan, and of course to Europe.

“‘But you are without means!’ I remarked.

“He smiled with his usual childlike and fascinating smile and quoted the Bible: ‘The Lord will provide’ (cf. Genesis 22:8). And marvelously enough, the Lord always provided for his faithful servant.”⁶⁹

For his part, Fr. Sebastian saw in St. Nikolai a true man of God. Now that St. Nikolai was a bishop, Fr. Sebastian felt even more strongly that he was the best candidate to become the first Serbian Orthodox hierarch in America. By this time the tensions between the Russian Church and the Serbian Orthodox congregations in America had essentially ended, for with the Russian Revolution of 1917 a rupture had occurred in contacts between the Church in Russia and its American Archdiocese. In 1921 the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America was established and was soon to receive its first Greek bishop.⁷⁰ St. Nikolai, meanwhile, had come to America with an assignment from the Holy Assembly of Bishops in Serbia to study the situation of the Serbian congregations in America and determine how they could be organized. Thus seeing greater hope that a Serbian hierarch could be consecrated for the Serbian flock in America, Fr. Sebastian wrote to Patriarch Dimitrije of Serbia on March 30, 1921:

“Considering the conditions and problems of the Serbian population in colonies across America, with their churches, organization and needs, it is imperative to undertake as soon as possible the reorganization and unification of our parishes and missions

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Bishop (later Archbishop) Alexander (Demoglou) of Rodostolon.



St. Sava's Church, Jackson, California.

there, so that it truly becomes the Serbian Church in America. His Grace Bishop Nikolai could do this, taking advantage of the present circumstances which are well known to him, especially since he enjoys the sympathies of the authorities there. Asking Your Holiness to confer the blessing in the form of assistance in the struggle for the Orthodox Church in America ...”⁷¹

On September 21, 1921, Metropolitan Varnava (the future Patriarch of Serbia) nominated St. Nikolai as Bishop of America, with Archimandrite Mardarije (Uskokovich) as his administrative assistant. Many pious people in Serbia objected to this nomination, being unwilling to relinquish their beloved “New Chrysostom.”⁷² Thus, in 1923 Archimandrite Mardarije was appointed administrator of the newly formed Serbian Orthodox Diocese of North America and Canada. According to Fr. Mardarije, the hierarchy in Serbia “were thinking of electing as Bishop for the American Church one of the three archimandrites in America, and they are: Sebastian Dabovic, Georgije Kodzich, both from California, and myself. Who will be chosen is a big question.”⁷³ In its fall meeting of 1925, the Holy Assembly of Serbian Bishops elected Archimandrite

⁷¹ Fr. Sebastian Dabovic to Serbian Patriarch Dimitrije, New York, March 30, 1921. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 86.

⁷² Fr. Daniel Rogich, *Serbian Patericon*, vol. 1 (Platina, Calif.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1994), p. 234.

⁷³ Archimandrite Mardarije to Dr. Paja Radosavljevich, Chicago, April 3, 1924. Quoted in Bishop Sava, pp. 109–10.



Memorial to Archimandrite Sebastian with St. Sava's Church in the background, Jackson, California.

Mardarije as the Bishop of the American-Canadian Diocese. On April 25, 1926, Fr. Mardarije was consecrated to the episcopacy in the Orthodox Cathedral in Belgrade, and in July he arrived in his diocese as the first Serbian bishop of America.

7. HIS FINAL YEARS AND REPOSE IN SERBIA

In the years following World War I, Fr. Sebastian traveled many times between America and Serbia, continuing his untiring pastoral work. As St. Nikolai recorded, in 1921 Fr. Sebastian was “engaged by the American Bible Society to distribute Bibles in the Balkans.”⁷⁴

Fr. Sebastian also began making missionary journeys to the Orthodox Mission in Japan, which had long interested and inspired him. St. Nikolai of Zhicha records that Fr. Sebastian, during his lifetime, crossed the Atlantic fifteen times and the Pacific nine times. He also writes that St. Nicholas of Japan, sometime before his repose in 1912, had offered Fr. Sebas-

tian to stay in Japan and serve the Orthodox mission there.⁷⁵ Although Fr. Sebastian did not stay there permanently, he was able to visit the Japanese Mission many times, offering his wealth of pastoral experience.

Finally, when Fr. Sebastian crossed the Atlantic for the fifteenth time and came to Serbia, he stayed there until the end. Not long before his repose, his fellow Serbian priests in America wrote to the Patriarch of Serbia: “We take the liberty of mentioning that our Homeland has acknowledged the religious and national work of elder brother, Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovic, who is spending his old age in retirement.”⁷⁶

St. Nikolai of Zhicha describes the last years of Fr. Sebastian's life as follows:

“Patriarch Varnava gave him an apartment in the Patriarchate where he stayed until 1938. Then he moved to Zhicha, where he stayed with us for some time, then again to Herceg Novi. On his way to and from he was steadily accompanied by Rev. Jovan Rapaich, whom he loved most of all and who took true filial care of the old man. Finally he returned definitely to Zhicha, his last resort. He stayed with us until the end of 1940. From there he wrote many letters to his American friends. In a letter to Mr. Niko Mussich he wrote: ‘My body is getting weaker and weaker. I would like to see once more the Golden Gate. All my dearest memories from childhood are concentrated in San Francisco and in the country in which I was born.’

“I visited him frequently, asking how the brothers served him. His heart was failing. Fr. Rapaich was with him day and night. The last time, on my return from the diocese, I went to see him. Sitting in an armchair, he was breathing heavily and spoke in a whisper.

“‘Do you have any wish, Father?’ I asked.

“‘Only the Kingdom of Heaven.’

“He spoke no more. These were his last words, representative of his entire career on earth. After that he gave up his spirit. He died on November 30, 1940.

“The next day he was buried in the monastery's cemetery alongside another famous archimandrite, Fr. Raphael, formerly the Superior of the great Serbian

⁷⁵ Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovich), “Father Sebastian Dabovic.”

⁷⁶ “Statement/Appeal of the Priesthood of the Serbian Orthodox Church of the American-Canadian Diocese, Humbly Sent to His Holiness, Archbishop of Pech and Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovac, Dr. Gavriilo, Patriarch of Serbia.” (This document is not dated; since His Holiness Gavriilo was elected patriarch in 1938 it would have been written during the last two years of Fr. Sebastian's life.) Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 188.

⁷⁴ “Report of Bishop Nikolai of Ohrid to the Holy Bishops' Assembly Concerning the Situation and Needs of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America.” Sremski Karlovci, June 26, 1921. Quoted in Bishop Sava, p. 93.

monastery Hilandar on the Holy Mountain, who died in Zhicha in 1937. During the night the season's first snow covered the earth, and it was cold. Yet His Excellency the American Ambassador Arthur Bliss Lane sent the American Consul General from Belgrade to represent him at the burial. For Fr. Sebastian was an American citizen. Besides, Mr. Bliss Lane had great personal devotion for him, calling him 'My spiritual father Dabovic.'

"So ended the earthly pilgrimage of a great servant of Christ and the greatest Serbian missionary of modern times. He was a missionary by words, by deeds, and—what is the greatest of all—by his personal character. He was a viceless man. Meek and unpretentious, he was positive and constructive in all his words and works. He never engaged in fruitless polemics. Externally he was a little, lean man, with a beard. Just a priest the Serbian immigrants liked, remembering their bearded priests in the Old Country. And behold, he was American-born and not an immigrant. But his conviction was that an Orthodox priest ought to be recognizable as Orthodox by his exterior, too."⁷⁷

Archimandrite Sebastian was buried in the cemetery of the Zhicha Monastery. "At the time of his death," writes Bishop Irinej, "Fr. Sebastian owned nothing more than a gold cross, some books, and a few personal mementos. He had long since given away any significant personal possessions to the poor and needy, choosing for himself a life of poverty, simplicity, and dedicated missionary service."⁷⁸

Ten years after Fr. Sebastian's repose, St. Nikolai wrote of him: "Here is a man who indebted all the Serbian race, especially all the Serbs and all the Serbian organizations in America. Should that man remain without a monument or any sign of honor on American soil? He does not need it. He did not wish it. All he wished to his last breath was the Kingdom of Heaven, which I believe he has obtained by the grace of his Lord. But his people need it; his posterity needs it. The Serbian people always cultivated the noble virtue of gratitude. Let them express their traditional gratitude to this remarkable Serbian—Father Sebastian Dabovic."⁷⁹

Now, with the transfer of Fr. Sebastian's relics from Serbia to America—to the first Serbian church in America, which he founded in Jackson, California—this outstanding missionary is at last being shown, in



Grave of Archimandrite Sebastian at Zhicha Monastery, Serbia.

his native country, the gratitude of which he is worthy. He sacrificed himself unremittingly for Christ's Holy Church throughout America and the world, creating new churches where they were needed, and spiritually strengthening those that already existed. It was his tremendous love for Jesus Christ and His Church that not only inspired but *drove* him in his apostolic ministry, that made him burn with zeal as he labored to bring all peoples into the fullness of the Church's grace. We are the inheritors of his spiritual legacy in America—the legacy of a life given wholly to Christ.

"Truly," writes Bishop Irinej of Fr. Sebastian, "this amazing man is deserving of our honor and respect. Even now he is considered worthy of canonization among the Serbian people. May that day indeed come quickly! The epitaph on his tombstone at Zhicha Monastery reads most appropriately, 'The First American Serbian Orthodox Apostle.' Holy Apostle Sebastian, pray for us!"⁸⁰

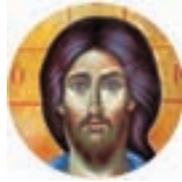
⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Mirko Dobrijevic (Bishop Irinej), p. 13.

⁷⁹ Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovich), "Father Sebastian Dabovic."

⁸⁰ Mirko Dobrijevic (Bishop Irinej), p. 15.





THE ENTHRONEMENT OF THE NEW BISHOP OF WESTERN AMERICA RT. REV. BISHOP MAXIM, PhD

During the Holy Liturgy on July 30, 2006, in the Cathedral Church in Alhambra, His Grace, Bishop Longin of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate, enthroned His Grace Maxim, as Bishop of the Western American Diocese. Bishop Maxim was elected to the Western American Diocese at the regular session of the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, held in May of this year. Serving at the Holy Liturgy were twelve priests, and the faithful who filled the church beyond capacity. According to the ancient ecclesiastical tradition, a new Bishop is installed at the Divine Eucharist. Leading the new Bishop to the Throne, Bishop Longin, the previous Administrator of the Western American Diocese, read the decision of the Holy Assembly of Bishops regarding the election of Bishop Maxim. He then congratulated the faithful of the Diocese on the arrival of their new Bishop, and called upon them to listen to their new Archpastor, to pray to God for him, and to whole-heartedly support him. He then greeted Bishop Maxim, wishing him God's assistance, and much success in his pastoral work in the region of Western America.

Bishop Maxim, upon taking the Throne, addressed all present with the traditional first homily. In his remarks, he thanked the Lord for the grace of the enthronement, as well as the Holy Assembly of Bishops for their decision to entrust him with the care of God's Church in this part of the world. He also expressed his gratitude to all of the previous honorable Hierarchs: Gregory, of blessed memory; Chrysostom, and Jovan, as well as Bishop Longin. Bishop Maxim

emphasized that today, only Orthodoxy lives the faith what breathes the ethos and spirit of self-sacrifice for others, the source of this being in the Holy Liturgy and the ascetical way of life. The Orthodox Church accepts all people, but especially the sinners who emulate Christ, "of a gentle and humble heart", who, as the Good Samaritan, "pours forth oil and wine" upon man's wounds and weaknesses. The new-



Metropolitan Christophor and Bishops Longin and Maxim with the Clergy after the Divine Liturgy in Los Angeles, September 2007

ly-enthroned Bishop pointed out that it is crucial today to keep and protect the most precious gift of peace, unity, and catholicity (universality) of the Church, which the devil begrudges, and which man's sins and weaknesses can often destroy. This unity concerns not just the relationship with the Mother Church in Serbia, but with all of the Churches on this continent. In a world that must face the ethos and culture of the West, Orthodoxy will not be able to offer a witness true to the faith if it is disunited, but rather, can do so only if it speaks "with one mouth and one heart". The Churches are called to overcome their isolation within their nationalistic boundaries, and to work and show themselves as one Church, unto the glory of God – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

At the conclusion of the liturgy, as a remembrance of his enthronement, Bishop Maxim gave each of the faithful in attendance a Prayer Book, illustrated by the iconographer Fr. Stamatis Skliris.

A festive banquet in honor of Bishop's Maxim's enthronement was held in the Cathedral social hall on September 9, with guest hierarchs and faithful from throughout the Diocese and North America.



