



# The Basil Leaf

*The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer. 2 Samuel 22:2*

The Official Publication of Orthodox Christian Fellowship

Volume 9 Issue 2

## The Hope for Orthodox Unity in America by His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP

I have traveled in the Middle East and walked in the footsteps of the early missionaries; I have visited Greece and seen the glory of the past centuries; I have visited Russia and was overwhelmed by the piety of the Russian people, but I can honestly say that despite the glory of the past, Orthodoxy in North America stands unique in its vigor, vitality and dynamism. To quote His Beatitude Patriarch Meletios IV of Constantinople after his visit to this continent in January, 1922: "I saw the largest and best part of the Orthodox Church in the Diaspora, and I

understood how exalted the name of Orthodoxy could be, especially in the United States of America, if more than two million Orthodox people there were united into one church organization, an American Orthodox Church." We have a tremendous opportunity in this land to witness to our Orthodox Faith, but only if we can put our house in order. We are no longer a church of immigrants. Many of our Orthodox young people have died on the battlefields of various wars, defending American ideals and principles. We have contributed much to the success of this country in the fields of medicine, science, technology, government, education, art, entertainment and business. We consider ourselves Americans and we are proud of it, except when we go to church, we suddenly become Greeks, Russians, Arabs, Albanians and so forth. Despite our long-standing presence on the American soil, our Church in America is

still divided into many jurisdictions, contrary to our Canon Law which forbids multiple jurisdictions in the same territory.

Individually, Orthodox jurisdictions have done much for themselves. We have some of the finest theological institutions in the world. We have excellent religious publications. Many volumes have been written in English on Orthodox theology. We have some of the best Christian Education programs. Our clergy are highly educated and deeply committed to the Orthodox faith.

We have built multi-million dollar churches and cathedrals and our laity are well organized and have contributed generously to the financial and spiritual well being of our parishes. To the many people in far-away lands who are not aware of these special characteristics which distinguish the life of the Church in this hemisphere, we say to them "come and see." Yes, come and see our organizations, our institutions, our liturgical and theological publications, our theological schools, our dedicated clergy, our faithful laity and our youth movements.

Collectively, however, we have not been able to rise above our ethnicity and work together with one mind and one accord for the glory of Orthodoxy. Our efforts continue to be scattered in different directions. Why should we have many

**"We have not been able to rise above our ethnicity and work together with one mind and one accord for the glory of Orthodoxy."**

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**..and more!**

## Letter From the SAB Chairwoman

Dear Members of Orthodox Christian Fellowship,

Happy spring, Orthodox college students! I pray that your semester has been wonderful and full of amazing blessings! As the weather warms up and I get to watch the trees on campus bloom and as the grass returns to green, I thank God for sending us what we need when we need it. Just when I cannot handle any more cold, gray days, God sends us the sunshine and tulip poplars. This semester, especially, Orthodox Christian Fellowship has been that needed blessing and encouragement for many, many students across the country, including myself.

Our national programs have made a huge impact on lives this semester, beginning with College Conference over Christmas break. The week spent in prayer, discussion, and laughter with other Orthodox college kids was wonderful encouragement that we are not alone in the Faith, but rather share it and support each other in it, and that we are the ones that can start to lead towards unity across jurisdictions.

Real Break sent students all over the world to serve God and the church during their spring breaks and make unimaginable impacts on the lives of those they met, served, and prayed with, not to mention the impact made on the lives of every participant. I am continually amazed at the way that one week literally changes lives, and after my second year of Real Break, can honestly say that it is also one of the most fun weeks I have ever had and thank God daily for the experiences.

Our Day of Prayer linked OCF chapters across the country in 24 hours of constant prayer for the first day of Lent. For my chapter and everyone I've talked to, the prayer was a great encouragement that we are not alone as we enter this fast and as we enter all of our struggles. And now, we have the opportunity to do everything we can to raise money for IOCC through Project Axios as another form of almsgiving in Lent especially for us college students, and as the first time that OCF is teamed up with IOCC! Through our efforts we can make a real difference in the lives of those in less fortunate situations.

If you did not get to participate this year in some of these programs, I strongly encourage you to do so next year, but even more, I encourage you to take an active role in shaping them and other programs that you have ideas for! Apply to be on the Student Advisory Board! This board is a great way to serve the church and your fellow students, to have a say in OCF programs, and to meet amazing Orthodox college kids that share your enthusiasm and will to serve.

