14/03/2019

Resolutions of the 2019 Annual Assembly



IN THE NAME OF THE HOLY AND LIFEGIVING TRINITY!

We, the clergy, monastics, and representatives of the people of God, ordained and elected members to the Annual Assembly of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Eastern America, Serbian Orthodox Church, have gathered together at the Church of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker in the God-protected City of Monroeville, Pennsylvania, on February 22 and 23, in the Year of Our Lord 2019.

Today, as we celebrate the memory of the Hieromartyr Haralambos, the Holy Spirit has gathered us in the community of the Body of Christ that He might bring us closer to our Heavenly Father. Having announced the fullness of God's Church, gathered around our Bishop, Father and Archpastor IRINEJ, we greet the fullness of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the person of His Holiness, the Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci, and Serbian Patriarch IRINEJ.

We also greet all the members of the Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America as well as the members of Central Church Council of the Serbian Orthodox Dioceses in the United States of America. From this place we greet His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Alexander, Heir to the Throne, and his wife, Her Royal Highness Princess Katherine.

This year we have the special honor and opportunity to extend our heartfelt greetings to Congressman Steven Stivers, the new co-chair of the Congressional Serbian-American Caucus. We pray to God that this Caucus, under the leadership of Congressman Stivers and Emanuel Cleaver II, and all people of good will, shall continue its important work bringing the United States and Serbia closer together by affirming shared values and historic ties as a firm foundation upon which future relations should be established.

The Diocesan Assembly also expresses its solidarity with His Excellency, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Milan Milanovic, Permanent RepresentativeofSerbiato the United Nations and his staff with regard to the tragic fire of December 9, 2018, which engulfed the third floor of the historic Mission built in 1905, and endeavors to restore the landmarked Beaux Art embassy.

WHEREAS the year 2019 is extremely important for our Church as a whole, making 800 years that the Word of Christ has been witnessed and vigilantly guarded among our people, in the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church and WHEREAS thanks to St. Sava, who, exactly eight centuries ago, secured autocephaly for our local Church, we today have the opportunity to live and witness our faith to the entire Church of Christ, stamped with the seal of St. Sava and WHEREAS we live the Orthodox faith in the Serbian manner and experiencewhich is, according to the

words of the Venerable Abba Justin of Chelije, well known to us as SVETOSAVLJE – The Way of Saint Sava.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that we join the fullness of the Serbian Church in celebration of this significant jubilee: 800 years of autocephaly of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

WHEREAS the entire Serbian nation, even here, far from our homeland, through the blessings of our pastors and teachers, has the grace and abilityto drink from the source of the Living Water. By laying the foundations of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Saint Sava set the task for all of us, according to his example, to witness the Gospel by establishing new communities and raising temples to the living God and WHEREAS the land in which we live today is blessed by the worthy followers of the vision of St. Sava. Especially here, we must remember VenerableSebastian of Jackson, Holy Bishop Mardarije of Libertyville, Holy Bishop Nicholai, and many others who, led by the prayers of St. Sava, laid the foundations of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America and WHEREAS in this place, it is appropriate that we remember ProtaRadovan Milkovich of Blessed Memory, the former Director of the Department of Christian Education of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada, who wrote a verse and added it to the Hymn of St. Sava, confirming us on the road to Svetosavlje: “And we Serbian children on this side of the sea, with Serbian blood and having Serbian names, who speak the Serbian language, offer praise to you, St. Sava, Wise Head of Serbian Schools! O, what a wonderful celebration, Father of Svetosavlje “.

While celebrating this important jubilee for our Church, we cannot ignore the great challenges of our time that impede uponthe fullness of the Church of God. Together we all pray to Almighty God to enlighten the hearts and minds of all the heads of the Orthodox Churches to diligently work, having in mind their great responsibility, to preserve the unity of the Orthodox Church.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that we express our prayerful support to His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry, the head of the autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and to his hierarchs, priests, monasticsand faithful people, in the struggle for the preservation of peace and unity in the Church. At the same time, we express great regret over the misunderstanding and division among Orthodox brethren. These divisions and misunderstandings are most visible to us who live in the Diaspora and who have, until recently, had the opportunity to daily witness the unity of the Church through the joy of Pan-Orthodox gatherings. Sadly, this year the divisions are visible and require additional prayers of all of us for peace and unity.