CHARTING A VISION FOR MISSION, OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM

As we look ahead to growth in the Western American Diocese, we anticipate various challenges confronting Orthodox Christianity in North America, in general and our Diocese in particular. Therefore, it is important for us to size up the effectiveness of the Diocese as it seeks to grow and manifest the Kingdom of God in these Western States of America. Looking ahead to the challenges we will face, we gave thought to some of the ways in which we can better meet those challenges, as well as make the most of the numerous opportunities ahead. This is a plan calling for action, from which hopefully we shall all benefit. The specific ideas mentioned here are already beginning to take shape. As you read this brochure, allow your own faith and vision for our Diocese to grow. I pray that you will offer your support to this important work, so that together, we bear witness to the saving message of the gospel of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

*With Archpastoral Blessings,
Bishop Maxim*

VISION

One of the most interesting concepts of our Christian faith is the challenge to continually improve our lives so that we may become “partakers of Divine Nature” (2 Peter 1:4), i.e., of the Body of the Church. The challenge to enrich and advance ourselves applies not only to each individual, but to every parish and our Diocese as a whole. Experience has shown that to survive and flourish, one must desire and ascetically strive to improve and grow. Our plans for such improvement and growth have a long term approach, as we offer direction and appeal for a unified effort. Our vision is a simple statement of what we hope our Diocese can be as it faces the many challenges of our day. Our Lord, Jesus Christ gave us His vision, recorded in Acts 1:8 when He said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witness in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and

to the end of the earth.” So that is the foundation on which we make our plans and focus our work. Our task is clear. Our clergy and laity throughout our Diocese, must achieve the consensus that the Church is here to manifest the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity, which is a Kingdom of peace, a Kingdom of love, a Kingdom of understanding, a Kingdom of hope and a Kingdom of eternal vision.

LITURGICAL RENEWAL

Liturgy is the work of the people (*leitōs* – people, *ergos* –work). In the Liturgy, there is no audience nor consumer. Rather, it is the effort of all. Therefore, as we move ahead, we must continue to move away from worship as a “formality” simply to be fulfilled. We must encourage the participation of all believers, for the Eucharist is the source of wisdom and strength for us, the “medicine of immor-

tality”, as St Ignatius of Antioch saw it. We must continue to work together to assure that our liturgical life is meaningful, prayerful and understood by all. It is particularly important to encourage each other to live an active Christian life, regularly receiving the Sacraments of the Church. Those who sincerely participate in the liturgical life of the Church come to know the power and love of God in their lives. We are all in need of this constant renewal in an absolute *interdependence*. Ministry in the Church involves personal talents (charismata) and charisms involve variety and diversity, many members with different gifts and ministries.

MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

Missionary work is the very life of the Church, but it has never been easy. Union with God and worship of Him must be the very heartbeat and purpose of our efforts to share the gospel and establish new communities of faithful. We know that if we make worship, the reception of the Sacraments, and growth in the knowledge of our Holy Orthodox Faith the inspiration of our new missions, then material growth and everything needful will come in God’s time.

Undoubtedly, there is a need for missionary expansion in our Western American Diocese. Up until now we have been somewhat successful with our small efforts in receiving families into the Church and forming missions in various parts of the Diocese. They are a beautiful beginning, a God-given opportunity for our Church. This ministry must be strengthened, so that our saving faith may be shared, grown and flourishing, as we reach out to our existing parishes, lapsed Orthodox, immigrant communities, and other missionary efforts with the unchurched and non-Orthodox believers. The harvest is plentiful, as new missions are now springing up and taking root in Denver, Salt Lake City, and Hawaii. We need dedicated men and women with the vision of the Church to make the necessary sacrifices to advance our missionary work.

PUBLISHING

The publishing of the two-volume Prologue from Ochrid demonstrated the importance of the written word, not only for our own community, but

for the benefit and spiritual growth of many outside our own Diocese. We hope that newest publications in 2007, *Christ the Alpha and Omega* by Bishop Athanasius and *In the Mirror: A Collection of Iconographic Essays and Illustrations* by Fr. Stamatios Skliris, will also have the same effect on the clergy and faithful. With that in mind, we look forward to increasing the publishing activity of the Diocese on a more regular basis with the production of a Diocesan magazine, Annual liturgical Calendar, books and translations of important theological works. The Newsletter we hope to begin is necessary in order to communicate the Church’s mission and message of hope and love to our Orthodox faithful and to the public at large. It will also be necessary to include spiritual guidance and theological insights in order to help the faithful to be established and grow in the teachings of the Church. It also will aim to bridge the enormous distances between the numerous communities of the Diocese and to those who are unable to regularly attend services.

EDUCATION

We have come to recognize that faith grows and develops over time, like the rest of ourselves. Our life experiences are always changing us. The Holy Fathers expressed the growth and development of persons as moving from “image” to “likeness.” This process is known as *theosis* – deification or divinization, which includes the body and mind as well as the spirit. Everything we do as the Church educates us, young and old alike. The responsibility of education is our collective duty. So, for all age groups, we hope to develop quality materials and programs, including Bible studies, family life, and similar materials and programs aimed at growth in the understanding of our Orthodox Christian Faith. Meeting with parents of church school children is extremely important. We hope to do more to coordinate such gatherings face-to-face with parents in order to help them with their efforts in raising God-fearing children and maintaining an Orthodox Christian family, in an ever-increasingly secular society, with its many influences on life. We will invite all the members of our diocese to use their heads, their hearts and their resources in serious, yet imaginative ways to come to know, identify with, and live the Orthodoxy Way of life.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Modern technology threatens the human person in many ways. Today's youth are the first generation to grow up in the age of MTV and MP3. Life without cell phones, internet, CDs, DVDs, and cable television is unimaginable. Whereas previous generations may have been influenced by the media, today's youth are often directed by the media. Advertisers are using billions of dollars to try to captivate our youth. Today's youth have not only been exposed to all kinds of immoral behavior, in many instances, they are being socialized to expect and accept them. Therefore, in loving and caring for the needs of our youth, we not only do we pass on the tenets of our Orthodox Christian Faith, but we maintain that zeal for what is good and beautiful for them and us to enter into the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the development of programs to continue and expand the work of ministering to our Youth should be a priority. We need to train regional and local youth leaders, create a college student ministry and outreach, as well as develop new programs for our children. Currently, the Diocese has no part time or full time Director of Youth Ministry. There is an increasing need for not only a part time, but soon even a full-time Christian Education and Youth Ministry Director to serve the parishes and diocese by providing materials and services that will advance our programs. With this additional assistance, we can better provide direction and resources for certain of our target groups: 0-7 year old, 8-12 year old, 13-18 years old, and 18 and up.

MONASTIC LIFE

Our vision is to continue the growth of the monasteries of Saint Herman of Alaska Monastery, Platina, California and of Saint Paisius Monastery in Safford, Arizona, in the Western American Diocese as they further enhance the spiritual growth of the faithful. With the blessing of the Bishop, their publishing activities will further witness to our faith. Additionally, the brotherhood will assist with liturgical life and the general affairs of the Diocesan center, as needed. We also hope to develop the land near San Marcos, CA which was donated to our Diocese and designated as the Monastery of the Meeting of Our Lord.

INTER-ORTHODOX RELATIONS

It is the duty and responsibility of Orthodox Christians to work in genuine and committed ways of expressing our unity of Faith. Inter-Orthodox relations and work is not a luxury but a necessity. It is important for us to keep close relations and collaborate with all Orthodox bishops, clergy and faithful as well as educational institutions such as Saint Vladimir's Seminary in New York, The Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute at Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, St. Sava Seminaries in Belgrade, Serbia and Libertyville, Illinois. Such contact and is always enriching as we learn from one other and find ways to collaborate our efforts, particularly in education and evangelization.

EXPANSION AND COMPUTERIZATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

As we grow, we will need to acquire appropriate hardware and software for the various needs of the Diocese. In many respects, we have already outgrown the office space provided by Saint Steven's Cathedral. With growth, comes the challenge of providing adequate work space for Diocesan personnel.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Diocese currently does not publish a regular newsletter or magazine. The mission of such a magazine could be to serve as the primary communications tool of the Western American Diocese. It could easily provide news of local, national and international interest about the Church, unite our geographically spread out community, educate the faithful about church teachings and policies, provide inspiration and affirmation for an Orthodox Christian lifestyle, provide an Orthodox perspective on major issues of the times, provide a forum for debate on issues and teachings of interest to the Orthodox faithful, and much more. An additional role this journal or newsletter can undertake is communication by the Diocese between the church and unchurched. It should be oriented in such a way that it can reach the unchurched on the territory of the Diocese, and bring them into active participation in the Church.

A DIOCESAN CENTER THE DIOCESE IN ACTION

Giving the enormity of its geographic territory, the breadth and work that goes on in the Western American Diocese can be vast. Maintaining current and establishing new ministries in the Diocese assures that it will always be a vibrant center with a real sense of commitment to sharing the Orthodox Faith locally, nationally and internationally. The Diocese can expand its ministries to become a tangible resource and focal point which reaches out to people, providing programs to put our faith into action. It is desirable and important for us to develop new ministries, such as a Diocesan school of arts (iconography and chanting). Courses in iconography and contemporary expositions are interesting to many and can enhance our Orthodox Christian witness. We have a potential project in mind to produce a chanting-instruction book and audio/ video CD, as well as other similar educational and instructional material. Finally, a strong center is essential to the development of a vibrant Eucharist-centered communities throughout our Diocese.





Bishops Atanasije and Maxim with the Faculty of the Holy Cross Seminary in Brookline

Below: Bishops Atanasije and Maxim with the Faculty of the Saint Vladimir's Seminary in New York





Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Faith Relations

We thank God for every opportunity to express concrete inter-Orthodox cooperation in renewal and witness. We hope that we will be able to continue without hesitation, to facilitate prayer and fellowship opportunities with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. As Orthodox Clergy and faithful, we are not sufficiently known to each other and such local inter-Orthodox activities allow us to get closer to one another and collaborate on our common effort to make our Orthodox Church better known to the world around us.

The Blessing of the Pacific

The feast of Epiphany was one such opportunity. His Grace Bishop Maxim together with a Southern California clergy and faithful from the Western American Diocese joined His Eminence, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Gerasimos for the annual Epiphany celebration held at the **Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** in Long Beach. Hundreds of faithful from around the region gathered for the Festal Divine Liturgy and Great Blessing of Water followed by the Service of the Holy Cross and blessing of the Pacific at Mothers Beach. In a solemn procession, the bishops throw the Cross into the waters, where divers were waiting to recover the Cross. The service of the sanctification of the water is an invocation of God's illumination and wisdom.

Hallowed Image: Hallowed Ground

The Lenten season began with one of the most unique blessings for Inter-Orthodox fellowship and witness. The J.P. Getty Museum at the Getty Center in Los Angeles, in partnership with the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, hosted the Sunday of Orthodoxy Pan-Orthodox Vespers as a finale to the exhibition of some of the oldest icons of Byzantium, icons from Sinai. On the eve of the first Sunday of Great Lent, His Grace Bishop Maxim, together with more than two dozen Orthodox clergy and hundreds of faithful celebrated the Triumph of Orthodoxy Vespers in the Getty Center's Harold M. Williams auditorium.

The occasion commemorates the defeat of iconoclasm, which had twice in the course of a hundred years banned the use of icons -- holy images -- as a form of idolatry.

So the feast called The Triumph of Orthodoxy has been celebrated on the first Sunday in Lent for nearly 12 centuries, since the Empress Theodora restored icons to the church by proclamation in 843.

The solemn atmosphere at the Getty that night evoked the historic nature of what was taking place: A celebration of the restoration of icons to the church in the presence of some of the oldest surviving icons in the world. Not at Sinai, but in Los Angeles.

Tens of thousands — by the close of the exhibit, perhaps hundreds of thousands — came to see the holy images brought to Los Angeles from Sinai. Kristen M. Collins, assistant curator of manuscripts at the J. Paul Getty Museum and co-editor of the catalog for the exhibit, speaking before the Vespers, said some visitors came to see the icons "for their extraordinary beauty" while others came "as a spiritual pilgrimage."

The Vespers, in many ways, though, was like any other Vespers for the Triumph of Orthodoxy. The same prayers were said — in the same order they have always been said anywhere. It concluded with a procession with icons. This time, though, the procession was not around a church, but from the Getty auditorium through the museum's entrance hall to an outdoor stage in the courtyard alongside the exhibitions pavilion.

A Los Angeles newspaper reported, “It was hard to forget and amazing to remember this holy event was being carried out in a very public place.”