Beyond these national programs, though, don't underestimate the effect of your local OCF chapter. I definitely grow in my faith with the people I meet in all these national programs, but the OCF friends that I get to see on campus are incredible blessings in my life and some of my closest friends. Make sure that as you stay involved and active in national OCF events, you are keeping the Orthodox students on your campus and your chapter as the haven it should be.

I thank God for all of you that have taught me and inspired me so much this year. As I have said before, these college years in our lives can be ones of amazing growth if we let them be. Take an active role in leading the movement of Orthodox Christian Fellowship, exactly the blessing we need, exactly when we need it. Thank God.

Pray for me as I pray for all of you,



Sarah Mashburn

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## The Basil Leaf



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## Letter From the Editor

Dear Fellow Orthodox Christian College Students,

As you will soon find as you read through the pages of this issue of *The Basil Leaf*, you will discover that we have included some articles on topics that are weightier, and very pertinent to

the growing American Orthodox Church. These topics include the headline article on Orthodox unity written by His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP and a Point Counterpoint article on liturgical language written by two very intelligent college students. It is my hope and prayer that these issues will not die when you are finished reading the newsletter, but that these articles will stimulate debate and foster healthy discussion. It is important that we, the Orthodox college students, are aware of the issues that affect our church because we are the future and the future is now. The other articles in the issue are on

some more common topics, especially those that deal with what is going on with OCF nationally, may also stimulate discussion.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any comments or concerns about this issue. My e-mail address is [catanese.1@nd.edu](mailto:catanese.1@nd.edu). I will be glad to hear from you!

In Christ,

Nathan Catanese,  
Editor

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## College Conference 2004: Experiencing Faith and Friendship

By *Keith LaRue*

As I was sitting in a restaurant writing this article, I realized how hard it is for me to properly portray the sense of amazement and complete joy I had experienced at the 2004 East Coast College Conference held at the Antiochian Village Conference Center in Bolivar, Pennsylvania.

Being new to the faith, I did not have many friends from the different Orthodox camps or other places that many of the other participants had. Besides the parishioners that I know from my home parish, Saint Michael's in Louisville, Kentucky, I had only met a few other Orthodox people my age. I had heard a lot about the College Conference from a few people in my church who had gone before; they had told me that it would be one of the greatest experiences of my life, but I never thought it really would be as great as it turned out to be.

On my way up to the conference, I was having second thoughts. The first day was a little rough for me. I did not know anyone; all I wanted to do was go home. The first night, it was a little awkward

sharing a room with a complete stranger so I decided to stay up and explore the hotel. Walking along the halls, I began to meet people. By six o'clock the next morning, I was having so much fun that I could not believe I had ever wanted to go home.



After meeting a few people the night before, I began to open up more to my small group members. The small group sessions were times where I was able to meet a few people and just have a great time being myself. We would have serious discussions about things that had happened earlier that day or we would

just joke around and play games or something. The daytime workshops were very informative. I learned a lot more about my faith than I had ever thought I would know. The large group speakers were all very enjoyable and they really understood how to tie our faith into today's society and our everyday lives. By the end of the conference, I really did not want to leave. As we said our goodbyes, I was already wishing that it was next year and we would all be coming back for the conference. On the ride home, I thought about all of the great people I had met and all the new things I had learned. When I got home, I could not stop talking about everything that had to do with the conference, but nobody really understood. Now I constantly talk to my friends from the conference and we reminisce about all of the great times we had. College Conference 2004 really was one of the greatest experiences of my life. The people there are my family and I cannot wait to see everyone again as well as meet new people next year.

