

# St. Makarios the Great Orthodox Christian Mission

Orthodox Church in America

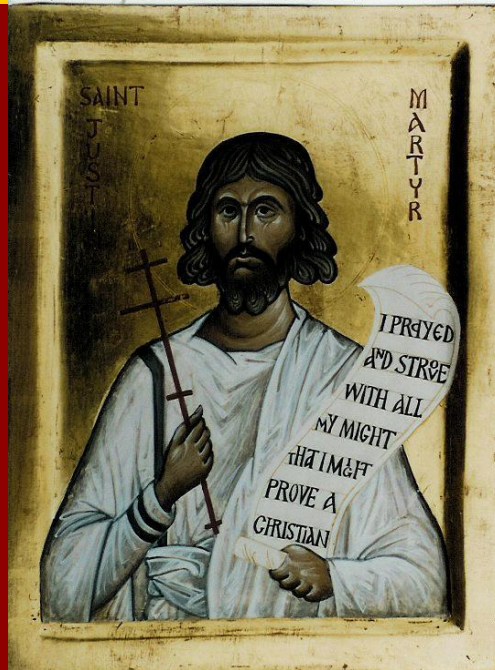
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St. Cyril of Alexandria, June 9<sup>th</sup>



St. Justin Martyr, June 1<sup>st</sup>

## May 31, 2010

*Confessions can be made before or after services or by appointment.*

**Vespers:** Tuesday 6:30 pm at St. John Stone Augustinian Friary, 1160 E. 54<sup>th</sup> Pl. Patristic or Bible study/ discussion afterwards.

Saturday 6pm; same place as above.

**Divine Liturgy:** Sunday 9am, 10am starting June 13<sup>th</sup>. At Bond Chapel, Southwest Corner of main UC Quad <http://maps.uchicago.edu/mainquad/bond.html>.

THERE WILL BE A PARISH MEETING AFTER LITURGY ON JUNE 6<sup>TH</sup>. WE WILL MEET WITH FR. THOMAS MUELLER, THE DEAN OF THE CHICAGO DEANERY AND RATIFY OUR MISSION BY-LAWS. WE ALSO HAVE TO FILL A VACANT PARISH COUNCIL SEAT. PLEASE COME! We will keep it as short as possible....

**We would like to congratulate 3 new graduates:** Ryan S. Erickson, Masha Klescheva, and Claire Saperstein. Ryan and Masha will be taking off earlier in the summer, Claire later. Ryan will be going to Tajikistan to learn Persian, presumably heading on to work with IOCC in Georgia. Masha will be furthering her studies at CalTech. Claire will be going to Russia for research with a Fulbright, but only after she gets married to Mark (Makarios)

Roosien in July at Holy Trinity Cathedral. **We will have a little celebration for our graduates after Liturgy this Sunday, before the meeting.**

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**Pentecost: Becoming an Icon of the Holy, Through the Spirit**

We celebrated the feast of Pentecost and All Saints on the past two Sundays. This week we start the Apostles' Fast. The Pentecost is the completion of the fifty days following Pascha. It is a mystical (7\*7) +1; seven means fullness, and +1 represents a reality beyond the limits of time. In other words, we are celebrating that the mystery of the Resurrection overflows the bounds of the earthly body of our Lord Jesus Christ, to form his mystical body, the church, through the descent of the Holy Spirit. Facing across the mathematical icon of the fifty days, we see Christ risen and reflect his risen body in the Church. In the resurrection, by the Holy Spirit, we become part of a Holy Body of the incarnate Word of God, we become the body of God. We become holy, we become part of the Glory of the Holy One we praise. We become saints. Sainthood is not an extra for the Christian, it is a requirement of our life in Christ. True faith gives birth to a union with God in sanctity. It is in recognition of this terrible and tremendous mystery that we begin to fast once again after Pentecost and the Feast of the "Holies", the "Saints". We are sent forth like the Apostles after Pentecost to overflow with love, life and the very goodness of God in every place that we go. At the end of this fast on June 29<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate the self-offering martyrdom (witness) of those two chief missionary Apostles, Peter and Paul.

May you all have a blessed Fast, learn to pray more and share more joy of revived life, shining like the risen Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Fr. Elijah*

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Russian-Georgian Peace Concert (Free) at Bond Chapel

Golosa, the University of Chicago's Russian Choir, will be holding a joint performance with Vazhkatsuri, the DePaul University Men's Georgian Choir.

