

Extraordinary Clergy-Laity Gathering of the Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle

On Thursday, October 28/November 10, 2011, by the Grace of God, the Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle held an Extraordinary Clergy-Laity Gathering at the Convent of St. Paraskeve, Acharnai, Attica.

A. That morning, His Grace, Bishop Klemes of Gardikion celebrated a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy in the convent's main Church, assisted by three Priests, with His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Holy Synod, in prayerful attendance in the Altar. Nearly all those who were to participate in the gathering also attended the Liturgy, and the majority communed of the Divine Gifts.



During his brief sermon at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Klemes spoke about the liturgical experience of God's love and mercy, and the anticipated reciprocation of love, unity, and communion among members of the Church, for an effectual witness of faith and life to the world that surrounds us.

B. After a pause for breakfast, the clergy-laity gathering—the first of its kind in the history of our Holy Metropolis—began around 9 a.m. in the convent's large reception hall.

1. Bishop Cyprian read the opening prayers, which were followed by an attendance check. Apart from Bishops Cyprian and Klemes, who served as representatives of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Phyle, Attica, there were seventeen of our Priests, a small number of monks and nuns, and at least fifty lay peo-



ple (both men and women), representing nine parishes, nine monasteries, three *metochia*, and five ecclesiastical communities from various parts of our homeland in attendance. Bishop Cyprian also acted as representative of our Swedish Exarchate. A number of observers and helpers were also present for the good organization and smooth progress of the work of the gathering.

2. Bishop Cyprian then expressed his gratitude to those in attendance at the Convent of St. Paraskeve, which has a long tradition of spirituality and confession through the presence, in the past, of its founder, Elder Hieronymos the Hagiorite of Crete (†1943), and regular visits by His Eminence, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina (†1955).

3. Bishop Klemes then read cordial messages of greetings from Their Eminences, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, Bishop Michael of Nora, Bishop Silvano of Luni, and His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone, *Locum Tenens* of the Dioceses of Australia and of Alania (South Ossetia), who was on a pastoral visit to Australia and

New Zealand.

4. After the reading of these messages, Bishop Cyprian discussed the provision for such gatherings in the Constitutional Principles of the Holy Synod, and then read his [Introductory Address](#).





5. Bishop Klemes next discussed the subject of zealously preserving the sanctity and dignity of the House of God—that is, the Church—calling attention to the latent danger of secularization, which enters the sacred precincts especially during the Mysteries of Baptism and Matrimony. He also spoke about the primacy of spiritual kinship among the faithful in the Church over biological kinship, and the concomitant sacrifice on our part on behalf of genuine ecclesiastical life and witness. His Grace likewise discussed the preservation of the purity of our hearts from the passions, since the heart is also a House of God. Thus, we must not permit discord to creep into the midst of the body of the faithful, and particularly in their relations with the clergy, who truly serve the Church self-sacrificially and without pay, and who are in need of love, respect, and support to cover their everyday needs. Finally, His Grace appealed for peace and unity, a renewal of Divine zeal and edification, with a pertinent reference to the legacy of our ailing Father, Metropolitan Cyprian. He also addressed various practical questions, including an appeal to reduce the irritating use of cell phones during Divine worship.

6. Bishop Cyprian noted that the matter of the dignity of the Church and of attendance in appropriate clothing is not primarily a moral, but rather a spiritual matter, and promised to issue an encyclical thereon.

7. With regard to the broader important issue of the cultivation of an Orthodox ecclesiastical mentality, Bishop Klemes was charged with preparing a presentation on this subject for the next clergy-laity



gathering, to be held before Pentecost next year.

8. Mr. Nikolaos Polychros, representing the parish of the Holy Apostles, in Kymina, Thessalonike, proposed that materials be printed for parishes with information and guidelines regarding the celebration of the Holy Mysteries. His proposal was accepted.

9. After other interesting comments on this subject by various representatives, Bishop Cyprian broached the issue of ecclesiastical committees or boards for all of the Churches. Both of the Bishops gave practical and spiritual guidelines for the improved regulation of this important organizational and pastoral matter.

10. Another important issue discussed at length was the special attention that should be given to the catechism not only of children, but also of adults in every parish, since parish life is inconceivable without systematic catechismal care. It was strongly urged that catechetical programs be created, where they have not already been organized. Issues, questions, and problems in this regard were discussed in a constructive dialogue. It was especially stressed that the Church needs to show assiduous concern and issue exhortations—even by way of a special encyclical—for the promotion of this endeavor. It was agreed that emphasis should be placed on liturgical catechism, as well as on understanding our identity as anti-ecumenist, Old Calendarist Orthodox Christians in resistance.