Antiochian, Bulgarian, Russian, Greek, Romanian, Serbian and Ukrainian Orthodox — even some who were not Orthodox at all — the Getty had brought them together for Vespers in this place. His Grace, Bishop Maxim, presided and gave a homily titled, “Holy Icons and the Ultimate State of Being.” Icons, he explained, were made possible through “the Incarnation [in Jesus Christ] of the Invisible God.” They are, he told the faithful, “our spiritual treasures because they ultimately reveal our relationship with God; that we belong, not to our self, or to our work, or to ambition in this world, but that we belong to God... They reveal that we are not alone, not isolated, but part of a communion of saints, loved by God with a love which this world with all its adversities and all of its trials and tribulations cannot take away.”



Bishops, Atanasije and Maxim with the Dean of the Holy Cross Theological School, Fr. Triandafilou



Visit to Monasteries on the East Coast



Bishops with His Eminence, Greek Archbishop Demetrios and Clergy



Canonical Orthodox Bishops on the West Coast: His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, His Grace Bishop Joseph, His Grace Bishop Maxim and His Grace Bishop Benjamin





Homily

The Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers

The Getty Center, Los Angeles, CA

February 24, 2007
Maxim, *Bishop of Western America*

Holy Icons and the Ultimate State of Being

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!

It is a joy to be here with all of you this evening, united together in prayer on this special day celebrating the victory of truth and restoration of icons in this special place – The Getty Center, where the holy icons from Sinai have been piously brought, so that they may be experienced and revered by all who come and will come here to be taught and spiritually uplifted by their unique and historical beauty.

From the very beginning of Christianity, the theme of *icons* has been a fundamental component of Theology, and most especially of Christology.

As we celebrate this day in history, we know that icons have been central to the life of Christians in the 8th and 9th centuries, culminating in the thought and work of theologians such as John of Damascus and Theodore the Studite, who made them key subjects of their theological discourses. However, we also know that the theology of the icon is as old as Christianity itself, as is evident from the place it occupied in the Pauline writings.

Here it is also worth mentioning that St. John of Damascus began his great theological work, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, with the words of St John the Evangelist (1:18) “*No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father’s heart, who has made him known* (ἐξηγήσατο)”.

This evangelical truth expressed in these words concerning the mystery of God and his Incarnation, reveals to us the solution to the two-fold question historically surrounding icons and *par excellence*, the icon of Christ – on the one hand, the complexity of describing God, Who by nature is ἀπερίγραπτος or indescribable; and on the other, the theological attempt to describe τὸ ἀπερίγραπτον God, who, by the nature of His Being, is limitless and infinite.

Through the reality of the Incarnation of the Invisible God, we have been given the possibility of Christian iconography, iconology and icon-veneration, knowing very well that on the one hand, it is impossible to make any adequate picture or description of God, for He is Invisible and Incomprehensible, and because “No one has ever seen God” But on the other hand, we have come to know that “it is the only-begotten Son”, “who is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1,15), who, in His Incarnation revealed the invisible God on a human face, as Saint John of Damascus paraphrased from the words of the forefather Jacob: *I have seen the human form (face) of God, “and my soul has been saved”* (Gen 32:31, *On the Divine Images*, 1,22 PG 94, 1256).



When we speak about the relationship between God and the icons, we should always bear in mind this fact of the Incarnation of the Word – the Son of God – by Whom God in Christ actually became visible. That is the reason why the Person of the God-man, Christ, – One Hypostasis in two natures – is the basis for iconography. The Seventh Ecumenical Council (787) expressed this relationship in its dogmatic “*oros*” which states that “honor rendered to the image ascends to its prototype and he who venerates an icon adores the person of the one portrayed.” It was the decision of this Council therefore, that affirmed, once and for all, that the rejection of the holy images was the rejection of the fact of salvation by God in Christ and the Holy Spirit.

In our own time there is vast agreement that Byzantine iconography has a particular unique value. But, the difficulty arises around the question: wherein lies that value? One main perspective is that Byzantine iconography is essentially a *spiritual* painting, contrary to the secular, which underlines (merely) the bodily dimension. Still others consider that Byzantine iconography expresses the heavenly reality as well as the secular – the earthly one. We insist that the difference lies in the fact that Byzantine iconography expresses the ultimate reality of this world. It depicts the world as it will be—transformed in the Kingdom of God.

Secular art usually expresses the mere passing, the temporal, one world which does not succeed to transcend its limitations, corruption and death. One such example is when Picasso completed a portrait of a particular woman, he discovered she was greatly disappointed with the presentation. Picasso responded by saying, “Dear lady, I’ve painted you exactly as you will look in ten years!”

So, iconography depicts that which is just the opposite. It depicts a Saint as he or she will appear and become known in the Kingdom of God. Instead of the decay and corruption of modern portraits, the icon – with the help of the uncreated light of Paradise – leaves out the features of corruption that a saint possessed during his earthly life. So, we might say, that an icon is a *portrait of transfigured life in the future kingdom*.

The icon is an unusual image which presents the landscape (“*paysage*”) of this world, not corruptible as it is now, but incorruptible, as God the Father will look upon it in the Eschata or end of time, when the Son of God will introduce the resurrected people and the entire creation to the Father, by saying: “*Behold, I and the children that You have given to me*”. In this way, the icon depicts the restoration of the fragmented, corrupted space and time.

From the artistic point of view we can summarize the theology of the icon with these four simple points:

First, the icon is not a naturalistic portrait, but a *light-portrait* (photo-portrait). Icons express ontological participation in the Uncreated Light.

Secondly, this Light transcends the laws of optics. It expresses the freedom of the Uncreated.

Third, icons of Christ are not presented as an *individuum* or individually, but are revealed as the Mystery of the Church, where the many are gathered as saints (in the Pauline sense). Each saint depicted in the icon bears all the properties of the Light of Christ, which implies that he is “a Christ by grace”.

And fourth, as every icon is depicted transcendently, the lighting “equalizes” every saint with Christ and other saints within the ontological community of persons, that is, the Church. In the iconic ontology of the Greek Fathers, an *eikon* is normally an “image of things to come.” So, there cannot be an icon of the Kingdom without the community.

The icon reveals an existential attitude and disposition. When we stand before an icon, we do not kiss a mere photograph, but rather, the eschatological (ultimate) person of a Saint depicted. And in the same manner, it is especially important for us to know and remember, that when we stand with our fellow man, we should also overlook his weaknesses and iniquities, and see in him primarily his future restored, transformed and resurrected face, free of passions.

This explains why historically, Orthodox people did *not* differentiate between ecclesial and secular painting. Their eyes were transformed by the eschatological vision of the world. Thus they looked not only at the saints, but also to the ordinary men and women, and our landscape and environment as well – all as transfigured from the temporal to the eternal, the mortal to the immortal, the corruptible to incorruptible.

To more fully understand this, let us now briefly consider what distinguishes Byzantine art from secular aesthetics. Byzantine art is not carried away by the phenomena caused by the laws of optics. It does not empirically observe and represent the appearance of what exists; rather these are appreciated on account of their partaking in *another light*, which is not determined entirely by the laws of optics. Everything in the icon is painted in such a way, with such conventional, flexible shading, that it lends *permanence* to its characteristics.

The fullness of Byzantine aesthetics is also expressed in the iconographer's freedom to depict not only what is visible, but more so, what is invisible. Byzantine art thus gives a *view of the subject which is complete and not at all fragmented*. While western art is *often* restricted to a great extent by the natural laws of the linear transmission of light so that everything which is behind or inside something else is not seen; in contrast, *Byzantine art has absolute freedom to depict everything*. One such example among many, in the many icons of saints and feast days which we venerate, as well as those which are part of the exhibition here at the museum, we can see depicted such things as the roof of a house, even though we are looking at it from below, and according to the laws of western perspective that would not be possible.

In the restoration of icons, we celebrate this perspective and vision of life, transformed and transfigured by the person of Jesus Christ. We celebrate in them the possibility of what remains ahead for those who believe and have lived faithful to Christ. It is precisely this vision of life which Byzantine iconography communicates to us and the culture in which we live.

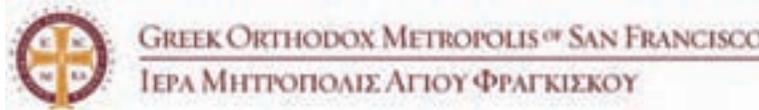
So, icons are our spiritual treasures because they ultimately reveal our relationship with God; that we belong, not to our self, or to our work, or to ambition in this world, but that we belong to God. They are our treasures because they reveal that we are not alone, not isolated, but part of a communion of saints, loved by God with a love which this world with all of its adversities and all of its trials and tribulations cannot take away. The Lenten season certainly calls us to joyfully rediscover this vision of life and our relationships with the world and one another. It is, in a very real way, the foundation and purpose of our fasting, prayer and almsgiving. Through our ascetic efforts, we are led to this essential understanding of our relationship to God, to the world, and to one another as citizens of His Kingdom to come.

May we all then, today, fully aware of our rich treasure of faith in the holy icons, honor the memory of those who have handed down this precious heritage to us, and by so doing, solemnly rediscover this vision of life, and once more, rededicate ourselves to our faith in Christ, our service to Him and to one another as we await the ultimate transformation of the world which has already begun through the Church. This is central to our spiritual growth and this celebration today, as summarized in the historic Synodikon which we so enthusiastically proclaim to one another and to the world.

Historic meetings of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops on the West Coast

At the initiative of His Grace, Bishop Joseph of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Los Angeles and the West, the canonical bishops on the West Coast held their first meeting in Los Angeles on April 10, 2007. The hierarchs, His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos (Greek), His Grace, Bishop Joseph (Antiochian) His Grace, Bishop Maxim (Serbian), His Grace, Bishop Benjamin (OCA) met with their Cathedral Deans to discuss ways and means to work more closely together on common ministries, and to express our Orthodox Christian Faith to the community with one voice. The hierarchs and clergy discussed the celebration of the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and other opportunities for concelebration and fellowship. They agreed that beginning in 2008 they all would concelebrate the Liturgy on the Sunday of Orthodoxy together. The Hierarchs appointed their four Deans to research practical ways to implement such occasions and develop ideas of how to advance our common ministries and collaborate on various programs.

A second meeting took place on July 19, 2007 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in San Francisco, hosted by Metropolitan Gerasimos and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis. It was an opportunity for the hierarchs and priests to build upon the work which began in Los Angeles. This meeting produced a joint communiqué and press release which express their desire to work more closely together and strengthen the bond of Orthodox Christians throughout the Western States. Another meeting is scheduled for November in Los Angeles, to be hosted by Bishop Maxim and the Western American Diocese in conjunction with the Pan-Orthodox Commemoration of the 1,600 Anniversary of the Repose of Saint John Chrysostom.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WEST COAST CANONICAL ORTHODOX BISHOPS MEET IN SAN FRANCISCO

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The second meeting of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the West Coast was held on Thursday, July 19, 2007 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in San Francisco. In attendance were: Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco (Greek), Bishop Joseph of Los Angeles and the West (Antiochian), Bishop Maxim of Western America (Serbian), and Bishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West (OCA). “This gathering of the Hierarchs in San Francisco underlines our desire to have a unified voice of Orthodoxy in the western states,” said His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos.

In an effort to convey the oneness of the Church, several items of importance were decided at the meeting, including:

- Beginning in 2008, an annual joint celebration for the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, which will be attended by all four Hierarchs. This service will be held in the Los Angeles area.
- The development of collaborative continuing education programs for both clergy and laity.
- To work more closely with Orthodox Campus Fellowship (OCF) ensuring that every university campus within the region of the western states has an Orthodox presence.
- Participate in a joint special commemoration of the 1,600th anniversary of the repose of St. John Chrysostom the weekend of November 9 – 10 in the Los Angeles area.

Also participating in the meeting were: V. Rev. Demetrios Earl Cantos (Chancellor, Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco), V. Rev. Nikola Ceko (Dean, St. Stephen Serbian Orthodox Cathedral – Los Angeles), V. Rev. Ian MacKinnon (Elevation of the Holy Cross OCA Church – Sacramento), Rev. Nicholas Borzghol (Priest, St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church – San Francisco), Rev. Michael G. Pappas (Priest, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church – San Francisco), Subdeacon Michael Habib (Antiochian Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles and the West).



The Canonical Orthodox Bishops on the West Coast: His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, His Grace Bishop Joseph, His Grace Bishop Maxim and His Grace Bishop Benjamin



Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the West Coast

COMMUNIQUE
July 19, 2007
San Francisco, California

To our Beloved, the Faithful Clergy and Laity of the Holy Orthodox Church throughout the Western States,

We greet you in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

We gathered together at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in San Francisco, California, for our second meeting with our Cathedral deans and clergy, conscious of our need to give a living witness to the unity of the Faith we share. As shepherds of the holy flock entrusted to our care, we are building on the work of our first meeting hosted by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese in Los Angeles on Bright Tuesday, April 10, 2007.

