



CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY MINUTES

May 16 – 17, 2011

Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center – Dunlap, CA

CALL TO ORDER AND DESIGNATION OF PRESIDING OFFICER

The 2011 Clergy-Laity Assembly was called to order at 2:45 p.m. by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos who led the delegates in an opening prayer service.

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos then nominated Fanis Economidis as the Presiding Officer of the Assembly. Fanis was appointed by acclamation of the Assembly.

Fanis welcomed everyone to the Assembly and to Saint Nicholas Ranch. A comprehensive agenda has been prepared with some very important presentations and he encouraged everyone to actively participate in the deliberations for the growth and development of our Metropolis. Fanis asked that all delegates take time to review the minutes from the 2010 Clergy-Laity Assembly and a motion for their approval will be requested on Tuesday, May 17.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS – HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos presented his Keynote Address, focusing on the theme “Living Your Calling” and referencing Saint Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 4:1-6. Now in his sixth year as our Metropolitan, he has had many opportunities to travel to our parishes. He stated that it has been a joy to come together for the mission of the Church and the work that God has appointed us to do as His faithful servants. Metropolitan Gerasimos also extended a special welcome to our two guest presenters Bill Marianes and Tony Stefanis who will talk about their faith and how this translates to works, acts and deeds. This year has been and will continue to be especially challenging with His Eminence’s participation as a member of the Holy Synod which requires his travel to the Ecumenical Patriarchate for one week per month. Unfortunately, this will temporarily limit the Metropolitan’s visits to our parishes until he completes his term on the Synod in February 2012.

In following with Metropolitan Gerasimos’ five-year plan, we are concluding our first year devoted to the Family. The 2011 – 2012 Ecclesiastical Year will focus on Worship as it represents our faith in action. Our Liturgical life is the core of the worship in our parishes and forms the heart of the communities’ life together. Metropolitan Gerasimos stated that too many of our communities have become Sunday-centered, with all energy and attention focused on one day of the week. Our parishes need to look at their worship services and make adjustments to the start of service times so that they are convenient for the faithful (both on Sundays and services during the week), and we need to encourage more participation in worship through congregational singing of the fixed hymns of the Liturgy. Our priests need to spend more time preparing their sermons which should focus on a clear and practical explanation of the Gospel or Epistle readings, or the lives of the Saints. This is a significant teaching opportunity that must be

carefully cultivated and utilized at each service. Metropolitan Gerasimos also emphasized Stewardship as a demonstration of our entire life with the church and that we must take responsibility for all aspects of our life in the church and provide leadership to the best of our ability.

Most recently, Metropolitan Gerasimos attended the Metropolis Oratorical Festival and was especially uplifted and inspired by two of the speakers – Michael Schwenke and Grace Silva – and invited them to be with us and offer their remarks to the Assembly. Michael Schwenke spoke on “*What are the most attractive points that Orthodox Christianity offers to teenagers today, and how can we use them to bring young people to the Church*”. Grace Silva spoke on a quote from Saint Basil the Great regarding “*wealth left idle*” and how this has impacted the financial challenges currently faced by our society. Both young people were extremely articulate and the insights they offered to the Assembly were well-received and commended by all.

Metropolitan Gerasimos concluded his remarks by reinforcing the theme of this year’s Assembly, “*Living Your Calling*”, reminding us of the importance of our collective work as the Body of Christ. He challenged us “to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called” and to strive to live as the Body of Christ, as one Church, and to exhibit that unity at every opportunity.

GUEST PRESENTATION – IGNITING THE FLAME OF TRUE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Bill Marianes gave an enthusiastic presentation on Stewardship, sharing with the Assembly ideas on how to ignite the flame of true Orthodox Christian Stewardship. Bill’s interactive program included information on how to organize your parish to maximize results and very specific tactics on how to get the most out of their stewardship program and stewards. Bill also offered insight on how to live a life of righteousness and Greek Orthodox Christian purpose, and challenged the delegates to change their lives and begin a new life where we make a difference while constantly giving thanks.

