



Valeriano

1951 - 1984

*Dedicated to the members of ARFORA, AROY and the
Orthodox Brotherhood, whose generous contributions
made this commemorative album possible.*



*We would also like to acknowledge the generosity of
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Peru, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Metes
and Mr. and Mrs. John W. Nika for their contributions
toward the printing of this commemorative album.*

The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Mrs. Sylvia Lupsor and Mr. Louis Martin, who supplied most of the pictures in this Album. Also to Fr. Vasile Hategan, whose booklet, "ARCHBISHOP VALERIAN D. TRIFA, 30 Years of Service and Devotion (1952-1982)," provided inspiration and guidance to the author.

Printed in the USA
by
KNELLO PRINTING SERVICES, INC.
Madison Heights, Michigan

FOREWORD

When one attempts to research and write about Bishop Valerian's 33 years of achievement in about 30 days, one knows that an injustice is being done to the subject. It is almost impossible even to mention, let alone give full credit to, all his programs and activities in such short a time and limited space.

But, such were the time constraints under which this commemorative album was put together. The Committee on Arrangements for the 1984 Church Congress, established very late in the year, wanted to give the people a memento since an era was coming to an end; His Eminence was retiring.

My first thought, when I was told about the project, was that His Eminence would not like it. He is not the man to beat his own drum, nor does he want it beat on his behalf. He quietly served the Church and our faithful, unselfishly and with complete dedication, without expecting praise and recognition.

The Committee thought differently. Why not tell about his many accomplishments in so short a time, so overwhelming in comparison with what had been done previously. Our recognition is overflowing our hearts and we have to share it with the thousands of his followers. And so this tribute took form.

These few pages won't be sufficient to list all the achievements of his 24 hours, 365 days a year calling; the tremendous, minute planning ahead for the future of our Church, and above all, his accomplishments in the spiritual field, the peace and love for their Church which he brought in the hearts of our faithful, and especially in the hearts of our youth.

It is my hope that someday, someone will write a more definitive history of this most important era in the history of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America. Until then, we offer this commemorative album to our people, hoping to present His Eminence as I have known him for 30 years: as a devoted spiritual leader, as an outstanding administrator, and above all, as an understanding and compassionate human being.

-- T.L.

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
P.O. BOX 675 • ROUTE 25A • SYOSSET NY 11791 • (516) 922-0550

**METROPOLITAN
THEODOSIUS
PRIMATE**

Dearly beloved:

In a statement made on December 3, 1983, His Eminence Archbishop VALERIAN announced his intention to retire from the Office of Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, effective on his seventieth birthday, June 28, 1984. On March 20, 1984, at its regular spring session, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America officially received Archbishop VALERIAN's petition to retire, and expressed its gratitude to him for his work in his own diocese and for his contributions to the life of the whole Orthodox Church in America.

During the more than three decades of service to the Romanian Episcopate Archbishop VALERIAN dedicated his talents and abilities to building up the Body of Christ. If one looks with attention at the volumes of Solia, the Episcopate's monthly publication, and at the other publications of the Episcopate, one sees the written and pictorial record of the Archbishop's constant labors: traveling throughout North America to visit the parishes of the Episcopate, directing the work of the Episcopate Council and the Episcopate Congress, overseeing the educational work at the Vatra youth camps, supervising the publication program of the Episcopate. This record, in words and images, eloquently witnesses to the selfless dedication of Archbishop VALERIAN to the service of God and of His Holy Church.

Since 1960 Archbishop VALERIAN has been a member of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America. In leading his Episcopate onto the road towards Orthodox canonical unity in North America, the Archbishop showed his archpastoral wisdom and courage. The late 1960s and the early 1970s were a decisive time in the establishment of the permanent canonical foundation for Orthodox ecclesiastical life in America. In these years Archbishop VALERIAN provided leadership within the Holy Synod of Bishops in helping to guide the Orthodox Church in America safely towards autocephaly. In his capacity as Chairman of the Department of Canonical and Pastoral Affairs, Archbishop VALERIAN played an important role in the All-American Council of 1970, at which the autocephaly was received by the Church and assimilated into her consciousness. In the All-American Council of 1971 he helped guide the Council deliberations on the adoption of a new Statute for the Orthodox Church in America. The Archbishop was an eloquent spokesman of the Orthodox Church in America on the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.

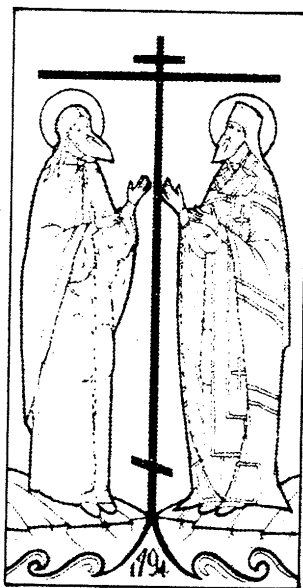
The whole Orthodox Church in America, therefore, pays tribute to Archbishop VALERIAN. His archpastoral leadership, his wisdom, courage, and vision made vital contributions to our Church's life and witness.

May this volume published in honor of Archbishop VALERIAN and his archpastoral ministry be a true offering of gratitude and love.

With love in Christ,

+Theodosius

+THEODOSIUS
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada



CHAPTER I

In his acceptance speech at the Church Congress in Chicago, July 4, 1951, the young Bishop-Vicar Elect Viorel Trifa said: "I'm aware of the Episcopate's difficulties and I know that many problems await a resolution." He then added: "I give you all that God has given me. However, to successfully carry out my mission, I'll need your help and cooperation."

Therein, in a nutshell, lies the key to Bishop Valerian's tremendous success story that would develop over the next 33 years.

Viorel Trifa did not submit his candidature for the position of Bishop-Vicar of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America on his own; he was drafted by the Episcopate Council, who saw in him the qualities they wanted in the prospective Bishop-Vicar.

For three months he debated with himself whether to accept or not to accept. As editor of the diocesan newspaper Solia, he was fully aware of the Episcopate's problems. He finally sent in his acceptance on the last day, barely beating the deadline for submitting it.

Fortunately for the Episcopate, one of Bishop Valerian's characteristics seems to have decided the issue, namely, never to stand aside when there was work to be done in something he believed in. The Bishop seems to have been born with a mission in life, to be a leader as he proved to be throughout his educational years, and to dedicate his life to a cause, which happened to be the Church.

Bishop Valerian was elected at a time when the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America was going through a most critical period in its life. It was divided amongst itself and involved in a struggle for independence with the Patriarchate in Bucharest who wanted to control it not only spiritually, but administratively as well. The loyal faithful of the Episcopate could not see themselves, as American citizens, being dominated by a godless regime that had taken control of the Patriarchate.

As if to confirm the low, moral fiber of the new masters of Romania, the newly-elected Bishop-Vicar would immediately become the object of the most vicious personal attacks and slanders directed by the Communists in Romania through some of their unwitting and docile followers in the United States, in the

belief that if they destroy the shepherd, they could then conquer the flock. But the young leader, believing in his mission to serve God and His Church, would not be deterred from his resolve to conquer all difficulties thrown in his path. That campaign against the Bishop would be carried on relentlessly by the Communists for the entire 33 years of his Episcopacy.

At the same 1951 Congress it elected Bishop Valerian, the Episcopate had declared itself independent from the Mother Church in Romania. In so doing, it became "de facto" an independent Orthodox unit, a situation not normal in the Orthodox Church. This canonical problem became acute when the need arose to consecrate the newly-elected Bishop-Vicar.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, to which the Episcopate appealed, was unable, or unwilling to do anything to solve the problem. The Patriarchate in Bucharest had intervened at Constantinople and at other Patriarchates, asking them not to immix into what it called an internal affair of the Romanian Patriarchate. Thus, none of the other historical Orthodox Patriarchates to which the Episcopate also appealed for help, would lift a little finger. No one was anxious to help such a small church body in America as the Episcopate, especially since such assistance would probably lead to jurisdictional complications with Bucharest.

In the end, the consecration of the Bishop-Vicar was resolved when the Episcopate accepted the good offices of the Ukrainian Metropolia to perform this service as a gesture of Orthodox goodwill and without any permanent jurisdictional obligations.

Amidst great joy and expectations, the Bishop-Elect was consecrated April 26 and 27, 1952, in the Descent of the Holy Ghost church in Philadelphia, Pa., and assumed the full leadership of the Diocese at the Church Congress held at Detroit, July 4th and 5th of that same year. The Episcopate had a new leader, but the path before the newly-elected bishop would be a most difficult one.

First, there was the mundane problem of where he would reside. There was no official residence for the Bishop. He first resided in Cleveland, then an attempt to locate him in Detroit following his installation failed because the Episcopate could not come up with a \$500.00 downpayment on a house.

