

THE TREASURE OF ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL
OF NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA



*A Breath of
Spiritual Fragrance*



ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL
OF NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA

Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church
in North and South America
Exarch of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans

Ordained to the Priesthood in 1919
Elected Metropolitan of Corinth in 1939
Enthroned as Archbishop on December 18, 1949
Reposed on July 13, 1958
1949-1958

Fifty-Year Memorial Service
Saint Sophia Cathedral
Washington, DC
July 13, 2008

May His Memory Be Eternal

THE TREASURE OF ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL
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Metropolitan Michael
speaking in Ancient Corinth
during St. Paul Apostle
Week





GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

July 13, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Archbishop Michael was an exceptional and highly esteemed hierarch and brilliant champion of Orthodoxy who, in a spirit of timeliness in the face of changes and challenges in the world during the time of his tenure, guided the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America to more systematically develop Her innate missionary vocation and to project in an increasingly public role the Church's proclamation of and witness to the Gospel message.

Among his many achievements, Archbishop Michael of truly blessed memory, continued the efforts that were begun by Archbishop Athenagoras to secure the recognition of Greek Orthodoxy as a major faith of this nation by the American government. With a caring approach guided by patience and foresight, courage and humility, the Archbishop welcomed and encouraged the active participation and leadership of youth in the life of the Church through the establishment of the GOYA movement and expanded the ministries of the Church to more adequately serve the disenfranchised and marginalized populations of American and Greek society.

As we engage in the meaningful deliberations of the 39th Biennial Congress and National Philoptochos Convention and pause with reverence to honor the memory of Archbishop Michael upon the fifty years of his passing, let us thank the Almighty God for the many fruits of his archpastoral ministry and the enduring impact this beloved hierarch has had on the Greek Orthodox Church in America.

With paternal love in Christ,

Archbishop Demetrios of America

ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL

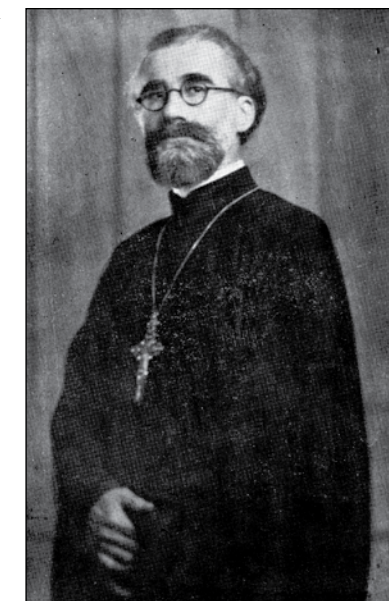
By Presvytera Nikki Stephanopoulos

His Eminence Archbishop Michael served as spiritual leader of Greek Orthodox Christians in the Western Hemisphere from 1949 until his untimely death in 1958. A noted scholar, theologian, pastor, ecumenist, author and administrator, he is most remembered as a man of deep spirituality with a devotion to his sacred mission of promulgating the Faith in the United States. A man loved and respected for his exemplary life and for having personalized the motto of his beloved Greek Orthodox Youth of America (GOYA). "Live Your Orthodox Faith", his nine years as Archbishop in the Americas were a bridge between Archbishop Athenagoras and Archbishop Iakovos.

Born Thucydides Constantinides on May 27, 1892, in Maronia, Western Thrace, he was admitted to the Halki Theological School in 1907. He was ordained to the Diaconate in 1914 and assumed the ecclesiastical name of Michael. He taught at Halki for one year and did his post-graduate work at the historic seminaries of Kiev and St. Petersburg, where he was an eye-witness of the Bolshevik Revolution. In 1919 he was ordained priest in Constantinople and appointed pastor of St. Stephen Church. In 1923 he was appointed Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Athens and All Greece and from 1927 to 1939 he served as Dean of the Cathedral of Saint Sophia in London. During his priestly tenure he represented the Patriarchate at the *Assembly of Faith and Government at Lausanne of 1927*, and as representative of the Church of Greece at the *Conference of Anglicans and Orthodox* in London in 1930.

In 1939 he was elected by the Holy Synod of Greece as Metropolitan of the ancient historic Apostolic Diocese of Corinth. As Metropolitan of Corinth, with

his own money he established a small general hospital and organized soup kitchens for the poor, and a library to educate the faithful. He established an Ecclesiastical School, Philoptochos Society and afternoon and Sunday schools. He established the St. Paul Association, held spiritual gatherings and Sunday Bible study. Metropolitan Michael could not imagine a parish without a preacher, Sunday school or philoptochos society.



Father Michael, Dean of Saint Sophia Cathedral, London, England.

Archbishop of North and South America

On October 11, 1949, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate elected him Archbishop North and South America and he was enthroned December 18, 1949 during a four-hour service attended by 2,000 at Holy Trinity Cathedral. In his comments Archbishop Michael thanked President Harry Truman and the American people for recent moral and material aid to Greece and declared his mission

Archbishop Michael with his beloved children of St. Basil Academy.



would be to build upon native traditions in making 1,000,000 Greeks better American citizens. He emphasized the place religion had taken in Greek life particularly as a fortifying element against totalitarianism.

Archbishop Michael was internationally known as an outstanding theologian, writer and administrator who wrote many theological treatises in Greek and English. He was also a linguist and was fluent in Greek, English, French, Russian and Turkish. Highly regarded in religious, education and government circles, he received honorary degrees from Yale University, St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary and General Theological Seminary. In 1954 Archbishop Michael represented the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, IL and in recognition of his many services to the Church and other Christian groups was elected as one of the six presidents of the WCC.