Wednesday, June 2

8:00pm, Bond Chapel, University of Chicago

FREE! <http://www.golosa.org>

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**FROM A TEXT WHICH WE ARE READING AND DISCUSSING ON TUESDAY:**

"Know to what extent the Creator has honored you above all the rest of Creation: the sky is not an image of God, nor is the moon, nor the sun, nor the beauty of the stars, nor anything of what can be seen in Creation. You alone have been made the image of the Reality that transcends all understanding, the likeness of Imperishable Beauty, the imprint of True Divinity, the recipient of Beatitude, the seal of the True Light. When you turn to Him, you become that which He is Himself. Nothing in Creation can be compared with your greatness. God is able to measure the whole heaven with His span. The earth and the sea are enclosed in the hollow of His hand. And although He is so great and holds all Creation in the palm of His hand, you are able to hold Him. He dwells in you and moves within you without constraint, for He has said, 'I will live and move among them.'"

-- Gregory of Nyssa (335-394)  
from a homily on the Song of Songs

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The first pan-Orthodox North American Episcopal Assembly took place this last week. This is, ideally, a good development towards Orthodox unity in America. However, there are certain problems that need to be pointed out. The following opinion piece gives a reasonably critical view of the meeting (though not without sarcasm).

5.28.10

### Decoding "The Message"

The careful reader may discover much in today's carefully drafted "Message" offered by the Episcopal Assembly which concluded its meeting yesterday evening.

First, it is not clear to whom the message is addressed: the first personage mentioned is *"The Triune God"*, who presumably knew what was happening before it did, and has little need to be informed. The second mention goes to the *"Primates and Representatives of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches"*. Third goes to *"We, as the Episcopal Assembly..."* In short the bishops were primarily talking to themselves and their "Leaders" abroad, which is probably a good thing since many of them have never spoken to each other before.

There were also prayers for the 11 victims of Gulf oil spill, and indeed *"for all people living under conditions of war, persecution, violence and oppression."* The one group not mentioned were the 1.25 million Orthodox clergy and laity in America - except until the very end, and then in only in terms of necessary *"contributions"* to their *"obligations"*.

In short, the "Message" has much to tell Orthodox America about their Bishops, and what the future may look like:

- SCOBA (Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops) is dead; although its formal burial will be delayed as lawyers make sure the transfers are all legal. SCOBA's monies transfer to the new Assembly, and its outreach programs will be subsumed as the *"...the Episcopal Assembly understands ourselves as being successors of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) assuming its agencies, dialogues and other ministries."*
- Unlike SCOBA, the Episcopal Assembly will be coordinated by a Bishop serving as the Secretary of the organization, rather than a priest. In this case it will be Bishop Basil (Essey) of the Antiochian Archdiocese. For those worried the Episcopal Assembly was simply a "stalking horse" for Constantinople, +Basil's election should provide some small comfort. Although, since all the bishops present *"expressed (their) resolve to adhere to and adopt the regulations proposed by the Pan Orthodox conferences and approved by the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, and to do everything in our power by the Grace of God to advance actions that facilitate canonical order in our region..."*, it matters little who enforces the "regulations" ...
- The OCA now has an official a seat at the table, albeit the lowest. Humility is good for the soul. Although less than half of the Orthodox Churches recognize the OCA's autocephaly, the situation was finessed by the Assembly. +Jonah was denied formal recognition as a "Primate" of a local church, and so a place on the Executive Committee, but the OCA formally recognized as a "local community" with "no reference to the (other) Most Holy Autocephalous Churches". Isn't that what "autocephaly" means?

The important news is that former episcopal discussions of whether the OCA was "canonical" or not, based on whether one accepted claims of autocephaly or not - are now moot. Every Orthodox bishop in America has formally signed off on the OCA's "canonicity" and presence at the table - except for the 10 who didn't show up. And since one of these was Metropolitan Sotirios of Canada, there could be a bump in the road up north...