There was the Vatra, not too far from Detroit, a farm that many considered a white elephant and a drain on the Episcopate and wanted to get rid of it...

The precipitating events that followed would resolve the problem of where the Bishop will reside.

On July 8, 1952, three days after the Bishop was installed, Judge Emerich B. Freed of the District Court of the United States for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division, rendered sentence against Bishop Moldovan's claims to the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America and its properties, recognizing the Episcopate's full autonomy and its right to elect its own Bishop and to administer itself without any outside interference. That decision will be upheld at all subsequent appeals by the losing party.

On August 16, 1952, after Bishop Moldovan and his followers had been evicted from the Vatra by Court order, the Episcopate Council decided to make the Vatra "temporarily" the Bishop's residence and the central offices of the Episcopate.

Up until then, the Vatra did not seem to figure prominently in Bishop Valerian's plans to rebuild the Episcopate. He was more concerned with the spiritual wellbeing of the Episcopate and its parishes, with the religious life of its faithful and especially of the youth, and with setting the Episcopate and the parishes on solid religious, administrative and legal grounds. But here it was, thrust upon him, and it would provide him with his first opportunity to put to work his known organizational and administrative abilities.

The Vatra would become a concrete example to the people of what their bishop was doing. They could see that he was spending their money wisely; every year, as they were coming to the Church Congresses that would begin to be held there, they could see further improvement. They would begin to donate generously to other projects the Bishop was recommending because he had proven himself as a good steward at the Vatra.

When Bishop Valerian took over, the Vatra was still a farm that was losing money every year, terribly mismanaged and with the buildings in a sore state of disrepair.

There was no money on hand and the Bishop appealed for volunteer labor. The people responded. From Chicago, from Cleveland, from Detroit, and from other parishes came carpenters, electricians, plumbers, roofers, masons and handymen of all kind, to spend days and weeks at the Vatra to make it livable for their Bishop. The "Big House," which would become the Bishop's residence and office, would undergo extensive repairs as would some of the other buildings.

The whole place was cleaned and painted, the electrical, water, and heating systems repaired and updated, a new well was dug and a new sanitary system built. Dilapidated buildings in disuse were torn down. At the recommendation of the Bishop, the Episcopate Council sold the cows to pay for the farm's debts, and placed the arable land in the Federal Soil Bank program. The Vatra ceased to be a farm.

During the immediate years that followed, barns, haylofts and stables became meeting halls, kitchens and dormitories. The transformation of the Vatra from a farm into a true center for the Diocese will take many years, demanding the Bishop's continuous attention. In the process, the Vatra became not only the Bishop's headquarters but also his recreational ground. Instead of golfing, the Bishop spent his free time trimming trees, planting flowers and cutting the grass.

Another problem the newly-installed Bishop had to address was the strengthening of the canonical dependence and of the spiritual relationship between the parishes and the Episcopate.

The parishes in America were not organized by Church authorities, but by the people themselves, who then asked the Church authorities to send them the priests to do their church services.

When the priest arrived, he found no guidance from above, but plenty of directions and say-so from those that paid him! In time, the instinct of self-preservation came first and the priests adjusted to this unnatural arrangement and made the best of a bad situation. Their parish became their diocese.

Under these conditions, it's no wonder that it took 25 years before the idea of a Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America took hold, and another 25 years for the people and the priests to get used to the idea of an Episcopate and of a Bishop. When Bishop Valerian took over, the Episcopate had had a Bishop for only four years in its 23-year history.

In some parishes this problem of local independence continued to exist. Probably the Bishop's biggest problems came from those priests and parishes that could not accept the authority of a Bishop, or any authority for that matter.

To be fair, we must also state that the people had generally no idea about the purposes of an Episcopate. Many felt that it was some kind of federation, with the visible relationship being the \$1.00 a year per capita tax. The canonical dependence of the parishes on the Episcopate and the spiritual relationship between the parishes and the Episcopate did not enter their mind.

As if the Bishop didn't have enough legitimate problems, there were those in the early days who objected to him as a Bishop because he didn't "look" like a Bishop. To their way of thinking, a Bishop should have white hair falling on his shoulders, a long beard, clad in long-flowing robes and moving about ponderously with deacons flitting about him hither and yon. Clearly, to their mind, the vision of a Bishop was something not much different from what could be found in a monastery back home in the Old Country, and here was this young Bishop, clean cut and clean shaven, bringing the Church squarely into 20th Century America.

Not everything looked dismal, though; there were some bright spots in this picture.

One of the brightest spots was the youth of the Episcopate, who in 1950 had organized into the American Romanian Orthodox Youth. These were responsible young adults, many of them married and with families of their own, who showed an intense interest in their parishes and in the Episcopate. At the Electoral Congress, through the voice of their president, the youth aligned itself solidly behind the newly-elected Bishop-Vicar.

As far as the Bishop was concerned, his thoughts on the importance of the youth were well known. In his acceptance speech to the Electoral Congress and through previous editorials in the Solia, he had made it very clear that the future of the Church and the youth were closely tied together.

As if to accentuate this theme, the Bishop-Elect's first official participation as such was three months later at the American Romanian Orthodox Youth's Second Annual Convention. There, he told the assembled delegates: "I believe that a Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America, will exist and will need a Bishop like me to lead it only if you, the young people will be active Orthodox Christians. That is one reason why my first thought and one of my principal preoccupations, as Bishop, will be for the young people of our Church."

The Bishop kept his promise, and the young people in AROY responded in kind. Out of the ranks of AROY would come eight priests and three deacons. As an Episcopate auxiliary, the AROYs would be solidly behind the Bishop's projects, contributing over \$100,000.00 to the Religious Education Program and the Camps at the Vatra, and to the Printing and Building Programs.

More important than their financial contribution to the Episcopate will be the young people's spiritual growth and develop-

ment, brought about by the continuous concern the Bishop and AROY have shown for the religious education of the youth. The Bishop's close involvement in all their programs, and the weeks that a majority of them have spent at the Camps and the Religious Education Courses at the Vatra, has brought about a very close relationship between the Bishop and the AROYS. As these young people became the leaders in the parishes and delegates in the Church Congress, the Bishop's programs would receive ready support from these AROY graduates.

What has been said about the AROYS can equally be said about the other two auxiliaries of the Episcopate, The Association of Romanian Orthodox Ladies Auxiliaries of North America, better known as ARFORA after their Romanian acronym, and the Orthodox Brotherhood, which came on the scene in 1968. Their support of the Bishop was equally unswerving at all times, and they helped in no small measure to bring to a successful conclusion some of the Bishop's major projects.

Another bright spot that would soon develop for the Bishop were the faithful members of the Episcopate themselves. Not everybody in the Episcopate was a rotten apple, or a rebel against authority. On the contrary, the majority of the priests were co-operative, and the absolute majority of the faithful were decent people, abiding by the laws of the Church.

For years they had supported their churches and the Episcopate, and wanted nothing more than to find another leader in whom they could put their trust. They soon saw that they had found such a leader in Bishop Valerian, and rallied to his support.

Convinced of his stewardship by what they saw at the Vatra, the faithful would respond generously to any appeal coming from the Bishop, or from the Episcopate.

For the first fourteen years of his Episcopacy, the per capita dues were only \$1.00, which barely covered the administrative expenses of the Episcopate. Consequently, all major building projects such as the Chapel, Pavillion and Dormitory at the Vatra, and the Printshop and Publication Department were completed through special fund drives outside the Episcopate's regular budget. The Episcopate's regular budget and the special contribution fund drives were always in balance; the Bishop never spent a penny more than what he collected.

The 1953 Church Congress, held in Canton, Ohio, is worth mentioning not only because it would be the last one held in a

parish, but also because it would give the people a chance to see what their young, spiritual leader had accomplished in one year.

They found that the books were in balance. The \$2,000.00 debt on the Vatra and the \$14,000.00 debt following Moldovan's suit had been paid. They further found that in the course of the year, the Bishop had travelled 22,500 miles visiting the parishes. He had started an intense contact with his flock, a trademark the Bishop would follow to his last day. In the first two years of his Episcopacy he visited every parish except two, small, affiliated branches. He spent 297 days in the field, traveling over 50,000 miles.

More important than what he had accomplished were his recommendations for the future. One such recommendation which was implemented by the Church Congress was the initiation of the Supporters of the Episcopate. These were volunteers who pledged to donate yearly to the Episcopate a sum of \$10.00 and up. Hundreds would enroll in this program, becoming over the years one of the Episcopate's most important financial mainstay.

Another important recommendation was the starting of the theological seminary "Andrei Saguna," which was to function in conjunction with a school granting a university-level degree.

With the break in relations with the Patriarchate in Romania, the Episcopate could no longer hope to obtain priests from the Mother Church. Our priests were getting older and it became quite evident that one of the most pressing needs was the recruitment of new priests to fill the increasing parish vacancies. The solution to the problem was to recruit and educate young men in this country to become priests.

