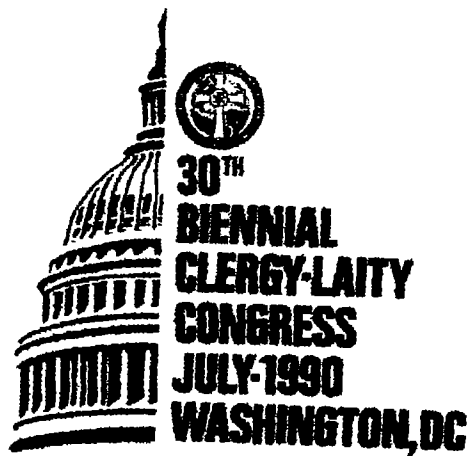


Report to His Eminence  
**ARCHBISHOP IAKOVOS**  
Concerning the Future  
Theological Agenda of the  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese



*Walk as children of Light.  
For the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.*

**THE 30TH BIENNIAL CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS  
OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE  
OF NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**Report to His Eminence  
ARCHBISHOP IAKOVOS**

By

**The Commission  
Appointed to Establish  
the Theological Agenda  
for the Future of the  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese**



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THE FUTURE OF ORTHODOXY  
IN THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF N. & S. AMERICA:  
A REPORT OF THE ARCHBISHOP'S COMMISSION FOR  
AN ARCHDIOCESAN THEOLOGICAL AGENDA

Prologue

In his keynote address to the 1986 Clergy-Laity Congress in Dallas, Texas entitled "Rekindling an Orthodox Awareness," His Eminence Archbishop IAKOVOS addressed the issue of a present crisis of identity in the Orthodox Church due to a weakening of ethnic, ecclesial, and spiritual bonds in a secular, pluralistic society. Calling for a Christ-centered rekindling of the Orthodox awareness, the Archbishop challenged the parishes, dioceses, and all departments of the Archdiocese to work toward strengthening the Orthodox identity by a) "growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pt. 3:18, the theme of the Dallas Clergy-Laity Congress), b) maturing corporately as members of the Body of Christ, and c) leading knowledgeable and conscious Orthodox lives wherever God has placed Orthodox Christians.

The Archbishop's Commission for an Archdiocesan Theological Agenda, appointed by His Eminence after the Dallas Clergy-Laity Congress, and chaired by His Excellency SILAS, Metropolitan of New Jersey and President of Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, was assigned the task of reflecting on the factors behind the identity crisis, formulating clear responses and offering recommendations pertaining to the priorities of the Archdiocese. The present report represents the labors of this Commission meeting during 1986-88, based on three fundamental questions: a) What are the abiding goals of the Church? b) What is the present reality of the Church? and c) By what priorities and means can the Church be guided from the present reality toward its goals? This report adopts a wholistic and positive approach. Given the strength and stability of our Archdiocese, the identity crisis should not be taken in an alarmist sense but as an opportunity for the Church's continued growth and mission in the world.

I. The Faith Crisis

1. The Abiding Goals of the Church

An assessment of the Church's contemporary situation must be anchored on a clear perception of the abiding goals of the Church. The all-inclusive goal of the Church is God's call to theosis--the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God and the transfiguration of the whole cosmos in divine glory. The Church itself is the "first fruits" of

salvation of the world from the domination of the devil, sin, and corruption, by the redeeming work of Christ and the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit, being concretely manifested as new quality of life, the new creation. The process of theosis may be seen as taking place in three inter-related spheres:

a) The Goal of Personal Transfiguration concentrates on the life of each Orthodox Christian. There can be no realization of the kingdom unless there is a personal response and a personal appropriation of God's saving, redeeming, and sanctifying grace. This goal is realized by a personal faith commitment, by personal and conscious participation in the Liturgy, worship, and prayer, by personal obedience to the will of God, by personal growth in love, by personal development of the image and likeness of God within each of us toward Christ-likeness.

b) The Goal of Corporate Life in Christ concentrates on the shared life of the Church, where each person is an integral part of the body of Christ, and clergy and laity alike live their lives in relationship to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, obtaining the meaning of life and actualizing the life of the kingdom of God within the common life of the Church. In this context the personal element is no longer individualistic or private, but finds its own fulfilment in membership in the body of Christ, the Church. The central means by which the corporate goal is achieved are the sacraments, especially the Eucharist; the governance and guidance of the Church in the spirit of Christ; the preaching and teaching ministries; and the life of mutual love, forgiveness, care, help, and acts of fellowship.

c) The Goal of Outreach concentrates on the loving concern of God and His Church for the life of the world and for all creation. This loving concern takes three forms: mission, so as to evangelize the world and bring it into the saving realm of the Church; philanthropy, so as to address the needs of individuals, peoples, and nations, suffering from immediate ills or from lack of urgent necessities; and social concern, so as to address the structural and environmental aspects of societies and nature which act as vehicles of good or evil. The Church always seeks to strengthen those forces which support the values and ways of God, and to struggle against those forces which promote the demonic and dehumanizing.