A dynamic hierarch, his pastoral virtues excelled. In 1950, he officiated and gave sermons in 107 parishes and traveled 46,952 miles by airplane, train and car. He also was the first Greek Orthodox Archbishop to travel to South America and had extensive discussions with Juan and Eva Peron in Argentina. In a report to Patriarch



Archbishop Michael in conversation during meeting of the WCC Central Committee.

Athenagoras On July 21, 1951, His Eminence said:

"I was successful in persuading President Peron to permit the immigration of 50,000 Greeks to Argentina for a span over five years and having clothing (produced by Greek women in Buenos Aires factories) sent to Greece, without any hindrance, for the orphan victims of the rebellion, as well as financial assistance from the Greeks to friends and relatives in Greece, wounded by the despicable plague of communism. Mrs. Peron recalled the prayers offered by Your All Holiness on the occasion of Mr. Peron's illness and asked me to convey to Your All Holiness her fervent gratitude and thanks. The President himself said that he will be at my disposal for any matter that relates to our Greek brethren in Argentina."

Another significant contribution of Archbishop Michael was to continue the efforts of Archbishop Athenagoras to obtain recognition of Orthodoxy as a major Faith in the United States. He succeeded in having this resolution passed in twenty-six states. The recognition led the Congress to adopt a bill that recognized Eastern Orthodox in

New York Times heralds enthronement of Archbishop Michael of North and South America, December 18, 1949.

the Armed Forces as separate from Catholics and Protestants. Because of this, Orthodox Christians included the initials E.O. for Eastern Orthodox on their tags.

Archbishop Michael's efforts were recognized at the highest level when on January 21, 1957, he became the first Orthodox hierarch to take part in the inaugural ceremony of a president, that of Dwight D. Eisenhower, by delivering the invocation. Earlier, on September 30, 1956, President and Mrs. Dwight Eisenhower participated in the laying of the cornerstone of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Washington, DC. First attending the Divine Liturgy and at the conclusion an overflowing crowd of over 1000 witnessed the President as he approached the foot of the altar and was presented with the Golden Cross of St. Andrew fastened around his neck by the Archbishop; Mrs. Mamie Eisenhower received a similar medal. It was a moving and historical moment (to be recognized also on the front page of the *New York Times* the next day). as the Archbishop blessed the President and Mrs. Eisenhower with these words:

"May the Almighty and Everlasting God, our common Heavenly Father whom we know and love through our common Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ bestow upon you and Mrs. Eisenhower and all your family the best of health and all His blessing so that you, Mr. President, carry on the most effective way your high and responsible duties to the benefit of our dearly beloved America and the freedom living peoples and nations of the world."

Recognizing the financial and spiritual needs of a growing national church, Archbishop Michael proposed at the 1952 Clergy-Laity Congress in Los Angeles an increased family obligation to the Archdiocese, first introduced at the 1950 Clergy-Laity Congress in St. Louis. For ten years, the *monodollarion*, or one dollar per family obligation, instituted by Archbishop Athenagoras, had sustained the needs of the Archdiocese. Archbishop Michael urged the Congress delegates to approve the *dekadollarion*, or \$10 per family.



Archbishop Michael welcomes King Paul and Queen Frederica of Greece to the Archdiocese.

On May 28th, 1958, Archbishop Michael opened the doors to St. Michael's Home, the only Archdiocesan institution serving the needs of elderly Greek Orthodox. He also created the Office of News and Information/Public Relations, brought about acceptance of the Uniform Parish By-Laws of the Archdiocese and gained membership for the Archdiocese in the National Council of Churches of Christ.



"Open the doors", Archbishop Michael officiates at consecration of Saint Sophia Cathedral, Los Angeles, CA, September 28, 1952.



Greek Orthodox Youth of America

Archbishop Michael's accomplishments and innovations were many and varied. Foremost, however, was the founding of the Greek Orthodox Youth of America (GOYA). In a message to the 6th GOYA Conference in Los Angeles, July 15th, 1957, His Eminence concluded with these words:

"As modern Americans of Greek descent you will accomplish much; but in attaining worldly destinies, never forget that as members of GOYA, you who are our pride and hope belong to an essentially religious organization, and whatever you attain on this earth is, in the last analysis, of little value without a deep and firm belief in the tried and tested religion of your forefathers. Adhere firmly to this faith, observe strictly its tenets, and in so doing you will in fact realize the motto of GOYA and truly live your Orthodox faith, thus becoming better Christians and better American citizens worthy of your noble Greek descent. With all my blessings for the future, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The untiring efforts of the Archbishop paid off. GOYA became the most vital segment of the Archdiocese with chapters in practically every community of the country. By the time of its founder's death, GOYA had reached a membership of over 30,000. The 1957 Birmingham GOYA Conference approved a National Memorial Chapel Drive to raise funds for a Chapel to be built on the grounds of Holy Cross School of Theology in Brookline, MA. Under the chairmanship of Ernie and Vickie Villas, GOYA pioneers, a goal of \$150,000 was set, funds were raised and the magnificent Holy Cross Chapel became a reality - dedicated to Archbishop Michael and the Greek immigrants, the parents, who established Orthodoxy in the Nation, nurtured it, sacrificed and saved for it and placed it in the hands of new generations for safe-keeping.

