

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of N. America - A Synergy of Clergy and Laity: Trustees Meet in Fall Session



There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

During the weekend of October 18 to 20, His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph presided over a historic weekend celebrating many joyous milestones: the beginning of the ministry of St. Raphael in North America in 1895, the consecration of the current St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn in 1920, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the priestly ordination of Fr. Thomas Zain, and the elevation of Fr. Adrian Budica to the rank of Archpriest.

The weekend was also the occasion of the fall meeting of the Archdiocesan Board of Trustees. Given the weekend's daunting schedule, His Eminence and the Board

could have considered shrinking down the scope and length of the meetings, but they seized the opportunity to engage in a full and robust series of fruitful deliberations.

His Eminence began the meeting by highlighting the indispensable contribution made by the hierarchs, clergy, and laity who had attended the recent “Antiochian Conference on the Family” that took place in Lebanon at the Balamand Monastery. His Beatitude Patriarch John X convened this expanded meeting of the Holy Synod earlier in the month that included all of the hierarchs of the patriarchal throne to study the challenges faced by our families in the contemporary world. To address this critical and timely topic, His Beatitude included not just hierarchs but esteemed clergy and laity with expertise in an expansive array of relevant areas. His Eminence reported that the presentations of our Archdiocesan delegation were a key to the success of this “Antiochian Conference on the Family,” and he expressed his great paternal pride in our Archdiocese as a whole.

His Eminence began the board meetings with this account of the Synod for a reason that went beyond merely expressing his pride over how our delegation presented itself in Lebanon. He stressed the point that our Archdiocese is a true model of cooperation of clergy and laity for the entire Patriarchate. Oftentimes in the Orthodox Church, we live with an untraditional traditionalism. In other words, the clericalism of recent centuries has become the tradition, while attempts to renew the ancient synergy of the clergy and the laity is viewed as a modern innovation. His Eminence wanted to illuminate this very point at the outset of the Board of Trustees meeting to set the proper tone for the work to come; work that would require this synergy of clergy and laity.

During the course of the board’s deliberations, many important topics were discussed. A lively and informative discussion took place after the report from the committee on legal issues, presented by Mr. Richard Ayoub. This committee is charged with identifying potential legal liabilities, and a proposal to send a letter to the parishes with helpful advice on certain issues of concern was approved. The financial report from Mr. Salim Abboud was noted for its comprehensiveness. Ancient Faith Ministries was invited for the first time to present a full overview of all of its varied programming. Archdeacon Emile Sayegh announced the completion of the initial draft of the new model parish constitution which was shared with a committee of senior clergy from each of the dioceses. The next phase of review will be sharing the draft with the members of the board in order to fully discuss at the spring board meeting.

Towards the end of the full agenda, His Eminence discussed the plans for enriching

the Antiochian Village. He anticipated some of the questions that may be asked, and he reiterated the importance of a larger church to meet the spiritual needs of the Holy Mountain of our Archdiocese. He spoke of the importance of planning for the retirement home for the hierarchs and a new monastic community. His Eminence also shared initial sketches of the new buildings for the board to see how this vision can be realized.

His Eminence thanked the board members for the care and diligence with which all presented, deliberated, and worked during the meetings. He spoke about how important it is for all of the members of the Body of Christ to offer their gifts and talents to work of the Church. All are necessary for the Body to function. The passage from Corinthians quoted at the beginning of this essay was used in the benediction to put a perfect closing to the fruitful meeting, which was a wonderful image of this Pauline teaching.

— Source: antiochian.org