WHEREAS our continual and open wound, Kosovo and Metohija, has required the voice of the Church from all over the world in the previous year and WHEREAS the Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States of America was forced to appeal publically on a number of occasions to the highest officials of the United States to protect the religious and human rights of our people, clergy, and monastics who continue to live in Kosovo and Metohija, subject to various types of persecution and intimidation.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that in accordance with the decision of the Holy Assembly of Bishops in May 2018, the Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States strongly raised its voice against the announced division of Kosovo and Metohija and the final recognition of statehood for those people who forcefully took away the most important part of our homeland. We direct our prayers to the Lord for His Grace TEODOSIJE, the Bishop of Raska-Prizren and Kosovo-Metohija, for his clergy, monastics, and faithful people who daily struggle to preserve the name of St. Sava and the martyred Holy Prince Lazar in these, the worst of times.

WHEREAS in the past year we have proudly celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the Day the Serbian Flag Flew at the White House and WHEREAS we have also remembered the venerable sacrifices of our Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian people on both sides of the Ocean and WHEREAS at the end of July 2018, in the capital of the United States of America, Washington, D.C., the 100th anniversary of the proclamation of President Woodrow Wilson was celebrated. One hundred years ago, President Wilson invited the American people to pray for Serbia, a country which, at that moment in history, made enormous sacrifices to achieve the allied victory during the World War I, and WHEREAS as a sign of support and respect for the Serbian people and the nation of Serbia, the Serbian flag was flown over the White House, marking the first time in the history of the

United States that a flag of another country was given such a position of honor.

WHEREAS with the blessing of the Episcopal Council and consent of the Central Church Council of the Serbian Orthodox Dioceses in the United States of America, a celebration was held which included liturgical, academic, cultural, and diplomatic elements. The celebration was organized by the Diocese of Eastern America. His Grace IRINEJ, Bishop of Eastern America, opened the session of the House of Representatives with prayer on July 25, 2018, marking the opening of the week-long celebration commemorating this remarkable jubilee and WHEREAS academic presentations and exhibits were held, at which officials and academics from the United States, the Serbian nation, and Republika Srpska participated. Rich cultural and artistic programming set the stage for deeper understanding of the importance of this jubilee WHEREAS the pinnacle of the events in Washington, D.C. was the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, held in the Cathedral Church of the Orthodox Church in America where prayers were offered to the Lord for the well-being of the Serbian and American nations revealing the unity of all Serbian organizations in the United States as the fruitful path in the struggle for the interests of our people and the Church of God.

THEREFORE,LET IT BE RESOLVED that we reaffirm our profound admiration for our valiant ancestors who have defended justice and liberated our Serbian lands; we continue to marvel at their faithfulness to the Orthodox ethos and their heroic patriotism; we also proudly remember our spiritual ancestors from the East Coast of the United States: Holy Bishop Nicholai of Zhicha, New York, and All Orthodoxy, Mihailo Pupin, Nikola Tesla, and Jelena Losanitch-Frothingham as bright examples of dedication, self-sacrifice, patriotism, and service to the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian people.

WHEREAS the leaders of many Serbian organizations in the United States, inspired by the success of the Washington celebration, gathered at the end of the year under the leadership of His Grace Bishop IRINEJ to consider, once again,the formation of a Serbian-American Leadership Conference (SALC) and WHEREAS this Conference would serve to improve relations between the Serbian people and U.S. officials as frequent and regular contacts with U.S. Senators and Congressmen may lead to greater visibility of the interests and challenges of the Serbian community in America and abroad.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that we confirm and support the creation of such a Conference, which in the past, under the Office of External Affairs of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA (1999-2003) has proven effectiveto the interests and challenges of the Serbian community in America and abroad.