*Keith LaRue is a sophomore college student. He is also an excellent Middle-Eastern and Greek dancer!*

## The Hope for Orthodox Unity in America

*Continued from Page 1*

departments for Christian Education, Media Relations, Sacred Music, Youth Ministry, Clergy pensions and so forth? Where is our spiritual and moral impact on the life of this nation? Where is our voice in the media? Why is it that every time there is a moral issue to be discussed, the Orthodox representative is missing? How can we explain our Orthodox absence despite the authenticity of our theology and moral teachings? The answer to these disturbing questions is simple; it is ethnicity. Unfortunately, we have permitted ourselves to become victims of our ethnic mentalities. We cannot be agents of change in full obedience to the truth unless we transcend ethnicity and establish a new Orthodox reality in North America. Orthodoxy, despite her past glory, remains the best kept secret in this land because of our failure to speak to America in a unified American voice. America does not understand us because we are still talking to her in languages which she does not understand. I am not advocating that we deny our own individual histories and cultures. We must not become a “melting pot” where all of the ingredients dissolve together into a bland substance which loses the vitality and uniqueness of the ingredients. The mission of the Church is not to be subservient to any kind of nationalism or ethnicity. The mission of the Church is the salvation of souls — all souls. In his Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul said: “There is neither Jew, nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for all are one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28)

The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America has made some historic strides in this respect. We have opened our doors, hearts and minds to all people of North America, regardless of ethnic background, or former religious affiliation, and we have exclaimed “Welcome Home”! We have done this while continuing to insist that

they prepare themselves properly to embrace the inheritance which has been granted to us. We have been granted the status of a self-ruling Archdiocese by our Mother Church of Antioch, and we have implemented that status in our constitution through the resounding voices of our clergy and laity working



**“I have become convinced that Orthodox unity in America must begin on the grass roots level. You...are the conscience of the Church and the defenders of the faith.”**

together. We must continue this progress, and even accelerate it, for our Lord demands nothing less of us.

After thirty-nine years in the Episcopacy, I have become convinced that Orthodox unity in America must begin on the grass roots level. You, the laity, and in particular the young adult laity, are the conscience of the Church and the defenders of the faith. Consequently, I would like to see a strong Pan-Orthodox lay movement, totally dedicated to the cause of Orthodox unity. Insist that the unity of our Faith must transcend all other interests. Insist that we silence those forces that would divide us. Insist that we witness our Faith to North America without boundaries. Without the laity, our churches would be empty and our

liturgical and sacramental services would be in vain. The clergy and laity, working together, are the “LAOS TOU THEOU,” the “People of God” and together we constitute the Holy Orthodox Church.

We bring to mind the visionary words of the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann. “One can almost visualize the glorious and blessed day when all Orthodox bishops of America will open their first Synod in New York, or Chicago or Pittsburgh with the hymn, ‘Today the grace of the Holy Spirit assembled us together,’ and will appear to us not as ‘representatives’ of Greek, Russian or any other ‘jurisdictions,’ and interests but as the very icon, the very ‘Epiphany’ of our unity within the Body of Christ; when each of them and all together will think and deliberate only in terms of the whole, putting aside all particular and national problems, real and important as they may be. On that day, we shall ‘taste and see’ the oneness of the North American Orthodox Church.”

Finally, let us always remember to ask our Lord for His guidance and strength:

“Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy Holy Orthodox, Catholic and Apostolic Church; confirm and strengthen it, increase it and keep it in peace, and preserve it unconquerable forever.” (from Morning Prayers)

*His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP is the Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church in North America, a member of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Antioch and Vice-Chairman of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (S.C.O.B.A.).*

## The Big Ten Conference...Not Just a Sports Powerhouse

As some of you may remember from past issues of *The Basil Leaf*, schools that comprise the Big Ten Conference are really stepping up in terms of Orthodox Christian Fellowship. In the fall we took a look at the new OCF house at Purdue University while the new OCF house at the University of Illinois was also showcased on the OCF website. Presently, the OCF chapters located in the state of Indiana, including Indiana University and Purdue (two Big Ten schools), are planning to have a retreat at the end of the academic year. The OCF chapter at Michigan, the reigning Big Ten Football Champion, is very active and will be featured in an article in the fall issue. Yes, all of the schools may rival each other on the football field and basketball court, but in Orthodox Christian Fellowship the schools are able to come together. The following article is a short summary of what has been going on at Penn State, the eleventh and last member of the Big Ten, but certainly not the least!

### Chapter Focus: OCF at the Pennsylvania State University

By Ryan Stingle

We are...Penn State OCF! During last fall, the Penn State OCF worked hard to plan the East Coast College Conference under the leadership of East Coast College Conference chairwoman, Helene Krenitsky. The College Conference was very exciting time and provided an opportunity for all of the members of the Penn State OCF to work together and to grow spiritually together. The conference also provided us an excellent chance for us to meet people from all over the country during the conference and during the conference's planning stages.