Last Public Appearance

The Grand Banquet of the 14th Biennial Congress at Salt Lake City was on July 5th, 1958 with almost 1000 people in attendance and had as the main speaker Howard W. Pyle, deputy assistant to President Eisenhower. He spoke eloquently on the importance of the Churches to American life and world peace. Leaving his sick bed again, Archbishop Michael told the delegates that "our Church never felt it has a monopoly of salvation" over other religions. He declared, "We must co-operate with other Christian denominations all over the world to settle social and moral questions".

He concluded his remarks by referring to St. Paul's famed epistle on agape: "Now abideth Faith, Hope and Love, of these, Love is the greatest." And as he stepped down from the rostrum and prepared to depart for his coming struggle with death, which was to claim him a week later, he looked at the GOYA representatives and with a benign and prophetic smile he told them: "Look after GOYA".

Archbishop Michael, the first Orthodox hierarch to offer a prayer at a Presidential inauguration, offers the invocation at the second inauguration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, January 21, 1957.

Immediately following the banquet, he was flown to New York by an army plane sent by President Eisenhower, and entered Doctors' Hospital, where he was operated on for an intestinal disorder. He died in Doctors' Hospital on July 13. Funeral services for Archbishop Michael, the first Greek Orthodox Archbishop to die in the United States, were held on July 17 at Holy Trinity Cathedral. Bishop Germanos of the Southern States Diocese, later to be named Patriarchal Vicar of the Archdiocese, officiated, assisted by five Greek Orthodox bishops, Archbishop Athenagoras of Great Britain and Metropolitan Germanos of Elias, Greece. Attending also were Archbishops and Bishops of Orthodox churches in the United States and over 150 priests from every state in the union. Also, in attendance were many religious, diplomatic and government officials.

[Presvytera Nikki, Director of News and Information/Public Relations; Public Relations Chairman of 1954 Minneapolis GOYA Conference]

[Right] Gracious letter to Archbishop Michael by President Eisenhower following cornerstone laying of Saint Sophia Cathedral, Washington D.C.

President and Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower join with Archbishop Michael in the laying the cornerstone of Saint Sophia Cathedral, Washington, DC, September 30, 1956.



Archbishop Michael honors President Eisenhower with the Golden Cross of St. Andrew, September 30, 1956.



THE WHITE HOUSE
Washington, D.C.
September 30, 1956

Dear Archbishop Michael:

It was a great privilege for Mrs. Eisenhower and myself to attend the ceremonies today in connection with the laying of the cornerstone of the Saint Sophia Cathedral. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to participate, with you and the representatives of the Greek Orthodox Church attending the Thirteenth Biennial Clergy Laity Congress, in an occasion of great spiritual significance to the entire world.

Mrs. Eisenhower and I profoundly appreciate your conferring upon each of us the Cross of Saint Andrew. We shall always try in every way to merit the dignity and trust that the bestowing of the medal of the highest honor of the Greek Orthodox Church indicates.

With warm personal regard,

Sincerely,
Dwight D. Eisenhower

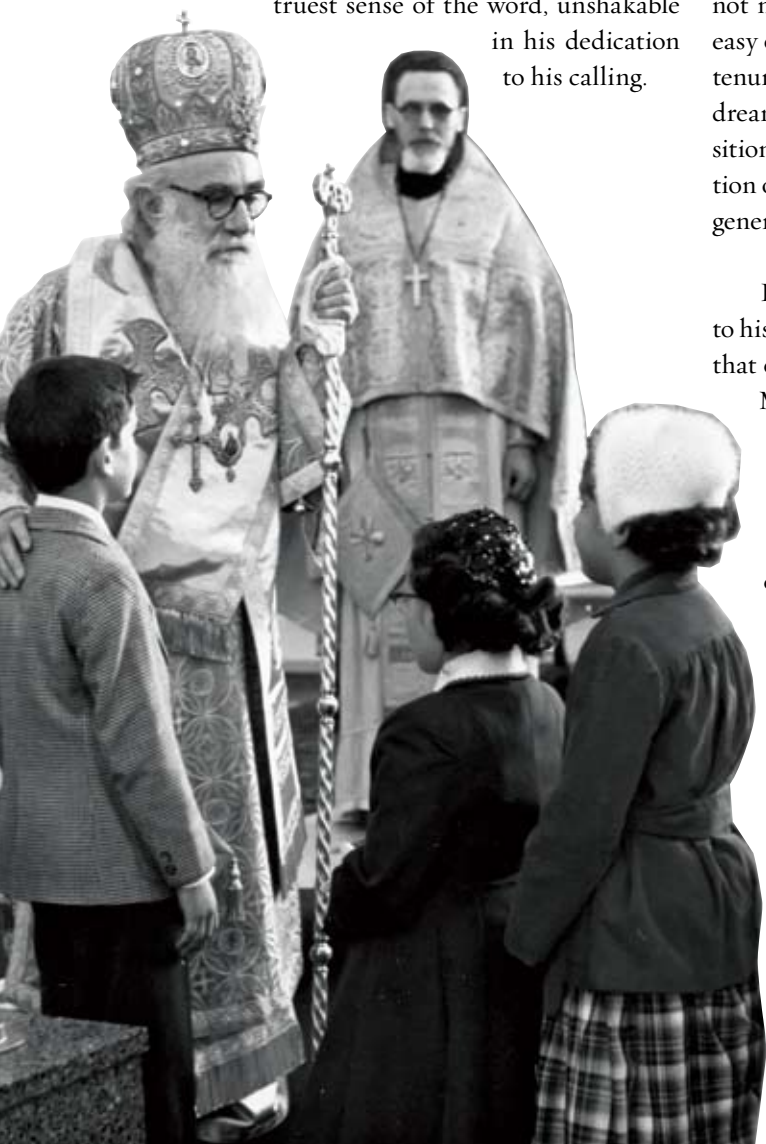
His Eminence
Archbishop Michael
Greek Orthodox Church
in North and South America
10 East 79th Street
New York 21, New York

