



## THE RETIREMENT



DURING THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE ARCHDIOCESAN COUNCIL ON JANUARY 8TH, 2013, ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL SPOKE ABOUT HIS HEALTH AND HIS WEAKNESS. HE INFORMED THE COUNCIL THAT HE HAD WRITTEN TO HIS HOLINESS THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH ASKING HIM TO ACCEPT HIS REQUEST TO RETIRE FROM ALL ARCHDIOCESAN RESPONSIBILITIES STARTING FROM JANUARY 15TH, 2013 (THE COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE IS HERE: [HTTP://WWW.EXARCHATE.ORG.UK](http://www.exarchate.org.uk)). THEN ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL READ THE LETTER ADDRESSED TO ALL THE CLERGY AND FAITHFUL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE, WHICH IS PRINTED BELOW.

My Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters!  
All you who are the spiritual flock that Christ has confided to me!

I must share a serious decision with you. As you know, I have been seized by a brutal illness, the progress of which leaves me very little remission. This illness that is gnawing at me is very difficult to overcome, even if God has Himself shown us that suffering can be a source of life. However, I no longer have the strength to carry out my archpastoral ministry because of the fatigue and suffering in which I find myself, and so, in the words of Symeon the Elder, I pray: *'Lord, now lettest Thy sarvant depart in peace'* Luke 2:29.

Also, after having informed the Council of the Archdiocese, I have asked His Holiness Patriarch Batholomew I to let me retire, to go home to Maastricht, to live there as a retired bishop and continue my treatment, with the complete rest prescribed by my doctors and in prayer that remains my only comfort. It is hard for me to say goodbye to you, especially as not all of you are ready to accept my departure. It is probable that I will disappoint many of you by going. But be sure that all that I am doing is for the good of the Church and, more concretely, of our Archdiocese. I hope that your love and compassions will allow you to accept a decision that can no longer be changed.

At the moment of leaving the mission that I received almost ten years ago, by the Lord's will, by your election and the

blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Holy Synod, I am thinking of all of you with whom it has been given to me to work: the priests, deacons, monks and nuns and all the laity. Through these long years, we have forged links; I have known deep joy, many consolations in the midst of tribulations. In this moment of emotion, my strongest feeling is one of love and gratitude. I give thanks to God for having covered my archepiscopal service with His overflowing love. Even in the trial He has given me at the present time, I see myself as 'a beloved disciple of the Lord', for, as the Apostle Paul says, *'My strength is made perfect in weakness'* II Cor. 12:9. This love in Christ is shown most vividly and concretely through you, my beloved brothers and sisters, whether near or far, who have shared in my joys and sorrows and have supported me. We have lived through so much together. We have prayed together, worked together for our common enlightenment and sanctification. Together we have hoped in the Lord, together we have received Jesus Christ in Communion, building up through time the holy Church of the living God.

I thank God first of all for you, the priests, my brothers and concelebrants at the Lord's Table. You all have a place in my heart. You are the bedrock of our diocese, building it up day by day to be a living and harmonious organism,

able to sing with one voice and one heart the most glorious Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I also thank the Lord for my confidential, discreet and effective fellow-workers, who have been driven by a spirit of service and self-giving, who have helped and surrounded me during the years in the Council of the Archdiocese, the Diocesan Office, the Cathedral, the St. Sergius Institute, the parishes and deaneries in France and in other countries.

Finally, I thank the Lord for all of you, my brothers and sisters, the beloved faithful of the Archdiocese with whom I have always discussed, made projects, shared moments of friendship, adding all those whom I have met, one time or another, during my many pastoral visits in the Archdiocese in many of the countries of Western Europe where we have parishes and communities. I'm grateful to you and, like the Apostle, *'I cease not giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers'* Eph. 1:16.

While we are speaking of gratitude and love, how can we not also mention forgiveness? I am aware that, in public debates and private discussions, and also in pastoral decisions, certain people have been offended or hurt: the message of truth and faithfulness to the Tradition of the Church is not always welcome; it involves suffering for the hearer and often for the speaker. I have at times made mistakes; no one among us is infallible, not even our bishop. Also, aware of my own weaknesses, I ask God and all of you to pardon all that I have done wrong to. I ask you to forgive my faults and my shortcomings. I also ask you to forgive, in my name, all who have trespassed against us. We do not accept either evil or sin, especially sin against the Church, but we must forgive and pray for those who have gone astray, that they may rediscover the right path. May our merciful Father let us part in peace and reconciliation!