11. Bishop Cyprian then set forth various proposals—which were unanimously accepted—that regional clergy-laity gatherings be organized according to geographical areas, and that a gathering of catechists be convened so that they might be given guidance and be able to share their experiences (with the idea, indeed, that a special “School for Catechists” be created). His Grace stressed the need to institute gatherings of this sort, for the rekindling of the zeal of the participants and, more generally, the more efficacious functioning of

the Body of the Church.

After over three and a half hours of deliberation, it was deemed advisable to pause for a brief intermission at 12:30 p.m. for the sake of the participants.

C. At 1 p.m., the clergy-laity gathering once again began its work.

1. Mother Seraphima, one of the representatives from the Convent of the Holy Angels, Aphidnai, Attica, expressed gratitude on behalf of the monastics for the edifying experience of attending the gathering, since even those who have dedicated themselves to the monastic life are constantly in need of systematic catechism.

2. Bishop Cyprian raised another subject, with the aim of helping to strengthen ties among the faithful; namely, the development of relations between parishes and between monasteries.

3. Likewise, in an endeavor to reinforce the active role of the laity in the Church, so as to develop their gifts and talents by means of fully organized activity, Bishop Cyprian proposed founding an “Ecclesiastical Association of Orthodox Laity,” involving a commitment to participate actively in the life of the Church, with the prospect of coming together as a body to deal with current ecclesiastical issues. Moreover, the work of certain lay brethren, who have already shown support for clergy that are faced with immediate financial difficulties, could in this way take on an organized form. It goes without saying, of course, that our solidarity extends also to those of our lay brothers and sisters in general who are in need. In this way, our philanthropic work may be expected to develop better and more effectively.

4. At this point, Bishop Cyprian noted that, as is provided by the Constitutional Principles of the Holy Synod, it is now time to activate the “Synodal Fund for the Needy” (SFN), with the immedi-



ate priority of covering the regular and special needs primarily of our married Priests. In order to achieve this, it is necessary that this fund receive regular and special contributions. It was proposed that a six-member administrative committee be formed to this effect, comprised of two Bishops (Cyprian and Klemes), two Priests (Fathers Apostolos Kagioglou and Angelos Mourlas), and two lay brethren (Messrs. Christos Katsoudas and Theochares Papageorgiou). This proposal was approved by acclamation. As for the means of obtaining an income for the stable and smooth functioning of the SFN (which would, to be sure, involve complete transparency), members of the gathering—clergy, monastics, and lay people—offered suggestions and ideas, which were discussed and appraised.

5. Bishop Cyprian proposed that each parish, monastery, *metochion*, and community pledge to offer a token sum of money each month on behalf of all of its members as a whole. If this is done regularly, the SFN will be able to accomplish its work. The *modus operandi* of this fund will be set out in a special charter, which will be submitted for approval. It would be good if small and poor communities, which, contrary to their wishes, are not able to respond to the present appeal, would at least offer a minimal sum as a show of participation in this common ecclesiastical endeavor and blessing. It was explained that the SFN does not directly involve the Bishops, but that the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina will contribute to it according to its ability. The SFN also has in view the support of our needy clergy abroad, and especially of our missions in Africa. As for the matter of the faithful offering a contribution directly to clergymen as a token of gratitude for their Priestly ministrations, Bishop Klemes suggested that this be dealt with in his presentation regarding the cultivation of an Orthodox ecclesiastical mentality.

6. After members of the gathering had



brought up other possible matters for future elaboration and study, Bishop Cyprian brought the clergy-laity gathering to a prayerful close around 3:30 p.m.

D. An **Encyclical** concerning the gathering was then distributed to those in attendance for further study, dissemination, and discussion, as well as the form for pledging monthly contributions to the SFN and a special memento of the gathering.

An *agape* meal was then provided for all present in the new refectory by the convent's sisterhood.

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This very edifying Extraordinary Clergy-Laity Gathering proceeded flawlessly in every respect. Participation in this lively and blessed meeting was, by common consent, an invaluable spiritual experience. May spiritual opportunities of this sort be repeated and augmented for the glory of God, the support of the work of the Church, the promotion of our witness, and the edification of immortal souls. Amen!