WHEREAS continuing the mission of St. Sava, our Bishop, the clergy, monasticsand the faithful people of the Eastern American Diocese are investing great efforts in the building up the Church of God and WHEREAS during the previous year, the parish community of Holy Apostles Peter and Paul in Atlanta, GA, in a remarkably short time, succeeded in building a church to the glory of the Living God, and WHEREAS for the needs of the socialgatherings, the community in Greensboro, NC, dedicated their newly built parish community center to one of their founders and great benefactor Dr. Djordje Cvijanovichand WHEREAS both of these structures were blessed by the hand of His Grace Bishop IRINEJ and dedicated to use for the building up of our Holy Church.

Two additional major construction projects are ahead of us in the near future:

It is nearly three years ago that we were wounded by the horrific fire that destroyed our Pro-Cathedral Church of Saint Sava in New York City. Our task for the future must be for the continual concern and care for the renovation of the Cathedral. A large part of the work for the rebuilding is already completed, but soon the roof will be replaced, allowing for an even greater effort to be launched for completion of the work. In accordance with the detailed conceptual plan of the renovation of the temple, including the crypt and other supporting areas, we anticipate that the Cathedral Church and Diocesan Center, located in the heart of the world’s leading city, will be the pride of world Orthodoxy.

The Monastery of New Marcha finds itself at the beginning of a major project, for the building of a monastic residence – konak– and other supporting facilities.

WHEREAS following St. Sava in his mission to spread the Word of God by erecting churches, the faithful people of our Diocese have followed St. Sava in yet another crucial direction in the spiritual life of the Church. Led by our Bishop, the faithful from various parts of our Diocese undertook a pilgrimage, following in the footsteps of St. Sava’s many pilgrimages when they visited the Holy Land. Not only did the pilgrims rejoice in the awe-inspiring and unforgettable experiences of their visit to the Holy Land, but our brothers and sisters also garnered many spiritual gifts and brought countless prayers on behalf of us all at the holy places where they commemorated events in the Life of Our Lord. We hope that more of the faithful of

our Diocese of Eastern America will have the opportunity to offer prayers to God in the places where Christ lived among us.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that our annual Diocesan Assembly congratulates these communities in their successful building efforts, and that our Diocese, with our Bishop IRINEJ at the head, stands ready to give whatever direction is needed so that other communities in their infancy can reflect on the accomplishments here offered. On the one hand, let it be resolved to take up the Cross of our Lord in building houses of worship and cultural centers for the furtherance of our Holy Orthodox faith and Svetosavlje; and on the other, let it be resolved to participate in pilgrimages to holy sites for the further building up of our souls.

WHEREAS the taking of innocent life of the unborn child is increasingly becoming a social norm and several states in our God-protected Diocese have either already adopted or are considering adoption of a law legalizing abortion up to the moment of birth; aggressively ignoring the sanctity of life and abandoning the divine mercy that both our Lord and our own humanity insist upon in loving the child, even in its mother’s womb;

THEREFORE, we reconfirm our resolve to remain faithful to the unalterable belief in the sanctity of all life, in the spirit of the Orthodox ethos as expressed in the Statement on the Sanctity of Life of the Assembly of Orthodox Canonical Bishops of the United States of America dated January 31, 2019; we denounce all unjustifiable termination of the unborn child’s life, and call on the faithful to protect all human life from the moment of conception.

WHEREAS the Department of Christian Education of the Diocese of Eastern America continues with projects that advance religious and cultural teaching and education of Orthodox children and youth and WHEREAS during the course of the last year, along with regular summer and winter camps sponsored by our Diocese, a series of conferences for youth was held and WHEREAS the goal of these gatherings was to develop liturgical awareness among young people, as well as to assist youth with the support and experience of the Church, to confront moral and societal problems they encounter in this day and age.