- Speaking of which, the "Message" reveals that the first thing the Assembly did was to submit to Constantinople, as the convener of the Episcopal Assemblies worldwide, a *"request to partition the present region of North and Central America into two distinct regions of the United States and Canada."* If tiny Switzerland and Leichtenstein can be a region, one wonders how +Bartholmaios can deny massive Canada equal status without the whole process losing credibility. Additionally *"...the Assembly will likewise request to merge Mexico and Central America with the Assembly of South America."* (Interestingly, Bishop Alejo of the OCA's Mexican diocese was also one of the Bishops not listed as present at the meeting, although photos of the meeting show he was. Reports from the Assembly indicate that Metropolitan Jonah spoke on multiple occasions to the Greek +Athenagoras of Mexico, and it appears some fences may have been mended.)
- In the short term, though, the goals of the Episcopal Assembly were very practical, as outlined in Archbishop Demetrios' opening address. Lists were (will be) made of canonical bishops, canonical clergy, and canonical congregations. *The Assembly was also able to organize committees for "liturgical, pastoral, financial, educational, ecumenical and legal issues"*, each with three bishops. This committees will be fleshed out, presumably by the Secretariate, with lay and clerical members in the coming year. This is where the real work of forging an encompassing American Orthodox Church will be hammered out.

As once can clearly see, the potential for the Episcopal Assembly to become a vehicle for real unity is great; although the road, if it exists, is long.

Finally, the drafters of the "Message" are to be congratulated for not using the word "Diaspora". Archbishop Demetrios' address, while offering an excellent overview of many of the problems facing Orthodoxy in America, (as well as a preview of most of the Assembly's decisions) suffered from this notable failure. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware famously banished the

word "diaspora" years ago, suggesting that we begin to speak of "areas of emerging local churches" instead. That seems to be the whole point of the Episcopal Assembly, no? That our bishops are not in "Diaspora" but have recognized that we are an "area of an emerging local church"? And if that is not the case, then any further "Messages" will most likely end as this one awkwardly seemed to have begun - with bishops meaning well, but talking to and mostly about, themselves.

-Mark Stokoe

<http://www.ocanews.org/news/InterpretingtheMessage5.28.10.html>

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12 fév 2010 - Russie : Staline a été " un fléau pour le peuple russe, une sorte de punition envoyée par Dieu ", déclare le responsable du département du patriarcat de Moscou chargé des relations avec l'armée et les forces de l'ordre

Pour le responsable du département du patriarcat de Moscou chargé des relations avec l'armée et les forces de l'ordre, le père Dimitri Smirnov, Staline a été " un fléau pour le peuple russe, une sorte de punition envoyée par Dieu ". Répondant sur les ondes de la radio de l'association orthodoxe moscovite " Radonège ", le 11 février, à une question sur le rôle de Staline dans l'histoire de la Russie, le père Dimitri Smirnov a souligné que Staline n'avait rien apporté de bien au peuple russe, mais qu'au contraire il était responsable de la mort de millions d'hommes. " C'était un être impitoyable, terrifiant [...] qui se fichait complètement des autres, même de ses proches, et n'éprouvait aucune pitié pour personne ", a-t-il rappelé. A ceux qui, aujourd'hui encore, dans la société post-soviétique, rêvent de réhabiliter Staline et le communisme, il a conseillé d'" aller passer, ne serait-ce qu'un mois, dans un camp [du Goulag] ", quant à ceux qui attribuent à Staline le mérite de la victoire de l'URSS sur l'Allemagne nazie, il leur a rétorqué que " Staline avait trahi tous les soldats de l'Armée rouge le jour où il a dit que tout prisonnier soviétique était un traître ". Les conséquences des 70 ans de régime soviétique, qui ont transformé la Russie, toujours selon père Dimitri Smirnov, en un " vaste royaume de vulgarité et de brutalité ", n'ont pas encore été surmontées. " Le peuple [russe] dans sa grande majorité n'a toujours pas pris conscience de son péché contre Dieu, ni de son rejet de la foi, de la destruction des églises, des meurtres de prêtres ", a-t-il affirmé, avant de pointer du doigt les tares de la société russe d'aujourd'hui. " Alors que nous étions les maîtres d'un sixième des terres émergées, nous sommes devenus le peuple le plus effrayant de la planète du point de vue du taux de consommation d'alcool par habitant, de la criminalité, de la prostitution, de la drogue, des avortements. Et pour ce qui est de la corruption, nous sommes à la première place devant tous les pays du monde : autrement dit, ici, tout est corrompu ", a-t-il poursuivi. Ces déclarations du père Smirnov interviennent alors qu'à la suite de la publication, en 2009, par le père Georges Mitrofanov, professeur à l'Académie de théologie de Saint-Petersbourg, d'un livre intitulé *La tragédie de la Russie : les sujets interdits de l'Histoire du 20e siècle*, un vaste débat s'est installé en Russie, notamment au sein de l'Eglise orthodoxe, sur l'héritage du communisme et les tentatives de réhabilitation du stalinisme.