The above goals are inseparable. None can be completely fulfilled without the others. The personal life in Christ cannot be realized outside the corporate reality of the

Church, which it does not live for itself alone but for the salvation of the whole world. In each generation the Church effectively fulfils its mission to the degree that it achieves the above goals. Therefore, the Church must ask itself time and again: How do our actual priorities reflect the above goals? What social forces and cultural factors impede the realization of these goals? What spiritual and practical strategies can the Church set in place to counteract the negative forces and to fulfil its goals in positive ways?

## 2. The Contemporary Crisis of Faith

As we reflect on the present and future situation of our Church in the Americas, we recognize that the cultural environment of the Greek Orthodox in this hemisphere is without historical precedent. We are an ethnic and religious minority in an open, secular society with powerful claims upon all, especially the young. Long-standing historical and sociological forces (secularization, the technological revolution, pluralism, the impact of the media and entertainment industries, and other) have during our generation brought about rapid and radical changes in personal and social values (selfish individualism, family instability, divorce, promiscuity, abortion, substance abuse, consumerism, pornography, and other). The results have been breakdown in community, breakdown in commonly accepted ethical principles, and breakdown in personal integrity. Despite the resurgence of some religious affiliations, western society is on the whole marked by a cultural crisis of faith, that is, a wholesale drifting away from traditional religious and moral values which now has become a sociological condition affecting all religious groups. Barring unforeseen dramatic changes in the course of history, this process is likely to continue. Consider, for example, how the public is divided over the issue of abortion, how public education is not able to address the question of values, and how an average young person is minimally influenced by his or her religious community as compared to society at large.

In this free, pluralistic society the Orthodox Church itself must take upon itself the prime responsibility for maintaining and strengthening the Orthodox identity among its members both as an intrinsic goal as well as a presupposition for effective mission in the world. Up to now ethnicity has played a major role and has given strength and cohesion to the identity of the Greek Orthodox Church. But with the weakening of ethnic ties due to various factors of sociological assimilation, most notably interfaith marriages, changes have occurred and problems have been created. The offspring of interfaith marriages, of converts, and of others

already culturally assimilated, will continue to drift away unless they become linked to the Orthodox Church with clear ecclesial and spiritual bonds. In a similar way traditional attachment to religious customs and forms (formalism) has contributed to the perpetuity of the Church, especially in homogeneous social environments. But in the modern, open, and radically changing world, where novelty rather than tradition seems to capture the imagination of people, the formal faith and loyalty of religious adherents cannot be taken for granted. The contemporary crisis of faith can be countered at its roots by raising the consciousness of the whole Church to the abiding goals of the Church and by placing these goals at the center of our thinking, deciding, and planning for the future. A new spiritual vision must be set to work among clergy and laity alike, not by means of high-sounding promotional statements or radical institutional changes, but by means of a conscious, deliberate, and consistent focusing on the true goals and priorities of the Church.

The fundamental response to the cultural crisis of faith must begin with a full acknowledgment of the principle that the faith commitment has more and more become a matter of personal choice than of social or cultural heritage. This means that Orthodox Christians must be both challenged and helped to move beyond religious nominalism to a conscious choosing of the Orthodox way of life based on personal knowledge of the Orthodox Faith and personal experience of its value amidst the problems of everyday life. In this perspective three inter-related objectives are crucial:

a) Clarification of the Truths of the Orthodox Faith. Clarifying the Orthodox Faith means lifting up the fundamental truths of Orthodoxy, including the centrality of Christ, the unique understanding of God and salvation, the wholistic view of humanity and nature, the meaning of the Eucharist, the insights of Orthodox spirituality, and all those elements which constitute the fulness of Christian truth and on which the Orthodox Church takes its stand. These truths, serving as the guideligh in all our thoughts and actions, must become the conscious focus of preaching, teaching, meetings, conferences, clergy-laity congresses, administrative polity, Church departments, and parish life.

b) Nurture of Living Faith. The task of rekindling the Orthodox awareness cannot be accomplished simply by dry, academic, and formal procedures. The clarification and application of the Orthodox truths must be accomplished in the context of living faith--a personal faith inspired by prayer, enlivened by a mystical sense of communion with the risen Christ, and communicated with an evangelical spirit as a heralding of the good news. The true evangelical spirit

keeps alive the horizon of living faith by which we apprehend that the risen Christ is present in the Church guiding us in our education, spiritual formation, liturgical life, moral and social concerns, youth programs, administration, and finances.

c) Creation of Supportive Environment. People need not only to be stirred to a positive decision of faith and commitment, but also to be helped and supported in that decision by a network of Christian relationships. They need a Christian social environment and concrete ways by which to live their Orthodox faith in counterbalance to the pervasive secular milieu of jobs, schools, media, recreation, and the like. People must be taught how to pray, to come to the sacrament of Holy Confession, to read the Scriptures and edifying books. They also need to establish personal relationships with one another through parish activities, organizations, conferences, camps, service projects, and support groups, all guided by an Orthodox vision of faith and life.

The overall answer to the cultural crisis of faith is a personal approach to the truths and values of the Orthodox faith. By personal is meant an internalization of these truths and values so that they may be held with a conscious personal conviction. To sustain the Orthodox identity we can no longer count on the spiritual investments of the past, that is to say, simply on the power of tradition and formal habits. We must also generate new spiritual investments ourselves in this secular but thirsting society by means of a spiritual rekindling of Orthodox souls with the grace of love of Christ.