And now the time has come to leave you. How can I put into words all that I have in my heart? I am certain that my going is in response to the will of God, and that with the Lord's help it will be good for you as well as for me. Through all sorts of tribulations, always trust and hope in the Word of God, who is the assurance of our salvation and the strength of our Church. The freedom of the Church and the universality of the Orthodox faith are the two treasures that I have sought to preserve, following the example of my predecessors at the head of this Archdiocese. And this lets us concentrate on that which, in the eyes of Christ's disciples, was the *'one thing necessary'*: *'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness'*, as the Lord Himself commanded us *Matt. 6:33*. My last word will be to ask you to keep your love and unity. It is our Church's most precious treasure. May the Lord deign to *'give you the spirit of wisdom'* *'the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling'* Eph. 1:17-18.

May God succour us and have mercy on us!  
May the peace of the Lord be always with you!  
Receive my blessing.

Paris, 8th January 2013  
✙ Gabriel, Archbishop of Comana



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• WE ASK YOU TO PRAY FOR ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL  
• TO HAVE, IN SPITE OF HIS ILLNESS, A PEACEFUL  
• RETIREMENT IN THE JOY AND LOVE OF JESUS-  
• CHRIST. LET US ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE  
• AT WORK IN OUR PARISHES AND OUR HEARTS,  
• TO ENLIGHTEN AND GUIDE US DURING THE  
• FOLLOWING WEEKS, AND JESUS-CHRIST TO GIVE  
• US THE "SPIRIT OF WISDOM" THAT ARCHBISHOP  
• GABRIEL WISHES US TO HAVE.  
• • • • •

The Prince Sergeï Sergeïevitch Obolensky died on January 1st, 2013 in Paris, at the age of 94 years. From 1981 to 1997 he held the office of Secretary of the Archdiocesan Council. Besides during many years he was the secretary of the Parish Council of the St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Paris.  
May the Lord receive his faithful servant in His kingdom, and make his memory eternal.



## FATHER JOHN GUEIT CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF PRIESTHOOD

Sunday 25 November. In our small church of Saint Hermogene, (Marseille-France) it was a day for celebration. Of course there was the joy of the Resurrection of our Lord! But another event also gathered us around our “proestos” father John, who was celebrating, with God’s grace, the 30th anniversary of his priesthood. The Jubilee has great significance for the man concerned, but it was also far more than just another day for every person present at the celebration of Leave-taking of the Presentation of the Theotokos into the Temple, and of Saint Catherine. Any anniversary of an ordination or of the consecration of a church is an occasion for highlighting the Church’s vitality, and her faithful devotion to the Bridegroom.

Many parishioners and friends, old or recent, gathered to celebrate together the Divine Liturgy; some had travelled from afar to be there. To match the exceptional event, we had an exceptional number of celebrants: to concelebrate with our rector, there was Fr. Serge (Vaes), the second priest of our parish, Fr. René (Fouilleul) who came from Montpellier, as well as Fr. Deacon Claude (Le Gouadec), who has been celebrating in our parish for many years.

Regretfully our Archbishop, his Eminence Gabriel was absent because of a grave illness; also, our joy was tempered as on November 22nd and 24th, our Lord had successively called to Himself the archpriest Michel (Heriard) and the archpriest Michel

(Ossorguine). Now both servants of the Word are among the heavenly Powers to glorify the Creator.

As for us, full of a divine peace, we left our modest church we repaired to the church of Saint Irenea. Indeed, if certain things has evolved during the thirty years of Fr. Jean(s) priesthood, and during the second life of our parish of Saint hermogene (for example we now have frescoes painted by Elisabeth Heriard, now widow of Fr. Michel), other more practical conditions have not changed at all: our premises are too small to organise any festive agape, but in fact... this suits us quit well. It gives us the possibility to ask for the willing and cordial welcome from our brothers and sisters of the church of Saint Irenea, who have been our great friends for thirty years, even more for some of us. Father Daniel (Bresson) and his wife, Marie Borrely (Fr. André’s presbytera) and many other parishioners shared our meal and partook in our joy as often before. Fr. Serge took the occasion to pay a heartfelt tribute to the zealous commitment of Fr. Jean; parishioners offered him a telescope, so he can “see heaven” in another way...

Undoubtedly we shall find other occasions to meet our brothers and sisters of the church of St Irenea. In the meanwhile, let us pray again and again that the Lord give Fr. Jean many returns in health, peace and divine mercy.

*Reader Philippe*

## CHILDREN’S SUMMER CAMP WALES 2012

Camp 2012 began in a blaze of sunshine on Monday July 23rd when after three days hard work putting up tents everyone looked forward to welcoming 40 eager children. This was the largest camp ever to be held at Dyffryn Ganol, the beautiful field owned by our kind hosts Robin and Marcus Beale, but it wasn’t long before everyone was settling in, greeting old friends and welcoming newcomers.

