

50TH ANNIVERSARY CON'T

But why bother pointing this out? Why recall the essentially interpretive nature of collective memory, even as it relates to the Church?

Because it implies responsibility for our interpretation. It implies responsibility to be faithful witnesses to what God has done and is doing; responsibility to join in that work of 'extending the mission' in America; responsibility to our faults and missteps along the way; responsibility to confess the ways we have failed to live up to our high calling in Christ. It implies responsibility to repent.

If our acts of memory and memorializing work to establish the meaning of a thing, then, as much as we are able, it behooves us to ensure that the interpretive choices we make are in conformity with what we believe and confess, and that the memorials we erect point beyond themselves to something of true significance. We bear a responsibility to ensure that the meaning of American autocephaly is Christ and the Gospel, and not the need to express national identity, or the ideal of self-determination, or merely an example of the rebellious spirit of the 1960s and 70s. If the meaning of American autocephaly is to be something besides these, then what we choose to remember, what we choose to emphasize – how we choose to tell our story and how we choose to act in light of that story – matters.

No doubt, there is no small dose of 'it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us' involved in this fraught and humbling work; but, it also reminds us that this is a cooperative process, and we have not been left without indications, signs, of what constitutes an appropriate interpretation. In this, Fr. Schmemmann was perceptive in his selection of signs: mission, local identity, and the suffering of the Cross. If present, these signs serve as translatable marks that the Holy Spirit is at work.

But, notice, again, that all of these point to conformity with the Gospel of Christ. Only if we can look and, in some sense, 'discern Christ' do we dare say of autocephaly that 'it was a good thing then,' and/or 'it is a good thing now.' If these are evident, then it would seem appropriate at this juncture to memorialize and establish with humility something of the significance of fifty

years of autocephaly. It would be appropriate, even, to celebrate with thanksgiving.

Then would autocephaly function something like Fr. Schmemmann envisioned: as a memorial 'marker' set up in recognition of what God has done, where he has led, and where he is leading. Then, and only then, would it function as a memorial ought, not as a dry statement of past happenings but as a living reminder of who God is and who we are as a result. It would function as a renewal of covenant and promises, and an encouragement to ongoing faithfulness.

My own institutional memory as a convert to Orthodoxy a mere twelve years ago is rather brief. All that I can relate is my own experience of being received into the Church within the OCA, in the context of one particular parish, one particular deanery, diocese, etc. And though it has been, as with all human experiences, a 'mixed bag,' I have experienced evidence of these signs.

I have experienced mission as Fr. Schmemmann characterized it: as the 'total identification of the Church with the people and with their real needs, spiritual as well as material;' in the choice of my home parish to remain a parish in its impoverished neighborhood; in the oft-OCA-led efforts of FOCUS; in the vigilance of priests lovingly to correct false dichotomies of us/them, often within their own parishes. What is the Gospel but this ministry of identity and presence, incarnate first on the part of God, and then incarnate in his Church?

I have experienced a church with a local identity, even if arrived at unwittingly; a church that is a melting-pot; a church oh-so American: neighborly, civic-minded, and intelligent, yet at times prone to exceptionalism and a fondness for tabloid and internet vitriol. But, I have also experienced a church that has turned the best of these traits to its advantage – in its participation in efforts at jurisdictional unity (SCOBA/ACOBUSA, etc.), in its willingness to dialogue with other non-Orthodox Christian denominations (WCC, etc.), and in its regular, if cautious, contributions to societal conversations.

Finally, I have experienced something of the suffering of the Cross my short time in the OCA. I do not romanticize the 'troubles' of the past two

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decades (see ‘responsibility to repent’ above). Rather, I mean to say that, as the Church, we are offered opportunities either to ‘remain with’ and ‘suffer with’ the errors of the people (and repent of our own sins), or to disassociate ourselves from the errors of the people (and our own sins), whether by culture wars or some other mechanism. In Metropolitan Tikhon’s most recent general address to the 19th All-American Council, the OCA and its leadership showed a willingness to ‘remain and suffer with’ the errors of the people.