However, the Penn State OCF stayed active after the College Conference and we were looking forward to all of our events during the spring semester. The spring semester events include two

pilgrimage trips. The first pilgrimage was to the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Elwood City, Pennsylvania and the second is a joint pilgrimage to St. Tikhon's Monastery with members of the University of Delaware OCF and the OCO (Orthodox Christian Organization) of the Hershey Medical Center.

In other news, we have been continuing our regular, weekly OCF events. For example, we have been studying the book of Job during our weekly Bible study, led by our spiritual advisor Fr. John Reeves. The main focus of our study has been to learn about the question of, "Where is God in the Midst of Crises?"

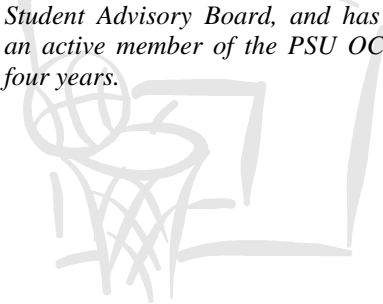
Finally, we hope to continue the practice of "Metamorphosis," which has been a wonderful source of fellowship and spiritual support during our time at college.

Metamorphosis consists of forming groups of three or four people that meet weekly for fellowship and spiritual accountability; in the past, our Metamorphosis groups have studied spiritual writings and met together to do what Orthodox Christians do best, eat! Each group is formed with the blessing of a priest and everything that is said within a Metamorphosis group remains confidential among group members; this way, all participants in Metamorphosis have a "safe

haven" that they can go to each week to share the joys and hardships of college life. Many of you were able to learn about Metamorphosis groups at the East Coast College Conference. If you would like to learn more about Metamorphosis, see the upcoming entry in the OCF Guidebook.

From Happy Valley, we wish all of you a b l e s s e d s u m m e r !

*Ryan Stingle is a fifth-year senior at Penn State. He is a member of the OCF Student Advisory Board, and has been an active member of the PSU OCF for four years.*



## Want to Make a Difference??



Apply to be a member of the National Student Advisory Board and help to propel the National OCF movement into the future with new energy and ideas!

Applications are available at [www.ocf.net](http://www.ocf.net)

## An Experience Unlike Any Other: A Reflection on OCF Real Break

By Bianca Bucaram

This spring break I was fortunate enough to be sponsored to go on the OCF Real Break Trip to San Salvador, El Salvador. While there, we were able to perform many tasks at an orphanage on the outskirts of the city including such things as tiling walls, building cabinets, and getting to know some of the children. However, the most rewarding part for me was being surrounded by youth of my faith and seeing that Orthodox Christian youth truly desire to make a difference in this world.

Upon arrival in El Salvador, we were greeted by a host of welcoming and appreciative faces who showed us that there was much work to be done, not only in the humanitarian field but also in the spiritual arena. El Salvador, as is the same with virtually all other Latin

American countries except Guatemala, are in need of an Orthodox Church. They currently do not have an Orthodox Church and there is a burning hunger for such a community. Many Orthodox families there will attend Catholic Masses in an attempt to practice some form of worship, yet still feel as if they are without. Two nights while on the trip, we were fortunate enough to have vespers on the balcony of one of our group leader's family's house and we began our praying for the Orthodox community there. As our priest who attended the trip with us expressed after this service, "Ask everyone to pray for the El Salvadorian community and the possibility of a coming church because the possibility of their starting one could

bring a revolution of new Orthodox churches to the Central American community, and what an amazing work of ministry that would be." Our group was extremely moved by this thought and realized that much work needs to be done.

Our time was primarily spent doing manual labor such as tiling walls and building cabinets, as the local orphanage



serve mostly handicapped children was desperately in need of people to help renovate. Although we were not able to spend time with the children in their classrooms and free-time, we were not without their company. Upon seeing us, most of the children crowded beside our bus and followed us to our work site. It was amazing that many were able to help and participated with us in some way, shape, or form. We met some truly marvelous children throughout the course of the week, whether they would stop by to say "hola," to read to us from their hymnal books, to take a break from their daily "dance time," or to just come to look at the visitors from the United States.

