

SYNDESMOS *news*

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Christ is Risen!

Editorial

Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, a father in the faith

She was undoubtedly the most famous Orthodox woman theologian of the 20th century. Elisabeth Behr-Sigel was born on 20 July 1907; she left this world for eternity on 26 November 2005 at the age of ninety-eight.

We inherited from this great lady a theological legacy of great value. All her life she was a faithful servant of the Lord. She has been a living witness of the ecclesiastical life in Western Europe for almost a century.

In homage to the memory of Elisabeth Behr-Sigel I would like to develop two themes that were dear to her and that are still relevant: the ministries of women in the Church and the Ecumenical dialogue. However, these of course were not the only interests of the theologian, but in these two topics, her contribution has been particularly significant.

One of the most sensitive issues that of the place of women in Orthodoxy leads us, from the start, to the issue of the diversity of ministries in the body of the Church. In fact, the Church of the first centuries knew a wide diversity of ministries, a diversity that the passage of history has lessened, but never abolished. It is in this sense that we should understand the words of Saint Paul, particularly in the Epistle to the Ephesians (4, 7-13). The apostle also teaches the Corinthians that the diversity of Church ministries doesn't go against the unity of the body; on the contrary, unity is based on the diversity of the charismatic gifts from the unique Spirit (1 Corinthians 12). It is really the Spirit and not some member of the Church that establishes a faithful person in a function of Church service. Today and in many places, diversity has been replaced - for a while probably - by some hierarchical ministries in a manner foreign to the evangelical spirit because it is based on fear of authority. For the divine Paul and the apostolic tradition, the authority of the Church is conceivable only in a communion of love and not in relationships of hierarchical domination (cf. Romans 12,3-21). It is not impossible that we have here, in this evolution, one of the historical reasons for the disappearance, in Orthodoxy of a variety of ministries within the Church.

The participation at the Eucharistic Liturgy is a parameter that allows us to evaluate the evolution of the ways the Church is administered. In the authentic tradition it is clear that the Eucharist is the hieratic act accomplished by the whole body of the Church. During the Liturgy it is the



“The myrrh-bearing women of Easter morning, the first ones to announce the resurrection of Christ, are honored in the Orthodox Churches with the title “Apostles to the Apostles.” However, the reading of the Gospel during public worship remains reserved for male ministers” (*This and the following quotes are taken from Elisabeth Behr-Sigel's article “Women in the Orthodox Church”, St. Nina Quarterly, Volume 2, No. 2, www.stnina.org*).

assembly of the whole Church that offers the oblation to God the Father, because by the incorporation of the Church the baptised are at the same time consecrated to and participating in the vocation of Christ the High Priest. Across the centuries, especially since the Constantinian and Justinian periods, the Church has made its administration more systematic in the manner of the imperial State, establishing an ontological separation between the simply baptised and the ordained ministers as if only the latter were consecrated. The model has prevailed in the Eastern Church until our days, with more or less success. The transformation of our societies and particularly the emergence of Orthodox communities in countries of Western Europe has given the Church since the 20th century the possibility to reflect again on the question of ecclesiastical functions. Our theology has never denied the richness of the first times, evidence of the living and life giving presence of the Holy Spirit in the assembly of the Saints, the *ecclesia* of the all the consecrated faithful.

Nowadays, the diversity of ministries taken on by the faithful that have not been ordained to the diaconate or to the priesthood is more obvious. Generally, everyone already agrees that it is imperative to give a greater

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The World Fellowship
SYNDESMOS
of Orthodox Youth

*"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit
in the bond (syndesmos) of peace"*
Ephesians 4:3

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Syndesmos is the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth. The aim of Syndesmos is to develop cooperation and communication among Orthodox Youth movements and theological schools around the world and to promote within them a deeper understanding and vision of their common faith. Founded in 1953, Syndesmos counts 121 member movements in 42 countries and organizes meetings, festivals, and exchanges. Syndesmos publishes resource materials, reports, directories, books, a newsletter and a website.

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Past events

- The enthronement of the new leader of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Didimos, took place on Sunday, 30 October 2005. He succeeded Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews II on the throne. May God bless His Holiness' archpastoral service!

Memory Eternal!

Mrs Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, a prominent Orthodox theologian of the 20th century, fell asleep in the Lord on 26 November 2005.

His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews II, former Catholicos of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church fell asleep in the Lord on 27 January 2006 at Devalokam, the headquarters of the Church near Kottayam.

Archbishop Nikolaj of the Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia passed away in Presov on January 30, age 78.

May the merciful Lord give rest to His servants with the Just, and set them in His courts!

- The General Assembly of the World Council of Churches met in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 14-23 February 2006, and gathered over 4,000 participants, including 691 delegates from the 348 member churches of the WCC, and representatives and observers from other churches, organisations and movements. More on this event at: www.wcc-assembly.info

Future events

- The Christian forum "Together for Europe" will take place on 12 May 2007 in Stuttgart, Germany. "Syndesmos News" (Year 2004 / Issue 1) reported on the first event of this kind, which took place on 8 May 2004 in Stuttgart. Syndesmos is represented in the organising committee of the forum by Christopher D'Aloisio, president. Further information at: <http://www.miteinander-wie-sonst.de>

- The Third European Ecumenical Assembly will take place in Sibiu, Romania 4 - 8 September 2007 with the participation of over 3000 delegates. Read more at: www.eea3.org

Recent Syndesmos representation:

- Sant' Egidio Congress "The Courage to Forge. A Spiritual Humanism of Peace", 11 - 13 September 2005, Lyon, France, *Christopher D'Aloisio*

- EYCE General Meeting, 24 - 30 October 2005, Turku, Finland, *Outi Vasko*

- Orthodox Congress in Western Europe, 29 - 31 October 2005, Blankenberge, Belgium, *Christopher D'Aloisio, Cyrille Sollogoub, Olga Oleinik*. See also page 15.

- Conference of European Churches Youth Working Group, 17 - 19 December, Brussels, Belgium, *Christopher D'Aloisio*

- The Third European Ecumenical Assembly preparatory meeting, 24-27 January 2006, Rome, Italy, *Christopher D'Aloisio*

- WCC General Assembly, 14 - 23 February 2006, Porto Alegre, Brazil, *Christopher D'Aloisio, Spyros Tsimouris, Olga Oleinik*

Syndesmos presented an exhibition stand and held a workshop "Orthodoxy and the Unity of the Church" at the Mutirao forum of the General Assembly.

Word of thanks to voluntary helpers:

The editor thanks Dr. Anna Krinis for proofreading the majority of articles in this "Syndesmos News" and all authors of the issue.

place to the service of the laity in the Church community. Functioning of laity as teachers of catechesis is an obvious example. The question of diversity of ecclesiastical functions is put back on the agenda, certain functions are to be redefined others to disappear or reappear.

The question of feminine ministries in the Church is part of the current questioning of the ministries. Within the framework of reflection on the history and theology of the feminine diaconate led by the group "Femmes et hommes dans l'Eglise" (*Women and men in the Church*), Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, together with a group of clergy and lay people, wrote, in Autumn 2000, a letter to the primates of all the patriarchal, autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox Churches in favour of a creative restoration of deaconesses. The magazine *Service Orthodoxe de Presse* gave an account of this event¹: "... the signatories underline that the possible restoration of the feminine diaconate constitutes *an important question that has been asked of our Church and in our Church for decades*. This ministry, they remind us, *existed and was flourishing in the time of the Fathers of the Church, as has been shown by serious historical studies*. It was at the time *quite a complete ministry, liturgical, cataphetical and philanthropic at the same time, adapted to the social structure of the age*. This question was put back on the agenda at the beginning of the 20th century by the initiative of Saint Nectarios of Aegina, a Greek bishop who died in 1922, and by Saint Elizabeth, Grand-Duchess of Russia, martyred in 1918. But it is particularly in the last 30 years in the context of a deep cultural mutation and of ecumenical dialogue that the possible restoration of deaconesses imposes itself on the conscience of the Orthodox Church as a burning problem.

