



Centennial Encyclical

"I was glad when they said, let us enter into the House of The Lord"
Psalm 122

The Year 2008 marks a century of ministry of the Albanian Orthodox apostolate in North America. For the first time, divine services were celebrated in Albanian in order to serve Orthodox Christians in their own language as the first parish was organized in Boston. Our first priest and, later hierarch, Theophan Stylian Noli began an extraordinary and multifaceted ministry in 1908 that served his people here and in the homeland in prodigious ways.

Over the course of the decades that followed, we have witnessed the rise of multiple jurisdictions, the intrusion of secular revolutions abroad as well as their effect on the faithful here; the intersect of political and patriotic considerations that challenged our communities and often divided them. As with all temporal struggles, we have experienced pain as well as triumphs, losses as well as epiphanies. During the last ten decades, we have learned many lessons and we have fallen short in embracing one another more fervently. Our separations have been due as much to circumstances as to ourselves. We have shared our experience with others, since we are both singular as well as similar to others. We have been passionate and reasoned, strident and flexible in seeking ways to overcome differences. Yet times of disunity have never clouded, nor prevented our predecessors from fulfilling their episcopal roles before Christ to go forth, teach, baptize and serve those entrusted to us and to our forebears.

At this time, we remember with prayer our guiding hierarchs, Bishop Theophan (Noli), Bishop Mark (Lipa), Bishop Stefan (Lasko) and the many priests and lay men and women of our shared and faithful flock who have gone before us to their rest. May their memory ever be eternal.

Despite the many challenges faced by us all, the clergy and faithful have always remained focused on their primary duty: the proclamation of the Gospel and the salvation they attain through the redemptive act of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We commemorate and celebrate this centennial moment with humility: recalling all that has gone before with the hope that we remain true to the aspirations and needs of future generations, yet to be saved, nurtured and nourished.

As those entrusted by God's Grace to shepherd our communities, we take this opportunity to witness together and to say together with love and hope, that we are one in Our Lord, one in the Eucharist and one in the sentiment that we leave this day a better place for the generations to come. "How good it is when brothers dwell together in unity." Psalm 133.

On the Sunday of Forgiveness, the 9th Day of March in the Year of Our Lord, 2008 at the Cathedral of Saint George in Boston, Massachusetts.
With Archpastoral Blessings,

+NIKON

Bishop of Boston, New England and
Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in
America

+ILIA

Bishop of Philomelion
The Albanian Orthodox Diocese of
America