WHEREAS the exhibit “Over There, Far Away 1918-2018”, was organized by the Department of Christian Education, together with Art Exchange, and the Society for the Cultivation of Tradition and Culture of Valjevo, and travelled from parish to parish across the Diocese as a continuation of the Jubilee Celebration which began in Washington, D.C. earlier in the year. The exhibit allowed visitors to become

acquainted with the role of the Serbian people in the Great War. An historical primer entitled The Little Newspaperwas published in support of the project.

WHEREAS during this last year, the Diocesan Department of Christian Education launched a publication entitled Orthodox Educational Magazine, directed toward the Christian upbringing of children. To date, four editions have been published. This bilingual journal with rich illustrations reaches even the youngest children through Christian and cultural themes. The collaborating Dioceses of Eastern America and Düsseldorf and Germany, which publishes the journal in Serbian andGerman, witness to the success of Magazine.

THEREFORE the Diocesan Assembly congratulates the Department of Christian Education on its efforts to continue to support religious and cultural education among the youth and adults of our Diocese, and recognizes the vital role Christian Education plays in the life of our Holy Serbian Orthodox Church, and encourages participation of the Department at the Parish level so that all our faithful can benefit from the important offerings of the Department to spread and uphold the teachings of Holy Orthodoxy.

WHEREAS the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Eastern America, in the course of the year, promoted the advancement of both the spiritual and material aspects of life in all of the parishes. It is important to stress the faith of the Church, that all of the faithful unite themselves sacramentally with God through one Liturgy, led by one Bishop. That is, every parish community is an integral part of one greater whole, the Diocese.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that participation of the parish in the life of the Diocese is not an option, but a requirement, without which the parish does not exist. From this follows that every parish has obligations to the Diocese.

WHEREAS the 20thanniversary of the bombing of Serbia by NATO is being marked by our 2019 Diocesan Assembly of Eastern America and will be commemorated on March 24, 2019, and WHEREAS our Diocesan Assembly, together with the entire Serbian Orthodox Church, prays that the Serbian nation be protected by our Lord God from such unjust punishment by the international community;

THEREFORE,LET IT BE RESOLVED that on Sunday, March 24, 2019, a Memorial Service – Parastosbe served in each Serbian Orthodox church of the Eastern American Diocese, in remembrance of those innocents who lost their lives and in prayerful obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ, asking for mercy on their souls and deliverance for our nation and our faithful people.

WHEREAS the Diocesan Council recognizes that communities that have parish cemeteries are obliged to tend to the care of those properties;

THEREFORE,LET IT BE RESOLVED that communities that have parish cemeteries provide both resources for their permanent maintenance and written regulations for their use and maintenance.

The local Church of God, the Diocese of Eastern America, expresses its deepest gratitude to its worthy pastors in the Lord's field, perpetuators of the work of Saint Sava and dedicated witnesses to the ideal of Saint Sava. Of particular note is Protopresbyter-stavrophor Rade Merick, one of the most esteemed priests of the Diocese, who will retire from active parochial service in June of this year. The faithful are aware of the sacrifices Father Rade made as he served Christ's Church and Svetosavlje. May the Lord reward him with long life, enabling him to continue to witness to the Name of Christ. Many years, dear Father!

The Assembly expresses its deep gratitude to the faithful servants at the altar of God who fell asleep in the Lord during the previous year. Here we remember the tireless laborers among the Lord's field: Protopresbyter-stavrophor Stevan Stepanov, Protopresbyter-stavrophor Dragan Filipovic, Protopresbyter-stavrophor Mateja Matejic, and Protopresbyter-stavrophor Zvonimir Kotorcevich. May the Lord give them rest in the "Mansions of the Righteous".Memory Eternal.

The Assembly expresses its deepest gratitude to the Parish of St. Nicholas in Monroeville, PA and to its priest, Very Reverend Economos George Veselinovic, for their hospitality and care on behalf of those who gathered for the Assembly. It was a great joy to be in their midst, and we pray the Lord makes us worthy of communion in His eternal community.

AMEN.



http://www.spc.rs/eng/resolutions_2019_annual_assembly