THE TREASURE OF ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL: A BREATH OF SPIRITUAL FRAGRANCE

By Bishop George of New Jersey

Among the first and most difficult tasks of Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras as spiritual leader of World Orthodoxy was to select an Archbishop for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, a replacement for himself.

On October 11, 1949, Patriarch Athenagoras, in a telegram to Bishop Germanos of Nyssa, locum tenens of the Archdiocese, announced to the Greek American faithful that the Holy Synod, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, had elected as legal and canonical Archbishop, Metropolitan Michael of Corinth. Like his predecessor, Michael resembled a biblical personality, imposing yet gentle, sweet and joyful. Like Athenagoras, he was a graduate of the Theological School of Halki but unlike him, Michael had served as a priest in London, was fluent in English, and had pursued theological studies abroad. Corinth enjoyed days of spiritual exaltation during the tenure of Michael in that city. He was a very spiritual man, in the truest sense of the word, unshakable in his dedication to his calling.



Archbishop Michael and Governor Averil Harriman of New York with Michael Sotirhos, Spyros Skouras, Bishop Germanos and Father John Psillas.

Archbishop Michael arrived in New York on December 15, 1949 to take up the reins of the Greek American Church. In contrast to the deplorable conditions that Athenagoras had found when he assumed his duties in 1930, the conditions awaiting Michael were very favorable. His Greek American flock was in harmony and peace and there was prosperity throughout the land. These favorable conditions, however, did not mean that the ministry of Michael was to be an easy one. On the contrary, the beginning of Michael's tenure coincided with the growing pains, the hopes, the dreams and the expectations of a community in transition from the old guard to the new, from the generation of the pioneer immigrants to the American-born generation.

He entered the picture and devoted all his energy to his people. Michael's personality was different from that of Athenagoras, who was a diplomat churchman, Michael was an intellectual pietist, he emphasized matters of piety, discipline and sacramental life, especially spiritual and sacramental reawakening. Michael dealt admirably with the two most pressing problems facing the Greek Orthodox community in the United States: religious education and youth.

It was Michael who first allowed a limited use of English in the church. It all began with the teaching of religion in Sunday School. Michael's predecessor had refused to yield to the pleas of the native born generation and allow the use of English in their teaching of the faith.

Archbishop Michael interacting with young children at St. Sophia Cathedral, Washington, DC.

Although Michael was no less a lover of Greek culture and language than Athenagoras, his deep religious convictions made him recognize the need for the use of English in teaching the Faith.

At the Tenth Clergy-Laity Congress in St. Louis in 1950, he painfully but most eloquently articulated change that would allow the use of English in Sunday Schools. This innovation was followed by the preaching of the sermon in both Greek and English and the use of English in the sacraments, especially in the western states. Michael's greatest contribution, however, was in dealing with the second most pressing problem of the Archdiocese, the youth. He labored more than anyone else to advance the rights of the youth in the church.

In April 1951, Archbishop Michael announced through an encyclical letter to the parishes that a national youth conference was to be held in Chicago and asked for their support. The Conference was held as scheduled and heralded as a new era in the Orthodox Church in the United States. The national youth organization became a reality: its name, "GOYA," was destined to capture the imagination and fulfill the dreams of tens of thousands of young people throughout the American Continent. Michael took personal command of the crusade for GOYA's acceptance as an inseparable part of our communities.

A churchman of ecumenical dimensions, he advanced the cause of Christian unity; in 1954 he was elected and served as president of the World Council



Archbishop Michael was elected one of six presidents of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, IL in 1954.

of Churches. Archbishop Michael's tenure as Primate of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America was cut short by his untimely death in July of 1958, depriving Orthodoxy of a learned Bishop who was vastly informed, had a wonderfully retentive memory, was fluent in many languages, was an eloquent orator and a brilliant writer. Michael had many talents and virtues. The genius of the man, however, was his spirituality. He was a spiritual man with a deep devotion to his sacred mission of promulgating the Faith in the United States, a man who was loved and respected for his exemplary life and for having personified the motto of his beloved GOYA, *Live Your Orthodox Faith*.

[Bishop George (Papaioannou) of New Jersey, noted historian and pastor, was a widower and father of three daughters. He was the first bishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese to be ordained as a widower. He died suddenly Nov. 22, 1999, six months after his enthronement. (Excerpt from Hellenic Chronicle Article July 11, 1996)]



Conference of Sunday School teachers at St. Basil Academy.

A REMARKABLE MINISTRY

By Paul G. Manolis

Archbishop Michael, who served as Archbishop of North and South America from 1949 until his death in 1958, was noted as a theologian, a scholar, a pastor, an administrator and an ecumenist.

His years as Archbishop of our church in the Americas were a bridge between the Archbishoprics of Athenagoras and Iakovos. He built upon the foundations laid by Athenagoras, who had united American Hellenism and the Church. Michael was able to progressively develop the Church administratively in many ways, especially financially. He placed great emphasis on education, both ecclesiastically and Greek.