## II. The Parish

Studying the nature of our communities and why people become or cease to be members of them, requires that we describe the Parish, not only theologically, but sociologically, as well. It is necessary, together with the doctrinally and spiritually founded understanding of the parish to understand it, as well, as a complex and diverse collection of interacting groups and individuals who have as a common denominator commitment to the Orthodox Christian faith, and to a greater or lesser degree a commonly shared cultural heritage. Within this complex social reality, the centrality, influence and significance of parish life varies from group to group and from individual to individual.

The character of the Parish is voluntary because people determine the depth and extent of their participation in its organized life. The voluntary nature of the Parish demands that we must carefully attempt to relate revelation and Christian tradition to people's experience by being sensitive to their diverse needs. This, however, cannot be done unless we succeed to activate the ministry of the laity by which the whole church through a variety of approaches will contribute to the upbuilding of the parish. The thrust of preaching and teaching in the parish must be toward the meaningfulness of faith in today's life. Our Presbyters should be encouraged and helped to shape their ministry so as to personalize belief and encourage the ministry of all to all.

### 1. An Empirical Assessment of Our Parish Life

Parishioners find meaning and respond positively to parish life on the basis of the following factors:

- liturgical life and preaching;
- the success of the parish in helping members deal practically with their concerns, especially their concerns about their children;
- a participatory style of leadership;
- an active quality to the parish, i.e. "there is much going on."

The reality is that there are many parishioners who do not find their parishes helpful or meaningful in their lives. They are unhappy with the liturgical life of the parish, dissatisfied with the quality of preaching, they do not find much assistance in addressing personal issues, find the



administrative life of the church often authoritarian or closed, and parish life frequently limited in activities. As our people become more educated and more cosmopolitan, they are looking for more persuasive preaching and more prayerful liturgy than they once needed. It is an interesting phenomenon that just when Presbyters have become more sophisticated and sensitive in their pastoral ministry, the laity have raised their levels of expectations.

This calls for an assessment of our parish life on the basis of the social realities we now face as a Church.

a) Parish Relationships are a major and increasing problem in the local Church. Like other relationships, they are undergoing serious changes. From a cultural perspective, it is a fact that we are not any more as homogenous as we used to be. This, however, must be seen as a challenge that invites us to use the diverse experience of our people for the enriching of our parish life, since in Christ all historical, natural and physical differences are overcome. A parish must be prepared to deal with the many changes that take place in the church, the country and the local area. This does not mean that crises in the future will not occur, but a community that devotes time to attending to relationships among its members will not as easily be thrown by these crises. Ours is a theology and ecclesiology of persons in relationship. That vision of truth must be consciously practiced in our parish life.

b) Age Distribution influences the nature of our parish life. There is a shift in the age distribution of the general population. It is a fact that ever since the mid-sixties the birthrate has been falling off. How does this affect our parishes? It is likely that people will continue to have fewer children. The largest percentage of the people will be in their forties and fifties.

Persons in certain age categories are more likely to become involved in parish functions than those in other age groups. Young people between the ages of 7 and 18 tend to have a high level of group participation whether in school, parish, or club. If the parish does not provide opportunities for involvement, young people will look for other outlets since the drive "to belong" is strong in this age group.

People between the ages of 18 to 30 are in a low group-participation category. It is difficult for them to become involved in any group or organization, whether religious or secular. Because of the many demands made on their time, the type of parish involvement that will prove most successful is the one that asks only limited and temporary commitment.

The next age group is between the ages of 30 to 50. This age group is most likely to volunteer for parish organizations and assume leadership positions.

In the next 20 years more people will be in this 30-50 age bracket than ever before. This will influence parish life. If a parish has nothing to offer these people, they will go elsewhere. Once they get involved in other organizations, perhaps elected to office in these groups, it will be difficult to entice them back to parish functions.

Finally, there are the older parishioners, those over 50 years old. What is unique about this age group is that they usually join only those groups they belonged to in their earlier years. They are still willing to belong to groups but not become leaders or join new groups.

As the percentage of older people continues to grow, the parish leaders will have to figure out ways of utilizing their rich resources and experiences. This then, will probably be the complexion of the typical parish in the years ahead - fewer young and more middle age and older people. This change in age distribution will influence parish life, and leaders must become aware of some of the implications so they can plan for them well in advance: a) Competition may arise among parishes or parish groups; b) Conservatism: because of an older membership, parishes in the future may tend to stress traditions more than changes; c) Educational shift: with fewer children and young people, the educational emphasis may shift toward adults. Here we must work hard because adults want more than a child's understanding and experience of their faith, one that relates a growing knowledge of the Lord found in prayer to a growing sense of concern and care for the needs of other people. Adult people are looking for a religious experience that speaks to the needs, crises, and desires of their adult life.

