



REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ANTIOCHIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

JULY 27 - 28, 2011

A child learns quickly that their parents put their money where their hearts are.

Our Antiochian Archdiocese has been blessed with parents who put their hard earned money in their Church and especially with The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. I am pleased to report as I conclude my second term the Order of St. Ignatius is financially strong and we continue on an upward growth trend.

STATISTICAL SYNOPSIS

Total Membership since inception: 4,500

Life Members: 353

Priest / Spouses: 195

Total Project Contributions since inception: \$25M

Total Contribution to Antiochian Village Camp & Heritage Learning Center: \$6M

Total Contribution to Retired Clergy Housing Allowance: \$3M

Total Contribution to Archdiocese Departments: \$9.5M

These statistics do not tell the whole story of how the Order got to where it is today. In preparation for this presentation, I took pause to recount my path since joining the Governing Council over 16 years ago. There were about 1,200 members 16 years ago and today as I reported previously, we will surpass 4,500 members since inception at the conclusion of this Assembly.

I remember one of our slogans, "2,000 by the year 2000". We had no idea how we would accomplish the goal, but we were determined to figure it out. We had no materials so we created them - homilies, sample letters, and testimonials. Someone said, "Go speak to the parishes." I said, "OK, but what do I say?" I had to learn what it meant to give so I could persuade others to give. I had to practice what I preached - give freely and God will fill your treasure chest. "When you give to the poor, it is like lending to the Lord and He will pay you back." We stumbled a bit, but by the Grace of God, we reached our goal and then some. There were a period of years where we were growing at a pace of upwards of 200 new members in one year. We couldn't believe it. We reached 2,500, then 3,000. We are on our way to 5,000. Along the way, our clergy and their spouses asked if they could join even though The Order was supposed to be a lay ministry. We welcomed them with open arms and today I am pleased to report that there are 195 Clergy and/or spouses who are members. On behalf of the entire Archdiocese and the Governing Council, I thank you for your commitment and support to our ministry. I share this because I want all the Clergy (members and future members) that you make a difference.

The Order has contributed over \$25M since inception. We have 353 Life Members and we gain more each year. We continue to build this annuity so we are assured forever that no child who wants to go to camp will be denied because of lack of finances. This summer almost 800 young children received some financial aid from The Order. We watch with amazement these young children who return from camp as their lives are changed permanently. **Like Zacchaeus, when we seek God, He will find us. These young people yearn to find God, and He finds them - playing and praying.**

Our path over the past 16 years was not without challenges. As our coffers increased so did the need. We found that our delinquent numbers needed to be addressed and we have done so these past four years. Our message is clear - when you make your lifetime commitment to The Order you make it to your Lord; when you stop for whatever reason you are accountable to God. However, at the same time, we opened the door to those who either chose or found themselves unable to continue. We said, you are welcome back. Slowly, they are returning. I was hoping for a faster turnaround, but we are building momentum. We will conquer this challenge for sure.

While The Order continues to grow, we find ourselves in need of more and more volunteers to help us sustain our forward progress. The Governing Council engaged in a series of "Strategic Discussions" to help us Plan for our Future. We reached the following conclusions:

1. The organizational structure continues to meet our need and we envision it so for the near future.
2. The need for more involvement by more members is critical if The Order is to sustain its growth. We concluded that to encourage more involvement by more volunteers we should identify smaller tasks that have a "beginning and end" so people can feel comfortable in making a commitment. Our approach will be to ask Volunteers to make The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch a priority for one year.
3. Communications both to our current membership and to future prospects is critical.
 - a. Jumpstart the Ambassador Program where we seek one person as our liaison in each parish or mission. The administration of the list and dissemination of materials can be managed from the Archdiocese office such as homilies and other materials for presentation.
 - b. Use electronic media to improve effectiveness and keep costs under control. We will engage current and prospective new members via Video Conference approach where we can get groups of people to participate in a presentation from their computer.
 - c. More frequent communications to members via electronic media
 - d. Evaluate social media opportunities to promulgate our message.