In the case of ordination to the priesthood, there is still a certain amount of reflection to be done, said Elisabeth Behr-Sigel. Nowadays the arguments going against such an ordination can be summed up by the symbolic or iconographic character of the function of the priesthood. The theologian Behr-Sigel proposes to diminish this argument, reminding us that the Eucharist is not only a memorial, but also an anticipation of the banquet in the Kingdom where the division of the sexes as we know it will be changed². "To insist heavily on the masculinity of Christ, God made man – *anthropos* – is it not falling into a form of Nestorianism? That is to say deny the real union in Christ of God and Man. This question was asked by the theologians present in Rhodes [at



Elisabeth Behr-Sigel at her home in Paris, July 2004

"The common vocation of all the baptised, both women and men, is proclaimed prophetically in the sacraments of Christian initiation. They are given to all in the Orthodox Church, without gender distinction, through a profound and symbolic ritual. Baptism by immersion signifies a passage, a birth into the new life in communion with the death and the resurrection of Christ. ... However, at the same time that all separation appears to be abolished by virtue of our baptism, a ritual usually follows that seems to contradict that notion. The baptised male is led into the sanctuary behind the iconostasis, while its doors remain closed for the female. Today, a growing number of Orthodox women feel that this ritual is discriminatory and wish for it to change."

"... it is the supreme will of God that the Church becomes that which she is: a community in faith, hope, and love, of men and of women, of the mystery of individuals, ineffably equal yet different, in the image and radiance of the divine Trinity. Such is the grand ecclesiological vision of the Orthodox Church. What remains is to translate it into our historical, empirical existence: a difficult task, seemingly impossible, to which we sometimes feel called, confident in the promise of Christ to send us the Spirit from above who will introduce the disciples to the entire Truth (John 16:13)."

the pan-Orthodox consultation on the place of women in the Church and of ordination of women, organised by the Ecumenical Patriarchate from the 30th October to 7th November 1988]³. Elisabeth Behr-Sigel goes on to propose a deepening of the notion of the person being the image and resemblance of God. She warns against a possible distortion of the understanding of the icon: it is not a naturalist portrait. "In the martyrdom of Blandine (of Lyon) attached naked to a stake, offered by her executioners to the beasts and offering herself in sacrifice to God, in the ecstasy of faith and love, her companions in the fight contemplated 'the image of Christ' who was comforting them. 'She was for her brothers an exhortation. She, the little one, the feeble one, the despised, who had put on the great, invincible athlete, the Christ'. Thus said the letter of the Christians of Lyon to the Churches of Asia Minor cited by Eusebius in his History of the Church (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, t. II, *Sources chrétiennes*, 1955, p. 17). Is it not this kind of transparency - how unreachable to the sole human strength - that is expected from the priest?"⁴

These few words do not sum up exhaustively the thoughts of Elisabeth Behr-Sigel and I only submit them to your charity for reflection and not necessarily in order to convince you. She herself, actually, was not what one could call a militant, but a lay theologian who put her reflection at the service of the Church. She always knew how to step aside before the pastors covered with the charisma of authority and her propositions were never peremptory affirmations, but an effort to revitalise the Church life. She insisted particularly on the fact that the impossibility of giving a simple answer does not exempt from the duty of asking complex questions.

In the field of relationships between divided Christians, Elisabeth Behr-Sigel played a pioneering role. Coming herself from Protestantism, she has always kept a strong link with her roots, a questioning capacity about the reality of Orthodoxy, that could have become sclerotic. From her youth, she understood her attraction to Orthodoxy not as a rejection of Western Christian experiences, but as a deepening of those. Through her friendship with Fr. Lev Gillet, the "Monk of the Eastern Church", Elisabeth Behr-Sigel knew the painful beginning of the dialogue between Christians, practically outlined by Protestants followed by Anglicans on one side of Europe, and the Church of Constantinople on the other side, quickly followed by all the patriarchal, autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox Churches. The Roman Catholics joined the movement next and in a different way. For Elisabeth Behr-Sigel as for all the people who have inspired the ecumenical movement, the dialogue and the search for unity is not an optional choice

1. SOP 254 (January 2001), the text in italic is a quotation from the letter.
2. É. BEHR-SIGEL, *Discerner les signes du temps*, Paris, 2000, p. 150.

3. *Ibidem*, p. 151.
4. *Ibidem*, p. 151.

of ecclesiastical hierarchies, nor a professional speciality to some elite clergy, but a way of being among Christians, an existential necessity that affects the witness of the unique Church of Christ in the world. Very significantly, in her writings, the French theologian names the Churches in the way they name themselves and not in the way the other Churches qualify them; for example, she only uses with quotation marks the adjective "uniate" for the reason of the pejorative connotation with which this qualifier is filled, in the benefit of the "Catholics of Eastern rite". She did not ignore the resurgence of proselytism in some Christian communities of Western origin dispersed in Eastern Europe, but she kept a critical distance from the events and knew how to witness a great respect for the other Christians without condemning a whole Church family due to the indigenous behaviour of some of its members. The attention given by Elisabeth Behr-Sigel to the terminology is a sign of patristic wisdom; our tradition gives a great importance to names.

In the same way she was reluctant to use the word "Churches" in the plural when discussing dialogue towards unity, because in this approach, it is the One and Holy Church of Christ that manifests itself in a process of reconciliation. The division of the Body is unbearable when the Gospel is open before us.

At last with many other Orthodox thinkers, Elisabeth Behr-Sigel understood as a manifestation of the providence of God the presence of

Orthodoxy in the West. For her, the Orthodox of Western Europe are charged with a particular mission because of their permanent contact with other Christians: to formulate the Orthodox Tradition of the Church in a renewed language, in a world which is in constant evolution. Like the Fathers of the Church, we have to proclaim the mystery of salvation in an intelligible way for the people we speak with. It is not we who choose the people with whom we cross paths, it is the Father who sends them to us, or rather who sends us to them. To talk to the world today, we have to love it in its strengths and in its weaknesses, and tell it about the Christ we know. This great lady, Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, was sought to take on this charge until the dusk of her life, with true pastoral concern towards the next generations. May God rest her soul in peace and grant her eternal memory.

In this issue of *Syndesmos News*, you will find information on the events organised by our Fellowship since 2005. Due to technical reasons, it has not been possible to send this issue earlier. News about the activities of *Syndesmos* since the beginning of 2006 will be published in the next issue of *Syndesmos News* in a few months.

Christopher D'Aloisio, president

Warmest thanks to Marc Victoroff who helped much in the translation of the text.

REPORTS FROM SYNDESMOS EVENTS 2005

"Martyrdom and Christian Witness today":

a week in Rome with the Community of Sant'Egidio,

17-23 July 2005

Is it really possible to be a saint today? If it is, where do we start?



Fr. Roberto Cherubini leads the excursion.

When we hear the Gospel, we regularly feel awkward about how little we follow what we know to be right, what we believe is the glorious path towards our salvation and the transformation of the world.

Our life is full of a great contradiction; we know what we are called to do, but we don't do it. We know the commandment to

love God, to love our neighbour (Mc 12, 28-34). We know we are even asked to love our enemies (Lk 6, 31-36). However, we do not put love in the centre of our lives.

We know that our mission is to go and preach the Gospel to all nations and baptise them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28, 18-20). We know that we are to be the salt of the

earth (Mt 5,13). But we stay at home, most of us and keep our Good News for ourselves, and find it extremely difficult to try and start living it.

We know we are to see Christ in any hungry person (Mt 25, 40). We understand that material goods will be of no use at the end of our journey (Mt 6, 19). If we examined our possessions, we would



Adriano Rocucci - Secretary General of Sant Egidio and Lydia Obolensky-D'Aloisio.



Prof. Grant White (Cambridge).

admit that we do not need half of what we have, and yet we do not share what we have with the poorest. And when we do feed the hungry or help shelter the homeless, we merely give them enough to be at peace with ourselves.

We believe in the resurrection of the dead, we know our life will be eternal, but is there anything we are more scared of than our death and the death of those we love?

The contradiction between what we want to do and what we actually do probably comes, most of the time, from the feeling that we just don't know where to start. We feel small and weak when we see the needs of the world. We can't see how we could make a difference.

We are scared of what would happen if we did give ourselves away to God: the change would be too radical. The fact is: we know we are called to be saints, but we don't want to follow this calling, or we think it is very arrogant to only try. And so, we restrict our efforts to areas that seem easier to reach.

In the Orthodox Church, for instance, we are particularly good at "keeping close to the tradition". Often it is synonymous to making sure that nothing will change in what we think to be the great tradition of our church, but is nothing more than our local habits. We can become very passionate at making sure things will remain "as they have always been" or "as they should be".

Yet, if we open our eyes, while we are busy with our debates, we see on our doorstep people that are on their own, that have no home, no family, no hope. Sometimes they are also ill, disabled. Sometimes their only comfort is in alcohol. Those who live outside are frozen in winter, dehydrated in summer. Very often they are displaced very far from the place they were born. Some of them are baptised, some are not.