c) Marriage Patterns are changing and this severely impacts on parish life. People are choosing to marry later in life, if at all. Once married, they are likely to have one or two children at the most. The consequence for the parish is to be composed of more single adults, more older parents with small children and more extended families. Many couples will have children later in life, after both mother and father have completed their schooling and have become established in their careers. This means that these couples will be better equipped not only to participate in parish groups but to lead them. But that will happen only if the parish speaks to their needs and expectations. Since both parents are likely to be working full-time, the little time left over from the job and family will be more jealously apportioned. The enormous increase in mixed marriages is the most significant reality to face our Church life. It will be

discussed in detail below, in part four of this report. It is the most significant social reality impacting on our parish life and must be addressed honestly and realistically.

d) The Changing Spirit of Parish Leadership is an important factor in parish life. Any authoritarian exercise of leadership in our communities contradicts the essential democratic spirit of our society and consequently produces tension or even alienation of people from the faith community. The desired leadership must be a facilitating one which implies that it provides the place, the occasion and the motivation for authentic Christian worship and service by activating the gifts of all God's people and providing a framework for their unceasing active presence in the life of the Parish.

Our churches must become personal and intimate communities sustained by the grace of God and growing in faith through acts of love for God's creation and humanity at large. Some of our parishes are suffering from the syndrome of 'anonymity', i.e., people feel alone and unrecognized in these communities.

A remedy against this serious problem is the development of small, more familiar worshipping and sharing groups within the parish. People need the support and friendship of others they know personally if they are going to remain active members of the parish. In small groups it is easier for people to express themselves more intimately and trustingly, to make connections between common tradition and their very particular situations, and to feel more personal support for their commitment and for living out the life of faith.

Our Churches with their strong ethnic cultural heritage and values, served this need of our people for belonging and personal involvement, well in the past, but the increasing diversity of our faithful and the impact of the surrounding culture have begun to loosen the ties that formerly bound the parishioners together. We must recapture and nurture the spirit of "belongingness" in our parishes. We must find and utilize additional new ways to reunite our people by recognizing that persons with common interests like to spend time sharing with others of the same mind or experience. Without a common interest or shared concern, people will not come together in small groups.

However, the effectiveness of these groups presupposes the training of their leaders so that they may assure full participation, avoid domination by some members and keep the groups from becoming aimless. In addition, we urgently need good printed materials that will touch on matters of importance, offer necessary information, and open up possibilities of prayer, discussion and action.

Thus, as language, culture, or security needs become less decisive in the formation of the parish consciousness of our people, we must recognize the importance of common interest and shared values as factors that help the people to come together. It is important to emphasize that as our people lose their cultural heritage they will suffer more and more from the American religious minimalism and as a result of it they may not be able to recognize why they have to travel twenty or thirty minutes in order to go to an Orthodox Church and not to go to their next door Roman Catholic or Protestant Church since, "we all believe in the same God". They may do that while they continue to consider themselves as Orthodox.

Finally, if we conceive our parish as a community of small communities, it is imperative for the Church leadership to build bridges between different interest groups so as to discourage the formation of cliques. This is a delicate balance between fostering small, personalized groups and keeping those groups open to new people and new directions.

e) Parish Planning is a new imperative for our parishes. Parishes must seek new ways to serve the people. Since the parish is composed of people with diverse needs and expectations, an effort to meet those needs and expectations must be done carefully. This necessitates parish planning. Until now parish planning was concerned with questions of whether to expand or modify our parish facilities. Another aspect of planning was crisis prevention, that is how to cope with changes taking place in the communities. This type of coping should lead to forming parish visions and goals and planning ways to realize them.

This planning must be the outcome of listening to the people, both the old and the young, the active and the inactive, the traditional and the progressive. Whatever the method, no plans or changes should be made without letting the people know them from the beginning and encouraging the people to "own" the planning process. This listening process should produce short-range achievable goals. The parish leaders must listen to the needs of the people and then try to respond to a common desire and expectation. This listening and responding to desires stimulates a parish community and provides everyone with a sense of hope.

But all the short-range goals for our parish must fit into a larger context of long term planning concerning the future of our community and its long term needs. If the parish leadership has a clear vision of what is the nature of the parish and how it should grow then spending priorities and emphasis for the present may be properly allocated.

In that process we must always remember that who we are is far more important than what we do. Parish planning works

when people trust their leaders. If the people sense a deeply, caring, sensitive leadership, one that is aware of parish needs and in prayerful contact with the Lord, then they are more likely to accept and respond to whatever plans are made. This kind of mutual caring between people and leader is the immeasurable ingredient in successful planning whose presence will spell success for a program in one parish and whose absence will spell failure in another, although the program may be identical.

Finally, the parish is more than a well-managed business; it is a faith community. Parish planning must be attuned to the Spirit from beginning to end. The Spirit, however, has a way of disrupting our best laid plans and pointing out new directions. This may mean taking risks and trying out new territories. On this issue we need further theological reflection on how our Church can be open and receptive to God's Spirit, especially when it leads us to new things.