We express our joy and affirm the oneness of our voice as we offer a witness of the truth of the Gospel to those around us. We share a vision that is faithful to our Orthodox Christian Tradition and dynamic in its desire to engage in our common work. Our prayer and purpose is to put that vision into action and effect, to the glory of God who offers us this opportunity to witness to Him together.

On several occasions we have concelebrated the Divine Liturgy, partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the perfect sign of our unity. It is the Holy Eucharist which renews us and reminds us that it is God who upholds and breaths life into everything. For this reason, we have agreed to institute the tradition of joining together with our clergy and faithful for a Pan-Orthodox celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the first Sunday of Great Lent each year, beginning in 2008.

We have also agreed to work together in the continuing education of our clergy and laity by establishing joint seminars and organizing conferences on topics which effect every diocese and parish. In this spirit, we have decided to jointly commemorate the 1,600th anniversary of the repose of Saint John Chrysostom, with Divine Liturgy and accompanying events planned for November 9-10, 2007.

As we look ahead, building on the work we have begun, we give thanks to our good and loving Lord for his gift of this time together, strengthened by our common prayer and vision. We call upon all of you to pray that our efforts may bear good fruit, for the good of all and unto the salvation of our souls.

With Archpastoral Blessings,

+ METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS
Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of San Francisco

+ BISHOP MAXIM
Serbian Orthodox Bishop of Western America

+ BISHOP JOSEPH
Antiochian Orthodox Bishop of Los Angeles and the West

+ BISHOP BENJAMIN
Bishop of San Francisco and the West,
Orthodox Church in America





THE FUTURE OF ORTHODOXY IN AMERICA

A Conversation with Bishop Atanasije (Jevtic)

After a month long stay and visit to ten American states, Bishop Atanasije in this exclusive interview said that our Faith in America has a future.

Young people in America, who seek Orthodoxy, seek to confront secularism. The Orthodox Church and her missionary work needs to help them in this endeavor. Not some kind of cheap missionary work likened to that of some zealots in our country, rather a deep tilling and sowing of evangelical seed in the souls of young people. That is not only the religious teachings, nor is it catechesis or homiletics, rather it is the awakening of new life in Christ and renewing and life-giving grace which the Holy Spirit gives through the holy virtues and the Holy Sacraments. An authentic Orthodox mission is deep evangelization.

Q: Your Grace, what is your impression of the United States of America and her people?

A: Unfortunately, we Serbs today endure much from American unjust policies and hostile feelings towards us. But, that is the American power – powerful politics, economic and military power like those seen during the brutality of Babylon, Rome, Istanbul, and Berlin. To this our people have a saying: “Power does not beg God, and God does not like power.” However, that Washingtonian power is not the America that we had the opportunity to meet and get to know, however limited, during our month long visit. First of all, America is a wonderful continent with very rare natural beauties where many different people, more specifically many different ethnicities that are simple-hearted, especially American kids and of course, our Serbian kids and many young people we have met. In America there is a rich and vi-

brant lifestyle with both good sides as well as the temptations, dangers, faults. We met American Indians, Mexicans, people from Central and South America, blacks, people from the Balkans, from Europe and the Middle East. Most of those people are religious and a certain number are Orthodox.

Q: How do you see the future of Orthodoxy in America?

A: Orthodoxy existed in America for over two centuries, but it is only in the twentieth century that its existence was strengthened. Since my last visit to the USA twenty years ago (two months, in the year of 1985) I’ve noticed significant improvement in Orthodoxy in America. Of course, we served the Divine Liturgy in our churches (in West Coast and Chicago) as well as in the Russian Church (in San Francisco of St. John of Shanghai), Greek and American churches and monasteries. We also spoke with our brothers Greeks, Russians, Antiochians, and Americans. We were especially pleased to visit and serve in the newly opened Greek, Russian and Serbian monasteries where the monks and nuns are American. There is a good intention and good will that the new Greek and Serbian monasteries are going to be opened in the West Coast, especially in California. They say that California is ahead of everyone else in America, both in the good as well as the bad. It seems as if the Orthodox believers in California are trying to keep up with the state’s advance status. My impression is that Orthodoxy has its deeper future.

There is no doubt that America is a new missionary field for Orthodoxy. Not in the sense of propagation or obtaining supporters, for there is too much religious and Christian proselytizing in America. America is, generally speaking, a Protestant country, (the presence of Roman Catholicism is not that



noticeable.) However, the Protestant divisions, along with partial and flawed understanding of the reality of the Church of Christ has not contributed, and does not contribute, to authentic evangelization and complete ecclesial Christianization of America. Not to prolong the general assessment of Protestantism, including the Episcopalians (Anglicans), we'll say that Protestantism since the time of the Reformation has degraded itself and the Christian Church in general. Protestantism came as a reaction to the wrongful and erroneous doings of the Roman Catholic Church. Nevertheless, Protestantism did not find a way to return to authentic Christianity. Even though they had accomplished much on the humanitarian, social and other aspects of life, they are in ever so great of danger of being secularized, regardless of their humanitarian organizations which suits the official America and which are supported by it for the purpose of worldly wellbeing of its society." But the Church is not "the society of this world," yet it is in this world and she, the Church of Christ, and not America, is the salvation of the world.

Q: Is America the fertile soil for missionary work?

A: Truly it is. We saw many young Orthodox people who more or less recently converted to the Christ of Orthodoxy and His Apostolic and Catholic (Saborna) Church. We also met others who are preparing to receive Orthodox Christianity, among them a young Canadian in the monastery of St. Anthony in Arizona who showed me a book by Fr. Justin in English who also told me, "he converted me to Orthodoxy." It is similar with English translations of the works of St. Nikolai (Velimirovich) and more so with the works of the Holy Fathers, ancient and new. By new I mean, the Athonite and Russian ascetics. America is a country well-suited for missionary work. On her soil, we already have many Orthodox saints, those who have immigrated and those born in America. The Orthodox commemorate and talk about them with spiritual pride and the saints in any given missionary field or country are proof of the fruit of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God that America today has a decent number of apostolic workers, those who proclaim the Gospel, the clergy, and the workers of the "great mystery of the Church in the World," to use the quote from the early Christian text the Didache. But America needs more missionaries, self-sacrificing evangelizing priests, bishops and theologians. There are some among Serbs, but we are always in need of more. I met quite a few theological students in seminaries at St. Vladimir's in New York and Holy Cross in Boston (the theological seminary at St. Sava monastery in Libertyville we did not visit, they were on summer break).

Q: Having in mind that the American society is historically young, that it comprises of numerous confessions, as well as the fact that secularism is very dominant in all spheres of life, how is Orthodoxy lived today in America? How vocal is the voice of Orthodoxy in a secularized country such as America?

A: I have mentioned the young theological students, but we have also met others who study the Orthodox Faith from the abundant Orthodox theological literature either written or translated into English. Even though this small group of young people is very small percentage wise in comparison to the three hundred-million American population, nonetheless it attests to the spiritual hunger for God, truth, true life, a living and true God. No doubt that



secularism is present and very aggressive, especially in respect to the young people who are inclined to live luxurious lives; a life of enjoyment filled with temptations that can lead one astray. Undoubtedly, the American society offers these temptations to our young people.

It is interesting that none of the young people in America mention Europe and the European standards, because America has her own, and many in Europe are trailing (canter) after America. I saw young Serbs, even students, who would rather come to America than Europe. But secularism – meaning this world and all of its wealth, even when utilized for our wellbeing – cannot fulfill man's being with utmost and meaningful content; and especially not when wealth is abused and utilized through consum-

erism. This especially applies to the lives of young people; just as the young man in the Gospel who was not fulfilled by his riches, and hence he asked Christ: "What shall I do to inherit the Kingdom of God?" We saw this during our meeting with a group of young Christians, majority of whom were Orthodox, gathered for their annual young adult conference held in Los Angeles, CA, the see of the Western American Diocese.

Secularism restrains and deludes man, but the strength is needed to resist it. Young people in America, who seek Orthodoxy, seek to resist secularism. The Orthodox Church and her missionary work need to support them. Not some kind of cheap missionary activity as seen among zealots in our country, but a deep tilling and sowing of evangelical seed in the souls of our young people. This is not only a religious education, nor is it catechism or homiletics, rather it is a reawakening for a new life in Christ, for the renewing and life-giving grace which the Holy Spirit gives through the Holy Virtues and the Holy Sacraments.

True Orthodox mission is a deep evangelization that means not only gaining of knowledge from the





Bible or books about God, but rather it means a true conversion to Christ and entrance into the Church as the Body of Christ, as the communion with the Holy Spirit through renewal with repentance and baptism. Furthermore, evangelization means transformation through holy Chrismation, Christian life, and sacramental consummation of the Bread of life in the Holy Liturgy. There is a Greek Orthodox priest in America who under Protestant influence wrote a pamphlet in which he says that not sacramentalization, but evangelization is more important than the sacramental life: we need to spend more time studying the Gospel rather than simply participating in the Sacraments alone. First of all, his polarization of this two-sided, yet undivided reality of Orthodox Apostolic and Church missionary activity is unacceptable and in his premise I see, first of all, a great lack of knowledge of Orthodoxy and furthermore just plain Protestant modernizing – which opposes the Gospel to the Church, and the Word of God to the Holy Mysteries of Christ. Such un-churchly [un-ecclesial] and un-evangelical Christianity exists in America and has been promoted by Protestants for several centuries now. That is why the young who convert to Orthodoxy show by this act that they do not need that type of Christianity because it does not lead to Christ – Incarnated Godman, but maybe to some “individualized” Jesus.

Q: What is “new” that Orthodoxy offers on the American soil that people have not heard from the preachers of various other Christian confessions?

A: First of all, we should remind ourselves of the words of St. Irenaeus of Lyon from the second century - when Gnosticism surfaced - and when asked “what has Christ brought to the world” St. Irenaeus answered: “He brought himself as the Incarnated God-man,” that is He brought Himself as the

Church – a personal and conciliar (saborna) community of God and persons. Such fullness of the image and the work of Christ in all His Divine-human dimensions has been preserved only in Orthodoxy, as Dostoevsky stated. America has Jesus, but has no Christ. You will hear sermons or you will encounter many books or even Protestant institutions where they mention Jesus (on some cars of Protestant missionaries the sticker states “Powered by Jesus”). But you will not hear the Gospel about God-man Christ and His Church, and that means that you will not hear about the incarnate Christ, the embodied Christ, about Christ in the Church and Christ as the Church. Many Protestants even doubt the Resurrection of Christ and some go as far as to say that it is insignificant. With such thinking, they actually deny the essence of Christianity and God’s Gospel of salvation of the world and man.

Orthodoxy does not know Christianity without the incarnate Christ, crucified and resurrected and does not know Christ without the Church - a grace-filled Community of God’s people in which He is the Firstborn amongst His many brethren.



Therefore, Orthodoxy confirms and presents Christ to the hearts, souls, and minds of people in America as the Church; Christ as truly living life; Christ as the parish; Christ as the monastery; Christ as the Liturgy. In that sense, Orthodoxy in America has succeeded in establishing new parishes through the efforts of a significant number of bishops. The establishment of several dozen of men’s and women’s monasteries – where ascetic-liturgical life can take place, is especially new.

In the last ten years the Athonite elder, ascetic and the man of prayer Ephraim of Philotheou founded seventeen monasteries throughout America (from the biggest in Arizona, St. Anthony, to California, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York and Canada. So there are under his spiritual guidance nine men's and eight women's monasteries and preparation is being made to establish yet another). Similarly, there are ten Serbian Orthodox monasteries, among them are those in Arizona, California and Alaska, with both nuns and monks who are all American converts; the rest of the monasteries are in the Midwest and Eastern America. These monasteries are significant not only in their life, work, prayer, and services of monks and nuns that live in them, but are also significant in the fact that they are visited by many traditional cradle-Orthodox and converts who come to attend services, come to confession, and Holy Communion. We also find it interesting that some of them build houses in the proximity of the monastery.

Other important points include living Orthodox parishes and a great number of active priests (whom we met and conversed with during the Clergy Brotherhood Meeting the last two days of May in Los Angeles) many of whom are young converts. (I will set aside the present problem in many parishes where a living and dynamic witness of Orthodoxy is challenged by few careless priests and unfortunately bishops for whom administration is more important

than pastoral work, in Serbian and other jurisdictions. The greatest problem is present in the Church boards in which members of laity control the Church, thus using authority for personal, material gain, rather than a missionary zeal and living liturgical community.)