Following the conclusion of this presentation, the Assembly suspended the meeting for the evening. The Assembly reconvened on Tuesday, May 17 at 10:30 a.m. with the singing of Christos Anesti and a prayer led by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Fanis asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the 2010 Clergy-Laity Assembly. A correction was noted on page 1 that should read “Greek” Education Office. A motion to approve the minutes as corrected was made by Father John Hondros, seconded by Tony Pettis. Motion carried unanimously.

GUEST PRESENTATION – ARCHDIOCESE REPORT

Tony Stefanis, chair of the Archdiocese Administration Committee offered a report on the state of the Archdiocese, its finances, an overview of the Archbishop’s leadership of our Church, the ministries and programs offered by the Archdiocese to support our Metropolises and parishes, resources for the training and cultivation of the Parish Council, and the formation of a Strategic Planning Session to create a five-year plan for the vision and growth of our Archdiocese.

METROPOLIS COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Fanis Economidis presented a summary of the deliberations of the Metropolis Council meeting which was held immediately preceding the Assembly. Fanis noted that the Ranch has benefited from many substantial improvements thanks to the generosity of the Metropolis Philoptochos, Tom Stefanopoulos, Nikiforos and Georgia Valaskantjis, George Marcus, and Gerry and Jeannie Ranglas. In addition to these donors who provided for the renovations of the Philoptochos and Apostle Lodges, Tom Stefanopoulos donated new bridges and railings; Mike Koulakis donated all the painting of these new facilities; Isidoros and Maria Garifalakis donated funds for a new computer infrastructure for the Ranch offices; and Ted Laliotis installed special equipment to enhance the wireless connectivity at the Ranch for our staff and guests.

Fanis reminded all our parishes that that we have specific procedures for parishes which are buying, selling or building facilities – be it a church, gymnasium, educational facility or any structures undergoing substantial renovations. All projects of this nature must be submitted to the Metropolis from which they will be forwarded to the Real Estate and Insurance Committee and/or the Art and Architecture Committee. The guidelines for both of these areas are included in your binders and will soon be available on the Metropolis website.

The Youth Protection Manual of the Archdiocese is a very important program as it addresses training youth workers to stop child abuse. All camps of the Archdiocese are required to comply with this manual, which includes specialized training to stop child abuse. It is important that all our regional Metropolis Summer Camps comply with this program for the safety and security of our children. Any questions about this program should be directed to our youth director, Deacon Niko Bekris.

The Metropolis Legal Committee is now under the leadership of John Buzas, after a long and distinguished tenure of Elenie Huszagh. Elenie will remain as an advisor to the committee, working not only with Mr. Buzas but also with our Metropolis Legal Counsel, Maryanne Murphy. If our parishes are in need of legal assistance, you should submit your materials in writing to the Metropolis from which we will direct your inquiry to the proper person. This includes the review and ratification of parish bylaws.

Our Metropolis Philoptochos has been a significant source of support for several initiatives in our Metropolis. They supported the renovation of the Philoptochos Lodge here at the Ranch, and they honored past-president Valerie Roumeliotes' service and raised much-needed funds for the renovation and restoration of the Metropolis House. Our new Metropolis Philoptochos President, Jeannie Ranglas, has been working very hard since she was appointed President last summer. Jeannie was with us yesterday but had to return home as she is preparing to travel to Boston to meet with our students and present over \$195,000 in financial support to the seminarians and students from our Metropolis thanks to the vision and foresight of the Bishop Anthony Philoptochos Student Aid Endowment Fund.

It was previously suggested that we rename the House Assessment line item in the budget to more appropriately reflect the use of these funds. Thus, we will be renaming this as "Metropolis Ministries Support".

As you are all aware, each of our parishes participates in the Archdiocese National Ministries Commitment program. It is from the collective contributions of our Metropolis to the Archdiocese from which we receive 25% to support the operations of the Metropolis. This is our largest source of income and obviously greatly impacts our budget. As you will see when we review our financial reports later today, many of our parishes did not fulfill their obligation, and thus our allotment from the Archdiocese was over \$230,000 less than what we anticipated for our budget. Thus, we had to adjust our planned expenditures to be in line with our reduced income.