The next day Father Alexander (Fostiropoulos) led us in a blessing of the campsite which by then included nine sleeping tents for the children a grand marquee for use as a dining and activity room, a beautiful island for swimming and even our very own toilet block, masterly handcrafted by the priest himself! Over the next few days as the weather continued giving us more gloriously warm sunshine, camp went into full swing with lessons and games in the mornings and activities in the afternoon; every minute in between was seemingly spent jumping in and out of the river than ran around one side of the campsite – there’s nothing like freezing Welsh river water to cool off with after lots of running around! Delicious hot meals were provided three times a day by a tireless team of volunteers, led by Deacon Peter (Scorer), to keep everybody going while each day would start and end with prayers in the chapel tent, a welcome chance to find peace after so much activity.

On Thursday the 26th of July everyone left the campsite for a day to go for the annual big walk; led this year by skilled navigator Vanya Burke, we left the campsite in the morning and struck out for the nearby mountain of Crug Mawr. Led by Vanya along the river and up hidden tracks and sheep paths we picnicked on the side of the mountain before finally reaching the top and enjoying some marvellous views across the Brecon Beacons. The descent through what seemed to be an endless sea of bracken was more adventurous but eventually we all made it back to the campsite, tired but exhilarated by our achievements.

Some people were sad this year as we would be living it camp while some of the London 2012 Olympic Games were playing but we were in for a nice surprise on Friday the 27th of July when Robin and Marcus very kindly invited



everyone up to their garden where a big screen had been set up and we were able to enjoy the spectacle of the Opening Ceremony outside as night fell across the Welsh mountains. The Olympics had always been a yearly tradition at camp as well so we had to try extra hard this year to make our games match up to the excitement happening in London; beginning with a torch procession round the field we then moved into two days of games that ended with a medal giving ceremony around the fire and an ultimate victory for the Red Team and lots of tired but happy campers.

Another highlight was Theme Day, another annual camp tradition where everybody dresses up to go with a particular theme; this year it was television and radio so after lunch everyone put on costumes to pretend to be their favourite characters in a parade hosted by Doctor Who himself, before running off to find more characters scattered over the field for a climactic big game. With bonfires, midnight feasts and a big boat race filling some of the intervening time the days flew by and we were arriving all too soon at the last day.

Perhaps the most important day of all, this was when we gathered in the morning to celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration which is always a special time at Camp as it commemorates not only this wonderful moment in Jesus' life but acknowledges in a small way how much we are all changed for the better by our time at Camp.

Then it was onto the last evening and the annual Camp Entertainments where everyone gathered to sing songs and perform sketches for each other before one last meal and a dance to celebrate the end of our time together. As the bus pulled away and the parents arrived down the hill the next morning everyone was eagerly looking forward to their own beds but feeling sad as well. Exhausted as we all were life would not be the same without Camp. A huge «thank you» to all the helpers and leaders for their amazing good work. Roll on 2013!

*James Taylor*



## PASTORAL ASSEMBLY : NOVEMBER FIRST 2012 ECUMENICAL MEETINGS

“AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR, A LOT OF CHRISTIANS REALIZE THERE ARE NUMEROUS WAYS TO WORSHIP THE LORD. HEARTS GET MOVED AND THE PEOPLE NOTICE THE HABITUAL PRACTICES OF THEIR NEIGHBOURS ARE NOT THAT ODD. THE EVENT LEADING TO THIS AWARENESS IS CALLED THE ‘WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY’. TRADITIONALLY ORGANISED ON JAN. 18 -25 (NORTHERN HEMISPHERE) OR THE WEEK FOLLOWING PENTECOST - GREGORIAN CALENDAR- (SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE), THIS EVENT USUALLY FITS IN THE ORDINARY PARISH LIFE ALL OVER THE WORLD: «PULPITS EXCHANGES ARE PROMOTED AND SPECIAL ECUMENICAL WORSHIPPING ARE ORGANIZED.” SO ARE WE TOLD BY THE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.

DURING THE PASTORAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 1 (IN PARIS), FATHER JEAN GUEIT TOLD THE ATTENDING CLERGY ABOUT THE BEHAVIOURS AND SPEECHES THAT ARE SUITABLE WHEN GATHERING WITH NON ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AT ECUMENICAL GATHERINGS. YOU WILL FIND A SUMMARY HEREAFTER.

Ecumenical meetings

father Jean Gueit

OUR ASSEMBLY IS A PASTORAL, NOT AN ACADEMIC ONE; THEREFORE I WANT TO PRESENT MY THOUGHTS AND MY OBSERVATIONS, OUT OF AN EXPERIENCE OF 30 YEARS, FROM A PASTORAL.