Almost none of them are members of our cosy parishes, parts of our lives, and we would not feel comfortable spending too much time with them. We know they are the needy, the hungry, the lonely, the homeless Christ spoke about in the Gospel (Mt 25, 34-46) but apart from giving some money or clothes to them, we do

not feel we can do very much to make a change. And there we are, with the love we receive and give to those around us, with our faith, our time and energy, so rich with all these things we have, and so weak when time comes to try and share what we have.

The feeling is: "Yes, I could just drop some of the things that matter so much now, I could probably follow another path, yes, I could decide now to take my cross and follow Christ, but it would imply changes that would be so radical, that I don't think it is reasonably possible to try. So, what can I do, apart from giving something to help the poor?"

What can we do apart from praying that the Saints be our intercessors? We are in awe in front of martyrs, we worship their radical love, their love for God and people that was stronger than the fear of dying, but we do not dare to feel we can try and live it ourselves: have the martyrs any real implication in our lives? Where do we start if we want to be what Christ has showed us we can be?

The witness of Sant'Egidio Community: a possible answer to many of our questions.

When coming to Rome, we knew that the Community of Sant'Egidio is a lay movement in the Roman Catholic Church. We knew that we would share their experience of serving the poor. We also knew that the theme of the exchange was "sainthood and martyrdom", and that among the proposed activities, there would be a pilgrimage to the places of the first Christians of the undivided church of early times, as well as to places of martyrdom of many of our common and most venerated Saints (such as the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Saint Clement of Rome, Saint Cyrille apostle of Slavs).

What we did not know was that the Community of Sant'Egidio would give us a living example of some possible answers to the questions we keep asking ourselves.

And their answers seem to be very humble and simple.

Live with your neighbour in need.

Loving the neighbour is not to give him things or to help him. Loving him is to know him, to talk and listen to him, to share his life, to become his friend. This is how the Community started,



Secretary General of Sant'Egidio, Adriano Rocucci and Lydia Obolensky-D'Asloisio.



The Orthodox liturgy.

almost 40 years ago, when some Catholic students in Rome started spending some time every day with gipsy people. After having spent some hours with the gypsies, they used to gather for a daily prayer. The rest of the time, they were carrying on with their studies and family lives. Nowadays it is thousands of people around the world that share this way of life: they have a job, families, and they spend time with vulnerable or lonely people, and also meet to pray together.

What is special about this kind of life is that it is not a charity activity. It is not barely giving to those in need. It is actually loving them, living with them (which, of course also involves feeding them, or allowing them to have a shower or get medical help).

As part of that life, there is also common prayer. During vespers (the structure is similar to the vespers we know in the orthodox church) every evening, there is a Bible reading, and a member of the community gives a sermon on that text. It is very impressive indeed to see the big Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere full of people that come to vespers every single evening of the week, and it is difficult not to compare it with so many of other churches that are almost empty on Saturday evening for vigils or vespers.

From this example we recognise that it is possible to offer a part of our "normal" daily life, love and energy to people who need it more than others and to pray together, read the Scripture and meditate on it, as Sant'Egidio members do.

The efficient and universal power of love.

One can see even more in the way of life Sant'Egidio proposes us. Their lives give the members of Sant'Egidio a better ability to recognise Christ in anyone they meet. Once they have learnt how to see their brother in the person of beggars, of gipsy families, of lonely elderly people, or disabled persons, they become more aware of the brother who is in any human person. Once they have spent parts of their lives with those people close to them that need them most, they find it natural to deeply and genuinely identify with the suffering of anyone on earth.

Loving the poor neighbour on the doorstep, they also very concretely love the neighbour very far away, as far away as Africa. This is how Sant'Egidio has helped solving conflicts in Algeria or Mozambique. This has led Sant'Egidio community to address all urgent issues whenever they identified a need, to become active in contributing to such matters as death penalty, HIV-Aids, war and violence. For Sant'Egidio, the victims of the death penalty, HIV and war are not figures on TV news, but real people, brothers and sisters. They have managed to reach that real and deep concern through sharing their daily life with everyone they meet.

With love and respect, the community, in addressing all possible urgent issues of humanity, has come to collaborate fruitfully with other Christians as well as with non-Christians. It has developed deep relationships with many people of different denominations, faiths, beliefs, and this network allows the message of peace and life to spread in many places and reach people throughout the world.

An important thing to underline is that throughout all their activities Sant'Egidio has managed to avoid any kind of ambiguity in their relations with other Christians. It is clear to anyone that meets them that love and fellowship is what the Community cares for. This is how the community has managed to gain trust from all Christian churches, including orthodox local churches.

Martyrdom: the last stage of radical love.

Another very significant element in the life of Sant'Egidio is that the Community has revived to a great extent the veneration of holy Christian martyrs. They venerate martyrs of the early church and are extremely conscious of the privilege it is to be living in Rome and to be able to literally walk where great martyrs did. Sant'Egidio also venerates new martyrs of the XX century. The XX century has been a century of great struggle and sorrow for many Christians. It has also given to the world a renewed witness of martyrdom. In Rome, Sant'Egidio takes care of the church of Saint apostle Bartholomew, and has devoted all lateral chapels of the church to New Martyrs. The Orthodox know well of the new martyrs of soviet regimes (and they were very many, it is true). Our trip to Rome reminded us of the numerous other Christian martyrs of last century that met a martyr's death in many countries around the world.

We may think that martyrdom is not something for us to consider, but it is disturbing to realise that in the last few generations (and even in the last few years) so many people went through martyrdom and showed the world that a martyr's death, this total

giving away of one's own self to God, is not something of the past only, it is something for today. Martyrs are persons who loved God and their neighbour until the very end of their life on earth.

Being a martyr is of course not something we choose to become. But when we look at how Sant'Egidio community lives, we can easily imagine that their witness, their radical consistency with Christ's commandments, is of the kind that under certain circumstances would turn them into joyful and glorious martyrs.

Lydia Obolensky-D'Aloisio

More about the Sant'Egidio community at: www.santegidio.org.

Seminar on liturgical language and translation

24-29 August 2005, Brühl, Germany

The idea of organising an event on translation arose during the Syndesmos assembly 2003, when so much was said about Syndesmos history. Above all, it reminded us of the fact that during the initial years after its founding, Syndesmos was holding theological conferences on different subjects which have helped to renew the Church - as, for instance, in the mission area. It was urgent to do something about a subject, which involves our faith and our witness to the world: the use of language in Church.

Language is primary to our faith, as its very centre, God's Son who became man, is called Word, Logos. Because of the incarnation and by words, we can express or speak about God, who is inexpressible. Without words, which we understand and which nourish, we cannot build up our relationship to God. But how is it that in our everyday church life today, many Orthodox Christians are not able to understand the language of the prayers they are saying and are not able, during the liturgy, to act as the "co-



Group photo with metropolitans Augustinos and Seraphim.



Alexandra Popescu, the coordinator of the seminar.

liturges" they are meant to be, as members of the "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2,9)?

The seminar about liturgical translation proposed a mixture between a theological seminar for translators and a Syndesmos event open to all. About 7 translators of different languages (Russian, English, German and French) and 25 other participants from 7 different countries met together and managed to find a common ground for communication. It was also a scientific seminar, but not one concerning only specialists. The topics discussed are of great importance for us all and have immediate implications.

The seminar was hosted by the parish St. John the Baptist in Brühl, a very active parish in the middle of a little German town near Cologne. We are very thankful to Fr. Konstantin Miron and the whole parish for their genuine hospitality.

The subject was divided into two main questions: *why* do we translate, and *how* do we translate?

The answer to the crucial question of "*why*" we have to translate our church offices may seem obvious. However, we often find ourselves having to answer arguments against it, such as "maintenance of tradition" or the "inadequacy" of modern languages". Fr. George Kochetkov, principal of the theological institute St. Philaret (Moscow) tried to give some answers to this question. Fr. George has been working on translation of liturgical texts into modern Russian for 25 years together with a group of other theologians and philologists. His main argument for the necessity of translation was that the theological reasons for translating go back to the essence of our faith, as people from all countries, nationalities and cultures are to receive life in Christ (cf. Gal 3,28). Fr. George spoke also about some principles and implications of creative translation. Translation should be creative in order to make texts written long ago accessible and understandable for the faithful today by letting aside secondary aspects. This is why liturgical translation enables us to deal more intently with forms and to retrieve their essential aspects. The spiritual health of a Church can be measured by her capacity to see the necessity of translating liturgical texts and to face contradictory theological debates, which can be provoked by such translations.

