

First Anniversary Trisagion for
Metropolitan Philip of Blessed Memory
St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral
Brooklyn, New York
Remarks of His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph
March 22nd, 2015

Yea, a man may say, you have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:18, 26)

Beloved brother Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, Honored Guests and all of the faithful gathered here today.

On behalf of the beloved hierarchs of this Archdiocese, our reverend clergy and all of the faithful, I greet you today with love and hope as we commemorate the first anniversary of the repose of our beloved Metropolitan Philip of thrice blessed memory. If we were to choose perhaps a single passage from the bible that best represents his life, it would have to be the passage quoted above from the Epistle of St. James. Metropolitan Philip was a man of action who was passionate about a faith that must be shown by action. He lived the Incarnational Theology given to us by the Church of Antioch which teaches that Christians must function as our Lord Jesus Christ to humanity and represent the incarnate Word of God to all people. He lived a theology that believed that a faith that does not touch people in their joy and sorrow is no faith at all. From a humanitarian perspective he possessed an iconic spirit of giving to others. He supported many individuals and charities, including the St. George

Hospital in Beirut, and Hosn Hospital. He was greatly grieved by the human suffering in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon and he was heard by many world leaders, including many U.S Presidents as he raised his strong voice in defense of innocent people who could not speak with a voice of their own.

Allow me to focus on three important attributes which characterize the life and ministry of our beloved Metropolitan Philip; the traits of a visionary, a unifier, and a builder.

No one could dispute that Metropolitan Philip was a man of extraordinary vision. He regularly quoted the passage from Proverbs 28:19 "*Where there is no vision, the people perish*". His vision for the Orthodox Church in this land was that it would become the universal faith for all people. His roots in the East and his strong assimilation in the West gave him the unique ability to create a bridge which allowed people of many backgrounds to be comfortable with his outreach. We can hear his voice exclaim "Bring America Home to Orthodoxy" as he focused on establishing missions and creating a strong outreach to those who desired to return to Orthodoxy. In February 1987, this zeal for outreach resulted in the return to Orthodoxy of a very large number of our brothers and sisters in Christ who were formerly a part of the Evangelical Orthodox church, and who shared this vision with His Eminence.

The accomplishments of Metropolitan Philip also speak loudly of his role as a unifier. His Eminence was deeply grieved by the fracture of the Antiochian presence in this land which was represented by the existence of both the Archdiocese of New York and the Archdiocese of Toledo. Therefore he worked diligently with His Eminence Archbishop Michael (Shaheen) of thrice blessed memory and through the efforts of both men they achieved the jurisdictional and administrative unity of the Antiochian Orthodox faithful in North America on June 24th, 1975. He was

instrumental in the life of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOBA), and was a strong voice for Orthodox Unity in this land. Through his leadership, the members of SCOBA gathered in 1994 for an historic meeting at the Antiochian Village near Ligonier, Pennsylvania where the goal of Orthodox unity was a very prominent item on the agenda. Unfortunately the goal of Orthodox Unity was not achieved in his lifetime, but we will persevere toward this goal with the remembrance of his courageous efforts in the face of those who stand in opposition.

Finally, let us dwell for a moment on the role of Metropolitan Philip as a builder. He took to heart the teaching from Psalm 127 verse 1 “*Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.*” From his earliest years as the pastor of St. George Church in Cleveland, Ohio he showed his passion for building by completing an educational and cultural center for the community. As Metropolitan, he purchased the house and land in Englewood, New Jersey and established the Archdiocese Headquarters. In 1978, he established the Antiochian Village Camp, and later the Heritage and Learning Center, and Museum as a testimony to both his focus on our Youth, as well as the articulation of the brilliant heritage and history of the Church of Antioch. In addition, he established the Convent of St. Thekla which now is located on beautiful property in Glenville, Pennsylvania where the nuns pursue a life of peace, serenity and prayer. But His Eminence did not stop at building physical structures. He also placed a priority on creating institutions, departments and organizations for the building up of the faith. Among the many vibrant institutions that flourish today are the Antiochian House of Studies, The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the Antiochian Women, the Fellowship of St. John the Divine, and Teen SOYO. He was a lover of education which resulted in his strong support for the University of Balamand, and the establishment of full scholarships for every Antiochian seminarian.

And so today, on this commemoration of the first anniversary of his falling

asleep in Christ, we remember this man of courage and action who built in this land a strong foundation for the Antiochian Orthodox presence here. But we would do a grave disservice to his memory if we only remember his accomplishments. His life challenges us to move forward with passion to continue the building which he began. The building of not only physical structures and institutions, but the building up of the faith in our people so as to inspire a flame to burn brightly within every man, woman and child who is today a part of the Orthodox Church, and those who will join us. As the successor to Metropolitan Philip, I make a commitment to work with each and every one of you, clergy and laity alike, to build upon his legacy. Let us take as our rallying cry the teaching of St. Paul from his Second Letter to the Corinthians where he says “*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

May the Lord grant rest to the soul of our beloved departed Metropolitan Philip of thrice blessed memory and may his memory be eternal!