Bishop Valerian would not ordain any priest without adequate training; the Episcopate needed priests not only to be dedicated, but also with a good theological education. To this end he created the "Andrei Saguna" Seminary.

Sunday, September 16, 1956 would be a red-letter day in more than one way. On that day, Fr. Ioan Dinu was consecrated, the first priest consecrated by Bishop Valerian and the first product of the Episcopate's efforts to train young people for the priesthood through its "Andrei Saguna" Seminary program.

When St. Vladimir's Seminary became an American and pan-Orthodox institution, it, together with St. Tikhon's Seminary, became the official schools for training Romanian Orthodox priests.

The 1953 Church Congress, however, will be remembered mostly for the changes in the Episcopate's Bylaws; it had been called as a Constitutional Congress.

Some parishes still couldn't see the function and the importance of an Episcopate. They were easy prey to adverse propaganda that the Episcopate wanted to take control of their properties. In the discussions about the new bylaws, these parishes, with their priests up-front, fought to keep the Episcopate from having any say-so in their internal affairs, as if the Episcopate was the greatest enemy to their religious life. Some churches in the Episcopate were organized and functioned on a congregational basis, denying any outside authority.

Aware of such un-Orthodox charters, the Church Bylaws voted at the 1953 Church Congress were specifically directed to protect the property of the parishes from any undue interference and to keep them for posterity for the purpose they had been intended. They further defined more clearly the relations between bishop and clergy, as well as between the Episcopate and the parishes, and designated the administrative procedures by which the local parishes should conduct their affairs.

The Bishop would recommend further changes to the Bylaws in 1957 and again in 1967. The 1957 changes, for example, gave the women a right to vote in the parish assemblies, but they could not yet serve on parish councils, or as delegates to the Church Congress. That right was given to them a bit later.

The 1967 amendments to the Bylaws established the procedures by which to elect and ordain the Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, set limits on the size of parish councils and the length of time members can serve consecutively in the same office. Also, the calling of general assemblies was simplified.

As expected, the early years of the Bishop's administration were full of spiritual and administrative decisions. Between 1954 and 1956, the Bishop's activities were dominated by the printing program for the religious education program, by the reorganization of the Solia and making it self-sustaining, the building of a cemetery and further improvements at the Vatra, and with new plans for the proposed church at the Vatra.

The religious education of young and old alike will be an ongoing and continuous concern of the Bishop. At the Clergy Conference preceding the 1954 Church Congress, he proposed that the 1954-1955 church year be called the Year of the Book, during which the printing of needed religious books should be initiated.

As a result, book No. 1 in the Episcopate's Orthodox

Christian Library Devotional Series, "Prayers for Orthodox Christians" came out in 1956 as the first religious education book printed by the Episcopate in its 27 years of existence. It was a pocket-size book, beautifully printed, with black leatherette covers, which soon sold out and had to be reprinted. It was quickly followed by book No. 2 in the Devotional Series, a catechism, "Beliefs of Orthodox Christians," in the same format as "Prayers."

A year earlier, in 1955, the Bishop had published, in Romanian, the "Prohodul" (Lamentations) to be used by the clergy and faithful during Holy Week.

The year 1954 was an anniversary year — 25 years since the founding of the Episcopate. On the occasion of the Church Congress, the faithful were presented with an excellent, 185-page Anniversary Album written by the Bishop. The Album contained not only the Episcopate's history, but also the historical beginnings of our parishes in the United States and Canada, with many historical pictures and documents.

From the report to the Church Congress, we note that during 1954, the Bishop's Office sent out over 10,000 circular letters and responded to 1724 official and personal letters from parishes and faithful — a typical workload that the Bishop's Office would put out year after year.

There was another event worth noting that took place in 1954 — the Episcopate's participation at the World Council of Churches meeting in Evanston, Ill. and at the National Council of Churches meeting in Boston, Mass. Realizing that his Church was functioning in a denominationally pluralistic society, and being the realist that he is, the Bishop felt that both sides had something to gain from such contacts. The Protestant Churches could benefit from an Orthodox spirituality and tradition and from our contemplative approach to problems of a religious nature, while the Orthodox could learn from the Protestant social gospel and approach to contemporary problems that were surrounding our Churches. The Bishop, himself, would attend several World Council of Churches meetings, and will be elected in the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches for five years.

Closer to home, the Episcopate found it equally beneficial to participate in the work of the National Council of Churches.

Of much greater importance to him than the inter-denominational contacts were his contacts with the sister Orthodox Churches in America. He was a strong promoter of

inter-Orthodox relations. One of Bishop Valerian's strength was to view his Church as part of the universal Orthodox Church, rather than as a narrow, ethnic Church. As such, the Episcopate kept good relations with the other Orthodox Churches in America, collaborating with them in the field of religious education and keeping the youth around the church. The Episcopate clergy was encouraged to participate in local inter-Orthodox activities, and with his progressive stance favoring unity among the Orthodox Churches in America, the Bishop, an accomplished orator, was a sought-after speaker at inter-Orthodox affairs.

Nineteen hundred and fifty-five was another heavy year of activities for the Bishop. Perhaps one of his most important accomplishments was the reorganization of Solia, the official organ of the Diocese.

Until 1955, the Solia had been printed in Cleveland as a weekly, necessitating many trips on the part of the Bishop. The Bishop was a born writer with extensive journalistic experience. Inasmuch as the Episcopate could not afford an editor, the task of editing fell upon the Bishop's shoulders. Even though the Solia was a high priority for the Bishop since it allowed him an effective means of communication with the faithful, it was nevertheless an extremely time-consuming affair for him.

To cut down on travel, beginning with 1955, the Solia was moved to Detroit and changed to a bi-weekly with double the pages. More pages appeared in English, a year or two later about half of it, under the editorship of Father Vasile Hategan, National Youth Director. Father Hategan would be the English Editor of the Solia for many years to come. Another notable contributor to the English pages at that time was Princess Ileana of Romania, today Mother Superior Alexandra of The Holy Transfiguration Monastery. The Bishop himself would have a steady column, "De vorba cu credinciosii," which roughly translated means talking with the faithful, in which he discussed various problems of importance to the Church and to their lives as Christians, with valuable advice, counsel and directions. There would also be a column with official communications from the Episcopate to keep the faithful informed.

Not only did the Bishop greatly improve the contents of the paper, he also quadrupled its run, sending it free to all members of his churches. He felt that the paper was a necessary means of communication between the Episcopate and its faithful, and as

such should reach every faithful's home. The readers responded positively to this move, quadrupling the number of paid subscribers.

To reach those living as refugees throughout the world, the Bishop joined forces with Professor D.C. Amzar from Germany who was editing a religious newsletter "Fratia Ortodoxa" (The Orthodox Brotherhood). The Episcopate financially supported the publication of that newsletter in 1954 and sent it free to over 1000 known Romanian Orthodox living in various parts of Europe, South America and Australia. Beginning with 1955, the newsletter was incorporated in the Solia as the Fratia Ortodoxa pages.

The Solia, in time, will undergo further changes. Beginning with 1962, it will be printed on white bookpaper rather than newsprint, and in 1972, it will change to a monthly, magazine-format paper, with triple the number of pages so as not to reduce any of its previous coverages.

What it did not change, however, in any of the 30 years that it appeared under the editorship of the Bishop, was its high, moral standard that the Bishop imposed upon it from the beginning. Solia avoided controversy, fratricidal polemics and the mudslinging that its adversaries used against the Bishop. The Solia was the mirror of the Episcopate, and its religious, family-type and newsy articles were highly appreciated by its readers.

Also, the increasing number of English pages -- two thirds of it is now in English -- its posture for Orthodox unity in America and its articles of general interest have made the Solia one of the most widely read papers among the Orthodox in America and elsewhere.

In 1982, due to failing health, the Bishop had to curtail his grueling work schedule, and the editorship of Solia passed on upon the younger shoulders of Auxiliary Bishop Nathaniel.

Other noteworthy achievements, or activities on the Bishop's part during 1955 was the publishing of the Episcopate Statutes in the 1955 Solia Calendar to put them at the disposal of every member; the opening of the first section of the St. Mary's Cemetery on the Vatra grounds on Memorial Day; and his opening of the U.S. Senate session on May 11, in honor of the Romanian National Day, May 10.

His one day stay in Washington would allow him access to people with high political influence, from the Vice President of the United States Richard Nixon to influential Senators and Congressmen. The Bishop, an ardent nationalist, would use such occasions

to defend the rights of the Romanian people who could no longer speak freely for themselves.