*Service Orthodoxe de presse*

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## **The Rapture: Indisputable Christian Heresy**

By Fr. Anthony M. Coniaris

As I was driving one day I encountered a bumper sticker admonishing me:

“WARNING! In the event of Rapture, this car will be driverless.”

The strange belief in the Rapture teaches that some day (sooner rather than later), without warning, born-again Christians will begin to float up from the freeway, abandoned vehicles careening wildly. There will be airliners in the sky suddenly with no one at the controls! Presumably, God is removing these favored ones from earth to spare them the tribulation of the Anti-Christ which the rest of us will have to endure.

Unfortunately the Rapture has been promoted widely by the *Left Behind* series of books that have sold over 70 million copies.

The Rapture represents a radical misinterpretation of Scripture. I remember watching “Sixty Minutes” a year ago and was appalled to hear the announcer say that “the Rapture is an unmistakably Christian doctrine”. It is not!

It is a serious distortion of Scripture.

It is astonishing that a belief so contrary to Scripture and the tradition of the Church could be propagated by so-called “Christians”.

According to the Bible and according to the belief not only of Orthodox Christians but also of the Roman Catholic and most Protestant mainline churches, the true Rapture will not be secret; it will be the great and very visible Second Coming of Jesus at the end of the world. That is the one and only “Rapture”. It will not be a separate, secret event but one that "every eye shall see" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

The word rapture is not found in Scripture but hearkens to 1 Thess. 4:17 where St. Paul says that when the Lord comes again “we who are alive...shall be caught up...in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”

This “being caught up...in the clouds” — *arpagisometha* in Greek - is translated by some as “raptured”. The word itself is not found in Orthodox theology.

The notion of a rapture in which Christ comes unseen to take believers away secretly, and only later comes back again for everyone else publicly—this whole teaching is quite novel. It was almost unheard of until John Nelson Darby formulated it in the 1800s as part of a new approach to the Bible, sometimes called “dispensationalism”.

The purpose of the “Rapture” is to protect the elect from the tribulations of the end times. Yet Jesus said nothing about sparing anyone from tribulation. In fact, He said, “In the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.”

Nowhere did Jesus ever say that He would return secretly to rapture the elect. Rather, He promised to be with His elect in all tribulations.

“Lo, I am with you always. I will never leave you or forsake you.” He even had something good to say about being persecuted: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:10).

Those who espouse the Rapture claim that Matthew 24:40-41 refers clearly to the rapture of the just, “Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

The entire passage, however, refers to Christ’s second coming where He will judge the living and the dead and separate the just from the unjust.

Darby taught as dogma that when the Scriptures reveal that the Lord will reign on earth for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4), this figure is to be taken literally, rather than as a symbol for eternity as we believe. The Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431 condemned as heresy this teaching which is called Chialiasmos (millenianism or 1000 years).

In fact, the Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787 A.D.) in which the essential truths of the Christian faith were defined never mention a rapture. Yet Evangelical Christians and Pentecostals keep using obscure passages of the Book of Revelation which purport to give a detailed timetable of what will happen at the end of the world, despite the fact that Jesus Himself warned that no man knows either the day or the hour when the Son of Man shall return.

A major problem with the Rapture is that it ends up teaching not two but three comings of Jesus — first His birth in Bethlehem; second, His secret coming to snatch away (rapture) the “born-again”; and third, His coming at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead and to reign in glory. Yet only two not three comings of Christ are mentioned in the Bible. We have the clearest definition of this in the Nicene Creed when we confess that “the Lord Jesus Christ...will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. His Kingdom will have no end.... I expect the resurrection of the dead. And the life of the ages to come.”

There is no mention of a “Rapture”.

