

AS ONE FAMILY OF FAITH

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

[Romans 12:4-5]

Immediately following the recent Metropolis of Atlanta Clergy Laity Assembly and Philoptochos Conference, held here in New Orleans June 16th to the 19th, in his letter expressing his appreciation, His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios noted how we had, *“gathered together in fellowship, prayer and worship as one family of faith.”* Indeed, his wording could not have been more accurate! After months of intense planning, and weeks of last-minute details and changes, after so much effort had been expended by so many of our Cathedral family, we had arrived at the start of the Conference. Each day had its own schedule, challenges, and opportunities to sense spiritual growth.

As if in a dream, the Conference went by so quickly! Those who were involved witnessed for themselves the work of the Holy Spirit. We were continually being blessed, doing His work and fulfilling the mission that He had appointed for us. From the first day’s meetings and activities, it was clear that people were accomplishing objectives while enjoying themselves, and with an appreciation for our efforts. At the Grand Banquet, we enjoyed one of our many delicious meals, the fellowship of others from throughout the southeastern United States, and we welcomed our guests, recalling the events around Katrina, with its many challenges and blessings. Completing the evening were the inspiring words of His Eminence as he summarized the previous two years and the challenges ahead.

On Friday, we began with the Opening Doxology, offering our prayers and being encouraged by the sight of so many delegates, representatives, clergy and their Presvyteres. At lunch, we reached out to Angel’s Place through the Philoptochos. We were entertained with a selection of cultural gems from our Hellenic heritage (sung by Eleftheria and Petros Demarinis, Helen Malachias, Magdalene Pelias, and Connie Tiliakos). Over the next two days, we met, discussed, attended workshops, sat at meals, appreciated the wonderful exhibit of our Cathedral’s archives and even enjoyed a fun and unforgettable evening with a taste of New Orleans. On Saturday, we brought the proceedings to a close as we ended of the Plenary.

Congregating on Sunday, with those guests who were able to stay one more day, we finished the week as we started – in prayer, offering our thanks to the Holy Trinity for the opportunity for fellowship. After Liturgy, we enjoyed one more meal while listening to the angelic voices of our youth (Andrew Adams, Eleni Korominas, Sophia Marathonitis, Pantelis Patselikos, Jacquelyn Pembo, Diana Popa, Sophia Spinu, Connie Stokes, and Nicholas Stokes; assisted by Gail Adams, Denise Ammons, Debbie Funti, Faith Kyame, Michelle Pembo, and Eleine Nugent, and directed by Viki Moustoukas) as they sang the Communion Hymn. Throughout the week, we received innumerable compliments and saw the joy and satisfaction in everyone’s face. Once again, New Orleans left an indelible mark upon the hearts and minds of all who came.

Appreciation must be extended to the generous donors (include Dathel & John Georges; Charlie & Helen Malachias; Dr. Nicholas & Christina Pappas; Dr. Steve & Carol Venturatos; Christ Kanellakis & Sophia Pappas; Dr. Nick & Viki Moustoukas; Fr. Grigorios Tatsis; Nick & Carol Zouboukos; and Byzantium, Inc.). Thanks also to all who volunteered and worked so hard, from those who returned after the Festival for yet another workshop, to the volunteers who stuffed registration bags, or ran errands or helped in so many other ways, to our Cathedral's dedicated staff, and everyone in between. Ultimately, appreciation must also be expressed to Clergy Laity Chairman Dr. Nick Moustoukas, to Philoptochos Co-Chairs Helen Malachias & Carol Venturatos, and to the members of the Executive Committee: Robert Angelico; Sandy Bouzon; Vickie Catsulis; Nick & Diane Chronis; Mary Kontos; Viki Moustoukas; Presvytera Eleni Stratis; Cathy Vial; Barbara Wolf; and Ginny Zissis.

As we look back upon all the work, and the satisfaction of a job very well done with the Clergy Laity Assembly and Philoptochos Conference, we offer our thanks to the Holy Trinity, to Whom belongs all glory!

Fr. Anthony Stratis