



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF BOSTON

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΒΟΣΤΩΝΗΣ

Clergy Laity Conference
Saturday, October 5, 2013

Welcome & Keynote Address
His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios

The theme of today's conference is, "Best Practices and Successful Ministries". We gather in order to discuss the ways in which we can effectively minister to the spiritual needs of the faithful entrusted to our care throughout New England. It is important to constantly adapt our ministries as an Archdiocese, as a Metropolis and as communities. We must keep abreast with an ever changing reality in our communities which affects attendance in our liturgical services, participation in parish programs, and even interest in Orthodoxy itself. By learning what are the best practices and successful ministries in some parishes, we will hopefully improve the ministries in all our communities.

Our parishioners are fully integrated into the religious and societal landscape of America and, as a result, they live their Orthodox Faith quite differently than did our parents and grandparents. More and more brethren differentiate their religious and moral beliefs from the teachings of the Church. This is the result of their interactions with people of different religions, races, cultures, and ethnicities. It is the result of the constant bombardment of materialistic and hedonistic philosophies

promulgated and advanced in the media. People today fashion their personal beliefs by integrating Orthodox and non-Orthodox elements. Without realizing it, they become “cafeteria Christians”. Just as they do not partake of every food item on a cafeteria line (but only those foods which they like), in the same way they feel they can pick and choose from what Orthodoxy teaches i.e., what teachings they accept and which they chose not to accept. As Orthodox Christians we run the risk of falling into—and being totally consumed—in the cultural melting pot of America, thus losing our identity. Let me be clear: Core teachings of our faith are not subject to popularity polls or political correctness.

The changes in the moral standards in our society are obvious. We live in a culture of cruelty and an age of entitlement. We have become so accustomed to the slow deterioration of morality in society, that we have adapted to the moral decay around us and taken it for granted. We live in a world of moral and ethical relativism, hedonism and selfishness, a world in desperate need of spiritual renewal. For a long time now, Sunday has ceased being the day that we worship Almighty God and then sit as a family at our dinner table to enjoy fellowship. Sunday has been regulated to a mere weekday, a day to do the laundry, to go to the mall, to read the newspaper, to take our children to sporting events, etc. Prayers are no longer offered in our public schools. The Ten Commandments have long been removed from our civil courts. I would dare to say that those of us who serve on parish councils and other leadership roles in our communities rarely pray or read the Gospel on a daily basis. Lifestyles previously kept in the closet—where they belong—are now championed as reputable and worthy of

emulation. I am sad to note that a legislator here in New England (who claims to be an Orthodox Christian and who champions Greek political causes) not only voted to change the law in his state to redefine homosexual unions as marriages—he asked for and received special permission to preside at a civil ceremony uniting a homosexual couple!

Christianity is under siege not only here in America, but throughout the world. I fear the day is fast approaching when no Christian will be left in the near East. It seems that every day we learn of the brutal killing of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, Palestine and India. Coptic Orthodox brethren have especially been affected. How sad and disappointing it is that the leaders of our nation do not have the courage to publically protest this systematic genocide of Christians. Perhaps our Clergy Laity Assembly will want to address a resolution expressing our great concern for this war against Christianity, and our support of the dwindling number of Christians that fear for their lives every day.

Recently, I was invited to preside at the baptisms of grandchildren of two close friends. I read the prescribed text from the 29th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, the last two verses of which read “Go therefore and make disciples of (or teach) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo that I am with you always to the close of the age” (Mt. 28, 19-20).

I knew what message I wanted to convey at the beginning of our Clergy Laity Assembly. You will surely agree that our mission as an Archdiocese, a Metropolis and individual parishes is to lead our brothers and sisters—both inside and outside the church—to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is becoming more and more difficult because many hesitate to share their faith, fearing they will be considered quaint and bothersome. This is especially the case in America’s colleges and universities where atheism and indifference on matters of faith and religion reign supreme.

It is in this setting that we must hear the commandment directed not only to the 12 disciples, but to all of us today.

“Go, therefore and teach all nations....”

We must ask ourselves if we take that commandment seriously and respond with the same zeal as did the 12 disciples that did “go” into the world to teach and make disciples. Do we go out into our parishes, our towns, our cities and neighborhoods to bring the message of salvation? Every community in New England has a large number of faithful that are for one reason or another not active in their parish. Do we “go” to them? Do we “go” to those that are not baptized to share the evangellion of salvation? Do we “go” to our young adults, many of whom are professional men and women to encourage them to serve on our parish councils—to bring new ideas and enthusiasm to the work of the church? Last year we inaugurated a program known as Orthodoxy on Tap. We went where young adults gather to engage them in dialogue about the church and their spiritual lives. We will continue that program this year.

And so, my brothers and sisters, let this ecclesiastical year be a year dedicated to re-evangelize, to re-catechize, to re-teach the faith....to encourage one and all to “observe all that Christ has commanded us”. The truth is that many brethren sitting in the pews of our parishes are not knowledgeable of even the basic teachings and tenets of Orthodoxy!

During today’s conference you will hear detailed reports on the finances of our Archdiocese and Metropolis and the stewardship program. We will bring you up to date on the progress of our various Metropolis ministries. Please listen carefully and feel free to address any questions you may have to the presenters.

Following the morning session, you are invited to attend a workshop of your choice where the various ministries discussed in the general session will be presented more thoroughly.

My brothers and sisters,

Let us leave today’s conference with the commandment of the Savior echoing in our hearts:

“Go therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you” Mt. 28 (19-20).