Fr. George also spoke about the danger common among Orthodox believers to cling to secondary aspects of Tradition and to forget the main ones. Before translating, he said, we have to restore the foundation for translation - for example reading the prayers of the



At the liturgy.

anaphora aloud, which enables the participation of the whole community -, otherwise, it is pointless to translate at all.

The second keynote speech, given by Fr. Ephrem Lash from Manchester, whose translations are used by many English-speaking parishes, was mainly about the question of “*how*” to translate. Fr. Ephrem began by saying that our entire tradition is based on translation: the New Testament conveys Christ’s words, which He originally spoke in Aramaic, into Greek. The question “*why*” we should translate doesn’t even need to be addressed, he said. Fr. Ephrem sketched in his talk four principles of a good translation: precision, compatibility with the Orthodox tradition, audibility and “singableness”. He showed, using many examples that a 100% translation is impossible because either the target language doesn’t have the precise word or some ambiguities present in the text cannot be brought forward in the target language. However, with intense work on the original text and on other texts of the Holy Scripture, the Fathers and other existing translations in different modern and old languages one can achieve a felicitous translation. However, translation should not be blocked by the constraint of literality. If it is, then we will get a “language fossil” and not a living text. One of the functions of liturgical texts is to transmit Tradition to the members of the Church of each era; in this perspective, we must keep in mind that the primary importance of a translated text is to be lived, heard and sang.

Beyond the interest of the particular examples he gave, Fr. Ephrem’s talk and his many contributions to the discussion during the whole seminar helped us to recognise how important it is for translators to cooperate and to combine the knowledge they possess. It can be only regretted that the instances of such cooperation are not very frequent, while it is a perfect possibility for living conciliarity in our Church.

The idea of combining a scientific seminar with a meeting of larger interest developed into a colloquy for participants interested in special problems of translation. Four talks were the subject of this colloquy. Firstly Elie Korotkoff from France (Caen) spoke about translation for and in the Church. Elie Korotkoff is the coordinator of

a translator group in France, which is acknowledged by the Bishops’ Assembly in France and tries to create French translations to be used by all. This group works on a “conciliar” basis: translations are discussed and sent to different persons for comments. In France there are already many other translations of the most used texts, so the time has come to search for a unified translation.

Secondly, Fr. Peter Sonntag, the priest of a German-speaking parish in Düsseldorf, spoke about the reasons, which hinder the translation of liturgical texts and its spreading. Firstly, exaggerated “apophatism” - to affirm that these texts surpass our comprehension in each language; however, only after hearing these texts in a comprehensible language are we enabled to wonder about the unspeakable “spoken” in them. Secondly, there is a kind of “over-sacralisation” of the typikon and of the liturgical language; and thirdly, a fear to banalise and rationalise the offices, to lose our identity and substance. Fr. Peter stated, however, that translation is traditional, as tradition originally also means “transferring”. As the Church Fathers have done when they adapted - or better, “baptised” - notions of the Greek-Latin culture of their time to express Christian Faith. Translation is in fact a kind of prolongation of the Incarnation of the Word of God. We on the contrary “disincarnate” our Faith if we don’t let the Word be expressed in the language of our cultures.

Thirdly, Cyrille Mozgov, a young specialist in Church Slavonic from the translation group of Fr. George Kochetkov in St. Philaret’s, spoke about the specific problems of Church Slavonic as a liturgical language today. He traced the historical development of Slavonic and showed that it is absurd to consider the translation used now as a reference, when in fact it is also a translation, which was developed over centuries. He also presented the difficulties in Russia of helping the people to accept that they don’t really understand Church Slavonic. Often seemingly understandable words or phrases may distort the meaning of the text.

Finally, Fr. Paisios (Rauer) from Germany spoke about the different practical difficulties of translation - such as the dogmatic importance of the text, the singing/reading character and the style.



One of the sessions.



French-speaking participants' quire.

The participants were also received by the Metropolitan Augustinos (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and Seraphim (Patriarchate of Romania) in Bonn. A very open discussion took place, in the course of which Metropolitan Augustinos said that translation and also the expression of our faith in an appropriate language is absolutely necessary, but it should go with the enculturation and not be forced; it also should happen under coordination of all the Orthodox present in Germany.

In the end of the meeting during an exchange about local experience, Fr. Timothy Dewedi from Benin spoke about his experience in his country and other countries in Africa. There was an orthodox mission there during the last decades, and naturally the languages used were local languages, mainly French and Swahili, but also many others, like Fon for Benin. The offices are held in these languages as a matter of fact, as no one would think to found a mission in Greek or Slavonic. This should make us reflect on our own situation in Western Europe and the implications of language use for our witness here.

One important outcome of this seminar was the founding of a contact group for translators. It became clear that some translation issues surpass the language barrier and that translators in different languages can help each other to find principles of translation and to surpass special difficulties. A publication containing the talks of the conferences will be published this year.

What we could ask ourselves after such a seminar is: what immediate results could it have on the language situation our Church is living in at the moment? Perhaps we could hope for more of openness to the idea that we are not simply being “modernists” when promoting translation, but that we are acting in the true spirit of our Tradition. It must also be said that few would propose to give up entirely the old liturgical languages; but each language spoken by members of the Church should also be a language of their prayer - if not, we will speak in Church “ten thousand words in an unknown tongue instead of five words with our understanding” (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:19).

Alexandra Popescu

“Unity in diversity: being different, being together” Youth Encounter between the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox *Vanadzor, Armenia,* 22 - 27 September 2005

We can with regret remember the battles over participation of youth organisation from the Oriental Orthodox Churches in Syndesmos at the XVI Syndesmos General Assembly in New Valamo (Finland) and the reaction to those of an Indian sister, which was published in the Assembly Bulletin: “In India I’m proud to be an Orthodox Christian, but here I found out that I’m just an Oriental”. Without going into depth regarding the theological aspects of the dialogue between Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches, it is with deep shame that we should consider the situation of someone feeling excluded or undervalued in the family of Churches that claims to have retained the tradition of the Apostolic Church.

Syndesmos Constitution declares our Fellowship “an instrument for furthering cooperation and deeper communion between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches”. This commitment was reaffirmed in September 2005, when 25 young people from the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox traditions gathered to reflect upon the theme “Unity in diversity: being different, being together” 22 - 27 September 2005 at Gyumri, Armenia. This project was supported by the European Youth Foundation, to which we express our gratitude.

continued on page 12



In the monastery of Haghpat.



Events 2006

Conference on Orthodox Religious Education

28.07. - 02.08.2006, Valamo Lay Academy, Valamo Monastery (Heinavesi, Finland)

Co-organisers: Orthodox Church in Finland, Valamo Lay Academy, University of Joensuu

Participants: Orthodox educationalists, religion teachers, persons involved in Christian education in state schools and those who study to become religion teachers.

Number of participants from Syndesmos: 10 young people from all over the world

Aims:

- To discuss present challenges in the field of Christian education and the holistic aspect in orthodox religious education;
- To form a network for cooperation, dialogue and exchange.

Short description: Holistic education has been in the focus of the World Council of Churches' educational work and discussions since 1998. Among the local Orthodox Churches there is a need to deepen discussion and share experiences in this particular field. There is also a need to create a stronger network between educators of religion and researchers of Orthodox Religious Education.

The Sub-conference: Within the conference agenda one of the main aims is to establish a network concerning academic research on Orthodox Religious Education, dealing with teaching both at schools and in the parish environment. The Sub-conference of Holistic Christian Education - Research on Orthodox Religious Education, gives an excellent forum for the exchange of ideas on research and to discuss the possibility of creating a network for further collaboration with your colleagues. The conference will include information about the situation of Religious Education in various Orthodox Churches.

Registration fee: Western Europe and USA/Canada - 100 Euro, others - 60 Euro

Expenses: the participants are responsible for their travel and visa expenses; limited number of subsidies is available on request from the Secretariat.

Applications deadline: 15.05.2006

Seminar on Renewal of Preaching

20.10. - 25.10.2006, Ferme de Froidmont Rixensart (Brussels area), Belgium

Co-organiser: Dominican community of Froidmont

Participants: up to 40 Orthodox and Roman Catholic youth and young adults motivated to serve the revival of the fullness of gifts in the Church and the gift of preaching in particular.