## 2. Archdiocesan Ministry To The Parishes

Realizing the difficulties and the intricacies of the parish ministry, and the fact that our resources of all kinds are limited, it is prudent and necessary to re-evaluate our national ministries in order to more effectively provide assistance for the most pressing and immediate needs of our parishes. We do not proceed to any organizational recommendation, but we do sense that there is a serious demand that all of the Archdiocesan resources be martialled in a coherent and focused way to help our Presbyters and lay leaders to implement the task and work of the parish. Some suggested areas of focus are the following:

- guidelines and resources to aid in the personal development of the faithful (intellectual, moral and spiritual);
- opening and maintaining communication with the parishioners so that the specific needs and character of each parish are known, so that dealings of the Hierarchy with the parish may be specific and oriented to the reality of each parish;
- developing a strong ecclesial identity, based on solid instruction, information and experience;
- cultivating appropriate Christian leadership styles among the clergy and the laity especially those laymen and women involved in parish administration;

- training in organizational development, i.e., how parishes should plan, manage and sustain parish life, for effective ministry;
- providing guidance for the cultivation of communications, listening, and assertion skills in an on-going fashion for clergy and lay leaders;
- instruction skills for the selection, training, organization and management of volunteers for Church service;
- assisting parishes in developing attitudes, methods, and disciplines for sound fiscal management of parish resources.

At the heart of these suggestions is the perception that the Archdiocese not only be centrally concerned with parish development, but that this concern be effectively conveyed to the parishes and implemented as fully as possible. The distance between Archdiocese, Dioceses and the parishes, which presently exists, can be narrowed and overcome, in the spirit of our theology of personhood, mutual service and practical concern.

### III. Leadership Issues

The issue of leadership, in both the areas of faith commitment and the dynamics of parish life have already been touched upon in the two preceding sections. Concern with them raises important questions regarding the identification and exercise of authority and leadership in our Church as we look ahead to the third millenium. Our concern with authority and leadership is based on the theological premise that the Church is truly and at its best a conciliar reality.

The concept of conciliarity is basic to the ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church. Conciliarity, as a way of life of the Church, seeks to fashion ecclesiastical life in such a way as to express faithfully her essence and ethos. The Church's conciliar way of life, which reaches its highest expression in episcopal synods, gives witness to the synergy of God and human being for the realization of salvation and the endurance of truth.

The canonical reflection of the doctrine of conciliarity confronts us as a Church and an Archdiocese, in the light of our present day life and practice.

There is an unclarity about the highest practical authority in the Archdiocese in its foundational organizational documents. This unclarity raises important questions which deal with many other issues structural and organizational importance for the Archdiocese and its future. Some of these important questions are: the nature of the exercise of authority, the issue of lay participation and service, and our relationship with other Orthodox Churches.

#### 1. Structural/Organizational Issues

a) Highest Authority. What is the relationship of the Synod of Bishops to the Clergy-Laity Congress? In the Special Regulations (1978) the Synod of Bishops is defined as "the hierarchical authority of the Archdiocese;" whereas the Clergy-Laity Congress is defined as "the highest legislative body of the Archdiocese". The authority and role of the Archdiocesan Council, relative to the Synod of Bishops is also not clearly perceived in our Archdiocese. There is confusion as to where the authority of one body ends and the authority of the other begins.

b) Clergy-Laity Congress Questions. Regarding the Clergy-Laity Congress, specific questions need to be asked: Does the work it accomplishes justify its cost? Is it

necessary for the Congress to be convened biennially? What should be the policy towards parishes not in attendance, especially when their number is considerable? How is the agenda prepared and what is the procedure for studying it in advance of the Congress? How open are discussions and how freely can one express a dissenting opinion? How well versed in the affairs of the Church are lay delegates to make informed decisions?

c) Conciliarity in the Parish. How is conciliarity expressed on the parish level? The pastor who functions as an impersonal bureaucrat usually administers his parish in a non-conciliar, despotic way. The pastor who gives expression to conciliarity in the administration of his parish will afford the opportunity to all its members to offer their gifts for the building up of the body.

Conciliarity on the parish level is likewise threatened whenever cliques and factions exist. Exclusivism of this kind contributes to the breakdown of unity with the body of the parish. The absence of conciliarity in all levels of Church life betrays an egocentric, non-transfigured life in Christ. Such a condition requires repentance and transformation of the inner person.

## 2. The Nature of Leadership in the Church

The Church's leadership, though it cannot help but appear similar to worldly leadership, is understood theologically of a completely different nature, rooted in a spirit of love and communion. The conciliar expression of ecclesiastical life should be found in every act of communion among all members of the Church's body. It is expressed in every act of communion between the Primate and the Bishop within an ecclesiastical province, between the Bishop and his Presbyters, between a Presbyter and his parishioners and among the parishioners themselves. Observing our present status, however, provokes more questions for us in the sphere of the nature of leadership in the Church.

a) Archbishop and Bishops. What is the relationship of our Bishops to the Archbishop? Lack of clarity regarding the modified role of Diocesan Bishops foreseen in the present Archdiocesan Charter contributes to their being perceived essentially as bureaucrats. This perception is sometimes enhanced by their insistence upon bureaucratic procedures of non-essential importance within their dioceses. Lack of clarity regarding the modified role of Diocesan Bishops creates tension in their relations with the Archbishop. This tension may manifest itself in a Bishop's claiming for himself the rights currently reserved only to the Archbishop, thereby jeopardizing the cause of unity within the Archdiocese.