When I speak of the children that were so eager to help, I am reminded specifically of one young man named Luis. Although I am not sure of his age, he was probably the most eager of all of the natives to help. He was not very articulate and really did not speak very much; however, he was very quick-witted. He knew exactly what was going on and knew exactly how to help. Without any one of us asking, he would

grab a tile and some cement and begin placing the cement on the back of a tile to help us with our work. By the end of the week, he had learned how to say "thank you" and was our most diligent worker. It was so humbling to see him working because that is what he truly wanted to do. He did not care about making friends or getting attention; he just wanted to prove his self-worth by showing he could do the task placed before him. He would come in

every day and do what he could, and when the day was over he would leave quietly, but I could tell that he left with a great sense of satisfaction. After having observed him, I am so grateful that he was given the opportunity to prove his skill because for Luis, this opportunity left him with a sense of self-satisfaction and respect. It was truly humbling.

In Spanish, there is a phrase, "obras de amor" which translates into "works of love." I am truly fortunate to feel as if I was able to participate in a work of love for the El Salvadorian community. Although we were not able to play with these children as much as we would

*Continued on Next Page*

have liked, we definitely left an impact among a few of them. Another child named Douglas was close to all of us. His condition is unique because he does not have a physical or mental handicap yet lives at the orphanage. One afternoon when we were about to eat lunch, I was asked to go get the keys to unlock the house where we were about to eat. When I approached the woman in charge, she told me that she would send one of the kids to unlock the door. I wondered to myself how this was possible, but I just decided to not be pushy and go with the flow. After a few minutes of standing in front of the door where we were to eat, I finally heard a “clank” “clank” that sounded like a tapping on the back door. I then decided that I should look into what was going on. As I approached the back door, I noticed that this little boy did not have a handicap and I was somewhat taken back. He then said to me in Spanish, “it doesn’t work.” So I kindly took the keys and proceeded to unlock the door for him. From that moment on, our group took to him and asked him to come and help with some of our tasks as well.

Another memory that sticks out in my mind is that of a woman who did not have much control over her hands and feet but had one of the biggest hearts for Christ that I have ever experienced. One afternoon after we had finished our lunch break, she waited for us in front of our house and was singing her songs of glory to God from her handbook. It was definitely a sight to see. We all stood around her and applauded after she finished the line saying “alabamos al Señor” (we praise God) and then she continued to talk to all of us saying some words in a gibberish that no one could understand. However, after this she was standing beside me and looked up at me. In that moment, something came over her eyes and she said to me in Spanish, “All I want is to sit at a table and have someone serve me.” Immediately after, the glossy look went away and she continued to show me the songs she had in her book about Christ. It was a truly breathtaking experience to have someone ask me in an indirect way to serve them and I felt at that moment as if I were looking into the eyes of one of Christ’s handmaidens. I hope that our

work fulfilled her desire to have been served.

Although our group did not get to spend as much time with the children in their classrooms participating in arts and crafts and bonding with them as we would have liked, we felt so privileged at the end of the week to have left a tangible reminder of our trip for them.



**“In Spanish, there is a phrase, “obras de amor” which translates into “works of love.” I am truly fortunate to feel as if I was able to participate in a work of love for the El Salvadorian community.”**

Four days of intensive physical labor paid off, and we built three cabinets for them to store their medical files, and almost completely tiled all of the rooms in this house for them to enjoy. Although our group was not professionally trained in any aspect of construction, we still managed to come together in love and service to leave a lasting legacy of love for these children. The orphanage staff was so incredibly grateful for our work and we realized that there was so much more we could have done; however, we realized that

even if our work was only a small rock that was dropped into the El Salvadorian pond that the ripples of Orthodox community service would continue to occur even after we had left.

Above all however, I felt truly blessed to experience the love and dedication of my fellow Orthodox College students. It was absolutely amazing for me to be surrounded by youth who had Christ so present in their lives and were so willing to selflessly serve. I am so used to being in an environment where all of my friends are not Orthodox or do not have as strong of a desire to live for Christ as I do, however, coming to El Salvador completely rejuvenated me and showed me that Orthodox youth DO care and ARE making a difference. I don’t think that during the course of the whole trip I heard anyone complain. Throughout the long work days spent mixing cement and using brute force to manually saw plywood in the pounding sun, not one person showed a frown. In fact, everyone constantly volunteered to do more than what was required of them and with a smile on their faces. I was truly amazed. I feel so fortunate to have been a part of this wonderful trip because although I went to serve, I was truly the one who was given hope. Above all, I feel so blessed that God has given us, the youth of His church the chance to show His love not only in our own cities and hometowns, but also to the rest of the world.