Aims: Reaffirming that the source of preaching the Gospel is the gift of the Holy Spirit given by Christ to His disciples

- To name and explore the conditions of an full, efficient and fruitful preaching;
- To define challenges and demands to the missionary message and activities of Christian communities in today's world;
- To share good practices of missionary activities in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches;
- To help the participants to see different ways of fulfilling the gift of preaching in their communities.

Short description: In order to renew Christian preaching today we must renew ourselves. Such renewal means many things - repentance, restoration of teaching and preaching of the Church, finding new approaches to preaching in our secularised and globalised world, etc. This seminar organised in cooperation with the Dominican community of Froidmont will focus on asking questions and trying to find answers arising in the process of carrying out one of the most essential services of the Church - her preaching of the Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Registration fee: Western Europe and USA/Canada - 70 Euro, others - 50 Euro

Expenses: the participants are responsible for their travel and visa expenses; limited number of subsidies is available on request from the Secretariat.

Applications deadline: 30.07.2006

In 2006 Syndesmos will also organise the following events, which will be advertised separately at a later stage:

- Seminar on theology of creation and social involvement of the Church
- Inter-religious exchange on creativity and arts
- Gatherings on the theme "Towards the Council... Urgent issues in the Church"

SYNDESMOS

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Application Form

PLEASE TYPE OR WRITE IN CAPITAL LETTERS! ONLY FULLY COMPLETED AND
DUELY SUBMITTED APPLICATION FORMS WILL BE CONSIDERED!

I am interested in participating in the following project(s) [specify project title and dates]:.....

.....

Name of Youth Organisation & Orthodox Church:.....

.....

What activities of your youth organisation do you contribute to/take part in:.....

.....

Mr/Mrs/Fr etc:..... First Name:..... Family name:.....

Address:..... City:

Zip Code:..... Country:.....

Telephone:..... Fax:..... Email:.....

Nationality: Date of Birth:.....

Passport number:..... Date of issue:..... Date expires:.....

Present occupation..... Languages spoken:.....

What is your motivation for participation in the project(s)?.....

.....

Indicate previous Syndesmos events you had participated in, if any

.....

Indicate the name and position of your reference.....

Stamp of the youth organisation (if applicable).....

I understand that Syndesmos will contact me if my application is accepted.

Signature:..... Date:.....

Syndesmos Projects are open to Christian youth from all countries. All projects in the Calendar are subject to change or cancellation without notice. A fee is payable at each Syndesmos event, for more information see the description of the event. For updated information about the events, please, consult our website.



A moment of rest after a long walk.

The catalyst to organise such a meeting in Armenia arose from the fact that at Syndesmos XVII General Assembly we welcomed our first member organisation from this country - the Youth of Jrvezh, represented by its chairperson, Lilit Sargsyan.

This trip to Armenia had the following characteristics. Firstly, for quite a long time Syndesmos haven't had an event with the majority of participants from the Oriental tradition and, therefore, it was important to choose content for the meeting that would inspire positive and fruitful discussions. The theme of the exchange itself - "Being different, being together"- ensured that there would be no topics that could bring about opposition. Therefore, the preparatory committee decided to focus on the issues of general importance - history, nation, culture, etc. It is also worth noting that in general very few young people from Oriental Orthodox Churches apply for participation in Syndesmos meetings. While there can be a variety of reasons for this, we need to



Anna Rogozhina reads the Gospel during the liturgy.

reconfirm that Federated members of the Fellowship carry as much responsibility for their full participation in Syndesmos life as everyone else. Secondly, we have never had an event held in Caucasus, a region with history rich in glorious and also tragic events, the most recent of them connected to the Soviet totalitarian regime.

The choice of the preparatory committee, led by Spyros Tsimouris, vice-president of Syndesmos, was to give the youth encounter a twofold focus - to invite the participants to discover their unity as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and to try to discern the issues that may lead away from it, for example, wrong interpretation of our denominational and national identity and responsibility towards it. The programme offered a wide, but coherent range of activities in order to promote common thinking and dialogue on these issues - common prayer organised according to both Oriental and Eastern Orthodox traditions but not mixing them up, inputs, discussions, presentations and trips.

Mr. Pekka Metso, lecturer of systematic theology at the University of Joensuu (Finland) started the discussion with his input "Witnessing Christ Today", in which he proposed to meditate on the basic elements of Christianity. Fr. Dajad A. Davidian (Armenia) explained in his talk the relation between the Eucharist and community, but also led the participants through similarities and distinctions of Armenian and Byzantine liturgical traditions. Sister Theoktisti (Emsley) from the monastery of St. John the Forerunner

(Agia, Greece) spoke on the theme "Nationalism as a Christian Disease". She encouraged the group to reflect on the meaning of nationality for Christians provoking hot debates on diversity and identity, on national and/or personal identity, and on how youth can contribute to peaceful and positive cooperation of their churches and growth of mutual understanding. The participants agreed that it is of immense importance to be able to distinguish between faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and local church traditions, which vary from place to place and often do not directly relate to the essence of Christian faith. The issue of so called "diaspora" was touched upon during these discussions; it was noted that both Oriental and Eastern Orthodox communities abroad being formed on national principle often appear to be more like "ethnic clubs" rather than Christian churches.

Spyros Tsimouris addressed the participants and the students of the Sevan Vazkenian Theological Seminary with a talk on the service of the laity and clergy in the Church. While it should be noted that our communities often suffer from clericalism, in many cases the laity themselves choose a passive role and are reluctant to take any responsibility in the church life. The speaker also underlined that it is vital for the dialogue between Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, as well as for healthy theological self-awareness of the Churches, to distinguish the word about God (theology) from confessional ideologies, which lead to fundamentalism and fanaticism. In the end of the meeting Anna Rogozhina made a brief presentation of Syndesmos.

Regarding the outcome of the meeting, we



Outi Vasko presents Syndesmos publications at Sevan seminary.



The discussion at Etchmiadzin.

should mention above all the true brotherly and sisterly friendship which appeared among the participants; it also became clear that by having this friendship in Christ as a foundation for communication, we can discuss difficult issues of our faith, religion, and culture without placing ourselves in opposition to one another. Common solutions can be found with humility and repentance. We have a long way to go before we can remove the obstacles erected by previous mistakes and conflicts.

We are grateful to all local organisers - members, Youth of Jrvezh, and personally to Lilit Sargsyan, who did a wonderful job for preparation and implementation of this meeting, Fr. Dajad A. Davidian and the staff of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin - Fr. Hovakim Manukyan and Eliza Manukyan. For them, being new to Syndesmos this meeting was a perfect introduction to the life of the Fellowship and a real test on trustful and effective cooperation.

During the last day of the encounter the group went on an excursion to Etchmiadzin. There the international participants had the honour of meeting his holiness Catholicos Karekin II, who expressed his joy over this first encounter and his wish for an even stronger cooperation with Syndesmos in the future.

*Olga Oleinik,
Spyros Tsimouris, Outi Vasko*



The international participants and Catholicos Karekin II.

Syndesmos members activities

*Common work, fun
and prayer*

25 years of the Fellowship
of Orthodox Youth in Poland

Year 2005 marked the 25th anniversary of the Fellowship of Orthodox Youth in Poland. This splendid event was celebrated in various ways during almost the entire year. The first part started with the film show describing the history and present life of the fellowship, which took place in March in Bia_ystok, the town where the headquarters of the fellowship are located, with about 300 people in attendance.

“Day of Open Doors” was another event to introduce more people to the work of the fellowship. Young people visited the main office in Bia_ystok and observed the work of the managing board. There were talks and discussion about the aims and the work of the fellowship.

The biggest common event was organised in one of the fellowship's center in a small village in the east of Poland, with a river and beautiful landscapes around. It was called “Summer Festival”. People gathered together for three days to pray, discuss, and have fun, celebrating the anniversary of their organization. The program consisted of the championships of small parish groups, where the people could show their creativity or sportsmanship. There was also a film show, common volleyball match, and a special event - an auction of the historical fellowship's gadgets - T-shirts, posters from the pilgrimages, balls with logo etc. Saturday's lunch was prepared from the ingredients brought by the participants and the common soup was cooked. There was also a short discussion about the fellowship's history, prepared by the founders of the organization, its first workers, and volunteers.

During the whole event there was also place for the common prayer. On Saturday and Sunday, liturgies were celebrated, where the people took part in the Eucharist and gave thanks to God for the common years of work and entertainment within the Fellowship of Orthodox Youth.

The last part of celebrating the anniversary was the photo exhibition “25 years of the fellowship in Poland” connected with the show of the film about the organization. All of the events were visited by the hierarchy of the Church, who participated together with parish priests and the youth.