The third important factor for consideration, are the Orthodox theological seminaries, of which the most important are St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary and Holy Cross Theological Seminary. The St. Sava's Theological Faculty of the Serbian Orthodox Church is in a developing phase, just as the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute at the University of California in Berkley. In the recent times St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary in the Monastery of St. Tikhon – where St. Nikolai of Zicha was the rector – has been growing. We should also mention the Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville and St. Herman's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kodiak, Alaska. Not everything in these seminaries is as it should be (for example, as it was in the early Christian schools in Alexandria and Antioch) and the teaching staff is not necessarily fully prepared. But these schools gave Orthodox theologians such as Fr. George Florovsky, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, Fr. John Meyendorff, Fr. Theodore Stasiopoulos, Fr. Paul Tarazi. The patristic and church-building theology which they have instituted is continued by the present generations. There exists a bit





of competitiveness among some Orthodox jurisdictions, but we hope that this will disappear in time because of the need for a united Orthodox witnessing of Christ and hierarchization of His Gospel in America.

Q: How to overcome the problem of the Orthodox "diaspora"?

A: Orthodox diaspora is a reality in the missionary sphere, for which we have to have understanding and patience until the full unity of the Catholic-universal Orthodox Church in America is established – which will undoubtedly be achieved one day as St. Nikolai of Zicha said in 1952. By the grace of God there exists an uninterrupted Eucharistic union and communication between all Orthodox jurisdictions after divisions – within the Serbian churches in America and between the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate – have healed.

Q: What is your opinion of the status of the Orthodox Church in the United States of America and her ecclesial life? How to overcome the consequences of the schism?

A: I have only visited Western American Diocese and the New Gracanica Metropolitanate of the Serbian Orthodox Church. I saw that the people as well as the clergy want the completion of the canonical-administrative unity, but from few priests and laity I heard that there exist certain delays and unwillingness to bring this to fruition, especially in Canada and the Midwest where "teachers of Israel" did not comprehend that going to the worldly courts is directly against the canonical tradition of the Church. I did not have time nor was I invited to visit the regions in which the final administrative unification is delayed and made more difficult. I shall not mention

the sad story of going to civil court of several of our bishops on this continent and Europe against their parishioners and their priests. That is the job of the Holy Assembly of Bishops.

Q: "The Dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theology Seminary in New York has awarded you with an honorary doctorate degree for your extensive pedagogical work at the cathedra of Patrology and your great influence on the development of contemporary Serbian, and not only Serbian, theological thought – for which we sincerely congratulate you. Would you share your impressions with us from this great event?"

A: St. Vladimir's Orthodox School of Theology gave an honorary doctorate to Justin (Popovich) of Blessed memory which he accepted with gratitude even though he was not able to attend the ceremony. I was invited by St. Vladimir's Seminary and was given a cross and the diploma and this took place at the beginning of the liturgical seminar of this theological school. The St. Sergius Orthodox School of Theology in Paris does a similar thing at the end of the academic year when it prepares a seminar for its professors, students and all interested Orthodox clergy and seminarians. After the ceremony I had the opportunity to hear the lecture of one Ukrainian Orthodox liturgist by the name of Archimandrite Gregory on the theme of the differences in liturgical practice among Orthodox churches in America and their endeavor of uniformity through the renewal of the





original Orthodox liturgical practice. He mentioned that this endeavor is present among Greeks, Antiochians, Russians, and Americans, not only in America but also in traditionally Orthodox countries. It is impressive how they follow, recognize and discern as the wise shepherds who were taught about the Kingdom of God, who bring forth from their treasury both new and old. We will publish his lecture which the author kindly passed on to us.

On the long journey back from America we mused on God's wondrous ways and works through-

out the world and its history. That the Gospel as the Good News of the salvation is preached to the end of the universe and to the end of the ages and that all the peoples as the children of God are called and brought home into the Church of Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God the Father. The hostility of American policy towards the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, cannot divert us from the feeling of joy and hope for the future of Orthodoxy in America.

Borislav Petrich and Snezana Denker.





Above: Bishops Longin and Maxim at St Sava Church in San Gabriel, Epiphany 2007.

Below: Divine Liturgy at Sts Constantine and Helene Greek Orthodox Church in Honolulu, Hawaii





NEW MISSIONS OF THE WESTERN AMERICAN DIOCESE

Liturgical and missionary work of the Church is the main task of every Bishop and of the Diocese. In the Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church there are several Missionary Parishes: The Venerable Peter of Korish in Anchorage, Alaska; The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos in Orange County, California; St. John the Baptist in Denver, Colorado; St. Lazar in Honolulu, Hawaii; St. John the Baptist in Reno, Nevada; The Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos in The Dales, Oregon; and St. Archangel Michael in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Venerable Peter of Korish Serbian Orthodox Mission, Anchorage, Alaska

The first Serbian immigrants came to Alaska during the Gold rush which occurred at the end of 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Alaska is considered the Cradle of Orthodoxy on this continent. In addition to the great work of the Russian Orthodox missionaries, most especially St. Herman, the Serbs contributed by erecting the Church of St. Sava in Douglas, Alaska with the help of Fr. Sabastian Dabovic, as it is written in the Article of Fr. Damascene in this book. The new parish of Venerable Peter of Kor-



two parishioners, Ljubisa and Lana Gavrilovic, donated property very close to downtown Anchorage. Initially the Divine Liturgy was served once every two years, but, since the enthronement of His Grace Bishop Maxim as Bishop of the Western American Diocese, the Liturgy is every two or three months until the conditions are created for a permanent priest.



ish was established by His Grace Bishop Chrisostom in 1992. Besides the descendants of early immigrants and some newer immigrants, the church serves recent refugees who fled the war and persecution in the former Yugoslavia. In spite to a severe climate and harsh weather changes, this small Serbian Orthodox community which includes 70 to 100 souls is determined to stay and build a church. Towards that goal,

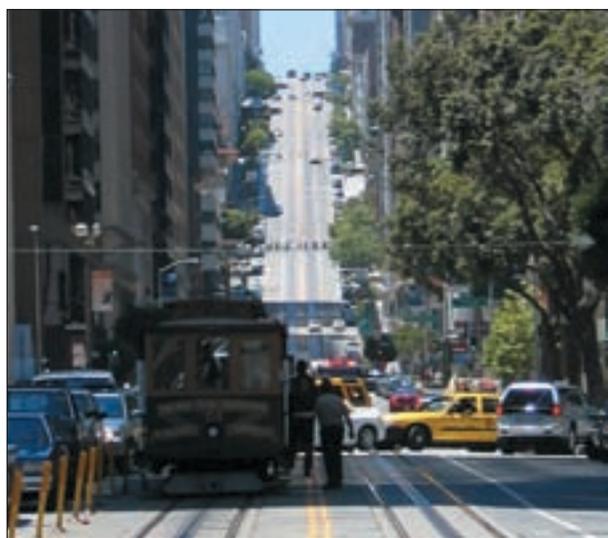




The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos Serbian Orthodox Church in Orange County, California

The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos Serbian Orthodox Church was established in Orange County, California by His Grace Bishop Jovan of the Western Diocese in Spring, 1998. For several months Fr. Peter Jovanovich served as the interim priest until October of that year when Father Blasko Paraklis was appointed as parish priest. United in the faith, parishioners shared a sense of fellowship and a growing determination to build a church, fellowship hall and school from the onset. Following the examples set by early Serb immigrants to this country, the Orange County community seeks to perpetuate the faith and pass a strong spiritual and cultural foundation on to future generations. Divine Liturgy and other services are celebrated regularly, followed by Sunday School, lunch and folk dancing, all in a rented facility. Religious holi-

days are observed with overflow crowds in attendance. Among the worshipers are senior citizens, grateful that there is finally a church close in their area; families seeking religious education for their children; college students and single adults, who appreciate the spiritual guidance and fellowship; new immigrants who seek support in the daunting task of acclimating to their new country; and a broad range of others. Besides Serbian families and a few converts the parish is blessed to have some Russian Orthodox families as a part of the community.



The regular liturgical and Church life for several years strengthened the determination of the Orange County Serbian community to build a place of worship that will be an earthly testimony to the glory of God, a place that will welcome all who are faithful to the Orthodox Church and her teachings.

St. Lazar Serbian Orthodox Mission in Honolulu, Hawaii

The first Serbians, mostly from the Western part of the United States, came to live in Hawaii about 50 years ago. During the last thirty years, quite a few immigrants from Serbia settled on these exotic and beautiful Islands. Today the Serbian community in Hawaii includes 50 to 70 souls. The Missionary Parish of St. Lazar in Honolulu, Hawaii was established with the blessings of His Grace Bishop Chrysostom on Vidovdan in 1992. At first, a few Divine Liturgies and



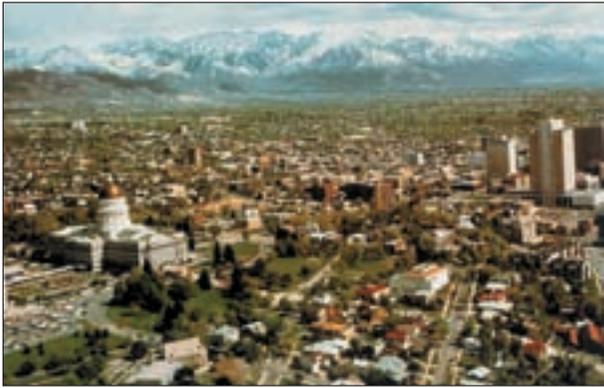
some baptisms took place, and other events were organized. Due to the relocation of the first organizers of the parish during the last 10 years, the activities of the community were reduced to a minimum. After Pascha of this year, the newly enthroned Bishop of the Western Diocese, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxim visited Hawaii, reestablished the Parish, served two Divine Liturgies and performed four Baptisms. Like every other missionary parish community, the Serbs in Hawaii have to work very hard to produce true spiritual fruits, the ground upon which a permanent church and community will be established.



St. Archangel Michael Serbian Orthodox Mission Salt Lake City, Utah

Salt Lake City was one of the cities in the US where the first Serbian immigrants settled at the end of 19th and beginning of 20th century. Inspired by the example of their fellow Serbs who built the first Orthodox Churches in North America in Jackson, California and Butte, Montana, the Serbs in Utah erected a church early in the 20th century. Unfortunately, after a number of years, the parish was dissolved for some unknown reasons. Today most members of Salt Lake parish are recent refugees who fled the war and persecution in former Yugoslavia. They found a safe haven and new life in Utah. As immigrants to America found so many times before, they also discovered that the Faith and the Church are the best foundations upon which to build new life in a new country.





St. Archangel Michael Parish was reestablished in 1997. The community worked very hard to raise funds and bought a church building in 2006. The Divine Liturgies, Sacraments, Bible study, national folk dance lessons, and language classes are now conducted in our own building. It is a wish of every immigrant to feel at a new place like at home. The Church is a place that offers continuity in faith and tradition. The Serbian Orthodox community in Salt Lake City is blessed with the facility obtained as a result of the love and hard work of the Faithful. Their labor was rewarded at Christmas this year by a large donation given by Mrs. Sofia Piedmont, the only living member of the first Serbian Church built in Salt Lake City. Currently the Divine Liturgy is served once, sometimes two times a month by a visiting priest. The 120 to 150 families in the parish are beginning to create conditions for a permanent priest to continue building the living Church.

The main goal of all these missionary parishes is to establish a regular Liturgical and Sacramental life with a full time priest.



As one Holy Bishop said: “The Holy Liturgy is the cornerstone on which our church depends and continues its mission throughout the world.” The liturgy, then, must be at the heart of the life of the church, of each parish, of each community. The Holy Liturgy is not simply one of the activities of a parish; it is the reason for its very existence and for its establishment. Besides Divine Liturgies, other services and sacraments are performed at all these parishes. Children and adults are baptized, and the faithful are spiritually fed through Sacramental life in the Church and her educational activities. The goal is to establish spiritual centers and to create conditions in all these parishes to support a full time priest. The following parishes currently have a full time priest who serves the Divine Liturgy and other Sacraments regularly: Denver, Colorado; The Dales, Oregon; Reno, Nevada; and Orange County, California.



Let’s pray that we may strengthen our missionary parishes and our life in the Church. Our first concern should not be the size or wealth of a parish, but how spiritual it is. I was recently reading articles from a wonderful book entitled, “The Diary of a Russian Priest” by Fr. Alexander Elchaninov. Fr. Alexander was a Russian priest living in France during the 1920’s and 30’s. His diary was compiled by his wife after his death in 1934 and is full of wonderful advice and observations. One particularly struck me, a rhetorical question, “How can we strengthen our life in the Church?” His answer, “The direction of a spiritual father, continual contact with him. Frequent resort to the sacraments, careful preparation before receiving them, participation in Church services, prayer at home, the daily reading of the Gospel and religious books, the observance of the Church calendar, friendship and contact with people who believe and belong to the Church.”