b) Archdiocesan Regulations. The continued absence of regulations defining the role and operating procedures of spiritual courts, the Archdiocesan Council and Diocesan Councils makes it difficult for these bodies to function effectively. At worse, it invites decisions to be reached in a non-participatory (i.e., non-conciliar) way.

c) Bishop and Presbyters. A Bishop who does not co-administer and co-pastor his diocese together with the Presbyters fails to recognize their spiritual gifts and to apply conciliarity in practice. Authority must eventually lead to shared leadership. True leadership, in fact, best expresses itself in the empowerment of others (the Presbyters) to co-administer and co-pastor together with the Bishop. Otherwise, the Presbyters are reduced to professional bureaucrats, who only execute the orders of their superior. Such Presbyters contribute to the estrangement of those entrusted to their spiritual care.

d) Presbyter and Parish Council. What is the relationship of the Presbyter and his Parish Council? The Uniform Parish Regulations stress the role of the Presbyter as spiritual leader and head of the parish. In practice this emphasis does not prevent abuses of authority. Both Presbyter and Parish Councils are susceptible to this temptation.

Authority on all levels which seeks to impose itself through claims and counterclaims causes rivalry and the disruption of harmony. On the contrary, authority understood as opportunity for service to others will promote the cause of unity both in the parish and in the Archdiocese as a whole. Furthermore, it will enhance the pastoral image of both Presbyters and Bishops.

### 3. Lay Participation and Service

Orthodox theology teaches that the Church is the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31). The characteristic of a healthy body is that every member performs its own function for the good of the whole. However, unity does not mean uniformity, and therefore within the Church there are differing gifts and differing functions. Every one of them is a gift of the same Spirit and designed, not for the glory of the individual members, but for good of the whole. These observations raise the issue of the place of the laity in our Church, on several different levels. A careful attention to our laity provokes the need for serious response by the Church.

a) Tensions In Regard The Laity. It is correct that the voice of the laity be heard in the Church. There must, however, be a clear understanding of roles and prerogatives

and limits. Only believing and worshipping laypersons should be permitted to assist in the governing of the Church; nominal and uninformed Christians should at all costs be excluded from governing roles.

The lay element is becoming more and more secularized, at least from the point of view of Christian knowledge and education. Thus, it is in constant danger of going astray from the Church's canonical guidelines, while at the same time more and more ecclesiastical rights are being recognized to it.

Neither "klerikokratia" (exclusive rulership by the clergy) nor "laikokratia" (exclusive rulership by the laity) has a place in the Church. In view of the fact that authority in the Church should be characterized by service, all are servants. The various problems which beset the Church today can only be resolved with the participation of the laity. What is needed is a definition of lay participation, i.e., guidelines which are in harmony with the work of the clergy on the model of the early Church.

b) Laity Formation. Religious Education, in many different forms, must at all times occupy a central place in equipping the laity for roles of leadership. Too often, lay persons serving in important decision-making bodies have a scandalously deficient knowledge of the faith. In view of this vacuum, decisions effecting the life of the Church are often based on criteria incompatible with our Orthodox faith.

#### 4. Issues of Pan-Orthodox Concern

We live and exercise our faith as members of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. But we are not the only Orthodox within the geographical boundaries which our Archdiocese encompasses. The One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Orthodox Church in this place consists of numerous other canonical jurisdictions. Each is different in many ways, but all share in the ecclesial reality which is Orthodoxy. Reflecting ecclesiologicaly, the Church is a body, and in a body there is unity in difference and variety. In these local Churches, it is imperative that differences be transformed into a common loyalty to Christ, a shared love for one another, and the sense of a unified Orthodox Christianity in common service.

a) Disunity Beyond Diversity. The impression given of the present state of Orthodoxy in the regions and nations included within the canonical boundaries of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, in regard to the Orthodox jurisdictions, is one of competing Churches seeking to preserve their ethnic heritages at the expense of unity. The cause of pan-Orthodox unity has been hindered

because we have loved our own ecclesiastical customs and cultural traditions more than we have loved each other. Not until we have really loved each other and really loved Christ's Church can we tear down the barriers which we have set up between each other and between our Orthodox Church jurisdictions.

b) Practicing Orthodox Unity. On the local parish level, more needs to be done to cultivate the awareness that members of all Orthodox jurisdictions, regardless of ethnic background, belong to the same Church. On the episcopal level, more must be done to promote contacts among the bishops of the various Orthodox jurisdictions. SCOBA can only play a pivotal role in the cause of pan-Orthodox unity when a corresponding level of trust among its members allows this to happen.

If pan-Orthodox unity is our goal, we must provide the leadership to secure it.

#### IV. Social Realities

It is commonly accepted that the American environment has powerful socializing influence on the members of our Church. We have clearly adapted to the major aspects of its capitalistic, entrepreneurial, democratic, success oriented ethos. Perhaps, more than some other groups we have also sought to maintain our ethnic identity. The impact of our general dispersment in all the 50 States, in the Canadian provinces and in some South American nations, has meant that we have not been able to maintain tight social cohesion among our people. Each of these factors has significant impact on our present composition, and our future potential as a people and as a Church.