The Fellowship of the Orthodox Youth in Poland was established in 1980. During the difficult political situation (years of communism in Poland) a group of people tried to create the organization, which



At the celebrations.

could help young people to actively participate in the life of the Church, as well as to meet and get to know one another. The “good soul” of the whole initiative was a young theologian Jan Anchimiuk, who later on became an archbishop of the Wrocław and Szczecin Diocese. The organization evolved during the years. At the very beginning it organised summer camps for children and common youth paschal pilgrimages for youth, afterwards the fellowship began cooperation with Syndesmos, WSCF and so on. Now it works actively on the international level, as well as on the regional one. The fellowship still tries to actively teach about the faith, but also to integrate young, Orthodox people in Poland.

The Orthodox Church in Poland consists of about 500 000 worshippers, which comprises more than 1% of the whole Polish population (mainly Roman-Catholic). The administration consists of 6 dioceses. Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church takes part in the work of the international organizations (WCC, CEC etc.). Its (young) members also work in the field of ecumenism in WCC's office in Geneva. Our Church, although small, is well known for the activity of youth, gathered within the Fellowship of the Orthodox Youth.

There are several Church newspapers, and two especially active web pages - the informational one (www.Cerkiew.pl), and the one exhibiting photos about Orthodoxy (www.Orthphoto.net), both prepared and edited by youth. A lot of these activities have their roots in the work within the fellowship, which now bears its fruits.

Anna Siegien



Birthday cake of the Polish Fellowship.

Exploring Lithuania with a Cross Procession

Lithuanian Orthodox youth took part in a Cross Procession from Paneviežis to Gegobrastai. The new Tihvin icon of the Theotokos, painted by Olga Bogomolova, was also carried in the Cross Procession. The icon was painted during one of the icon-painting camps, which are held in Gegobrastai. During the year the icon is kept in Panieviežis Resurrection of Christ church. Then before the icon's feast day on the 8th of July 2005 it is carried with a Cross Procession to the church in Gegobrastai and stays there for the duration of the icon-painting camp.

Gegobrastai village is well known among Orthodox Christians in Lithuania. Firstly, because famous protopresbyter Nikolai Gurianov used to be the rector of the church there. He named Gegobrastai the “second Athos”. Secondly in the beginning of 20th century, saint martyr archbishop John (Pommer) of Riga, organised Cross Processions to Gegobrastai from other cities.

The Cross Procession started with a short service. In Catholic Lithuania an Orthodox procession is a very unusual event, so therefore, the local people were very interested in seeing Orthodox youth walking and singing psalms. It was very hot (appr. 30AC) and the way was very hard. The Procession arrived at Gegobrastai in the evening and had a rest. In the morning the Divine Liturgy was celebrated. In total, the procession travelled 42 km in 11 hours of walking. However, the main objective of the Procession was not to cover this distance, but to bring together young and old Orthodox Christians in Lithuania for celebration and witness of their common faith. Those interested in participation in the similar Cross Procession in 2006 are invited to send their applications to the address: antjan@takas.lt.

Natallia Vasilevich on the basis of reports of the Cross Procession participants



The young and old together in the Cross Procession.

XII Orthodox Congress in Western European



The Congress at work.

The XII Orthodox Congress in Western Europe took place 29-31 October 2005 in Blankenberge (Belgium). The theme of this gathering was “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21:5). The main goal of such congresses is to gather the Orthodox from different jurisdictions for common worship, communication and discussion of common issues of the church life in Western Europe. The congresses are organised once in three years. Approximately 600 people from France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Great Britain and other countries including a large number of youth and children participated in the past congress.

The congress started with the talk of Bertrand Vergely, philosophy professor of St. Serge Institute in Paris, entitled “Human being: depersonalisation or renewal”. The next day Oxford University professor, bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, delivered the lecture “The new heaven and new earth”, and the closing address “The challenges of the Church in the third millennium” was made by Michel Stavrou, professor of dogmatics at St. Serge's. In conclusion Archbishop Gabriel of Komana and Fr. John Gueit summed up the results of the Congress.

Fr. Serge Sollogoub shared his impression of the event: “This Congress was exceptional due to the fact that many people from the old generation of theologians previously active in the Orthodox Fellowship in Western Europe (Olivier Clément, Fr. Boris Bobrinskoj, Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, deacon Nikolaj Lossky) were not present because of age, illness or other reasons. Their absence from the meeting was a challenge to us. Thanks God



Common worship in many languages.

everything went well and this proved that the Fellowship has a future even if our dear founding fathers and mothers are not there. We can continue their mission and new congresses will be organised at a high level.”

Olga Oleinik

on the basis of the materials from the website www.sfi.ru

Orthodox Theology Student Discuss Issues of Human Sexuality

The Orthodox Student Association and Pistis, the Association for Students of Theology, organised a seminar on relationships (Joensuu, Finland, 18 - 20.11.2005). Traditionally the Orthodox teaching deals mostly with marriage and life in a monastery or convent. In our times, other options have emerged. In Finland more and more people live alone (it is financially possible) and young couples date often long before marriage. Couples of the same sex can marry legally. Medicine makes it possible to control birth, both with effective prevention and fertility treatments. The clergy may be unfamiliar with these matters and therefore regard them as scary signs of secularism. This leads to denial and often rejection of people who would need pastoral care just like anyone else. Our times call for theology on these matters that would be rooted in Orthodox tradition.

The keynote speakers of the seminar showed that it is possible to face these challenges while respecting the people and without using double standards. For example, people who are dating can be helped to understand the responsibility they have for the other person. In this way they can prepare themselves for the Sacrament of Love. There has always been and will always be homosexually oriented people. The time has come for our Churches and local communities to change their attitude from eluding this fact to formulating and following clear pastoral approaches based on the principles of Holy Scripture and Tradition to integrate such people into the communities.

Sexual relationships are less discussed in tradition. For example, few of the people we remember as Saints were married. Sexuality has not been discussed in public, and for a reason. It is a very private and intimate matter. However, in their work the clergy have to face it just as all the other aspects of humanity. The question is whether they are prepared for it. Can they meet another human being as a God-created person, or do they see in him/her only an expression of sexuality?

Altti Moisala, Finland



Fr. Teemu Toivonen speaking at the seminar.

In the previous issue of “Syndesmos News” (Volume XVIII-1) we reported on the conference “Youth in the Church: Problems and the Ways to Solve them”, which took place in Moscow 16-21 February 2005. In this issue we include one of the statements of the conference entitled “Church Community, Liturgical Life and Christian Service”. The statements were written by a special working group and unanimously approved by all participants of the conference.

We consider that this statement deserves attention of “Syndesmos News” readers as it represents the position of the most active youth workers of the Orthodox Church in Russia on vital issues of Church life.

Church Community, Liturgical Life and Christian Service



The participants of the Conference.

1. The purpose, sphere of activity and tasks of the church community

The purpose, sphere of activity and tasks of the church community (orthodox parish) are identical to those of the Church as a whole. A parish is the Church expressed in a concrete and visible community. The task of a church community can be generally defined as the salvation of a person in Christ. The centre of a church community's life is the Eucharist, its sphere of activity church services, the realisation of the spiritual life at parish level and the expression of these two things in external service, i.e. the gospel in word and deed. Having united themselves to Christ in the Eucharist, Christians are called to take His gift into the world through their lives and Christian, including social, service.

The activity of a community outside church services proceeds naturally from its Eucharistic life and must in the first instance be directed at the parish itself. Only after this can it be widened beyond this to missionary and social service.

2. Principles of relations between the clergy and laity

The basic principles of relations between the parish priest and the

church community can be defined as living as a family, brotherhood and fatherhood, the expression of love and trust between all the members of the parish, both priests and parishioners. In spiritual terms the ideal situation is for the parish priest and other priests of the parish to be the spiritual fathers of the parishioners. On the other hand, the parishioners and priests must observe a certain subordination in their mutual relations, as one often comes across cases of distortion of the principle of fatherhood; for example the sort of relationship, which divides people up into “one of us” and “one of them”, or cases, where one or another community feels itself to be somehow elite. It is essential to understand that such relations are sometimes fostered and provoked by the priest himself.

It is worth noting the importance of the obedience of the parishioners to the priest based on a conscious choice of him as spiritual guide (in the sphere of personal spiritual life), and also based on the status of the service of the priest (in teaching the faith and church administration). At the same time the priest is called to remember that the laity in their entirety constitute, according the apostle Peter “a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2 - 9). Therefore the participation of the whole parish in taking important

decisions linked with the life of the community is desirable.