These things and more, taken together, present, at least to this convert, a discernible icon of Christ, one which might not have been seen otherwise were it not for the autocephaly that has enabled it. However suspect or unfulfilled one might feel that autocephaly is, by these signs it may still function as a memorial of what God has done and of what he is doing. The Orthodox Church in America has borne in its own halting, human way signs of the Holy Spirit’s activity. Will we choose to remember it?

Reflections on Autocephaly: Priest William Rettig

The Episcopal Consecration of Bishop Andrei of Cleveland

On Saturday, February 1, 2020, clergy and faithful of the Romanian Episcopate of the Orthodox Church in America gathered at Saint George Cathedral here for the celebration of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, during which Bishop-elect Andrei (Hoarste) was ordained to the Episcopacy as Bishop of Cleveland, Auxiliary to His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel.

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America [elected Archimandrite Andrei as Bishop-elect of Cleveland](#) during its Regular Fall Session on Tuesday, November 12, 2019.

On the eve of the ordination, Archimandrite Andrei celebrated Great Vespers for the feast of Holy martyr Tryphon. Immediately following Great Vespers His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, together with the other bishops, celebrated the Nomination and Proclamation of a Bishop which began with Archpriest Laurence Lazar, Dean of Saint George Cathedral and Secretary of the Episcopate Council, reading the official announcement of the election.

Concelebrating with His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon were His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit, His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of North America, His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of America and Canada of the Patriarchate of Romania, His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco, His Eminence Archbishop Irénée of Ottawa, His Eminence Archbishop Michael of New York, His Eminence Archbishop Alexander of Dallas, His Eminence Archbishop David of Sitka, His Grace Bishop Paul of Chicago, and His Grace Bishop Alexis of Bethesda.

Before the beginning of the Divine Liturgy on Saturday morning, Bishop-elect Andrei offered his statement of faith, proclaiming the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and offered a detailed explanation of the Church’s Trinitarian and Christological doctrines in the presence of Metropolitan Tikhon and the assembled hierarchs, clergy, and faithful. He pledged his commitment to uphold the Church’s canons and the teachings of the Holy Fathers and to preserve unity with his brother bishops.

During the singing of the Trisagion at the Divine Liturgy, Archpriest Alexander Rentel, Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America, and Archimandrite Joseph (Morris), Abbot of the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Saint Gregory Palamas, Perrysville, OH., presented Bishop-elect Andrei to the bishops in the altar.

[In his homily](#), Metropolitan Tikhon asked all the faithful to pray daily for Bishop Andrei and offered this personal prayer for the newly ordained bishop, “ We pray that he may be the bishop that God has called him to be, a bishop who preaches the Gospel at all times. We pray that his flock and indeed the entire world might see Christ through him. And in this way, in seeing Christ through the bishop, the entire world will be inspired and enlivened to struggle more and more in their daily lives.”

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Tikhon presented Bishop Andrei with the pastoral staff, signifying his responsibility and authority as Bishop of Cleveland, and offered the **Con’t Pg 11**

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following words of exhortation:

Your Grace, Bishop Andrei, newly ordained bishop of the city of Cleveland:

On behalf of all the bishops, clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, and on behalf of all those who have gathered here today to give expression to the fullness of the Church: I wholeheartedly congratulate you on your ordination as auxiliary bishop to His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel. His Eminence has faithfully served as the Father of this Episcopate for 40 years and it is fitting for him now to receive an auxiliary bishop to assist him in the heavy pastoral and administrative burdens that belong to a diocesan bishop. His Eminence has brought you forward, has prepared you, and now will guide you with his fatherly care and brotherly encouragement as you embark on this sacred work for the Episcopate and for the Orthodox Church in America.

Through the mystery of the All-Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands, our Lord has bestowed upon you the apostolic grace for your Episcopal ministry and labors.