Nevertheless, there are two major issues which seem to have serious impact upon the future of our Church and are factors with which we must come to terms in the form of conscious policy orientations. They are, a) the significant, if not overwhelming rise of mixed marriages, and b) our self-perception as either a Hellenic Diaspora, or as American Ethnics. These two social realities are keys to whatever remains in our hands to determine our future as a Church and as a people in the northern part of our hemisphere. It is for this reason we are focusing upon them in this report.

##### 1. Demography and Intermarriage

In spite of our inflated public relations statements about our size in the United States, official figures demand a more realistic perception of our numbers, and honest reflection of what this means for us as an organized group in this country, especially as those figures are related to the issue of intermarriage.

a) Demography. According to the U.S. Census of 1980, some 950,000 Americans reported themselves as having at least some Greek ancestry, about 600,000 of whom reported only Greek Ancestry. A 1975 Gallup poll of American religious preferences found .031 percent who identified as Greek Orthodox. If the Gallup figures are extrapolated to a total U.S. population of 235,000,000 and rounded off, there are approximately 700,000 self-identified Greek Orthodox in this country. Thus it would be reasonable to estimate that about three out of four persons who regard themselves as ethnically Greek in this country are Greek Orthodox -- whether actively or only nominally.

This latter observation points to another, very insidious and troublesome observation. It is clear that these realistic population figures are not designators of

active membership in Church life. A tendency exists among many bona fide Orthodox Church members to limit their religious participation to occasional Church attendance. Such casual Church membership often leads to a movement away from the Church, not so much in a sense of renunciation or joining another denominational body, but in the sense that Orthodox Christianity no longer is a prime definer of one's identity. The danger is not that the Greek Orthodox suffer discrimination, much less persecution, in the United States, but that in the tolerance of American society, no Orthodox identity be maintained. The "drifting away" phenomenon is often accentuated by the growing likelihood of marriage with non-Greek Orthodox.

b) Intermarriage. A growing number of non-Greeks are becoming part of the Greek Orthodox Church. Most of this infusion consists of people who enter the community through marriage to a Greek-American spouse. As early as 1926, it was estimated that one in five Greeks in America entered a mixed marriage. According to Archdiocesan statistics, mixed couples accounted for three out of ten Church marriages in the 1960s; by the 1980s, the figure was six out of ten. What must be kept in mind, however, is that these numbers refer only to weddings conducted in the Greek Orthodox Church. We can safely assume that virtually all Greek Americans who marry outside the Church are marrying non-Greek spouses.

The Greek-American community has had to change its position on intermarriage in the face of its frequency. The initial edict of the immigrant parents was to tell their children that all Greek potential marriage partners were better than all non-Greek. The next line of defense, typical of the second generation, was to acknowledge that there are equal measures of good and bad in all nationalities, but the sharing of a common Greek background makes for a better marriage. The final argument, a common recourse for the third generation, is that if one does marry a non-Greek, one must be sure that the spouse is able to adapt to the family kinship system and be willing to become Greek Orthodox. Without frontal recognition of the increasing likelihood of intermarriage, there can be no long-term answer to the viability of the Greek Orthodox Church in this country.

At present, the non-Greek spouse usually plays a minor role in Church functions, but there is a discernible trend for some such converts to become more actively involved in Church organization. Non-Greeks, in fact, have been elected to Church Boards. Converts -- a very, very few who learn to speak Greek -- have become a new element in the impetus toward Americanization of the Church.

c) The Children of Mixed Marriages. What happens to

the children of intermarried couples? There is no firm answer to this question. But there is good reason to think that a substantial proportion of children of mixed-marriages will have less identity as Greeks than that of the offspring of two Greek-American parents. Thus, unless measures are taken to incorporate non-Greek spouses into the Greek Orthodox community, intermarriage inevitably reduces the number who identify themselves as Greek Orthodox in future generations.

It is revealing to examine the religious patterns of our five most prominent Greek American political figures: Spiro Agnew, John Brademas, Michael Dukakis, Paul Sarbanes, and Paul Tsongas. Agnew and Brademas were children of mixed marriages and not raised in the Greek Orthodox faith. Michael Dukakis, although raised as Greek Orthodox and a member of the Church, did not marry in the Church and does not raise his children as Greek Orthodox. Paul Tsongas and Paul Sarbanes married non-Greek women in the Church and have raised their children as Greek Orthodox, although Sarbanes's children are the only ones with a strong Greek identity.

With such an experience among our most prominent Greeks, it behooves the Church to consider ways to maintain or, in some cases, even create a Greek Orthodox identity among its children. We support the idea of instituting some kind of public rite of passage for adolescent young people in which the Greek Orthodox heritage would be expressed. Such an expression would be based on focused instruction in Church doctrine and history extending beyond the Sunday School level. Presently, the knowledge of Orthodox traditions and beliefs among even Church-going young people is woefully deficient. (Simply ask, for example, our young people what is the significance of such major Orthodox holydays as January 6 and August 15.)