The fatherhood of the priest in relation to the parishioners expresses itself primarily in love, active participation in all the affairs of the community, and also teaching, spiritual guidance and sacramental service. The parish is a family, and all the members of the family, in particular those carrying out pastoral service, are called to actively participate in the life of the community. The role of the priest solely as a server or cult “intermediary” between the people of God and God is unacceptable: the parishioners expect lively and active participation in the life of the community from the pastor.

3. Difficulties experienced by young people in the church community

The arrival of a young person in a community without any established traditions of life outside church services places him or her in a position of isolation. In such parishes more often than not there is no desire to fulfil any activity outside services. This is partially explained by the make-up of such parishes and the inertia of their clergy. On the other hand, the communities in churches, which have a developed life outside services and which carry out active Christian service present a different picture. It is precisely to this sort of community that young people most often come, and their advantage consists in the fact that young people are given a chance to actively express themselves in serving their neighbour. One of the main problems of young people in a parish is to find a use for their abilities in the life of the church community. The main factor enabling the coming together of a parish and the arising of relationships outside church services is the presence of a general direction of activity, in which all the parishioners are involved. In its turn, such socialising leads to the attraction of new members to the church. Thus the problems of young people are linked to the absence of a community life as such. Another important factor for young people in the church community is the accessibility of the priest for conversations and personal communication.

It is important to note that the involvement of a young person in the activity of a community must happen in a spirit of Christian love, gradually and without pressure on his or her will. The parish priest is called to build up the life of the community around liturgical service in such a way that parish life becomes its consequence. In this work the spiritual leader fulfils the role of pastor, educator, father, and head of the church community.

4. The liturgical life of a community

1. Every member of a Christian community needs to participate fully in liturgical life, the essential aspects of which are:

- a) Active participation in the Liturgy and an aiming towards more frequent Holy Communion, ideally at every Liturgy, at which the person is present: “I see that many people rarely take communion: this is the work of the devil. He obstructs frequent receiving of the body of Christ. And it is obvious that one, who rarely takes communion, gives the devil more power over himself, and the devil takes hold of him and leads him into all evil” (St. John Chrysostom). At the same time it is worth remembering these words of the same saint: “Who should we approve? Those, who take communion once, those, who do so often, or those, who do

so rarely? Neither the first, second, nor third groups, but those, who take communion with a clear conscience, a pure heart, and an irrefragable life”.

- b) Thoughtful, prayerful and active participation in church services and prayer at home. To achieve the last of these the creation of a special short prayer book in Russian for young Christians, who have recently entered the Church is highly desirable.
- c) The Christian service, which is inseparable from the liturgical life of a Christian. In the words of His Holiness Patriarch Alexis II: “service is the fruit of enlightenment in Christ and the continuation of witness to him”. Archbishop Anastasios Yannulatos (the current head of the Orthodox Church of Albania) writes the following on this subject: “The Liturgy must be continued in personal and everyday life. Every believer is called to continue the liturgy on the secret altar of his or her own heart and to realise in this way the living preaching of the Good News for the life of the world. Without this continuation the liturgy in church will remain incomplete.”¹
- d) Community life. Without friendly and sincere relationships, mutual help and support between the members of the community a person cannot fully take part in the liturgy.
- e) Intense spiritual life, which includes constant testing of oneself, forcing oneself to follow Christ's commandments and the doing of good deeds, sincere repentance, self-denial etc.

The intense spiritual life, to which a Christian is called, depends on the will of the Christians themselves and on the pastoral care he or she receives. However, there are external factors, which cause serious harm to understanding and participation in church services and make it difficult for young people, who have recently come into the church to lead a correct and thoughtful liturgical life. The main ones are:

- I. The separation in the mind of believers of church services from real life. In contemporary church life, as a result of many historical and moral/spiritual factors, church services have to a certain degree lost the sense of common prayer, and have begun to be perceived as a means to “individual” salvation. People come into church often only for themselves. They do not know, and often do not want to know, who is standing and praying next to them. They come to communion with the aim of personal enlightenment; there is little feeling of the one Body of Christ in our parishes. Moreover, the process of prayer itself is often accompanied by a forced effort directed at “blocking out” other people in order that “prayer is not ruined” by the noise, whispering, singing of the choir etc.
- II. Problems of liturgical life expressed in lack of comprehension of the meaning of church services:
 1. The demands of contemporary young people coming into the church have revealed the problem of the impenetrability of the Eucharist for parishioners. This is not a new problem, but for young people it is one of the most important. The reading of the so called “secret prayers” in a quiet voice or

1. Archbishop Anastasios Yannulatos. Liturgy after the liturgy.

to himself by the priest causes serious damage to comprehension, meaning that the “vast majority of the laity do not know and do not hear the text of the Eucharist itself, and are deprived of this priceless gift. And after all no one has ever explained, why the **“chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, people called by God to proclaim the mighty acts of him, who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”** (1 Peter 2-9) cannot hear the prayers, which they themselves are bringing to God”².

2. Inaudible, quiet, quick reading and singing of texts from services, including the Apostle and the Gospel, and also lengthy remembering of the living and departed in the litanies.
3. Texts, which are theologically incorrect, for example the service of the burial of the Mother of God. A correction of such texts by the Synodal service commission of the Russian Orthodox Church is desirable.
4. The closing of the Royal Doors by the presiding priest, as a result of which, is lost the spirit of common prayer.
5. The difficulty of understanding the language of church services, especially for beginners. Patriarch Alexis II remarks: “Slavonic is not comprehensible to everyone: for this reason many liturgists of our Church have long been considering the question of translating the whole round of service texts into Russian³. Even someone as far back as Bishop Sergei Starogorodskii (the future Patriarch) wrote of the **“simplification of the Slavonic used in services** and the granting of the right to serve in their native tongue, where a parish desires it”⁴. A speeding up of the renewal process of the Slavonic translation of the service texts and a correction of the mistakes in them is essential. This was remarked upon already by Saint Theofan the Recluse: “There is something extremely necessary. I am talking about a new, simplified and clarified translation of the church service books. Our service texts are all edifying, meaningful and noble. In them lies all the theological learning and teaching of Christianity, all the consolations, and all the deterrents from doing wrong. Whoever listens to them can do without any other books on Christian teaching. However, a large number of these texts are completely incomprehensible. This deprives the church books of the fruit, which they could produce, and does not allow them to serve those aims, for which they are intended and for which we have them. As a result of this a new translation of the service books is immediately essential. We need to start this work as soon as we possibly can if we do not wish to bear the reproach for this anomaly and be the cause of the harm, which arises from it”⁵.

2. Prot. Alexander Schmemmann “The Eucharist: the Mystery of the Kingdom”, p. 299

3. The speech of His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia at the ceremony of the awarding an honorary doctorate to him by the Spiritual Academy of Tbilisi during a visit of His Holiness to Georgia from the 27th April - 1st May 1996. See the information bulletin of the Department of external church affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate of 1st July 1996, p.3

4. Remarks of the diocesan archbishops, III, 433

5. Bishop Theofan. Edificatory reading, No 10. M., 1986, III pp. 462 - 463

6. An unjustifiably long pause between the prayers said before communion and communion itself, which has a negative effect, the perception of the Liturgy as a whole by believers.

III. The wide variations in the demands and conditions placed on Christians for participation in Holy Communion. His Holiness Patriarch Alexis II has commented that “sometimes believers are not permitted access to Holy communion on insufficient grounds”⁶. Bearing in mind that the barring of a Christian from Eucharistic communion is established by canon law for relatively serious transgressions, the participants of the conference are in favour of a standardisation of the demands made on communicants.

IV. Distractions in church services

- 1) Buying and selling and noise in church.
- 2) The presence of un-canonical representations and icons.
- 3) Unselective and excessively 'operatic' singing.
- 4) Making confessions during the Liturgy, when this is not justified by necessity.
- 5) The conducting of several services (molebens, panikhidas, burial services) simultaneously in the same church etc.

To make entering and staying in the Church easier for young people it would be possible to lessen the above negative factors by giving parishes the right to conduct **special missionary services**, in which would be included elements of catechesis and which would have the following particularities:

1. The service would, where necessary, be interrupted by catechesis and the explanation of prayers, without destroying its wholeness and the prayer of the believers.
2. A pious silence would be observed during the service. All buying and selling would stop and other distracting factors would be removed.
3. The closing and opening of the Royal Doors would be carried out according to the order for a bishop.
4. The gospel, the apostle and other readings from Scripture would be read or repeated in Russian.
5. The content of the 'secret' liturgical prayers would definitely be conveyed to the congregation.
6. The pause between the prayers said before communion and communion itself would be reduced to a minimum.