As already stated, most Christians, Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Protestants do not believe in the Rapture. In fact, one Protestant pastor, John L. Gray, summarized magnificently what we Orthodox and most other Christians believe about the Rapture when he wrote these remarkable words:

“Though many believe and teach this 'Pre-Tribulation Rapture' theory, they erroneously do so, because neither Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, nor any of the other writers of the Bible taught this. Nor did the early Church Fathers, nor any others for many hundreds of years.... Did you know that NONE of this was ever taught prior to 1812, and that all forms of Pre-Tribulation Rapture teaching were developed since that date? .... If I were to preach something, or believe something, supposedly from the Bible, but cannot find that ANYONE ELSE before 1812 ever believed it or taught it, I would seriously question that it is based on the Bible.”

Thus the Rapture is foreign to the Bible and to the living tradition of the Church. It is what we call a heresy, a false teaching. False teachings, such as this, happen when people — like John Darby — believe that they have the right to interpret the Scriptures individually apart from the Living Body of Christ — the Church — where the Spirit of Truth abides and leads us to all truth.

I can think of no better words to conclude than those of Jesus when He speaks of the one and only “Rapture”, the Second Coming:

“Be on guard. Be alert! You do not know when that time will come...keep watch...if He comes suddenly, do not let Him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch!” (Mark 13:32-37).

<http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/04/rapture-indisputable-christian-heresy.html>

For another, more detailed, view from a Catholic perspective (largely in agreement with an Orthodox view), see:

[http://insidecatholic.com/Joomla/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=8205&Itemid=100](http://insidecatholic.com/Joomla/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=8205&Itemid=100)

## **Statement from the Ecumenical Patriarchate: Sins Against Nature and God: We Are All Accountable for Ignoring the Global Consequences of Environmental Exploitation**

Once again, in a matter only of a few years, the eyes of the world are turned with suspense toward the Gulf Coast. Sadly, the oil spill is following a path similar to Hurricane Katrina and threatening the coast of Louisiana as well as neighboring states.

As citizens of God's creation, we perceive this monumental spill of crude oil in the oceans of our planet as a sign of how far we have moved from the purpose of God's creation. Our immediate reaction is to pray fervently for the urgent and efficient response to the current crisis, to mourn painfully for the sacrifice of human life as well as for the loss of marine life and wildlife, and to support the people and communities of the region, whose livelihood directly depends on the fisheries of the Gulf.

But as the first bishop of the world's second-largest Christian Church, we also have a responsibility not only to pray, but also to declare that to mistreat the natural environment is to sin against humanity, against all living things, and against our creator God. All of us -- individuals, institutions, and industries alike -- bear responsibility; all of us are accountable for ignoring the global consequences of environmental exploitation. Katrina -- we knew -- was a natural calamity. This time -- we know -- it is a man-made disaster. One deepwater pipe will impact millions of lives in several states as well as countless businesses and industries.

Therefore, we must use every resource at our disposal to contain this disaster. But we must also use every resource to determine liability for the fact that 11 people have died and 5,000 barrels of oil are flowing daily into the delicate ecology of the Gulf of Mexico. In exchange for the benefits and wealth generated by deep underwater drilling, individuals, institutions, and industries assume responsibility for protecting the earth and its creatures from the well-known potential hazards. In this instance, they have clearly failed in those responsibilities; that failure must be acknowledged and strong measures taken to avert future catastrophes.

Although we are halfway around the world from this incident, our interest in it is deeply personal. We visited Louisiana and its bayous only four months after its devastation by Hurricane Katrina and we returned there just last October to convene our Eighth Religion, Science, and the Environment Symposium, "Restoring Balance: The Great Mississippi," in New Orleans. At that time, we noted:

*Although the time we have been on the planet is insignificant in the context of the life of the planet itself, we have reached a defining moment in our story. Let us remember that, whoever we are, we all have our part to play, our sacred responsibility to the future. And let us remember that our responsibility grows alongside our privileges; we are more accountable the higher we stand on the scale of leadership. Our successes or failures, personal and collective, determine the lives of billions. Our decisions, personal and collective, determine the future of the planet.*

*In the spirit of responsibility, the White House and certain Congressional leaders have declared that, before beginning new offshore drilling for oil, there must be greater understanding of the environmental impact and responsibility for such endeavors. We support this approach. For, as confident as interested parties were that a disaster like this could not occur because of watertight controls and fail-safe mechanisms installed, those controls and mechanisms failed, with the horrific results we witness unfolding each day.*

Until such understanding and responsibility have been determined, may God grant us all the strength to curtail the spill, the resources to support the region, and the courage to make the necessary changes so that similar tragedies may be avoided in the future.

<http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/sins-against-nature-and-god>