While not involved in the day to day politics of the exile, Bishop Valerian was nevertheless deeply interested in the plight of the refugees. At all times he urged our parishes and our people to sign affidavits of support so that the refugees could be brought over. He would later establish a specific office in New York as a liaison with the World Council of Churches which was entrusted with the care of the refugees in Europe, and to elicit affidavits and jobs for the refugees. The Bishop, who was a refugee himself, understood their plight and would never cease to intervene to try to alleviate their condition. In 1955, he mounted an Episcopate-wide drive to send tons of clothing to the refugees in European camps.

When it came to helping the needy, political borders did not stop him either. When a few years later Romania suffered terrible spring floods destroying the fields of winter wheat, the Episcopate, together with the Union and League fraternal societies and with the help of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, sent 10,000 tons of wheat to Romania to be used as seed.

Also, in 1977, when the Romanian people suffered great losses as a result of a devastating earthquake, the Episcopate, through the American Red Cross, sent thousands of dollars worth of medicine and blankets to Romania.

There is one more event that occurred in 1955 and which we would like to mention here, namely, the opening of the first Camp Vatra, that year for altar boys.

We've mentioned the Bishop's concern for the religious education of the youth in AROY, but he showed even greater concern for the religious education of the young through the home and Sunday School. He would not let any occasion pass by without urging the parents and the parishes to organize Sunday Schools where none existed, and to send the youth to the Religious Education courses at the Vatra. Through circular and pastoral letters read in the churches, he would let parishes know in no uncertain terms that none of them will have an assured future unless the parish provides for the religious education of its youth.

The churches had help in that direction. Through its Commission on Religious Education, the Episcopate was supplying the parishes with all the curricula and educational material necessary for the functioning of the Sunday School. What the churches had to provide was the space and the teachers for the Sunday School.

Even here, the Episcopate would come to their assistance. Beginning with 1950, it would organize two-week courses at the Vatra for Sunday School teachers, during which their teaching skills would be upgraded. Those courses will later be opened to all youth age 15 and over. The Bishop would teach a course as will, in time, some of the most noted theologians and Orthodox educators in this country. During those two weeks the Bishop would schedule no other activity away from the Vatra, and would live in close, day-to-day contact with the students.

The altar boys' camp, in the years to follow, would alternate between boys age 12-14 and girls of the same age. While it was primarily a recreational camp, it was geared to Christian living with a well-rounded program of religious education interspersed with crafts, sports and guided recreation.

Nineteen hundred and fifty-six was a light year as far as new programs originating from the Bishop's Office were concerned. He did establish that year a missionary department whose mission was to hold services in parishes without priests, and to serve Romanian Orthodox living in communities where there's no Orthodox church. How the Episcopate could provide needed services to those moving away from the community in our mobile society was of constant concern to the Bishop.

He was also concerned with the lot of his priests, especially the older ones who had served a lifetime in smaller parishes and were now retiring without a pension for their old age. To help them a little bit, the Bishop established that year a Retired Priests' Home in the vicinity of the Vatra, where the retired priests could live rent-free.

In a communique to all parishes at the beginning of the year, Bishop Valerian decreed that the entire year 1957 be dedicated to religious education, not only for the youth but for all parish members through sermons, conferences, religious education classes for young and adults, missions and retreats, publications, and heavy emphasis on religious education in the pages of the Solia, in which the Bishop would write a pastoral letter in each issue dealing with religious education.

Similarly, the following year, 1958, the Bishop decreed it as the year to educate the people about the meaning and the importance of the Holy Liturgy.

The major event in 1957 was the blessing of the Memorial Chapel at the Vatra, May 4-5. The Memorial Chapel must be regarded as a masterpiece of the Bishop's practical sense to do the best he could within available resources. Realizing that the plans drawn by his predecessors for the proposed church at the Vatra, intended to be a copy of the famous Curtea de Arges church in Romania, were entirely beyond the Episcopate's means, he set about to come up with more practical plans for the project. The open foundation which for several years had been exposed to the weather was beginning to crumble, and the architects and engineers consulted advised to blast the whole thing and start fresh with feasible plans and a new foundation, which would be cheaper.

These recommendations, however, ran counter to the Bishop's practical and frugal nature. How could he destroy that crumbling foundation in which the faithful had poured thousands of dollars to see a dream come true? He wouldn't do it. He urged the architects and engineers to figure out how to save the existing foundation and to build on top of it. At his insistence and with his constant input as new plans were developed, they saved the foundation and came up with a beautiful chapel beneath and a larger church above, whose altar could be enclosed and the spacious nave used for the meetings of the Church Congress. The final result was beautiful, practical, and within available means.

Let us also mention, in passing, that in 1957 the Bishop received his U.S. citizenship, after the Immigration and Naturalization Service thoroughly investigated all charges that had been hurled against him by that time, and found them baseless and without any truth whatsoever.

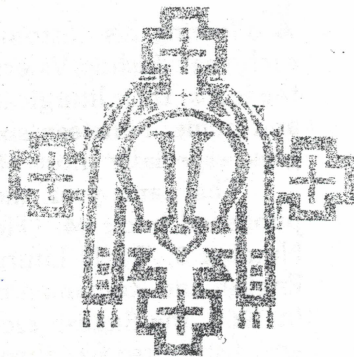
Following his custom of concentrating on a particular subject each year, Bishop Valerian dedicated 1959 to explaining the role of the icons, their liturgical meaning and proper veneration in church and home. Nineteen sixty was dedicated to the problem of refugees, especially those of Romanian origin.

That same year, the Episcopate's Orthodox Christian Library published book #4, "Holy Sacraments for Orthodox Christians." Number 3, "Holy Liturgy for Orthodox Christians" with parallel English and Romanian texts had been published two years earlier. In 1960, the English section of the Holy Liturgy was reproduced and distributed free through the military chaplains to thousands of Orthodox soldiers in the Armed Forces, and to Orthodox students through the Orthodox Campus Fellowships.

The most important event that year, however, was the canonical affiliation of the Episcopate with the Russian Metropolia.

Two years earlier, in 1958, Bishop Policarp Morusca, titular Bishop of the Episcopate, held in forced domicile in Romania since the end of World War II, had passed away and Bishop-Vicar Valerian now became titular Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America. With Bishop Morusca's passing, all symbolic or real ties with the Mother Church were gone, and the Episcopate began looking elsewhere for a resolution of its remaining canonical problems.

For several years following the break in relations with the Patriarchate in Romania, the Episcopate had hoped that the Romanian Patriarchate might reconsider its attitude toward it. When it became convinced that a reconciliation was no longer possible due to the Patriarchate's contradictory actions of declaring on the one hand through its delegates and emissaries that it wanted only "spiritual ties, peace and understanding" with the Episcopate, while on the other it directed its faction in America to start new legal proceedings to regain the Vatra and all Episcopate's assets, and was continuing its practice of creating problems by sending missionary priests to the United States to start new parishes supported by the Patriarchate in localities where there existed already a parish under the jurisdiction of the Episcopate, it affiliated canonically with the Russian Orthodox Metropolia in March of 1960. The Metropolia was negotiating the resolution of the over-all problem of canonicity through autocephaly and a native American hierarchy, a solution that would come about after 10 years of discussions and negotiations.



CHAPTER II

The 1960s were years of remarkable progress in the diocese. With the canonical status regularized, the Bishop and the parishes proceeded to rebuild, to consolidate, and to expand. The most visible sign of this progress were the many new churches that would be built during this decade.

Up to 1950, no parish in America had thought to invest its money in land or real-estate, nor did it plan for future expansion. The parishes found themselves with old and dilapidated buildings in blighted neighborhoods, without reserve funds and often without much incentive to move from their present location. The older generation was content with this status quo, but not the younger generation that now started to take an interest in the affairs of the Church.

Bishop Valerian, with an eye to the future, had much to do with this change in mentality. He had been constantly preaching to the parishes the need to have proper facilities for the Sunday School, meeting facilities for the young people, ample parking for the congregation, a suburban location to be close to the faithful who were deserting the inner cities, and room for expansion.

To those parishes who followed his advice, he was a source of practical knowledge for the parish as to how to go about building. From his experience at the Vatra and from the cumulative experience of other church-building programs that went up before them, he was able to assist the parishes both in the practical aspect of building as well as fund raising. He requested that each building plan be submitted to the Episcopate, to be sure that the new churches conformed to Orthodox Church traditions.

During the Bishop's tenure, new churches were built in Leonard, MacNutt, Flintoft and Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, and St. Louis, Mo., all in the 1950s. In the '60s, spacious and beautifully appointed churches with proper facilities and ample grounds were built in Cleveland, Ohio, Detroit, Mich., Canton and Akron, Ohio, Hermitage, Pa., Bridgeport, Conn., Warren, Ohio, Chicago, Ill., Dearborn, Mich., Merrillville, Ind., Warren, Mich., and the latest, Miramar, Fla.

At the Bishop's recommendation, the 1961 Church Congress extended a hand in brotherly love to all independent Romanian

Orthodox parishes in the United States and Canada, inviting them to join the Episcopate in a common effort to strengthen Romanian Orthodoxy in the New World. Only two responded.