THE 2007 CLERGY BROTHERHOOD CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL MEETING HOSTED BY THE WESTERN AMERICAN DIOCESE

On Monday afternoon, May 28, 2007, His Grace, Bishop Maxim returned to Los Angeles from the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church with the honored guests for the Clergy Brotherhood Conference: His Grace, Bishop Atanasije, PhD., of Hercegovina, and Father Stamatis Skliris. Upon their arrival, they were greeted and welcomed by children dressed in Serbian folklore costumes who welcomed the guests with the traditional bread and salt: bread is the staple of life from ancient times and Christ referred to Himself as the “Bread of Life” (John 6: 48); salt reminds us of Christ’s example from

the Gospel: “Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another” (Mark 9: 50). The children then presented beautiful flower bouquets to Bishop Maxim and our guests: Bishop Atanasije; Father Stamatis Skliris, renowned priest, iconographer and medical doctor from Athens, Greece; Presbyter Marina Skliris; Igumen Sava, Abbot of Tvrdos Monastery; Milan Pecut, a friend and assistant to Bishop Atanasije for twenty years.

After a brief prayer service, clergy and faithful of the Western Diocese in attendance proceeded to the North hall for a luncheon

prepared by members of the Diocesan Kolo Srpskih Sestara.

Following a short rest, Vespers was served and both Bishops’ voices filled the Cathedral as they chanted the hymns that commemorate the Holy Spirit on this second day of the Feast of Pentecost. The Vespers service always includes the ancient hymn, *O Gladsome Light*, and Bishop Atanasije addresses it in the first chapter of the new English translation of his book, *Christ: The Alpha and Omega* (published by the Western Diocese). In part he writes: “the world glorifies Christ as its Lord and Savior, as its Creator, and as the Giver of light and life in this physical existence...That life is a holy, bright, blessed and immortal Life, and corresponds to those characteristics which Christians receive from Christ, and which He eternally possesses from the Heavenly Father. This is our newly established being and life in the Holy Spirit, in the Holy and Light-generating, Life-giving Trinity, in the Kingdom of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – God.”

On Tuesday morning, May 29, Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the second day of Pentecost, often referred to as “Spirit Tuesday.” Following Vespers, there was a reception throughout the evening to wel-



His Grace Bishop Atanasije celebrates the Divine Liturgy at Saint Steven’s Cathedral



Procession into the St Steven's Cathedral before the Divine Liturgy, June 3, 2007

come Serbian Orthodox clergy from across the country arriving for the Annual Clergy Brotherhood Conference taking place over the next two days.

With nearly seventy clergy in attendance, the Annual Clergy Brotherhood Conference of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North & South America began on Wednesday, May 30, 2007, in a most blessed way: with the presentation, *"A Testimony on Orthodoxy and the Contemporary World,"* by His Grace, Bishop Atanasije, PhD. The Bishop covered a wealth of material, drawing on his many years of study in his areas of specialty, Church history and Patristic teachings, and his time as a disciple of Saint Justin (Popovich) of Chelije. The presentation included: the role of the Apostle Paul and his dynamic relationship with the Apostle Peter in the establishment and theology of the young Church; the Orthodox Christian emphasis on the understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ's name in the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah: "Immanuel - God is with us;" greater participation of the parishioners in the worship services, including more frequent partaking of Holy Communion; examples of Orthodox Christian witness throughout the world; imitating Trinitarian

love, especially within our families; prioritizing increased communication and fellowship among the Orthodox jurisdictions. Those in attendance who didn't understand Serbian were able to hear a real-time translation into English using headphones, portable receivers and a direct radio feed through the Social hall's p.a. system, provided by the Western American Diocese.

Following the Bishop's planned remarks, he answered questions from the clergy which was followed by lunch. All meals during the two-day conference were deliciously prepared by the Western Diocesan Kolo Srpskih Sestara and the conference organizers thank God for their love and devotion to His Holy Church!

The Annual Clergy Brotherhood Conference convened for the remainder of Wednesday afternoon, addressing a number of topics pertaining to the work of the Brotherhood over the past year and in the year to come: continuing clergy education, publishing the *Brotherhood Calendar* and other projects, addressing clergy health care and pension issues, and the election of a new Executive Board for 2007-08.

Fr. Merick presented the acting president's report on the work of the Brotherhood over the past

year. The board met four times, three via conference call. Charitable gifts were given to the families of clergy who departed this life, to the St. Sava School of Theology, and to all clergy widows. The Brotherhood also was represented by a board member at a number of significant events in the life our parish and dioceses. Several students and clergy were given scholarships to help them pursue their studies or research. Fr. Mile Subotic, Fr. Dragoljub Popovic and Fr. Milovan Katanic were recognized for their work on the periodic Clergy Messenger, as were Fr. Djuro Krosnjar, Fr. Darko Spasojevic and Fr. Deacon Damjan Bozic on the annual official Calendar and yearbook. Fr. Spasojevic was also thanked for his work as web master of the Brotherhood's web site.

Continuing clergy education and seminars/conferences, publishing activities, and other activities were touched upon in his report.

Reports were also heard from Secretary Fr. Rodney Torbic and Treasurer Fr. Deacon Damjan Bozic. Fr. Darko Spasojevic presented the report on behalf of the Calendar editors, and Fr. Milovan Katanic reported on the Clergy health care plan. A written report on the Pension plan was provided by Fr. Dragoljub Malich, who was unable to attend. Discussion on various topics led to a number of initiatives and improvements the membership would like the Brotherhood to pursue in the coming year.

Elected as the Brotherhood board for the coming year were: President Fr. Djokan Majstorovic, Vice President Fr. Darko Spasojevic, Secretary Fr. Norman Kosanovich, Treasurer Deacon Damjan



Bishop Atanasije speaking at the 2007 Clergy Brotherhood Conference and Annual Meeting in Los Angeles;

Bozic, and board member Fr. Rastko Trbuhovich, Fr. Rade Merick, Fr. Rodney Torbic, Fr. Alexander Novakovic, Fr. Michael Boyle. Audit Board members include Fr. Radovan Jakovljevic, Fr. Dragan Petrovic, Fr. Alexander Savic, Fr. Dragoljub Malich and Fr. Milovan Katanic will remain in their positions as administrators of the Pension Plan and Health Care Plan, respectively, as appointed by the Central Church Council.

The second presentation to the clergy on Wednesday took place in the evening following the meeting. Fr. Stamatis Skliris is renowned as an iconographer and medical doctor but more importantly for the clergy gathered, is his wealth of experience as a priest, and he offered some of it with great humility in a presentation called "Priestly Ministry in a Changing World."

Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was concelebrated on Thursday morning with Bishops Maxim and Atanasije, some thirty of the priests and three deacons. Bishop Atanasije then continued his presentation on "A Testimony on Orthodoxy and the Contemporary World" and following lunch Fr. Stamatis spoke on "The Icon and the Kingdom of God." With the use of a Powerpoint slide presentation, Fr. Stamatis touched briefly on comparing the use of light between Western art and Byzantine iconography. He concludes in part: "light in Western art is just an application on the creature which...beautifies already-existing creatures, whereas light in the Byzantine icon is a prerequisite for the existence of the creatures..." This subject is addressed more thoroughly in his new book, *In the Mirror: A Collec-*

tion of Iconographic Essays and Illustrations (published by the Western Diocese).

This Conference was not only informative and educational, it was first and foremost inspiring and energizing. It not only gave the Serbian Orthodox clergy on this continent an opportunity to renew their bonds of brotherhood, to serve and pray together, but also to renew their own spiritual life and continue their commitment to their ongoing education through such instructive and inspirational lectures, workshops and discussions, and to address common concerns in their life and work for the Church. Next year's meeting has been tentatively scheduled to be hosted by St. Sava Cathedral in New York City.

The official website of the Clergy Brotherhood posts the following: "The Brotherhood extends deepest thanks to His Grace, Bishop Dr. Maxim and the Western American Diocese for their invitation to the Clergy Brotherhood to participate in the clergy seminar they organized and which provided continuing education opportunities for our clergy, and to Fr. Nikola Ceko and St. Steven's Cathedral for their additional assistance and hospitality."

Faithful of the Dormition of the Theotokos Mission in the Dalles (Oregon)



Η ΜΕΤΑΝΟΡΘΩΣΙΣ





“What is Christianity?” **Theme of the** **2007 ANNUAL DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY**

“The center of our Christian faith,” has to be Jesus and the Gospel... which is our goal. You can’t separate Christian life from Jesus Christ.”—Thomas Hopko

During the week of the Publican and Pharisee, Orthodox Christians slowly prepare themselves for Great and Holy Lent. This preparation begins with the reminder of the need for repentance, a positive change of mind, as our Lord Himself taught us in the parable of the repentant Publican and the proud Pharisee. At the parish of the Holy Apostle Peter in Fresno, California, at the beginning of February 2007, the Annual Assembly of the Western American Diocese took place.

As each year, the Assembly was preceded by a clergy seminar. The guest speaker in 2007 was Protos-priester Thomas Hopko, a well known and beloved theologian and Dean Emeritus of St. Vladimir’s Seminary. Father Tom spoke to the clergy from the wealth of his experience and knowledge about the basis of the ordained priesthood and practical dimensions of pastoral work in modern society.

The next day, Friday, February 2, following the Service of the Invocation of the Holy Spirit and greetings from His Grace Bishop Maxim, Fr. Thomas Hopko spoke to the Assembly on the theme *“What is Christianity?”* Fr. Hopko began the presentation by stating that everything begins with Jesus Christ and the Gospel, which tells us who Christ is. He identified some of the basic aspects of Christianity, that it is first and foremost life in the person of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, the Word (Logos) of God incarnate, who is one with God as His only-begotten Son, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified for us, who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be seated at the right hand of God the Father, and who will come again in all his glory to “judge the living and the dead and whose

kingdom shall have no end. He came to deliver man from darkness, to liberate him from the enslavement of sin, and to transfer him once again into the kingdom of divine wisdom, insight and light. This is the gospel proclamation and the profession of faith formulated by the Holy Fathers.

“The center of our Christian faith,” Fr. Hopko stated, “has to be Jesus and the Gospel... which is our goal. You can’t separate Christian life from Jesus Christ.” Yet, Fr. Hopko expressed concern that, in many cases our so-called Christian life has nothing to do with Jesus (The word Jesus is used flippantly, for example, and Jesus is too often quoted by people who have not read the Bible.) Basically, “there is no Orthodoxy in itself that is not directly connected to Jesus Christ.” In fact, “every day should be a Pascha,” since “our mission of reality is Christ and the Gospels.”

“God has established His final and everlasting covenant with human beings in His Son, the Messiah.” He added, “What the prophets have predicted has come to pass. The covenant in the blood of the Son of God, the living temple animated by the Spirit of God, is with us. God is with us. Jesus Christ has come and established His Church, and ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ (Matthew 6:18). The Church is not some conglomeration of competing and contradicting denominations, nor some sort of divinely established organization to make decrees and moral pronouncements. It is the Church of the living God, the Bride of the Bridegroom, the True Vine with His branches.” What the holy Church prays is what the scripture teaches. “We believe and proclaim to this day,” said Fr. Tom, “that there is a Church in which the fullness of grace and truth, which resides in Christ, is made accessible to human beings. The Church is salvation; the Church is eternal life in its deepest and fullest sense. This salvation is in the Orthodox Church.”

As usual, Fr. Hopko interspersed his presentation with stories and humor, and following his impressive delivery, there was a question and answer period.

The working portion of the Assembly began with the report of the Bishop. His Grace, Bishop Maxim reflected on his first months as Bishop of the Western American Diocese: *"Over the course of the last six months, I have been blessed with the opportunity to visit and extend my pastoral blessing to many of the faithful parishes of the Diocese. As the faithful communally worshipped our Lord during our Divine Liturgy, love and spiritual unity have increased. The importance of remembering that it is only by Christ that the Church and His people continue to exist, is essential for the flourishing of our Diocese...I am sincerely thankful for the experiences I have been having with the entire Diocese. It becomes more evident that our ministry today is 'multifold', consisting of: 'cultivating, nurturing, and sustaining a vibrant and dynamic Orthodox faith in the United States; teaching and practicing limitless love and philanthropy; and emphasizing, pursuing and enhancing the establishment of a strong and unbreakable unity within the Orthodox Churches."* He also spoke about outreach and ministry to the youth and young adults: *Our responsibilities are great and awesome in any context, but certainly this is especially the case in North America today... My words and thoughts are also dedicated to the beautiful and lively presence of the youth. Young people today look to the Church with particular trust. They are looking for solutions to the impasses of a mechanized, technical culture. They want to surpass the different tendencies towards dehumanization. Furthermore, they are seeking answers to the arrogance of power and the disdain of various scientific achievements. However, they are also formulating certain important requests of us. They want, for example, spiritual leaders of the Church to be without hypocrisy; pure, true prototypes in ethos, conduct, and lifestyle. I hope to continue to fervently serve the Holy Orthodox Church by being able to visit and extend my pastoral blessing to the faithful, and I sincerely pray that we may all continue to yield abundant spiritual fruit."*

With Father Hopko present for the entire weekend, it was also an opportunity for a Pan-Orthodox gathering of prayer, fellowship and education, sponsored by our Diocesan Education Department and hosted by Saint Peter Church. Father Hopko spoke to the clergy and faithful from the Fresno region on the theme of God's Gospel in Jesus. Here Fr. Tom noted that the Gnostic gospels, published lately around ma-

ior Christian Holy Days as something new, were known to the first Christians (St. Irenaeus of Leon in his writings rejects them and exposes their fallacy). He also mentioned that the Gnostic gospels do not talk about the Cross (the crucifixion and suffering of Christ). The Gospels that the Church has included in the Canon reveal to us the fullness of the economy of salvation, the integral message of Christ, and His Divine-human person.