Archbishop Michael was born Thucydides Constantinides in Maroneia of Western Thrace on May 27, 1892. He entered the Halki Theological School in 1906 and graduated in 1914. In 1915 he was sent to Russia for further study at the Theological Schools of Kiev and St. Petersburg, Russia, where



Metropolitan Michael of Corinth

he studied for four years on a scholarship from the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

He returned to Constantinople after the Russian Revolution and was ordained a priest in 1919 and served a parish of Constantinople. He went to Greece in 1923 and was named chancellor of the Archdiocese of Athens.

In 1927 he was appointed the Dean of the Cathedral of St. Sophia in London, England, where he remained until 1939, when he was elected Metropolitan of Corinth. During the 12 years of his London tenure he was pastorally, theologically and socially very active.

During this period he also authored many theological studies including translations from the Greek, Russian and English. He was at the same time active in ecumenical affairs. He represented the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the Faith and Order meeting in Lausanne in 1927, representative of the Church of



[Left] Archbishop Michael with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.



[Right] Archbishop Michael with Senator William Knowland of California and his assistant Paul Manolis

Greece at the meeting of Anglicans and Orthodox in 1920 on the occasion of the Lambeth Conference, represented the Patriarchate of Alexandria on the Anglican Orthodox Committee at Lambeth in 1931 and finally, the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the Conference of Life and Work at Oxford and Faith and Order at Edinburgh in 1937.

He wrote extensively on these ecumenical activities, which were published in various ecclesiastical journals. Both the Church of Greece and the Ecumenical Patriarchate named him Great Archimandrite.

He was elected Metropolitan of Corinth in 1939, and was a remarkable leader of his people during the war years and German occupation. After his election of Archbishop of the Americas in 1949, he undertook to reorganize the Archdiocese. He began by doubling the number of assistant bishops to help him administer the Archdiocese. He increased the number of par-

ochial and Sunday Schools and reorganized the finances of the Archdiocese by instituting the dekadollarion (ten dollar) program instead of the previous monodollarion (one dollar) program.

He was the founder of GOYA, which became a nationwide vibrant organization of youth under his leadership.



Early brochure promoting St. Michael's Home for the Aged.

He took great interest in promoting the Holy Cross Theological School and St. Basil's Academy. He reorganized the Orthodox Observer and founded the Home for the Aged in New York and established the Office of News and Information/Public Relations.

In 1956 he was invited by President Eisenhower to deliver the invocation at the second Eisenhower inauguration, the first time that an Orthodox churchman was so honored. This established a precedent for future presidential inaugurations.

His presence in America strengthened Orthodox presence in international ecclesiastical meetings and especially in the World Council of Churches. Michael was one of the most eminent and prominent ecclesiastical personalities of the Orthodox Church during the first 60 years of the past century.

His career at the three great centers, Corinth, London and America, left a remarkable reputation. Besides his role as an ecclesiastical leader he was distinguished as an author. His numerous books and almost a hundred theological articles remind us of one of the most learned hierarchs of the Orthodox Church in recent times. He is remembered by many for his deep spirituality, his distinctive liturgical presence and his stirring and learned sermons. His strong devotion and emphasis on the youth of the church spawned an entire generation of young people, especially within GOYA, who were devoted to him.

[Paul Manolis is retired director of the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute in Berkeley, CA, was board chairman of the Orthodox Observer when it was transformed into its present newspaper format, and was assistant to U.S. Senator William Knowland from California. He served as vice-chairman of the Inaugural Committee 1957 of the Nationalities Liaison Committee.]

Ladies Philoptochos Society Board members meet with their Archbishop.



CHURCH MAKES PROGRESS IN THE DECADE OF THE 1950S

By Peter Kourides

The second modern era of our Church began with the arrival of Archbishop Michael on Dec. 15, 1949. For a decade, he had been the Metropolitan of Corinth and for 12 years prior he had been the dean of the Cathedral of St. Sophia in London.

Archbishop Michael's personality was totally different from that of his predecessor, Archbishop Athenagoras. He was an intellectual, a deeply learned man, a theologian and an author. He was reserved in demeanor, a very quiet person and literally avoided publicity and personal popularity. He was a very pious, spiritual man concerned intensely with the sacramental life of the Church.

In succeeding a man of Archbishop Athenagoras' stature and charismatic gifts, Archbishop Michael was faced with a great challenge. He made no effort to compete. He was not of a competitive nature and felt no need to win the acclaim of the populace.

As a result, his reign was particularly low key and totally different from the exciting and vibrant Athenagoras tenure.

It is reasonable to conclude that after 18 years



Clergy present Archbishop Michael with first check for Clergy Benefit Fund.

of Archbishop Athenagoras, the time had come for a period of consolidating the unity that was gained with so many struggles.

Michael's era was the 1950 decade of consolidating and extending the unity and reconciliation that Archbishop Athenagoras attained with so much blood, sweat and tears during the 1930s and the 1940s.

Notwithstanding his lack of familiarity with the unique problems that confronted the administration and direction of our Church in the Americas, Archbishop Michael within a few months concluded that it was not possible to fund the Archdiocesan responsibilities with the "monodollarion." As a result of the 10th Biennial Congress in November 1950 in St. Louis, Missouri, he recommended that the one dollar annual contribution to the Archdiocese is increased to \$10 – the dekadollarion. To the surprise of many, there was practically no opposition either in committee or at plenary sessions.