With Episcopal blessing such services are already being conducted in various dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church. A widening of these would be an active response to the problem already pointed out by His Holiness Patriarch Alexis II in 1996 of 'making the liturgical culture of Orthodoxy accessible to our contemporaries in the interests of mission'⁷.

6. His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Alexis II “A true elder cares for all people.”

7. The speech of His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia at the ceremony of the awarding an honorary doctorate to him by the Spiritual Academy of Tbilisi during a visit of His Holiness to Georgia from the 27th April - 1st May 1996. See the information bulletin of the Department of external church affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate of 1st July 1996, p.3.

5. Opportunities for young people to express themselves in the life of a community

Internal parish life is called to transfer the emphasis from the necessity of performing external rites to the internal life of a person and make life itself into service of God and communion with him. **The church community is called to give the young person the same as the Church as a whole: 'life in all its fullness'**. The most important thing in Christianity is unification with Christ and life with Him and in Him, which is by no means guaranteed by outward piety and the semblance of a spiritual life, but only by the realisation of the Gospel in one's life. The Eucharist and the life of a community outside the liturgy, which proceeds from it as its source, is this fullness of the home, work, leisure and other aspects of the life and activity of a person. Thus all that is done in the spheres of church, services, mission and spirituality is only a means of union with Christ.

Some parishes specialise in a particular field of activity. This can be expressed in social, missionary, educational service etc. At the same time life in such parishes is not limited to the chosen activity. If the principle of fatherhood and family life is observed in the community, then life itself defines concrete aims, roles and types of service. The most important task of the community is to build its life around the Eucharist as the centre of the group. A church community, as a true family, chooses and realises that type of service, for which a demand arises on a daily basis. In this way the types of activity carried out by a young person in the community outside church services depend first of all on his or her desire, abilities, the intensity of his or her parish liturgical and family life, and also on the experience of the parish priest.

The types of this service can be as follows:

1. Helping the clergy in services.
2. Domestic obediences within the parish.
3. Teaching children in Sunday school.
4. Missionary service.
5. Educational service.
6. Social service.
7. Youth service etc.

6. Dangers of a spiritual character for the young person in a community

Spiritual dangers and problems arise most sharply for a young person during his or her period as a neophyte. This happens in connection with an incorrect directing of spiritual effort, idealising the external life of the Church, excessive emphasis on certain phenomena, a tendency to look for incontrovertible spiritual authorities (including priests) with the aim of placing responsibility for one's life onto them.

The following things in particular are causes of this. Firstly, an inexperienced person tends to perceive the practical recommendations made to separate people in the literature of the church fathers as general church rules for the spiritual life. As a result a monastic way of life is transferred to the daily life of a Christian. Such a perception of particular solutions as universal for the life of any other person is dangerous. The great ascetics approached each person individually; therefore their experience

should not be interpreted without taking into account the cultural and historical context or their writings.

Secondly, in certain conditions a person, who has recently entered the church, has a tendency to idealise priests, thinking that the grace given to the priesthood guarantees each pastor individual sainthood. As a result of this approach some orthodox Christians mistakenly take a priest as a supreme authority and try to construct their whole life in accordance with his smallest opinion or desire.

Another danger for the church community is to put activity outside services in first place, i.e. to turn the church into a hobbies club.

Often one comes across the elementary irresponsibility of a member of the community, who has undertaken to fulfil certain duties, and does not do so. This problem may have not only spiritual, but also psychological reasons, and is unfortunately widespread in parish life.

Conclusion

It is essential to admit that the majority of the problems mentioned above, as a rule, have their roots in the long persecutions of the church, which have caused a break in its spiritual and church traditions, and also in the incorrect interpretations of these by contemporary people. In the majority of Eastern European countries church communities were destroyed and there was not even talk of their rebirth. Those churches, which were still not closed, were perceived only as places for the provision of religion to the population.

Unfortunately in our time of relative freedom the process of rebirth of church communities has met with new difficulties. The natural conservatism of the Orthodox Church sometimes plays a negative role here. The traditions and way of life of parishes, which have built up through particular historical factors over several decades, have begun to be seen as almost straight from the fathers, as absolutely orthodox. As a result some parish priests are afraid to change anything in their parish, including creating a community life.

Today it is already becoming clear that it is important to shift emphasis from the rebirth of external church forms and material welfare to the creation of community life and creative work in the church.

The processes happening at present in the church give us the right to look towards the future with optimism. In spite of all the complications people turn to the church with hope; the number of parishes is growing, to some degree also thanks to young people. Having passed through the phase of being neophytes as through natural growth pains, people gain the true meaning and joy of life in the love of Christ and unity with Him. Missionary work and catechesis are being renewed. The level of self-awareness within the church is growing. Faith rooted in the words of Christ: **"I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not overcome it"** (Matt. 16 - 18) give us strength to fulfil Christian service of our neighbour.

Translated from Russian by John Pumphrey

THE WORLD FELLOWSHIP OF ORTHODOX YOUTH

SYNDESMOS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Orthodox Mission Teams 2006
PUT YOUR FAITH IN ACTION!**

Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), St. Augustine, FL - Orthodox Mission Teams make a difference. Sponsored by the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), short term Orthodox Mission Teams, through work, witness, and worship, becomes a visible expression of love, unity, and support in the Church. Teams offer the opportunity to witness the Orthodox Faith in action and support Orthodox communities around the world.

Visit the OCMC Website for the various Orthodox Mission Team opportunities, dates, costs and application at www.ocmc.org/teams. Or contact the Mission Center, toll-free 1-877-GO FORTH; telephone: 904/829-5132, fax: 904/829-1635; OCMC - P.O. Box 4319, St. Augustine, FL 32085.

**St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary
Summer Institute****June 25-30, 2006**

A short-term way to study at St Vladimir's Seminary

The annual St Vladimir's Seminary Summer Institute is a week-long study opportunity for everyone interested in the life of the Orthodox Church; clergy and laity, men and women, young and old. Participants are invited to delve into important theological questions in small and large group discussions all within a context of active involvement in daily worship. A combination of lecture and interactive workshops will explore this year's theme "A Christian Ending to our Life: The Mystery of Death."

Contact: Sofia Lopoukhine, Communications Officer, sofia@svots.edu, www.svots.edu

**Seventh Cambridge International
Summer School***"Orthodoxy and the World Religions"***2-7 July 2006**

Topics include: Comparing Religions, Otherness, Orthodoxy and Judaism, Orthodoxy and Hinduism, Orthodoxy and Islam, The Sufis, Jewish/Christian Relations, Wisdom in Jewish and Christian Thought.

Contact: info@iocs.cam.ac.uk,
<http://www.iocs.cam.ac.uk/index.html>

Men and Women in the Church**Conference, 28-30 July 2006***The Friars, Aylesford, Kent*

What is our vocation and ministry within the Church, whether we are clergy or lay people, whether we are monastics, married or single?

Contact: bjgerrard@compuserve.com, antonia.himmel-agisburg@chello.at,
<http://www.orthodoxwomensnetwork.org/>

**Celebration of the 40th Anniversary
of the Orthodox Christian Youth Association of
Kenya (OCYAK)****1-7 August 2006, Nairobi, Kenya**

In 1966 the OCYAK was founded in Waithaka, Kenya. Since then it served the Orthodox Church in Kenya in various spheres:

- managing and teaching in Sunday schools;
- providing illiteracy classes to the local population;
- training youth leaders;
- translating the Holy Scripture, liturgical and theological texts into the local languages of Kenya;
- etc.

In 1971 the OCYAK became an affiliated member of Syndesmos at the VIII General Assembly in Boston.

Contact: ocyak2002@yahoo.com

**First Pan-Orthodox Conference
on Liturgical Music**

PSALM (Pan-Orthodox Society for Advancement of Liturgical Music) announces its first pan-Orthodox, national conference on Orthodox Liturgical music, to take place August 2-5, 2006, in the metropolitan Chicago area. The conference activities will take place at St. George (Antiochian) Orthodox Church in Cicero, Illinois. All presentations and panel discussions will revolve around the theme, "Sing Praises with Understanding," addressing the various aspects of "understanding," from understanding each other (Clergy-Musician communication) to understanding history, liturgy and the calling of liturgical musicians.

Further information at: <http://orthodoxpsalm.org>