The final day of the Assembly, Saturday, February 3, the Feast Day of St. Maximus the Confessor, the Divine Liturgy and a memorial service for reposed clergy and laity in the diocese was celebrated by His Grace and the clergy. His Grace's homily reflected on the harmony between the Liturgical and ascetic life in the Orthodox Church as St. Maximus the Confessor demonstrated by his life and writings. In his writings, St. Maximus speaks about the Heavenly Kingdom whose icon is the Divine Liturgy. He also talks about the necessity to repel and fight against selfishness and individualism.

The concluding plenary session which followed the Divine Liturgy addressed the status of missionary parishes, other ministries of the Diocese, and the plans for the 2007 Diocesan Days scheduled for Labor Day weekend in Jackson, California. The assembly also welcomed Protopresbyter-stavrophor Dusan Bunjevic, the Bishop's Deputy of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate for the West Coast. The assembly unanimously expressed the wish to have the five New Gracanica Metropolitanate parishes that are on the west coast added to the Western American Diocese. The Assembly issued a formal resolution on this question and addressed it to His Grace Bishop Longin of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate.



Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at Monastery Gracanica, Third Lake, Illinois



**ORTHODOX BISHOP OF WESTERN AMERICA
TO HIS GRACE KYR LONGIN
BISHOP OF THE NEW GRACANICA, NEW GRACANICA MONASTERY**

RESOLUTION OF THE DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

**WESTERN AMERICAN DIOCESE
FRESNO, FEBRUARY 3, 2007**

Your Grace, the Archpastor of the Fullness of God's Holy Church in New Gracanica Metropolitanate, greetings in these days of Triodion before the Great Lent!

Gathered today on February 3, 2007, on the Feast Day of St. Maximus the Confessor, inspired by the Spirit of unity, with one accord and brotherly love, with one voice and one heart, we implore Your Grace, together with your God protected diocese, to consider one more time, the question of *adding* to the Western Diocese, the parishes of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate on the territory of Western America, and our Diocese. The following are the parishes: 1. St. John the Baptist in San Francisco, 2. St. George in Oakland, 3. St. Archangel Michael in Saratoga, 4. St. Nicholas in Phoenix, and 5. Christ the Savior in Arcadia.

Taking into consideration Your already shown readiness for this effort, as well as the readiness of the parishes from the Bay area with their priests (expressed this time with the voice of Protopresbyter-stavrophor Dusan Bunjevich – the guest of our Assembly), we call upon Your Grace, with the Church over which You preside, that with jointly and brotherly love, You seek the *decision* for the previously mentioned union.

St. Apostle Paul counsels churches to do everything “gracefully and orderly,” and the Holy Church with her canonical tradition, protects this order by forbidding overlapping of jurisdictions on one territory. In this spirit, the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1992, brought forth the

decision about the unity of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States of America and Canada. Therefore, we loving the truth, think that any postponement of this unification of the parishes pleases only our enemies. The experience testifies even through the proverb that time heals wounds, but it also can deepen the schism.

We assure You and all those concerned, that this, our prayerful wish, is truthful and well-meant. It is not ill conceived nor does it have any other pretense, but rather it comes out of our unconditional pastoral care and brotherly concern for salvific function of the Church on this territory and for the glory of God!

*Bishop Maxim of the Western America
With all the clergy, monastics and the faithful*

In response to this Resolution, at its regular session held on May 14-25, 2007 at the Patriarchate, the Holy Assembly of Bishops, presided by His Holiness, Patriarch Pavle, rendered the following decision:

“The Holy Hierarchical Assembly praises the joint work of Their Graces, Bishop for America and Canada of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate Longin and Bishop of Western America Maxim, who in the spirit of brotherly love share pastoral care over the Serbian Orthodox parishes on the west coast of America [five parishes of New Gracanica Metropolitanate], leading them to administrative unity.”

May our Lord grant a speedy fulfillment of our desire!



First Young Adult
Conference in LA

Divine Liturgy
in Fresno, 2007



Saint Sava Summer Camp 2007





OUR SAINT SAVA SUMMER CAMP 2007

St. Sava summer camp begins each year after the feast of Petrovdan and continues for three full weeks. The first week is restricted to younger campers of elementary and middle school. Protostavrophor Dusan Bunevic ably guides this week. The second and third week are open to campers who range from those entering the first grade to the twelfth grade and are led by Fr. Petar Jovanovich and Fr. George Gligich respectfully.

St. Sava Camp is a gathering place for members of all generations. It is not uncommon to have grandparents in the kitchen, parents as lay directors and children, and even grandchildren of the same family as campers. The campground is a home away from home. Camp counselors are most often former campers who are “giving back” their time and talent to help today’s campers.

The camp program offers a daily regimen of church services: matins and vespers. Once a week, campers participate in the Divine Liturgy and Holy Communion, having fasted and offered a confession the day before. In this way, the camp sets a model for campers in their daily lives at home.

The camp curriculum also addresses the cultural needs of the campers. The children are instructed in kolo dancing, folk singing and lessons regarding the history and culture of the Serbian people. This year’s program also included a lesson in preparing the profora for the Divine Liturgy.

With the theme of the Divine Liturgy and the topic of the “Liturgy after the Liturgy”, campers were taken to perform various acts of kindness and charity. One week, the campers visited local Serbian Orthodox, some who are shut-ins, to show their concern for the aged. Another group traveled to Sacramento to the city center in search of opportunities to help people on the street.

The campers were challenged to use whatever means they had to make a positive influence on the life of a person whom they encountered that day. Some gave a few dollars to help the folks, which they met. Others bought cool drinks to distribute to the people on the street. One group of campers, spontaneously sought donations from merchants and then distributed these gifts among the poor.

Whatever method they employed, the campers of St. Sava Mission exemplified the teachings of our Lord, Jesus Christ—serving the least of His brethren and at the same time serving Jesus Christ Himself. In addition, they learned how to multiply the Holy Gift that they receive by helping others.

St. Sava Camp remains a place where life-shaping experiences occur. Long-lasting friendships are formed at camp. This is also the place where future kumovi are discovered and sometimes, where budding marriage relationships are formed.





What do I need to do to inherit eternal life?

Theme of the First Annual Young Adult Conference held in LA

St. Steven's Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Alhambra, California, hosted the First Annual Young Adult Conference of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North & South America on Saturday, June 2, 2007.

Some thirty young adults from across the country joined several of our own for a unique one-on-one experience with Bishop Atanasije, PhD. His Grace addressed the group on the conference's theme of seeking eternal life with Christ in a variety of ways. As the discussion progressed throughout the day, he explained that by way of St. Paul's conversion experience with the risen Lord (Acts 9: 1-18) and his prominent role in the establishment of the early Church and the teaching of how to seek eternal life with Christ (included throughout thirteen letters in the New Testament), St. Paul theologically became the twelfth apostle that replaced Judas, rather than Matthias who was chosen by casting lots (Acts 1: 16-26); Bishop Atanasije pointed out that the 19th century Russian writer Feodor Dostoyevsky was, in a manner of speaking, an Orthodox theologian in regards to the way he thoughtfully described the Orthodox Church and spirituality in his writing, and he recommended works such as *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*; His Grace also offered his insight on how much Orthodox people throughout the Balkans have had to suffer and endure especially in recent decades. In these and other examples, Bishop Atanasije kept reminding the participants that we, too, need to seek our fulfillment in Jesus Christ through His Holy Church.

During a question-and-answer period, one of the participants asked Bishop Atanasije for his thoughts on struggling with an attitude like that of the older brother in Christ's parable the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). In the parable, the younger of two sons asked his father for his share of the inheritance then left home and "wasted his possessions with prodigal living." When later he returned repenting, his father welcomed him joyfully, dressed him richly and celebrated with music, dancing and a feast. When the older brother learned this "he was angry and would not go in" because as he told his father, "many years I

have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time;" and yet, his father never threw him a party. But when the younger brother returned after wasting the father's livelihood, the father "killed the fatted calf for him."

The Bishop expressed his appreciation for such a thoughtful question then referred to another place in Luke's Gospel (23: 39-43) to help address it: as Christ hung upon the cross there was a criminal crucified in the same way on either side of Him. The first criminal blasphemed our Lord but the second one rebuked the first because they were guilty of their crimes, but of Jesus he said, "This Man has done nothing wrong." His Grace noted this is only one of many places in the Scriptures where we learn there is only one Righteous Judge for all humanity and our concern needs to be with judging our own effort.

The discussion continued through lunch, with Bishop Atanasije sharing anecdotes both humorous and thoughtful. He spent some time preparing these mostly-single attendees for their possible future roles as parents, disdaining the popular concept of daycare, emphasizing that no other situation can duplicate the love relationship between a parent and their own child. The Bishop sadly shook his head as he observed that there are parents who place their children in daycare and then use the time to take their dogs for a walk. Shortly after, he displayed another vital facet of our life in this world – the ability to sing! He serenaded the group with a song from his native Herzegovina and had Bishop Maxim come and join him; when finished he stressed the importance of being able to sing joyful songs as well as sad songs.

The afternoon continued with a trip to the Huntington Library in Pasadena then it was back to the Cathedral for Vespers followed by dinner and an evening in Santa Monica. The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and banquet on Sunday, June 3rd brought the first National Young Adult Conference to a close – the young adults took part as tutors in the vestibule, singers in the choir and even servers in the Altar. This first event of its kind successfully laid the foundation on which future young adult fellowship gatherings can build.

**SEBASTIAN PRESS
OF THE WESTERN AMERICAN DIOCESE
NEWEST RELEASES**

Bishop Athanasius Yevtich

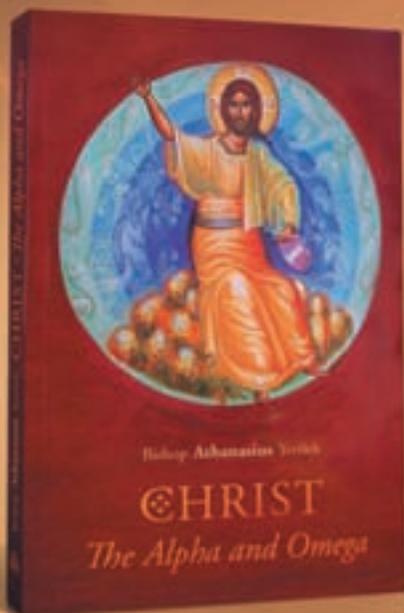
CHRIST
The Alpha and Omega

*Published by the Western American Diocese
of the Serbian Orthodox Church*

Christ—The Alpha and Omega is an anthology of Bishop Athanasius' articles which have appeared in Serbian, Greek, French, English and Russian. Focusing on themes central to Christian patristic Triadology, Ecclesiology and Anthropology, the book reveals the ultimate purpose of man and the universe, and speaks of how each of us can realize this purpose within the divine-human community of the Orthodox Church. Bishop Athanasius reminds us that the God-man Jesus Christ is the Beginning and the End of all things, and that we must seek our own end, goal, and fulfillment in Him.

Bishop Athanasius (1938) is a well-known Orthodox Theologian throughout Europe and North America and specializes in Church history and Patristic teachings. In addition to being a disciple of Justin Popovich, he holds a doctorate in Orthodox Theology from the University of Athens, is an author of numerous books including "Christ: the Alpha and Omega," and has taught in Paris, France and Belgrade, Serbia.

His thought combines adherence to the teachings of the Church Fathers with a vibrant faith and a profound experience of Christ in the Church. Bishop Athanasius is himself one of the most renowned and respected theologians in the Orthodox Church today.