My dear brother, I pray that our Lord will grant you good health and the fullness of spiritual gifts so that you may with patience and humility nourish the people of God and be a witness to all those who are searching and seeking for the healing offered by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Archimandrite Roman Braga, of blessed memory, reminds us that, "The unity of the Orthodox Church as we see it today is not explained only through the fact that in our Church we can prove genealogically how one bishop follows another since the time of the Apostles. The authenticity of faith is realized first of all in sacramental communion. Apostolic succession takes place in the context of the sacramental life of the local church, and not only through individual transmission. True succession is given, therefore, through the continuity of faith and of the life of each successive generation of Christians who were in communion with the Church. Only in this way does Apostolic succession keep and transmit the fullness of the faith, actualized and recognized

as the work of the Holy Spirit Himself."

Your Grace, Bishop Andrei of Cleveland, you are now called to be an uncompromising guardian of this living tradition, but you do not stand alone or in isolation in this task. You have with you today, and before you in the past, countless examples of good, kind, and faithful pastors. Follow their examples, both in strength and in weakness. Among the first, look to Saint Andrei Shaguna, your patron saint, and the martyr Tryphon whose memory we celebrate on this day, to find your inspiration and consolation, and a model of humility and gratitude for God's divine blessings in your life.

Following the exhortation of Metropolitan Tikhon, Bishop Andrei addressed His Beatitude, all the bishops, clergy and faithful noting that he begins this ministry of the Church, "with a sincere trembling of heart, but also with a youthful hope, knowing that the Lord desires that all man should be saved and come to the knowledge of Truth."

Bishop Andrei, who is especially known for his good work, and close bond with young people, offered a special note to the youth of the Church, "To the young people especially, I say with all my heart, do not fear the Mother - our Church, do not have fear of asking and inquiring in your quest to know the Truth. Turn to the Church for wisdom, for guidance, for protection, for love and compassion... No one does it better than Christ our Lord in His Church." His Grace went on to encourage young people to, "...not be afraid of this world for God is with us. I am young as well. We all have fears. But let us walk together and as the words of prophet Micah show us clearly: *The Lord has shown you what is good. He has told you what he requires of you: You must act with justice. You must love to show mercy. And you must be humble as you live in the sight of your God* (Micah 6:8)."

Bishop Andrei continued his address by thanking those who have helped him along his path in the Church. Most notably His Grace thanked the Lord for his parents Mariana and Florin and his sister Iuliana, "who have always been a patient support and loving refuge for me. Thank you, mom and dad." His Grace went on to recount his family's journey to the United States with the following words, "Only the Lord knew why, we left Romania 23 years ago and came to an
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unknown world, here in the United States. The Church, through the parish of Saints Peter and Paul in Dearborn Heights, Father Romey and Preoteasa Mary Ellen, received us lovingly here and helped us establish our new home. The courage and perseverance of my parents, along with the prayers and support of my grandparents Eugenia and Augustin and of aunts, uncles, cousins and the rest of my family from Europe, made difficulties a bit easier to bear and gave us hope when hope seemed to be lost in the new world." You can read Bishop Andrei's address in its entirety in [English](#) and [Romanian](#).

On Sunday, February 2nd, the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple, His Grace celebrated the Divine Liturgy in his cathedral of Saint Mary, Cleveland, Ohio. His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, and His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin prayed in the altar during the Divine Liturgy.

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Commemorated on [February 16](#)

The Sunday after the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. This parable of God's forgiveness calls us to "come to ourselves" as did the prodigal son, to see ourselves as being "in a far country" far from the Father's house, and to make the journey of return to God. We are given every assurance by the Master that our heavenly Father will receive us with joy and gladness. We must only "arise and go," confessing our self-inflicted and sinful separation from that "home" where we truly belong (Luke 15:11-24).

After the Polyeleion at Matins, we first hear the lenten hymn "By the Waters of Babylon." It will be sung for the next two Sundays before Lent begins, and it serves to reinforce the theme of exile in today's Gospel.

Luke 15:11-32 (Gospel)

Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.

So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"