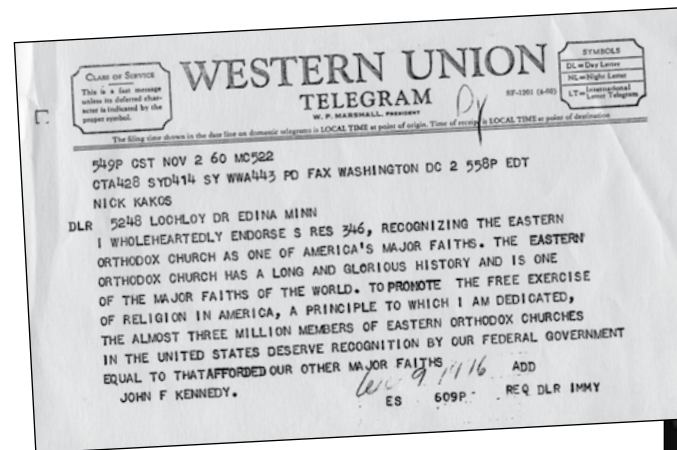
By the time of his death eight years later, the annual income of the Archdiocese had increased from \$100,320.25 during the last year of Archbishop Athenagoras' monodollarion, to \$585,698.99 under the dekadollarion for the 1958 calendar year.

Because boom times had come to the U.S. and the Greek American population had "matured" as citizens and economic units, Archbishop Michael, within his short reign, was able to increase the revenue of the Archdiocese six-fold.

Another significant contribution of Archbishop Michael was the organization in July 1951 of the



Archbishop Michael discusses progress for accreditation of Holy Cross School of Theology with Spyros Skouras, Father Iakovos Coucouzis, Dean of the Annunciation Cathedral and Holy Cross Dean Rev. Dr. Nicon Patrinos (1954).



[Top] President John F. Kennedy responds to support of Major Faith legislation from Nick Kakos of Minneapolis, MN. [Right] Archbishop Michael visits President Harry Truman at the White House, Jan. 20, 1950.

Greek Orthodox Youth of America, popularly known as GOYA.

During his reign, GOYA mushroomed into nearly 250 communities in every part of the country. It was the first time that a serious centralized effort had been made to organize our young people under the aegis of our Church.

Archbishop Michael continued the efforts that were begun by Archbishop Athenagoras to obtain formal recognition of our church through resolutions adopted by the state legislatures directing that all references to major faiths, which were heretofore limited to Protestant, Catholic and Jewish, would hereinafter include the Greek Orthodox as well. As a result of this



concerted action, 26 states adopted with uniform incorporation act or the major faith resolution.

The crowning event of this effort occurred in 1956 during the 13th Biennial Congress. President and Mrs. Eisenhower not only participated in the dedicatory ceremonies of the Cathedral of St. Sophia in the nation's capital but joined us for nearly two hours in worshipping there. Then Vice President Nixon addressed one of its plenary sessions and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was the principal speaker at the banquet.

There is no record of any other religious conclave in the history of the United States that had been so signally honored by the attendance at its functions of the three highest ranking officers of the nation: President, Vice President and Secretary of State.

[Peter Kourides for over 60 years, 1934-96, was the legal counsel to the Archdiocese. He is now retired and a member of Holy Trinity Archdiocesan Cathedral. This article is excerpted from his chapter "Our Three Hierarchs" published in "History of the Greek Orthodox Church in America". (1984)]



Reviewing the Greek Independence Day Parade in front of Holy Trinity Cathedral. Among those joining Archbishop Michael were Father Basil Efthimiou, Dean and Peter Kourides, 2nd from right, 2nd row.

REMEMBERING MICHAEL

By Ambassador Michael Sotirhos

Very few people have had an enduring influence on my life. One, however, stands out in my mind and heart – Archbishop Michael.

In the late 1940s, many parishes in the United States formed youth groups. Many of these groups banded together to form Greek Orthodox Youth Federations. I was president of one such federation in New York that had 14 youth groups as members. Other federations also existed – in Chicago and the upper Midwest. When Archbishop Michael assumed leadership of our Church in North and South America, he helped these federations of youth groups unite on a national level in an organization named the Greek Orthodox Youth of America, or GOYA.

With Archbishop Michael's encouragement, GOYA had as many as 30,000 members in the mid-1950s. From the membership of GOYA came hundreds of future presidents of local parishes and boards of trustees, for not only a local parish but for archdiocesan institutions and leadership of Philoptochos and

its organization. He was always supportive, encouraging and helpful in GOYA's progress and success. Many hours were spent in those formative years with the Archbishop. Not only were we building an organization, but we were building friendships and character – things that my generation held deeply. Many of those friendships continue to endure today.



Archbishop Michael arrives for, what was to be his final Divine Liturgy on June 29th, 1958, at Holy Trinity Church, marking the opening of the 14th Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress in Salt Lake City. He is welcomed by William Cocorinis and several hierarchs including Metropolitan Germanos of Elias, Greece.

[Left] Archbishop Michael at the Tomb of the Unknown, Arlington, VA (1956). [Below] Archbishop Michael is welcomed to Salt Lake City in 1950 and officiates at ordination of Fr. Angelo Gavalas, left, with Chancellor Neophytos Spyros, Nick Strike and his father Louis; George Zeese, Holy Trinity President, Father Harry Gavalas, pastor from 1935-41.