Perhaps even more significant than the intermarriage rate (though given much less attention) is the overall low birthrate of Greek Americans. For at least two decades, the American-born generations have probably not been reproducing themselves. In terms of economic and educational status, Greek Americans have done well. But there is no question that there are fewer of them than there would be if they were not so well educated, so mobile, and so prosperous. For a variety of reasons calls for marriage within the group and for a higher birthrate cannot be issued forcefully, or, if issued, have any impact.

d) Opportunity or Problem? Necessity requires then, that the rise in intermarriage be looked upon as an

opportunity rather than as a problem. For without genuine acceptance of non-Greek spouses and steps to reinvigorate Greek Orthodox identity among youth, the very demographic continuance of Greek Orthodoxy in America is problematic.

## 2. Hellenic Diaspora or American Ethnic?

Two versions of the Greek American experience in America compete. One is that Greek Americans are to be understood as part of a homeland extension, a homogenia, a Hellenic diaspora. The other approach is to see Greek Americans as entrants and then participants in American history. Which of these -- to be sure overstated -- versions are we to accept? There is no simple answer, for each contains part of the truth.

The paradigm of the diaspora is that one's cultural roots and even political sensitivities must be nourished by a responsiveness to contemporary Greek realities -- even if at a distance. The diaspora understanding, paradoxically enough, is one in which Hellenic traditionalists and most Greek-American leftists find agreement. The underlying presumption is that, whether residing or even born in the United States, Greeks in America share a destiny connected with other people who call themselves Hellenes. The fact that most of the early immigrants came to this country with the intention of returning home -- and that sizeable numbers actually did return -- speaks clearly to the diaspora persuasion. Among the newer immigrants, as well, there is a strong undercurrent to come to the United States on a trial basis. Even among the American-born generations there are some who put their "Greekness" at the very center of their social identity. Among its more analytical proponents, the diaspora view implies that the Greek immigrant phenomenon -- to America and elsewhere -- is better grasped as a profound outcome of the political economy of modern Greece than as a minor theme in American history.

A quite different view is that Greek Americans must be placed in the broad context of the immigrant ethnic experience of the United States. Whatever the fullness of their traditional heritage and allegiances to the old country, the Greek immigrants who came to these shores inevitably reordered their lives; initially, to the imperatives of the economic and social structure of the United States and, later, to some degree of conformance with American cultural norms. Among those born in this country, it seems clear that one's identity is not that of a transplanted Greek, but rather the sensibility of an American ethnic. Our own understanding of the Greek experience in America leans much more to the ethnic rather than the diaspora viewpoint.

It may be useful to distinguish between secular ethnicity and sacred ethnicity. Secular ethnicity will slowly erode, despite rearguard actions by the diasporists. Sacred ethnicity, on the other hand, can strike roots in the new world -- adaptable to changing social conditions while not deviating from its holy traditions and transcendental truths. If Greek Orthodoxy were to emphasize secular ethnicity over sacred ethnicity, its long-term future in this country would be in doubt.

Looking at Greek Orthodoxy in America, we can offer the following generalizations. For the immigrant generation, we might say that Orthodoxy was Hellenism -- the two were virtually synonymous. For the second generation, Orthodoxy was found in Hellenism. To be Greek in America meant to be Greek Orthodox. For the third and later generations, Hellenism is to be found in Orthodoxy. This is to say that rather than viewing the increasing Americanization of the Church as antithetical to Greek identity, it will only be with an indigenous Greek Orthodox Church that we can expect any kind of Greek identity to carry on in the generations to come. Paradoxically enough, the more the Church reaches out and accepts non-Greeks, always without compromise of its doctrinal tenets, the more it will insure its own flowering, and therefore, guarantee some form of Greek-American ethnic survival into the indefinite future.

### Conclusion

Our study, though in many ways detailed and complex, has come to several basic conclusions which can be stated rather briefly.

Our survival and growth as a Church depends on lifting up four major concerns and opportunities for future policy direction. First, we must focus resources and attention upon the developing of a spiritually formed membership. This means much more attention to all aspects of Church life as it touches personal, ecclesial and outreach dimensions of our existence. It means priority attention to education and spiritual formation on all levels.

Secondly, we must focus resources and attention upon the parish, the locus of the religious, cultural and spiritual life of our Church, with special attention to the development of the potential of the parish to facilitate the realization of the churchly goals discussed in part one. Vigorous, informed, participatory parish life is a key to the future of the Church.



Thirdly, the leadership of our Church, especially the Hierarchy and the Presbyters need to find ways to understand their roles in ways which focus resources and attention on the conciliar understanding of the life of the Body of Christ, and to emphasize their facilitative role in building up the People of God. Inevitably this will demand changes in role expectations in regard to the laity and expand concern with Pan-Orthodox cooperation and unity.

Finally, an honest assessment of our numbers and the realities of intermarriage demand serious reflection and re-orientation of basic assumptions about our identity and the future course of our Archdiocese. A firm, clear and unequivocal acceptance of the social realities in which we live, need not mean an abandonment of our ethnic heritage, but like many other ethnic groups in America, it will be preserved only within the framework of a larger commitment to the Orthodox Christian Faith.

#### **COMMISSION MEMBERS**

**Members of the Commission who contributed to its work are listed below. Not all members have had the opportunity to read and approve the final draft of this report. The final draft is the work of the Holy Cross faculty members and Professor Moskos.**

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