

## **Parish Growth and Outreach Highlighted at Metropolis of San Francisco Clergy-Laity Assembly**



The Great Commission was the theme of the Metropolis of San Francisco 2019 Clergy-Laity Assembly which was attended by over 180 clergy and lay delegates from Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon and Washington. This annual gathering was held at Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center in Squaw Valley, California, and was replete with engaging discussions, edifying presentations, and vision for the future.

In his keynote address, His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos stated, “As we look at The Great Commission, we can see that our Lord has given us a straightforward charge: Go, teach, baptize. He places no limits on where we are to go, who we are to teach, and who we can baptize and incorporate into His Church. All nations, all people.” He continued on to reflect that, “One of today’s challenges – and opportunities – is how we welcome our visitors and newest members and what these new people find and experience when they enter our parishes. Hundreds of people every year step out of their comfort zones to visit our parishes sometimes after years of research and reading about Orthodoxy. We must be ready to welcome them and to receive them into a new spiritual home.”

The featured speaker for the Clergy-Laity Assembly was Rev. Father Evan Armatas, from Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Loveland, Colorado. His uplifting presentation focused on how The Great Commission is being achieved through a healthy parish. He explained that parish health, while different for each community,

has the same outcome – a vibrant, Christ-centered parish that is focused on growth, builds bridges, is transparent, has a clear vision and mission, empowers parishioners to effect change, develops leaders, and recognizes the essential task of caring for one another and building an interconnected social fabric. “If we know that God desires and creates growth, we first must strive to remove the barriers we have erected and enable the God-given potential in our communities to flourish,” said Father Evan Armatas. He continued to state that, “developing a healthy parish culture that sets the stage for growth in faith and in numbers begins with identifying what is holding us back.” The four presentations by Father Evan during the Clergy-Laity Assembly are also available online.

The Clergy-Laity Assembly also received a report from the deliberations of the Metropolis Council which met the day prior to the Assembly. This included the careful review of the Metropolis Budget which reflects the significant progress in our Ministries since the development of the Metropolis Strategic Plan in 2012. This has resulted in expanded and enhanced ministries which have also required our budget to change proportionately to sustain these efforts. Currently there are five people whose scope of work directly relates to our ministries. The 2019 budget of \$1,850,000 was unanimously approved by the delegates to the Clergy-Laity Assembly.

Following the conclusion of the Assembly, nearly 70 priests from throughout the Metropolis participated in a Clergy Retreat led by Dr. Albert Rossi from Saint Vladimir Seminary. Dr. Rossi’s inspirational presentation was entitled, “In Becoming a Healing Presence, Prayer is NOT Optional.”

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