The Archbishop attended all our national conferences. Feeling poorly, the Archbishop attended the 1958 Clergy Laity Congress in Salt Lake City. None of us knew how ill the Archbishop was. His plan was to attend only the opening session but, to our surprise, he gathered his strength to attend all the important events of the Congress. Little did we know that he would soon meet his Maker.

I was so fortunate to know this great man. He was always ready to advise, to love, to inspire and to motivate our Church's youth. His kindness to all and to me, in particular, was one of his key traits. Further, his good humor and depth of knowledge enhanced his hard work and success. I was especially honored by the auxiliary bishops who chose me to lay the ceremonial wreath upon his grave at St. Basil's Academy the day of his funeral

We who know you, Your Eminence, pray for you, as we know you pray for us and our beloved Church.

[Michael Sotirhos is a former U.S. Ambassador to Greece and to Jamaica, Former President, Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Member, First National Council and First Treasurer of GOYA.]



[Top, left] Archbishop Michael with Michael Sotirhos at the Archdiocese. [Top, right] Archbishop Michael celebrates Exaltation of the Holy Cross and Blessing of the Waters at Asbury Park, NJ. [Above] The first issue of THE GOYAN magazine Spring 1953, printed this photo of General Van Fleet paying his respects to Archbishop Michael. As Director of the Joint U.S. Military Advisory and Planning group in Athens, Greece in 1948, he had the responsibility of advising the Greek government in the struggle against Communist insurgents. The Greek Army had completely routed the Communists by the end of 1949.

WHO WILL REPLACE ATHENAGORAS ?

By Ernest Villas

In 1949, after eighteen years of shepherding the Church in the Americas, Archbishop Athenagoras was elected Ecumenical Patriarch. He was flown to Constantinople in the presidential plane of Harry S. Truman, and the question of the day was, "Who will succeed Athenagoras?" That name had become synonymous with Greek Orthodoxy in the Americas, and another Archbishop would be a totally new experience for everyone.

In 1950 his successor, Archbishop Michael, arrived. He was a kindly, soft spoken man, fluent in English, of moderate stature with a white flowing beard. Almost a year passed before the new Archbishop met many of his parish leaders at the 1950 Clergy Laity Congress in St. Louis during the cold days of late November. Who could then imagine that our new spiritual leader would only live long enough to lead his flock through four more Clergy Laity Congresses before being called home to God?

The arrival of Archbishop Michael coincided with

the flurry of Greek Orthodox youth activity following World War II. Youth groups from parishes in Chicago, New York, the Upper Midwest, New England and the Rocky Mountain area were already organized and following initiatives by the youth leaders in Chicago. The first gathering of youth delegates met in November at the 1950 Clergy Laity Congress. This meeting set the stage for the first national youth conference in Chicago eight months later where GOYA and the Archdiocese youth movement were born.

While the goal of uniting our youth was high among the priorities of the new Archbishop, so was the need to stabilize Archdiocese finances. For ten years the "monodollarion" instituted by Archbishop Athenagoras in 1942, had sustained the needs of the Archdiocese. In 1952 at the Clergy Laity Congress in Los Angeles, where the magnificent new Cathedral of St. Sophia was consecrated, Archbishop Michael ignited financial shock waves when he convinced Congress delegates to legislate the "dekadollarion." He also pricked our moral consciousness with a controversial

Orthodox Hierarchs meet at the Archdiocese.





Father Anthony Coniaris was ordained by Archbishop Michael at St. Mary's Church, Minneapolis on July 20, 1953. Now retired as pastor, Father continues as publisher of Light and Life Publications, which he established in Minneapolis in 1966.

edict prohibiting dances on Saturday evenings as inappropriate to our participation in the Divine Liturgy on Sunday. There was no lack of items for discussion when delegates returned to their parishes after the Los Angeles Congress!

Meanwhile, Michael moved ahead in another area that was new to most of us, ecumenism. He ushered the Greek Orthodox Church into the National Council of Churches, and began the preliminary efforts of convening his fellow Orthodox prelates into what eventually would become the Standing Conference of

Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) organized by Archbishop Iakovos.

His attention also focused on the inner life and order of the Church. Congregations were urged to recite the Lord's Prayer and Creed in both Greek and English, the taking of flash pictures during weddings and baptisms was forbidden, and, to focus attention on smaller parishes, he had the 1954 Clergy Laity Congress convene in Savannah, GA to demonstrate what could be accomplished by a small Parish.

In 1956, the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, accepted an invitation from the Archbishop to participate in the cornerstone laying ceremony of St. Sophia Cathedral in Washington D.C. Later that year, following his reelection to a second term, the President extended to His Eminence the historic invitation to offer the first Orthodox prayer at a U.S. Presidential inauguration. This was a huge step toward the recognition of Orthodoxy as a major faith in America.

The life of Archbishop Michael on earth ended shortly after the 1958 Clergy Laity Congress in Salt Lake City. He had not been feeling well, and eight years of spartan-like existence, plus the never-ending pastoral visitations and duties of the Archbishop took its toll.