To better understand the composition and the potential needs of his flock, the Bishop ordered that year a census of all members of the parishes belonging to the Episcopate, which was completed by the following Congress.

A third religious education camp in the Episcopate began to function beginning with 1961, this one at Shell Valley, Man., Canada.

Also in 1961, on the occasion of its 25th anniversary, the Solia quadrupled its size coming out in 32 pages with many historical articles. Among them was a detailed history of the Solia for the past 25 years, as well as a complete history of Romanian publications that appeared in the United States between 1903 and 1961, both written by the Bishop.

That same year, during a visit to Europe where the Episcopate was planning to print a high-quality pictorial book on Romania with contributors from Europe, Bishop Valerian took the opportunity to visit the World Council of Churches' Refugees Center in Geneva, Switzerland, intervening in behalf of our refugees, as well as to visit the World Council of Churches refugees assistance centers in Rome and Munich. He also visited the Romanian Orthodox church in Paris and several other Romanian institutions in France, Germany and Italy, as well as the Church of England's External Relations Office in London. In between he met privately with a number of Romanian Orthodox leaders and people, inquiring about the spiritual needs of the Romanians living in Europe.

The book ROMANIA, the Land -- the History -- the People, a hard-cover, 9x12 book printed on luxurious paper for the benefit of the Romanian Orthodox Youth in America, with hundreds of photographs taken on location by French architect Alexandre Th. Petit was published three years later, in 1964.

Other noteworthy events during the Sixties due to the Bishop's initiative were the initiation of a Pension Fund for the Episcopate's clergy in 1963; the dedication of the year 1965 to the administrative reorganization of the parishes; the making of a documentary film about the Episcopate, its auxiliaries and its parishes in 1965; and the publishing of Liturgical Choir Music in English for four voices and in English and Romanian for three voices, also in 1965.

The 1965 Church Congress created the Episcopate Publication Department, charged with the publishing and the distribution of books and informational material. That department would ultimately include a fully-equipped printshop and its own building in Detroit.

Earlier in the decade, the Episcopate was asked by the Orthodox nuns community from Bussy-en-Othe in France to patronize their project to create an Orthodox convent in America. Never one to refuse to help, Bishop Valerian accepted their request and spent many hours and days with the selection of a site, the building plans of the monastery and with its operational program. When everything was finalized, he established an inter-Orthodox Committee to supervise the construction and operation of the monastery, which intended to be pan-Orthodox.

The Orthodox Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration was built near Ellwood City, Pa. and blessed September 28, 1968 by Metropolitan Ireney of the Russian Metropolia, assisted by Bishop Valerian, Bishop Gerasimos of the Greek Diocese of Pittsburgh, and Bishop Ambrosius of the Russian Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Even though the Episcopate had "de facto" separated from the Patriarchate in Romania in 1951 due to governmental immixture in our internal affairs, and even though it had canonically affiliated with the Russian Metropolia in 1960, sentimentally and spiritually the Episcopate remained attached to the Mother Church. The Romanian language was maintained; as a rule, to this day and with very few exceptions, the first part of the Holy Liturgy in our churches is said in Romanian and the last part in English. The Bishop himself gives the tone to this bi-lingual process; he summarizes his sermons in Romanian at the beginning, and then switches to the English language and develops the subject further.

The Catechism the Episcopate printed and all its liturgical books are in the liturgical practice and tradition of the Church of Romania. Knowing full well that the Mother Church was not free to act on its own, the Bishop always treated its hierarchs with the respect their ranks deserved. The Episcopate never ceased to hope that some day, the Patriarchate will realize that it was now an American Church at the point of no return to the old order, and that friendly relations between the two would be beneficial to both.

On its part, the Patriarchate in Bucharest never ceased in its attempts to bring the Episcopate back into its fold, using alternately over the years the stick and the carrot. While the talks about the autocephaly were going on, they made another attempt through one of their highest hierarch, Metropolitan Justin Moisescu (presently Patriarch of Romania). While he was visiting America, in a meeting with the Bishop at the Vatra, he proposed the return of the Episcopate to the Mother Church, which was disposed to accept him in its midst with all the honors and in the position he presently enjoyed, also guaranteeing the Episcopate a large measure of administrative autonomy.

The Bishop, however, based on the Patriarchate's past performance, was not convinced of Bucharest's good intentions. Besides, he pointed out to the distinguished visitor that the faithful of the Episcopate were American citizens who had declared the Episcopate free from any foreign domination, and would not return to any such control. Instead, he suggested that the Patriarchate grant complete autonomy to its Episcopate here, so it could join an American Orthodox Church as American Orthodox Christians.

The Bishop had every reason not to trust the Patriarchate's offer. Past experience told a different story. While such contacts and talks were taking place, Romanian Chief Rabbi Moshe Rosen, official appointee of the Romanian Communist State and no doubt at their instruction, resurrected the Bishop's "war crimes" during a visit to the United States in 1962, using the same worn-out accusations that appeared in a local, inimical Romanian press 10 years earlier. With the help of the World Jewish Congress, the campaign against the Bishop now found its way in a non-discriminating or tendentious American press, and on radio and television. Rosen would make several trips during that decade and the next, each time stirring anew what would become known as "the Bishop's case."

Dismayed by these continuous, slanderous attacks against their spiritual leader, many times his faithful followers would urge the initiation of court action against his detractors. The Bishop's answer would always be the same: court actions cost money, and we need every penny for Church work, not for lawyers. Besides, he did not want to see the Church in the gutter with those detractors. Then he would add that he believed in God's justice and in the sound judgment of our faithful, who can make the distinction according to the text: by their works ye shall know them.

One can hardly dispute this argument, even though some of us couldn't always see it. For this, we might be forgiven; we did

not have his patience, nor his dedication. If we insisted, he would come back with still another argument, one that would ultimately prevail when he made his final decision: my person is not important; what's important is the Church. The Church must never suffer because of our actions.

The Sixties closed, nevertheless, on a positive note for the Bishop. On March 27, 1970, the Bishops' Sobor of the Metropolia, elevated Bishop Valerian to the rank of Archbishop for his distinguished service to the Holy Church.

In a communique from the Episcopate, the Bishop stated that he was grateful to His Beatitude, Metropolitan Iriney and to the Great Council of Bishops for this honor bestowed upon him, but true to his well-known position of shunning titles (the Bishop did not believe in handing out honorary titles, not even that of archpriest; to administer a deanery, he would appoint a priest as administrator for a duration of three years), he expressed a desire that the clergy and his faithful continue to address him as Bishop Valerian as in the past.

The clergy and laity went along with this request for a short while. They were proud of their hierarch and felt that he fully deserved this honor after 18 fruitful years in the Episcopacy. Slowly, one by one, they began addressing him as "Your Eminence" until the Bishop had to accept the inevitable.

The other positive event for the Bishop, closing the decade of the Sixties was the granting of the autocephaly after ten years of discussion and negotiations. On March 31, 1970, by a decree of the Russian Patriarchate, the Metropolia became the Orthodox Church in America (O.C.A.) and accepted the responsibility to assure the future of Orthodoxy in America.

Bishop Valerian, with his clear vision of the future, had championed the idea of an autocephalous, fully autonomous Orthodox Church in America, with full territorial jurisdiction, and was the first non-Russian Bishop to accept it wholeheartedly.

At the same time, he kept the ethnicity of our Church. The Episcopate in the Synod made the O.C.A., which otherwise would have been an autocephalous Russian Orthodox Church in America. The Bishop was one of the architects of the policy adopted by the Orthodox Church in America in its recognition that canonical unity does not mean suppression of any particular national traditions, but the cooperation of all members of the Church, working for the good of the Church.

CHAPTER III

In the 14 years since belonging to the O.C.A., the Episcopate has had a period of canonical stability, peace and continuous progress. It was the first non-Russian jurisdiction to join the O.C.A and dedicated itself sincerely and enthusiastically to cooperation in its goals of unity. In the new, Orthodox Church in America, Archbishop Valerian was named Chairman of the Canonical Committee, dealing with the statutory reorganization of the former Metropolia to correspond to its new status as an autocephalous Church.

In this capacity, the Archbishop would be an ardent advocate of the Orthodox Church in America among the other, independent Orthodox Episcopates of America. Following the example of our diocese, the Albanian and Bulgarian dioceses will later join the O.C.A.

At this point, I feel that an explanation is in order. If, at times, to the initiated, the account of the Bishop's 33 years may seem like the history of the Episcopate, it is because the Bishop *was* the Episcopate. The great majority of the recommendations that the Episcopate Council submitted to the Church Congress for approval and implementation came out of the Bishop's Office. The Bishop did not believe in authoritarian rule and conscientiously followed established procedure. He would submit his recommendations to the Council, which in turn submitted them to the Church Congress.