The parish of Saints Constantine and Helen in Honolulu submitted three resolutions to the Metropolis. During the meeting of the Metropolis Council we reviewed these resolutions and we are recommending the following:

1. Resolution #1 proposes a laity-only workshop at the Clergy-Laity Assembly which will be allowed to make motions and recommendations for the Clergy-Laity Assembly. The Metropolis Council strongly feels that this resolution introduces a “spur of the moment process” and lends itself to side initiatives. Furthermore, as a church we must work together as clergy and laity for the growth and benefit of our communities and Metropolis. Therefore, the Metropolis Council recommends against approval.

A motion was made by Ted Laliotis, seconded by John Demetropoulos, to accept the Council’s recommendation against the approval of this resolution. A substitute motion was introduced by Terry Kastanis, seconded by John Prekeges, and subsequently withdrawn. The Assembly voted on the original motion and it carried unanimously.

2. Resolution #2 concerns the release of Archdiocesan and Metropolis budgets. The budget of the Archdiocese is available on the Archdiocese website. The Archdiocese budget is approved every two years at the Clergy-Laity Congress at which each of our parishes should have representation. That is the forum at which to inquire about the Archdiocese budget. Regarding the Metropolis Budget, it was reviewed and approved yesterday by the Metropolis Council and was distributed last evening to allow time for review prior to today’s discussion and vote. Therefore, this resolution is unnecessary.
3. Resolution #3 requests that the Metropolitan allow parishes of 100 families or fewer to be able to deduct the total clergy compensation package in reporting and calculating each parish’s Archdiocese Annual Commitment Allocation and payment. The Metropolis Council understands that this would penalize the larger parishes which would have to make up the difference. The Metropolis Council carefully reviewed this and therefore recommends against approval of this resolution. Subsequent to the meeting of the Metropolis Council, the presenter of this Resolution withdrew it from further consideration.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Fanis Economidis reviewed the financial reports of the Metropolis. The Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2010 showed a total of \$32,395 in our Unrestricted Accounts. Basil Papahronis suggested that in future years, a two-year comparison be provided for the Balance Sheet. The Metropolis Restricted Accounts show a 2010 year-end total of \$1,371,212. Peter Eliades offered his services to assist on the Investment Committee; his contact information will be shared with John Demetropoulos who chairs this committee for the Metropolis Council.

The 2011 Metropolis Budget was presented for consideration and adoption. Fanis Economidis reviewed the various line items in the budget. A motion to approve the budget as presented was made by Father John Hondros, seconded by Father Ted Pantels. Motion carried unanimously.

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos stated that with regard to the National Ministries Committee we must put Christ in front. Let the issue of the money go and put our focus in the right area – on the Lord, and He will provide the guidance and direction we need to fulfill our mission as a Church.

YOUTH PRESENTATION

Deacon Niko Bekris presented a summary of the recent Metropolis Youth Survey. Over 300 youth from 40 parishes in our Metropolis participated in this survey which helped identify several key areas that impact youth ministry and their participation in the Church. The results of this survey will be of tremendous use to our clergy as they work to strengthen youth ministry in their parishes, as well as help the Metropolis offer stronger and more diverse programming to attract better participation amongst our youth and young adults.

Father Anthony Savas from Saint Nicholas Church in Northridge, CA, and Father Christopher Flesoras from Saint Anna Church in Roseville, CA each presented a summary of youth activities at their respective parishes, both of which are known for their strong youth ministry programs. They offered ideas and insights into building up youth ministry programs and provided examples of events and activities which have been successful in their communities.

DRAWING FOR SAINT NICHOLAS RANCH

Under the leadership of Mr. Isidoros Garifalakis, a fundraising initiative in support of Saint Nicholas Ranch was organized. The drawing for the winning prizes was held at the conclusion of the Assembly, with the following results:

3rd Prize (\$2,000 each): Omega Industries; Steve Manios; Sophia Koulakis

2nd Prize (\$4,000): Nicholas Bouras

1st Prize (\$10,000): Terrence and Constance Bowers

ADJOURNMENT

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos extended his thanks and that of the entire Metropolis to Fanis Economidis for his untiring leadership and commitment to serving the Metropolis. With there being no further business to discuss, the Assembly was adjourned at 4:30 p.m. with Metropolitan Gerasimos offering a closing prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kristen Bruskas