I thank you for your encouragement and receptiveness to our DVD. It presents in a very visually touching way our message - **"The Order teaches us how to give; The Order teaches how to sacrifice; The Order teaches how to reach out to those in need."** This is as Metropolitan PHILIP so eloquently stated "the miracle of The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch."

This is all well and good, but it is not what is most important. This is important only in that we have built a strong foundation for future growth. The future for The Order is brighter than ever. Why? We now have a few generations of faithful Antiochian Orthodox who attended camp, served in SOYO, attended college conferences, and did missionary work through OCF. These were made possible in part by The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. These people are ready now to make their contribution back to The Order so that those who follow will enjoy the same opportunity. Currently, we have only 138 members between 18 - 40 years old. We simply need to invite them to join us and they will. We can dream big dreams. Why can't we own more camps around the country? Why can't we do more for our seminarians? Why can't we do more for our Clergy to retire with dignity? Why can't we help our young people learn leadership from an Orthodox perspective? Why can't we help those in need around the world as we

have helped Al Kafaat whose sole mission is to make those with disabilities positive contributors to society. Why can't we help those who evangelize to bring the millions of un-churched to Orthodoxy? **THERE IS NOTHING IMPOSSIBLE TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE.**

I traveled throughout this land for 16 years and I was greeted as friend each time. I know my life is enriched far more than I could ever give. My message was the same: "we make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give". I learned two important points over the past 16 years: 1) It is not just giving that is important, but that God asks us to give from the heart. When we care for the poor or for one another, we who care are transformed. St. John Chrysostom said, "Give so you do not lose; do not hoard so that you are not in want, spend so you may gain" and 2) Making this commitment to give requires faith in our Lord. It is through our unwavering faith that we realize the more we give the more God gives us to give even more. When we believe and give from the heart, we do not want to stop.

We ask God to show us the path that we should walk. It is our choice to choose that path. When we do, we are showered with heavenly riches that can only come from God. I have seen with my own eyes God take our contributions and multiply our gift. I have cried tears of joy from letters from parents whose children were changed by their camping experience. I received some delightful thank you notes from the children. One was addressed, "Dear Mr. Donation." Another one was addressed to "Mr. & Mrs. Saint Ignatius." On a personal note, I was reminded at the banquet for Fr. Rados in Potomac, MD that is was Fr. George who helped my sister adopt two young babies from Lebanon. Today 14 years later my niece Rose looks forward to her second year at camp. She helped raise money to she and her fellow Church school friends could get a bus to go to camp together. She returned last summer filled with the Holy Spirit. She might have been left on the streets of Beirut. By His Grace, God brought her here as a testament to the miracles He can do with our gifts. I was humbled in my warm home in winter when I learned that our small stipend would provide heat for one of our seminarians.

I would like to take a moment to express my profound thanks to the Governing Council. Without the dedication of these people who serve, we cannot survive much less grow. I thank in particular my officers: Mary Winstanley O'Connor - Vice Chair; Darlene Haddad - Treasurer; and Chris Bezreh - Secretary. I realized quickly that if I can keep three women pointed in the same direction at the same time, it must be the right decision! I express my appreciation and gratitude to Joanne Hakim. Her support, commitment, and ever-optimistic attitude kept me on the right path. It cannot be understated the support we have from our Hierarchs. Your Graces, let me be clear - we need you. You make a difference. Finally, a special thanks to His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP. You stuck with me even when you disagreed. You pushed me when I was so tired I broke down from exhaustion. You took me in as friend. You made a difference. Thank You.

So, where do I go from here? The Lord when He was creating me out of nothing must have taken a coffee break and never returned when He started working on my legs. I learned that He blessed me with lips to speak His words and a mind to write. I look forward to continuing to walk this path that God has put me on.

I have closed each of my presentations these past four years with the same message from His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP. They perfectly and concisely describe what each of us as members of The Order believe -

"Blessed are you who give without remembering and blessed are those who receive without forgetting"

In His Service and respectfully submitted,

Daniel Abraham
North American Chair