The Archdiocese (of churches of Russian origin under the obedience of the Constantinople Patriarchate) is a unique entity, because it is the consequence of an involuntary, political not economical, emigration, suffered by people who were literally compelled to consider their actual identity and had unexpectedly to face the Christianity of the Roman Catholicism, a Christianity which corresponds historically as well as geopolitically to the "Western soil".

**It is useful, during encounters, to make clear a certain terminology.**

It is commonplace to make a distinction, if not to oppose, "Orthodoxy" and "Western Christianity". However both terms do not at all belong to the same categories (see for example the study made by Fr. Placide Deseille "Convergences and divergences"). In the same way, but even more significantly, "Orthodoxy" and "Catholicism" do not belong to the same category. The "Orthodoxy" (and not Orthodoxism) means the accurateness of content; it is an assertion. "Catholicity", not Catholicism, defines content. This is why Orthodoxy, i.e. the Orthodox Christians, confess a "catholic" Church (universal "as a whole"). On the other hand, Catholicism, as any other concept terminating with "ism", is the name of an institution and of its doctrine, rather than a dogmatic theological content.

**Ecumenism as such is not a matter of dogmatic or canonical theology .**

Its origin is in the great schism of 1054, but it has acquired new aspects because of the migrations of the 19th and 20th centuries. The phenomenon creates key issues and shakes up our feelings, which can differ greatly. During the colloquium held in October 2012 in the Saint-Serge Institute in Paris, "Understanding the issues of the next council of the Orthodox Church", Fr. Grigorios Papatomas reminded us that the 1054 schism may be considered or felt as a "removal" or a "break-up". Consequently three (not two) behaviours are possible. If it is a removal, it means outright rejection of the other side, i.e. of the Western Christianity which in this case cannot actually even be considered as Christian. Any ecumenical encounter is then inappropriate. If it is a break-up, there may be two options: being rigid, at least demanding, or more flexible. In the first case we must point out those elements, in fact those sacraments, which are acceptable from the Orthodox point of view, and those which are not; it necessarily leads to raise questions of dogmas. Such an attitude prevails within the institutional ecumenical dialogue, particularly in specialized ecumenical commissions, mostly in bi-party ones. In the second case, we choose to go forward towards unity, giving exclusive prominence to all that unites us and discarding all that divides us. Our experience shows that basic ecumenism, that is the one which concerns us from the pastoral point of view, is in favour of this last approach.

Both ways are necessary and are complementary. Both are also part of the inescapable tension we experience by "being in the world but not of this world". Goodwill and respect must

not be engulfed by the wish to find a syncretism or to reduce everything to the "lowest common denominator".

**In our context, it is better to consider the following backgrounds.**

*Historical basics:*

Growth of Christianity around the Mediterranean basin, where the Roman Empire reigned; existence of two imperial centres of gravity (Rome and Byzantium), stressing the fact that the dominant pole is in the East part of the empire. All seven Ecumenical Councils were held in the Orient (Turkey nowadays); all the scriptures of the New Testament, all dogmatic and canonical texts were either written or composed in Greek. The great theological and spiritual patristics have mainly been written in the Christian Orient. All these details are useful to remind that, unlike the Reform, the Oriental Christianity, "Byzantine", Antiochian, Alexandrian – nowadays called Orthodox – is as ancient as the Roman Christianity, although this is often little known.

*Dogmatics:*

The "filioque" and the "immaculate conception" It is not the place here to elaborate on these subjects. We just want to insist on the fact that they are not trifling subjects, not only from the theological point of view, but also from the spiritual and ecclesiological points of view. Beyond the mere word filioque, the issue is the place and the role of the Holy Spirit, of the Holy Breath. This lead to our relation to God, personally (including our mode of knowledge) and as an church community (Lex orandi Lex credenda and vice versa). As for the "immaculate conception", it spoils the scope of the Incarnation, of the Word made flesh, of the divine-human reality. However, it is probably a repercussion, a consequence of the Father-Son diarchy, itself having its origin in the filioque doctrine.

Concretely and culturally speaking, the biggest obstacles in the ecumenical dialogue arise because of the ecclesiological question (essence of the Church, but above all its organization and its working rules). Here again, beyond the basic principles, in particular the (very recent) dogmatisation of the primacy of Rome, what hurts the Orthodox feelings is the highly "legal" aspect of the pastoral and hierarchical system of authority.

These observations, whatever their significance in principle, cannot hide the aberrations we observe in the present Orthodox way of life, ecclesiological but also sometimes pastoral, due to an absence or a lack of education. They cannot either justify any condescending attitude or any rejection of the "other" Christian. In the Orient and in the Occident many ministers, including several "primates", call out to the people of God and remind us that witnessing our unity in Christ is the only response we may give facing the enmity of a secularized world.

*father Jean Guéit*