*Bianca Bucaram is a junior at Vanderbilt University majoring in political science, is minoring in Spanish, and is pursuing a concentration in Arabic. Bianca enjoys singing, speaking foreign languages, meeting people, traveling, and learning about different cultures.*



## POINT

## Worship Language:

**Preface:** Over the past two years Point/Counterpoint has been a regular feature in the Basil Leaf. We've tackled such topics as Ramen vs. Cup O Noodle and Football vs. Basketball; these topics have always been on the lighter side of things, and hopefully humorous (they were intended as jokes). See ocf.net to read these past articles. In this issue, however, the Pt. Ctpt, departs from this format to discuss a more serious issue facing the Orthodox Church in North America: worship language. This article presents the two writers arguments for why we, as the Church in North America should worship exclusively in English, or in other languages (Arabic, Slavonic, Greek...). While there are strong emotional attachments to both sides of this issue, this does not prevent a meaningful discussion. The purpose of the article is not to create controversy (that already exists), or to give the definitive position on either point of view, but to promote intelligent exchange and understanding of both sides of this issue. With all this said, we, as members of the Body of Christ, are under the spiritual guidance of our bishops and priests and must seek their wisdom in these and other matters. I will be presenting the English argument, while Virginia Pourakis a student at Princeton University, will be presenting the other side of the issue.

Noah Papas

**Point**

By Noah Papas

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in the Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred the multitude came together and were confused because everyone heard them speaking in his own native language." —Acts 2:4-6

From the very birthday of our Church, Pentecost, it has been the practice to proclaim the Good News to all nations in their "native language." After the

Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles they were able to preach the word of Jesus Resurrected to Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judeans, Cappadocians, Cretans, and Arabs, among other nationalities. AND THEY



"...our native tongue is English, not Slavonic, not Arabic, nor Greek. We need to take the example of the Apostles on Pentecost and spread the Word, in our own native language"

ALL UNDERSTOOD! For us in 2005 America, our native tongue is English, not Slavonic, not Arabic, nor Greek. We need to take the example of the Apostles on Pentecost (as well as various other missionaries in our tradition i.e.. Sts.Cyril and Methodius who learned the oral Slavic language and invented the written Cyrillic alphabet so they could translate the Liturgy and Scripture to the native language of the Slavs) and spread the Word, in our own native language.

There is more scriptural mention of language in 1 Corinthians Chapter 14. Paul writes to encourage the Corinthians to pursue other gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as prophesy, rather than *glossolalia* or speaking in tongues. While *glossolalia* is different than speaking in a different language (like the Apostles at Pentecost), his theme still applies to this discussion.

"For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? So likewise, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air....Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me." - 1 Corinthians 14:9, 14:11

Paul later states "yet in the Church I would rather speak five words with understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Corinthians 14:19). From the text it is clear that, unless the words are comprehended, they are useless and are HEARD *only by the air*.

Another way of approaching this is from an evangelical standpoint. As Orthodox Christians we have been given this amazing wonderful thing: the Faith of the apostles handed down century by century and millennia by millennia. We are charged by Christ Himself to spread the Good News. Worshiping in another language makes this very difficult. There have been numerous times when my friends have wanted to come to church with me here at school (where the Sunday Liturgy is pretty much 80% Greek, the part that is English is done by the priest). I've been squeamish to bring them along, because of the language barrier. I don't want their first exposure to the faith to be something that is inaccessible and foreign. The incense and the iconostasis usually make it foreign enough for most American

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## COUNTERPOINT

### English or Ethnic Languages?



Christians. As a side note, this sheepishness could entirely be a lack of faith or judgment on my part. However, the point remains: because of the language barrier some of us Orthodox Christians do very little to reach out to inquiring souls.

In this article I have mentioned the apostles, saints and my own experience. I would also like to simply add this as a final thought. Jesus Christ himself used the language of the people. Jesus not only taught in Aramaic (while other Jewish teachers insisted on Hebrew), Christ used a familial tone, referring to God as "Abba" which is a very intimate version of the word "father," which has been translated as 'daddy.' Christ made his teaching accessible just as we should make our worship accessible to Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike.