His Last Liturgy

Only he knew it, but his sermon on that day was his own eulogy. He must have known the end was near, for at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, which opened the 1958 Clergy Laity Congress in Salt Lake City, he came out of the altar to deliver the sermon, but he paused, and instead of proceeding to the Bishop's throne he took off his Mitre, placed it on the



[Top] First National GOYA Council elected in Washington, DC in 1952. Seated: Chris Kalogeras, Chicago, vice chair; Ernie Villas, Minneapolis, Chairman; Michael Pagos, Springfield, MA, secy.; Standing: Lou Nikolas, Chicago, Stephan Pendias, NYC, Michael Sotirhos, NYC, treas; Tom Loris, Sacramento and Jerry Lorant, Birmingham, AL. [Above] Ernie and Vickie Villas, GOYA pioneers and co-chairs of the Holy Cross Memorial Chapel Fund.

altar and went directly to the pulpit. Why he chose to spurn tradition and deliver his sermon from the pulpit instead of the Bishop's throne we will never know. Perhaps for physical reasons, for he leaned heavily on its sides and drank deeply from the glass of water placed conveniently there before him. For whatever reason, the sermon he delivered on that day will eternally be enshrined in the minds of those who heard it. There, white beard and hair flowing, ablaze with spiritual fire, His Eminence fervently preached on his favorite topic, St. Paul the



Apostle; his words, his great tribulations and temptations, his travels and his famous epistles, and it could not have been more fitting, that this Sunday coincided with the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul, the latter of who has had a living champion in the person of the Archbishop. Immediately after the Congress banquet, he returned to New York, by an ambulance plane sent by President Eisenhower, and entered the hospital. On Sunday July 13, 1958, a telegram announcing his unexpected death was read in all of our Churches. It shocked everyone.

The unforgettable funeral with over 150 priests chanting the funeral hymns ended with the long cortege that made its way to St. Basil's Academy where, amid tears and final goodbyes, Archbishop Michael was laid to rest. His entire life was a total testimony to the Church he loved and served so well, and a dynamic witness to the living God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Will of God had been served, and once again history had been set in motion for the next major chapter in the life of our Greek Orthodox people in North and South America.

[Ernest A. Villas, Director, Archdiocese Department of Religious Education (1984). Founding Conference Chairman GOYA, C.E.O.Y.A.L. Chairman; created Archdiocese Department of Laity; Exec. Chairman of several Clergy-Laity Congresses' and was Executive Director of the Archons. Ernest, a native of Minneapolis, MN and a World War II veteran, a founding member of the Upper Midwest Hellenic Orthodox Youth Federation (1940-50) forerunner of GOYA, retired as Director of the Department of Religious Education in 1997. His death, July 14th, 2006 in Weston, MA, was announced during the 28th Clergy-Laity Congress in Nashville, TN]

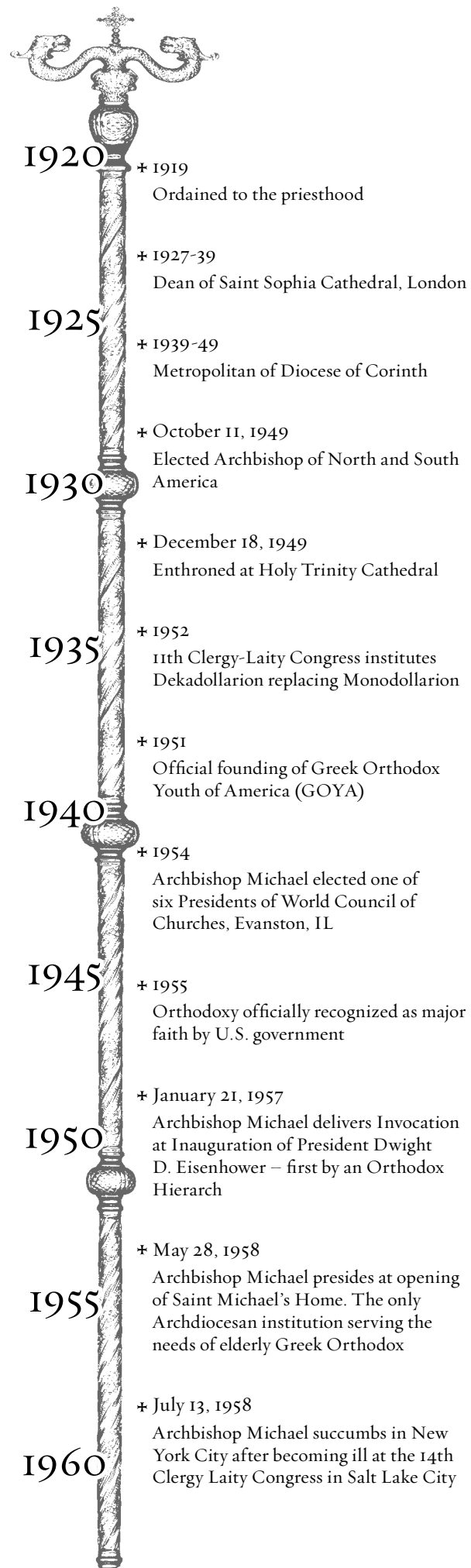


[Above] Funeral cortege to hearse and on to burial at St. Basil Academy, July 17, 1958. [Left] Archbishop Michael dwells forever within the bosom of his beloved Saint Basil Academy.

[Inscription] "For not one of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:7-8)

“Spiritual glory constitutes the most positive negation of time; thus, beautiful spiritual personalities appear in front of us in unusual radiance and greatness. The life and ministry of spiritual people vibrate deeply with our innermost world with the beautiful features of their spiritual being and their moral luster. The arduous spiritual battle sanctifies the virtuous worker of the spirit.”

~ Archbishop Michael



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