Also, if Chapters II and III detail fewer activities in these pages than Chapter I, that does not mean that the Bishop's workload was any less in the last two decades than in the first. Many programs described in Chapter I continued year after year and should be understood as such; they're not repeated to save space.

For example, the parish visitations continued year after year. In 1977, his office revealed that the Bishop had made 1115 visitations during the first 25 years of his Episcopacy — about 45 visitations a year. The trips he made between the Vatra and Detroit to work at the Solia were not even counted because they were so many.

The preparatory work for the Church Congress and the Religious Education Programs are repeated year after year. The

Solia appears month after month and the heavy office work must be expedited day after day.

We've mentioned only five or six books printed under the Orthodox Christian Library Series published by the Episcopate. It has reached No. 26 and counting, in addition to eight historical and two song books. This does not include the yearly Solia Calendar, whose contents are usually written by the Bishop. The workload of Bishop Valerian continued to be simply staggering.

Coming back to the Seventies, early in the decade, the Archbishop would again turn his attention to the never-ending problem of the refugees, this time joining forces with the Union & League of Romanian Societies, in the hope to facilitate their emigration and alleviate their plight in the refugee camps in Europe.

Every five years or so, on anniversary dates, the Episcopate Council, the Clergy and faithful found ways to express their gratitude to their spiritual leader with special festivities organized during the Church Congress. The progress the Episcopate was experiencing due to the Archbishop's leadership was cause for rejoicing. There would be few laudatory speeches because the Archbishop simply wouldn't put up with them, but he would enjoy, along with the faithful, good dance ensembles and choral renditions from parishes throughout the Episcopate, or instrumental and vocal renditions by individual performers. A huge tent would be erected on the Vatra grounds to accommodate the large crowd and the Vatra would take on a very festive appearance on these occasions.

The year 1972 was such a festive occasion, celebrating 20 years of the Archbishop's Episcopacy and the 40th Annual Church Congress.

Again with an eye to the future and for the preservation of his peoples' heritage for future generations, at the 1973 Church Congress the Archbishop proposed one of the most important project for the Romanian-American ethnic community, namely, the creation of a Center for Documentation and Research, dedicated to collecting, preserving and evaluating documents dealing with the Romanian-American religious, cultural and social life. The Center, of which the Episcopate would be one of the founding members, will be completed and dedicated by 1978, and

is generally known today as the Romanian-American Heritage Center.

Another important event—to my thinking at least—occurred during this decade, not directly due to the Archbishop's intervention but as a result of his leadership abilities over the years and the trust he had earned from the faithful by then.

For years, the Episcopate would appoint parish priests for the Canadian parishes of the Western Deanery. Many were too small to elect, or to support their own parish priest, therefore the Episcopate would appoint priests to Canada to serve two or three parishes at a time. The American parishes, larger and financially more stable, continued the practice, given them by the Bylaws, of electing their own parish priests.

This practice of priests competing against each other for available positions created instability in the parishes since priests would compete for plum positions while they were still serving in a parish. On the other hand, smaller parishes, by their smaller offerings, could not attract top-notch priests.

The process of electing the parish priest had another undesirable effect; he was practically at the mercy of the parish. If they could hire him, they could also fire him, which had happened all too frequently.

The younger generation, now in power in a number of parishes, did not like the instability that this market-type-offering created, and felt it demeaning to the priest and to the Church. Thus, when in 1975, the parish in Hermitage, Pa. experienced a parish vacancy due to the retirement of its parish priest, it did not go the the route of electing but asked the Episcopate to appoint a parish priest for them, an option available in the Bylaws that had not been used by the American parishes until then.

Since then, not a single American parish has gone the route of competition to fill a parish vacancy, but has asked the Episcopate to appoint a parish priest for them. After all, who knows better the priests, and the overall needs of the parishes than the Archbishop?

During this decade, new clouds appeared on the horizon which threatened to disturb the good order of the Episcopate. In its reporting, the media became increasingly biased and irresponsible. Dismayed by the new wave of attacks against their spiritual leader, the 1974 Church Congress voted a resolution of

unqualified support for the Archbishop. Each subsequent Congress during this trying period would go on record as being 100 percent behind their spiritual leader.

In spite of the continued attacks, the Archbishop tried not to be deterred from carrying out the work of the Episcopate. What was more important to him was to have the belief and the support of his people, and this was amply demonstrated during the whole 1974 Church Congress.

The campaign against him intensified under political pressure and extensive publicity. It prompted an investigation by the Immigration and Naturalization Service which resulted in a citation before the United States Federal Court in June of 1975.

For 23 years the United States government could find no reason to prosecute the Bishop. When it finally did so in 1975, it was not because any substantive change in these allegations had occurred, but because political gains were to be reaped from it.

During this investigation, the truth, the facts, his record as a Bishop had not been considered at all. He was not even given a chance to defend himself during the investigation process.

In spite of it all, the Archbishop remained serene; he always believed in the American justice. As we all know by now, his faith in the American justice was sadly misplaced; the American judicial system would fail him.

The Archbishop refused any money from the Episcopate for the upcoming Court action. The Episcopate Council subsequently organized a defense committee which in due time raised \$100,000.00 in individual donations for the Archbishop's defense.

The upcoming suit and the additional many hours needed to prepare the legal defense, did not stop the Archbishop's grueling schedule of long office hours, writing, speaking, parish visitations, and official functions, but it did slow it down. More importantly, the Court case will take a visible toll on his health. He needed help.

At the Episcopate Council meeting January 19, 1980, the Archbishop informed the Council of his intention to proceed with the appointment of a Vicar, or an auxiliary with the rank of bishop to assist him in the discharge of his heavy responsibilities. He was passed the age of 65.

The ensuing Church Congress set in motion the nomination and election process of the new Auxiliary Bishop, who was elected at a special, Electoral Congress held in Cleveland, Ohio, September 20, 1980. The delegates elected the Rev. Fr. Nathaniel Popp as the new Auxiliary Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox

Episcopate of America. He was consecrated November 14 that same year in the St. George Cathedral in Detroit. The new Bishop would relieve the Archbishop of the worries of many responsibilities.

After five years of delays and postponements, the Court suit came to trial in August of 1980. From a civil case of misrepresentation, the suit by now had mushroomed into a debate of complex historical problems and definitions about which historians and political scientists themselves were far from being in agreement. For its part, the media was headlining the trial as a "Nazi War Criminal" trial. Under these conditions, justice was not to be had.

The Archbishop was faced with the problems of a selective prosecution based on a recently passed law that had been given retroactive enforcement of some 30 years, and a complete denial of due process, such as no statute of limitation in his case, no right to equal access to evidence for his lawyers, no right to jury trial, and no right to free counsel. Defense attorney George E. Woods was to call the case one of the "greatest debasements of due process and constitutional law ever."

Not wanting to involve the Episcopate into an obvious power struggle with the United States and Romanian governments, on August 25, 1980, the Archbishop decided to put an end to the protracted litigation against him by voluntarily surrendering his Certificate of Naturalization. It must have weighed heavily on his mind that for the past five years, the suit had drained him of both time and energy to minister to his far-flung parishes.

The suit, however, did not come to an end then. The misguided Nazi War Crimes Litigation Unit of the United States Department of Justice continued its prosecution, and two years later, the Archbishop was back in Court facing extradition. He quickly realized that, as with the first case, the United States government was not so much interested that justice be done as to make a political spectacle out of it. He put an end to it by voluntarily agreeing to deportation after the government dropped all alleged charges of war crimes against him.

In making that decision, the Archbishop had considered the effects of this lengthy litigation upon the Episcopate's limited finances, and concluded that the growth and vitality of the Episco-

pate must be of greater importance than his residence. He could not place himself above the needs of the Episcopate. To do so would have been inconsistent with his belief that the individual is responsible to the community.

The end of the trial stunned his many supporters who believed in his innocence and were prepared to go to any length to defend him. They felt lost; they did not understand what was happening.

Now that those terribly emotional days are behind us, we can see more clearly that it could not have been any other way. The Archbishop had said all along that what was important was the Church, not his person, and that the Church must not be allowed to suffer because of any one person. He sacrificed himself for the good of the Church.

Most spirits would have probably faltered after going for years through such trying circumstances, but not His Eminence. In spite of all the problems he had to cope with in all these years, the Archbishop continued to conduct his multiple duties as spiritual leader of the Episcopate.

He now had a helper with whom he would share the load. The Report to the 1983 Church Congress lists 94 parish visitations, including meetings, canonical visits, liturgies, and special events which the hierarchs now shared between themselves.

He also continued to plan for the future. At that same Church Congress he announced a list of service books, with bi-lingual texts, scheduled to be printed in the immediate future. Therefore, his announcement December 3, 1983 that he will retire effective his 70th birthday, June 28, 1984, came as a complete surprise to everybody and was totally unexpected.