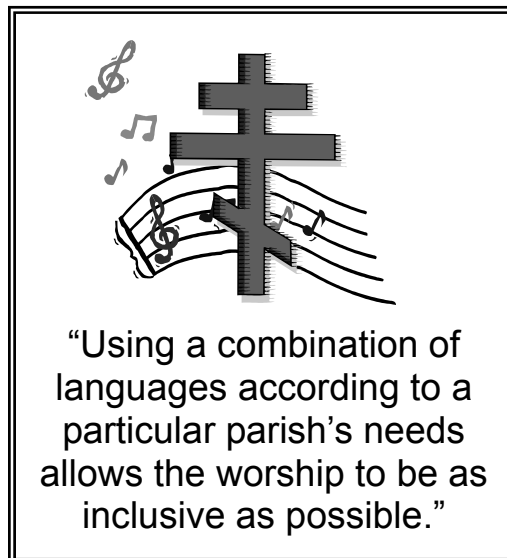
#### Counterpoint

By Virginia Pourakis

Mix together: 1) converts to Orthodox Christianity, 2) immigrants who brought their Orthodox faith with them from countries all around the world, and 3) the children, grandchildren, and other descendents of said immigrants. What have you got? "A melting pot of Orthodox soup," as Andrew Anthony (one of my favorite Orthodox singers) would say. Welcome to Orthodoxy in the United States!

While most of the Orthodox Christians in America can read and understand English, the truth is that there also are many whose native language or first language or best language is not English. I see no harm in allowing these people's own preferred languages to be used as part of Orthodox worship. Using a combination of languages (English with any other well-represented languages) according to a particular parish's needs allows the worship to be as inclusive as possible. It would help for each parishioner to be able to hold the text of the worship in his or her own preferred language so that he or she may follow along and participate throughout. As far

as the Divine Liturgy goes, anything that changes according to the given day (such as the Epistle and Gospel readings, the Apolytikion/Troparion, the Kontakion, the sermon, etc.) should perhaps be read/sung/spoken in all the well-represented languages so that everyone might be given a chance to hear and understand. Any sections that are part of congregational recitation (the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, etc.) should also be read in all well-represented languages (if possible, or in the Creed's case on a rotating basis from week to week), so that everyone might be given



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the chance to declare their faith aloud. Beyond this, a particular parish priest might also decide that certain moments of the liturgy should also be in all well-represented languages or alternate between languages.

Even those who are native English speakers may appreciate worship in another language if it is the worship language of their ancestors or part of the worship with which they are most familiar. I know that this is the case for me! I grew up going to a Greek Orthodox Church, and thus I was accustomed to hearing a lot of Greek, whether spoken by the priest, as Byzantine chant from the mouth of a "psalti," or as the text of harmonized

Byzantine melodies sung by a choir and accompanied by an organ. When I came to college, I began attending church on campus where almost everything was in English and the singing was a-cappella with Russian melodies and harmonies. It certainly sounded a bit "foreign" to me at first, even though I could understand everything that was being said! I always consider it a special treat when at certain Divine Liturgies here the choir will answer the petitions in the Litanies with "Lord Have Mercy" in various languages. Whenever I hear the Greek ("Kyrie Eleison") I am reminded of my own Orthodox roots, and I imagine my family and loved ones praying those words at home during that same moment. Because of this I become mindful of the unity that exists between all Orthodox worshipping anywhere in any language on any given Sunday morning, even those separated by time and space. Truly the Kingdom of God is at hand!

But familiarity does not equal understanding. I happened to know (and would hear in church) the English translations for the Greek that was used in worship. But this Greek is actually not the same as modern Greek! So it is possible that those who might prefer Greek because it is familiar to them (including the Greek-speaking people) do not fully understand the text! The same can be said for those who prefer church Slavonic, which is not the same as modern Russian. One should not even assume that English-speakers worshipping in English or anyone who worships in a language that is exactly the same as his or her everyday vernacular will "understand" everything in all respects.

This is because full understanding goes beyond the literal level. Understanding the *meaning* of what we say and do in worship allows us to participate in new ways. Thus worship language is only the first step toward understanding; learning

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