**A book by the renowned theologian,
iconographer and priest**

STAMATIS SKLIRIS

IN THE MIRROR

*A Collection of Iconographic Essays
and Illustrations*

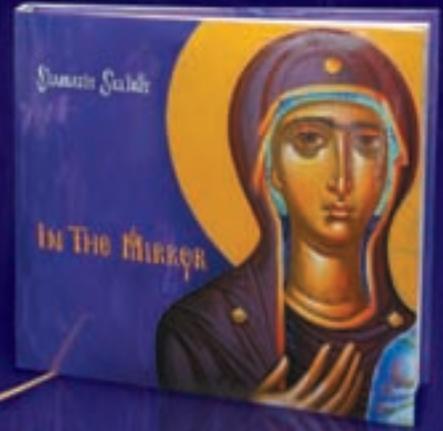
The Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America is pleased to announce the publication of an outstanding book by Fr. Stamatis Skliris, a disciple of the great twentieth-century theologians Archimandrite Justin Popovich and Bishop Athanasius Yevtich. Fr. Stamatis is a parish priest in Athens and is renowned as an iconographer and as a writer and lecturer on Byzantine iconography.

In the Mirror is the second of a planned collection of works of contemporary theologians. It is an anthology of Fr. Stamatis' articles which have appeared in Greek and Serbian. In it, he combines adherence to the teachings of the Church Fathers with a vibrant expression of faith through the experience of Christ in the Church. The book is adorned with more than 200 striking icons and illustrations by Fr. Stamatis.

Fr. Stamatis' contribution to modern art (both Church art, and art in general) through his painting and iconography is already a generally established fact. Focusing on themes central to patristic Christology and Anthropology, the book reveals the ultimate purpose of the icon. Fr. Stamatis speaks of how, through the reality of the Incarnation of the Invisible God, we have been given the possibility of Christian iconography, iconology and icon veneration.

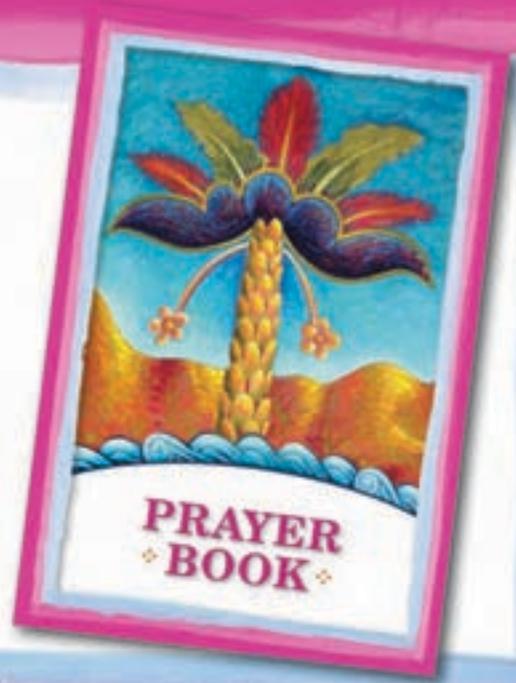
Upon observing Fr. Stamatis' artwork, we see that he manages to link the graphic and the chromatic elements harmoniously and with rare originality, thus anticipating with his drawing and coloring a wondrous world, God's world of love and light. With regard to the graphic element, by the mobility and expressiveness of his images, with the open, childlike looks in their eyes – through his excellent knowledge of anatomy (being a medical doctor) and of psychology (being a priest and a spiritual father) – Fr. Stamatis overcomes the immobility and inertia of fallen

human nature through a movement of reaching out, which is the feat of loving and of an eager progress toward Christ. As far as coloration is concerned, by a combination of color (warm-cold, complementary), by a gradation of tones, and by a multitude of vibrating shades brought on by the brush – employing the best solutions from the history of the art of painting (Byzantine, impressionist, cubistic, abstract, surrealist, etc.) – and in doing all this, illuminating everything by light, Fr. Stamatis anticipates the coloration of Paradise, the coloration of “a new Heaven and a new Earth” (Rev. 21:1). In addition to this, he also offers a thematic contribution: he does not overlook emphasizing the historic, tragic element (agony, suffering, wounds, and pain) in the images of saints and martyrs depicted in his works, and especially in his most recent creations, which are, nevertheless, illuminated by the Light which overcomes the world and history.

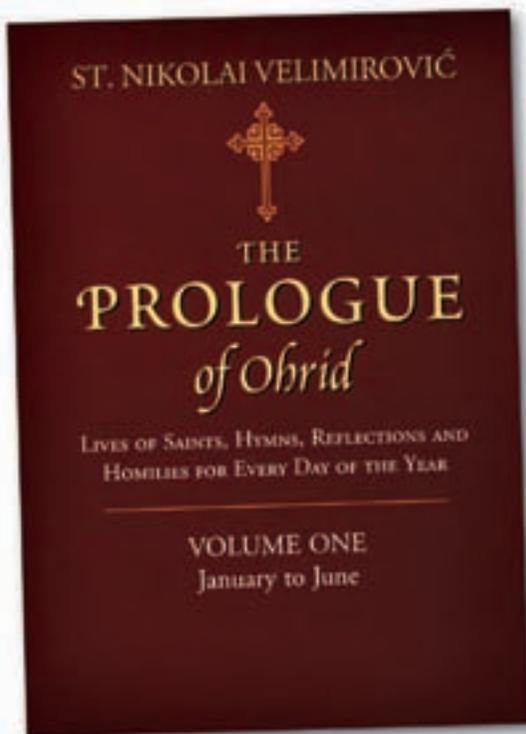


PRAYER BOOK

The Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America is pleased to announce the publication of a beautiful pocket-size, full-color, English-language Prayer Book, which has been compiled and designed by our newly enthroned Bishop, His Grace Maxim, and printed in Serbia. The book contains prayers commonly used by Orthodox Christians, lists of Scriptural Commandments, and brief articles on the precepts of Faith, proper conduct in church, and the meaning and practice of prayer. It is adorned with striking icons and illustrations by Fr. Stamatis Skliris, a parish priest in Athens who is renowned as an iconographer and as a writer and lecturer on Byzantine iconography. Full-color on coated stock throughout, 36 pages, 3¾" × 5½" format, paperback, saddle-stitched.



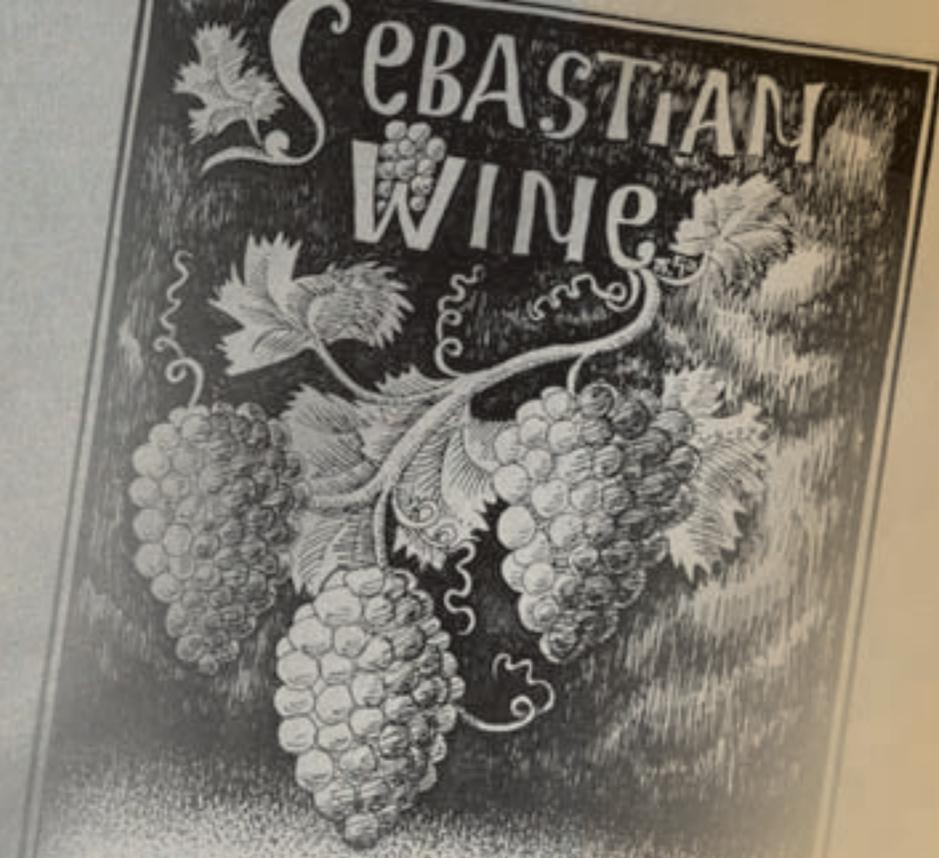
The Prologue of Ohrid BY SAINT NICHOLAI OF ZICA, Serbia (Velimirovic)



St Nikolai of Zica (Velimirovic) (1880-1956) has been called the "Serbian Chrysostom" for his theological depth and golden-tongued eloquence. Now for the first time, a complete and unabridged English translation of St. Nikolai's Prologue of Ohrid has been made available. St. Nikolai's Prologue has become a much-loved spiritual classic for Orthodox Christians worldwide. An inspirational source-book of the Orthodox Faith, it contains within its pages a summation of the Church's wisdom and Her experience of sanctity through the Grace of Jesus Christ. Lives of Saints, Hymns, Reflections and Homilies are presented for every day of the year. St. Nikolai's beautiful Hymns have never before appeared in English.

The text of this 1,450-page magnum opus of St. Nikolai has been translated from the Serbian and edited by clergy and monastics of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America.

In two volumes, hardbound, with full-color dust jackets.
Volume I: January to June, 696 pages (ISBN 0-9719505-0-4).
Volume II: July to December, 752 pages (ISBN 0-9719505-1-2).



Sebastian Wine Our Liturgical Wine

On His first visit to St. Sava's Church in Jackson, California, His Grace Bishop Maxim tasted our Amador County wine and immediately suggested that we should produce a wine to be used for the Holy Sacrament in all the churches of the Western American Diocese.

Not knowing exactly what would be involved, I agreed to take on the project. His Grace helped to define the best qualities for a sacramental wine—full-bodied, yet mellow; aromatic and slightly sweet to the taste.

To meet these criteria, I proposed a blend of Black Muscat and Zinfandel grapes harvested late in the season for higher sugar content. By the Grace of God, one year later, we are offering our parishes a hand-crafted wine: soft, sweet and well-perfumed to become the mystical blood of the Holy Eucharist.

*Fr. Steve Tumbas,
Tumbas Vineyards,
Shenandoah Valley*





WESTERN AMERICAN DIOCESE OUR RADIO MINISTRY

- Segment one contains a sermon by His Grace Bishop Maxim, directly connected to the respective holiday that is being celebrated in any given week. Sometimes we are reading sermons from a variety of sources, like Saint Bishop Nicholai's book of sermons, and other prominent Orthodox authors.

- Segment two constitutes of the readings of selections from The Prologue from Ohrid, by Saint Nicholai of Zicha. This segment is also connected to appropriate holidays or Saints Days being celebrated in a given week.

- Segment three is educational and is presented as an ongoing series of subjects. One subject is education on Serbian religious traditions such as Krsna Slava, Zito, etc. In this segment, listeners are instructed of the proper ways to preserve our traditions during the Holidays and celebrations of our Saints Days.

- Another subject is an introduction to Serbian literature. From time to time, we present one or two prominent Serbian writers, their biographies and fragments from their opus. This is primarily done in the English language enabling us to reach first, second, and third generation listeners who are of Serbian decent, and thus introduce them to the cultural roots of their country of origin, Serbia.

- The spiritual and sacral music of the Serbian Orthodox Church is also an integral part of these educational segments.

- Segment four is dedicated to the news from the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Western American

Diocese. That way, we are attempting to inform our listeners regarding events taking place in the Serbian Orthodox Church and our Diocese. Lately, we have the news from Serbia, regarding developments in Kosovo and Metohija.

In addition to the regular format of the radio show, we have featured several "Specials". This way, our listeners are learning about the achievements and events that are happening in our Diocese or our Parishes. We report from Diocesan Days, Annual Diocesan Assembly, and similar events. The other Special shows were dedicated to the commemoration of Vidov-Dan, Sv. Sava, Christmas and Easter. In 2003, in a tragic auto accident, we lost one of the founders of WAD Radio Program, producer, Peter Maligo. This was a great loss for our Church community as well as for our Radio Program. The actors-readers and producers that are preparing and performing the Western American Diocese Serbian Orthodox Church Radio Show, are donating their professional time, because they are dedicated to the concept of "Svetosavlje", the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the leadership of His Grace Bishop Maxim. The professional actors that participate in our shows are: Ms. Zeljka Gortinski, Mr. Milan Dragicevic, and Ms. Natasa Babic-Zoric. We also have some occasional guests.

The program was originally produced by Dejan Karakljaic and the late Peter Maligo. Later, it was produced by Protodeacon Djurica Gordic. Today, the program's producer and host is Hieromonk Jovan Babic.





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Creation of the World, Wall-painting in Kostolac, Serbia, by Fr Stamatis Skliris, 2006