What ultimately got the Archbishop down was his failing health. For 30 years he was in excellent health, and one wonders whether the increasing legal harassments piled upon his extraordinary heavy workload and long hours he kept all these years, might not have finally gotten to him, and how much more he could have achieved without it. The fact is that during these last years, he suffered a slight stroke from which he made an excellent recovery, but remained with some to the average eye imperceptible residual weaknesses of strength and coordination.

If you were around him for awhile, you might have caught him taking a small pill which looked suspiciously like digitalis. Or,

after sitting for awhile, he might get up from behind his desk and start pacing his office. If you looked at him quizzically, he would quip -- "It's good for my circulation; my legs get stiff after sitting for awhile." One may speculate, but the Archbishop is not one to talk about his health problems, no matter how many they may be.

However, there's one health problem that's probably more than any other the cause of his retirement: his failing eyesight. Few have noticed the fact that for the last several years, he was no longer traveling alone. He would travel with his devoted secretary, Fr. John, or with his long-time friend living in the vicinity of the Vatra, Mr. Stelian Stanicel, or, after his consecration, with Bishop Nathaniel whenever possible. He needed help for long-distance driving, and especially for night driving.

During the consecration of the Holy Trinity church in Miramar, Fla., February 12, 1984, he was barely able to read the needed special prayers for the consecration, even though the book was held close to his eyes. Thus, when his failing eyesight began to interfere with the proper performance of his hierarchal duties, he decided it was time to retire.

In so doing, we hope that he will at last know some rest and peace in which to enjoy the many fruits of his labor.

His outstanding abilities and his person brought the Episcopate and the Romanian people in America only honor, and for this our people were fully behind him. His achievements are that much more to be admired since they came about under the most trying circumstances.

Perhaps the most eloquent way for us, Bishop, clergy, and layity, to thank His Eminence for the 33 years of sacrifice and dedication to the Episcopate, is to see to it that the Episcopate continues to flourish as it did under his guidance.



CHAPTER IV

The Hierarchy

Close contacts with his priests and flock is probably Bishop Valerian's major characteristic as a hierarchy. To reach all the parishes, the Bishop traveled nearly 900,000 miles by car and many more thousands of miles by train, bus and airplane.



Parish visitations have always been at the top of his agenda. He did not want a life segregated from the people of his Church. His preferred method during parish visitations was to meet with the people informally and to give everyone a chance to ask the Bishop questions and to convey to him suggestions or problems.

He was always with his priests, with his parishes, and with his people when they needed guidance and solutions to their problems. During his 33 years of service, Archbishop Valerian personally attended all AROY, ARFORA, and Orthodox Brotherhood conferences, was present at important events in the life of the parishes, at summer courses and camps, and has made innumerable pastoral visitations.

Almost every member of the Episcopate has personally met Archbishop Valerian. To many of us, he is more than just a remote spiritual leader; he is a personal friend. He knows many of us by name.

This interaction between shepherd and flock has helped to consolidate the Episcopate and bring about a true appreciation of the Archbishop as a spiritual leader.

Throughout the years, the Archbishop never changed. He remained modest, without pomp and pretensions that sometimes characterize those that come to occupy exalted positions. While he faithfully preserved and observed the centuries-old attributes associated with the position of the Bishop, at the same time he harmoniously brought that position into the 20th Century. As a hierarchy, he was a modern man, constantly looking toward the future.

He was also a priests' Bishop, concerned with the welfare of the priests under his jurisdiction. He insisted on a good, educa-

tional and theological background for them, and provided them with all the religious aids necessary to help them in the various phases of their activities. He would frequently meet with his clergy to discuss problems of mutual concern. When problems would arise, the Bishop would be at their side helping to resolve them.

Throughout the years, patiently but consistently he would urge the parishes to provide the priest with the means to carry on his pastoral duties. He was also concerned that the priests should be provided a decent pension. Thanks to the Bishop, a priest can now look forward to a pension equal to half of his last salary.

The ranks of the Episcopate clergy has increased dramatically during the Bishop's tenure, with the majority of those presently serving ordained by His Eminence. In 1951, when he took over, the Episcopate had 28 priests. In 1984, when he leaves, it lists one Titular Bishop, one Auxiliary Bishop, 61 priests and eight deacons as belonging to the Episcopate.

The Bishop rarely gave orders or sat in judgment; he preferred instead to give advice, and to try to smoothen things out with love and justice like a father would with his children. He never punished an insubordinate until every peaceful means of correction had been exhausted. He was a peacemaker and Father Confessor of the highest order. During his Episcopacy, if they had a problem, parishes and priests wisely went to him for help.

Archbishop Valerian is also well-known beyond the confines of the Episcopate. He was a favorite speaker at inter-Orthodox gatherings. The Orthodox hierarchs, theologians, and leaders came to recognize His Eminence as a man of high theological and philosophical culture, as well as a devoted missionary of the Orthodox Church in America, of which he is the oldest Bishop in rank and the only Archbishop.

We're sure that Archbishop Valerian will gain his share of recognition when the definitive history of the Orthodox Church in America is written.



The Administrator

The Archbishop's dedication and leadership abilities were soon recognized even by his enemies. What he found at the Episcopate and at the Vatra and what the Episcopate and the Vatra are today are perhaps the best examples of his administrative abilities.



Administrative ability encompasses good money management, good planning and a sound, analytical mind with a practical orientation for things earthly. The Bishop was amply endowed with these skills which are interrelated.

He came with a reputation of leadership ability which was quickly put to test. When he was elected in 1951, the Episcopate's total budget, including the \$13,000.00 Church Building Fund, was only \$26,000.00. In 1983, 32 years later, its budget was \$786,000.00. Granted some inflationary effects, most of this increase in assets is due to the Bishop's wise money management over the years, while some of it are estate and trust funds established by the people in fulfillment of their wishes, knowing full well that these will be scrupulously and efficiently managed by the Episcopate.

The Bishop's wise stewardship, reflected in paying off the debts of the Episcopate and of the Vatra and balancing the budget in his first year in office, had probably a lot to do with the acceptance of changes he proposed in the Bylaws. When they proved to be the right medicine to strengthen our parishes and the Episcopate, future changes were readily accepted. When he proposed changes at the Vatra and the printing program to accommodate the religious education of the youth, the people went along because he had already proven himself a wise planner; he did not have to prove himself every time. His plans were practical and within the means of the Episcopate. Not a single plan from the many he proposed over the years has failed.

A characteristic of a good planner that could not escape anyone who came in contact with the Bishop, was his phenomenal sense of observation. Nothing escaped his quick, perceptive, and sharply analytical mind. Here you came to him with a proposal you had mulled over for days, or maybe weeks, and thought you

had covered all the angles and knew all the answers to the problem. He would patiently hear you out, then he would pucker his mouth -- a sign all of us who worked with him knew that it meant he had discovered a weak spot in your proposal. Slowly he would ask: "Did you . . . consider this eventuality?" . . . or, "What would happen if . . . ?" and he would proceed to point out several aspects of the problem that you had never thought about.

If, after ironing out all the shortcomings, he considered the proposal good, he would be one hundred percent behind you, giving you all the support you needed.

Bishop Valerian was a scrupulous administrator, a stickler for observing legal and established procedures. Unless there was an emergency, any decision concerning the Episcopate went first the route of the Episcopate Council, Church Congress, or of the Church Tribunals if that was the case. He showed no favoritism towards any one person or situation. When it came to making a decision, the Bylaws or other established procedures always prevailed, to the chagrin of some who felt that an exception could have been made in their case.

There's no doubt that when it comes to a showplace of his planning and administrative abilities, the Vatra is it. From a delapidated farm when he took over, it is today a distinguished residence for the Bishop and his Office, a place of spiritual retreat and a religious and cultural center.

It is a national center, a unifying force for all Romanian-Americans.



The Man

Though he has been in our midst for 33 years, the Archbishop still remains a private person. He never burdens anyone with his personal problems; he keeps them to himself. He never complains or decries his fate; he carries it with a stoic resignation typical of the mountain people from whom he descends.



He is a modest and frugal man. Throughout the years he was paid less than the majority of his priests. Not that the Congress didn't repeatedly try to raise his salary; he steadfastly refused it, saying that he had enough to live on.

He is a good listener, able to talk to everybody, young and old, simple or educated, at their level. He enjoys a good laugh, and it is not above him to razz you good-humoredly. The quips and humor he frequently injects in his speeches -- always coming off the cuff -- are a delight to his listeners.

While he dislikes pomp and showmanship, in official circumstances, the Bishop is precise and meticulous. When he expects visitors, he is always well prepared to receive the visitor with all the courtesy his visit demands.

In private life, however, the Bishop is unpretentious. He is a very warm person, a very congenial host when you drop in on him at the Vatra, never letting you feel that you are intruding on his time. He cooks for himself -- and for others -- when necessary.

He is very sparing in his compliments to others, feeling that the satisfaction of knowing a job is well done should be its own reward. Likewise, he abhors hypocrisy. He does not feel comfortable being complimented to excess.

Therefore, before we fall into such possible excess ourselves, let us close this portrait of the Bishop by thanking God for having been merciful with our Church in its crucial moment 33 years ago, in sending us a man of wisdom and dedication in His Eminence, Archbishop Valerian, and pray for his continued health.

May you enjoy many more years, Your Eminence.

IN MEMORY TRAIAN LASCU

Traian Lascu, born in Palos, Romania on September 24, 1923, to Traian and Maria (Stan-
ciu) Lascu, fell asleep in the Lord on December 8, 2015, at the age of 92 in Florida. He was the beloved husband of Maria Lascu; beloved brother of Elena Itu (Romania), Gheorghe Lascu (Romania), Ana Munteanu-Ramnic (deceased), Maria Neder (deceased), Pandele Lascu (deceased), Vasile Balaban (deceased), Ion Bell (deceased) and Maria Lascu (deceased); beloved uncle of Eugen, Cristina, Florin, Maria, Costica, Elena, Daniela and Silvia. Survived by beloved cousins Maria and Lulu Bogdan, along with their daughter, Carmen Bogdan; beloved cousin Aneta Iambor, along with her children, Gheorghe and Elena Oprean (daughter) and Mihai Iambor (son). Traian is also survived by respected family friend Gheorghe Marinescu. Visitation and Wake Service took place on December 11, 2015, at the John N. Santeiu & Son Funeral Home, Garden City, Michigan; and the funeral service was served by Protopresbyter Laurence Lazar on December 12, 2015, in the presence of His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel at St. George Cathedral, Southfield, Michigan. Burial was at St. Mary's Romanian Orthodox Cemetery at the Vatra in Grass Lake, Michigan.



Traian Lascu was an important personality in the history of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America due to his extensive work with *Solia*, the *American Romanian Orthodox Youth (AROY)*, the *Orthodox Brotherhood* and the *V.D. Trifa Romanian-American Heritage Center*. He also was the author of two books: "A.R.O.Y. - The American Romanian Orthodox Youth - A Short History 1950-1974," published in 1974; and "VALERIAN: 1951-1984," published in 1984. The following information was gleaned from an article of *Memories* that he had written several years ago.

After having spent three years wandering through Czechoslovakia, Germany and France as a refugee, Traian Lascu accepted his cousin George Ulita's offer to emigrate to Canada where he arrived (Halifax) on December 24, 1951. He spent several weeks in Sudbury, Ontario, where he enrolled in English classes for immigrants and excelled in learning the language.

He then travelled to Timmins, Ontario, where he was hired to work in the Aunor Gold Mine. Three years later, when the mine went on strike, he traveled to Windsor, Ontario where his cousin George worked for General Motors. Due to a downturn in the economy, no factory work was available; however, through the active refugee Cultural Association, he met Florence Gaspar whom he married six months later in Detroit at St. George Cathedral. The day following the wedding, he traveled with Florence and their good friend Eugen Siara to the Vatra to meet Bishop Valerian, whom he had never met, but knew about as a student leader in Romania.

Traian's father-in-law, Jack Gaspar, owned a print shop in Detroit which took over the printing of *Solia* on a bi-weekly basis when Bishop Valerian moved the operation from Cleveland in 1954. Traian became a printing apprentice in the family business and over time became responsible for the production of *Solia*, which included writing, printing and administration. In 1955, he was appointed AROY Editor and contributed an article in every issue. After his election as National AROY President in 1957, he wrote a column called the "President's Corner." Additionally, he wrote articles in English of general interest about events at the Vatra and AROY Conventions. During the Episcopate Congress at the Vatra, he manned the *Solia* stand. Traian's work schedule and time away from home as a result of his heavy involvement with the Episcopate and AROY stressed his relationship with his wife, and after seven years of marriage, Florence and Traian divorced. In 1962, he married Olga Rodenczuk (a marriage which was to last until her death 39 years later). He took a job with the *Detroit Free Press* and enrolled in Wayne State University, which didn't allow him any more time to work for the *Solia*. In 1967, he graduated from Wayne State and was hired by the State of Michigan, Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation Services. When the printing of *Solia* was moved to Woodward Avenue in Detroit, his new job afforded him the ability to occasionally help out with the *Solia*, especially on publication day. He became the English editor, and Bishop Valerian was the Romanian editor. Due to his many years of association with the Bishop and *Solia* operations, he knew how the Bishop expected the paper to look; so, when the Bishop could not return in time from parish visits, Traian singlehandedly produced the paper.

Concerned about what was happening to the older AROY members once they reached the age of 45, the supposed upper limit of belonging to the organization, Traian approached Bishop Valerian and suggested that a third Episcopate auxiliary be formed. The 1967 Episcopate Congress approved the formation of this auxiliary, named the "Orthodox Brotherhood," a direct translation of "Fratia Ortodoxa," a religious lay organization created in Romania to combat the prose-

Cont. on page 15

IN LOVING MEMORY OF CEZAR TEODORESCU

*Lasati clopotul sa plinga cu al lui voce de arama
Lasati turnul ca sa miste trupul lui de fier
Caci de stele mai aproape el le da acuma seama
Ca un suflet bun si nobil se indreapta catre cer.*

(Mihai Eminescu)

Cezar Teodorescu was born in Romania in 1923. Our father was peaceful and private, but also loud and vigorous in his belief in the principles behind the American dream, a free Romania, and his absolute belief in God.

Cezar was an amazing man in many ways. He swam the Danube to escape Communist Romania after serving in the Romanian army in World War II, arriving on, of all days, July 4th, 1951, in Yugoslavia, with no possessions to his name.

He crossed the Alps on foot, eventually being interned in a refugee camp in Italy. From there, Cezar crossed the Atlantic and took a job cutting trees in Northeast



Canada, so poor that he shared shoes with his best friend. Next he mined gold, made his way to Toronto and finally Detroit, working for General Motors.

He met our mother Doina at the Vatra in Jackson, Michigan (again magically on a 4th of July weekend) and was married shortly after.

Family dominated the second half of Cezar's life, first with his sons Mike and George, and then with his beloved grandchildren, Alexandra, Rachael, Brendan and Gabrielle. He retired after 37 years with GM with an outstanding service record, and traveled extensively with our mother in retirement.

Cezar was an extremely proud American-Romanian, always extolling the greatness of his adopted country and celebrating Romanian culture and freedom from tyranny in 1989. He devoted himself to being an outstanding father and grandfather, doting over his grandkids, their beloved 'Grandpa', with whom his generosity knew no bounds. For Cezar, his kids and grandchildren were the #1 priority; he was enormously proud of each of them.

Cezar Teodorescu passed away peacefully on January 20, 2015.

May God rest his soul, Dumnezeu sa-l odihneasca. We miss him dearly as Husband, Father, Grandfather and Friend.

George & Mike Teodorescu

Traian Lascu ... *Cont. from page 14*

lytizing efforts of Evangelical missionaries. Following the organizational meeting in October 1967, Traian became Chairman of the steering committee charged with presenting By-Laws at the next Conference. The next Conference elected him to be the Orthodox Brotherhood's first Chairman; and, he was heavily involved in the organization for years to come.

In 1974, the Episcopate Congress approved Archbishop Valerian's proposal to create a Heritage Center; and, two years later, Traian was drafted President of the Center with Archbishop Valerian acting as the Chairman of the Board. Thus began another long-running collaboration with the Archbishop in addition to Solia. Following the Archbishop's falling asleep in the Lord in January 1987, Traian fulfilled the role of one of three trustees to administer a Trust left by the Archbishop for the sole benefit of the Heritage Center, and he became Chairman of the Board. As a result of Traian's suggestion, the name of the center was changed to the "Valerian D. Trifa Romanian-American SOLIA NOV/DEC 2015

PRAY AND WORK FOR ORTHODOX UNITY IN NORTH AMERICA

NEW 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF THE

POFTĂ BUNĂ COOKBOOK

\$14.00 ea. - U.S. Funds

Make check payable to:

ST. MARY'S SOCIETY

c/o Marie Sandru

3097 W 230th ST

NORTH OLMSTED OH 44070

Heritage Center." Following Traian's retirement from his job with the State of Michigan, he made several trips a month to the Center and served as editor of the Center's *Information Bulletin* until his he was forced to retire from these positions in order to take care of his wife who was in the grips of Alzheimer's disease. She fell asleep in the Lord in August 2001. A year later, he married Maria from Romania and lived a peaceful and uneventful life with the exception of yearly trips to Romania to visit her family there.

May his memory be eternal!

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER
2015



VOL. LXXX,
No. 11-12

