

The Western Rite Vicariate

The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America



The Right Reverend Bishop JOHN, Auxiliary Bishop
Very Reverend Edward W. Hughes, Vicar General
103 Pleasant Street, Methuen, MA 01844-7130
Telephone/Fax: 978-686-3274
WRVicarGeneral@gmail.com

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According to the founding document signed by Metropolitan Antony Bashir in 1962, and as reiterated in 1980 by Metropolitan Philip, the purpose of the Western Rite is twofold:

1. To provide a home in the Orthodox Church for western people of non-Byzantine cultural and religious background.
2. To witness to the catholicity of the Orthodox Church to her Byzantine Rite people, priests and theologians.

In addition, the document states that the Vicariate exists also

3. To establish a desirable uniformity of practice within the Western Rite parishes of the Archdiocese, and
4. To orient those who may, from time to time, apply for admission to it.

In order to provide such a home in the Orthodox Church, with the permission of the Metropolitan; we establish parishes and missions, we train clergy, we recommend to the Metropolitan to appoint clergy to the various parishes and missions, we publish or provide liturgical, musical, and educational materials, and we meet with interested people wishing to enter the Archdiocese through the Vicariate, answering questions about Orthodoxy and about the Western Rite within our Archdiocese, as well as helping to guide them through the process of entering the Archdiocese, especially if they are bringing a mission group with them. We also conduct classes in Western Rite liturgics and chant through the Antiochian House of Studies. We organize a bi-ennial Western Rite convention for both clergy and laity on the years opposite the Archdiocese convention, and we meet together during the departmental meetings of the Archdiocese convention.

In 2016

We held our bi-ennial Western Rite Conference in August. It was hosted by St. Patrick's parish in Bealeton, VA. Attendance varied between 50 and 80 participants throughout the conference. A highlight of the conference was the presence of Adam Roberts who showed us portions of the movie: *Becoming Completely Human*. A very serious discussion followed which showed how deeply the film affected participants.

We published the *Ordo* which provides liturgical directions for daily services throughout the year.

We published *Credo* which is a bi-monthly informational and educational magazine for our clergy and laity, around 30 pages on letter size paper.

We published *Ad Clerum* which is an e-mail newsletter intended to provide up-dates and new information specifically for pastors of the Vicariate. It is sent out irregularly as needed. Through this medium, we provide 'translations' of Archdiocese liturgical directives for our pastors and parishes, making them relevant to our own Western Rite situation.

We published an annual 12 month wall calendar with daily liturgical and devotional information.

Stephen Kerr was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Bishop John on Dec. 11, 2016 and assigned to St. John the Baptist Mission in Lewiston, MD.

We have several parish which will be needing or currently already need pastors. Bishop John and I are working different ways to provide pastoral care for these communities. These include requesting ordination of current deacons within the vicariate, requesting assignment of byzantine rite priests who have expressed interest in learning the Western Rite and pastoring Western Rite congregations, and requesting admission to the Archdiocese and ordination of former non-Orthodox clergymen.

* Father Joseph Gleason emigrated to Russian recently which has left us with a vacancy in Christ the King mission in Omaha Illinois. Fr. Joseph has undergone surgery for cancer and requests our prayers. The community is traveling to a nearby mission served by Fr. James Mackoul twice a month and for holidays, otherwise is doing reader-services. There are presently 3 families and they use a church building owned by Fr. Joseph Gleason.

* Christ the Good Shepherd mission in St. Louis MO. recently switched back to the Byzantine Rite. They had requested to be Western Rite some years ago, and chose to return to the Byzantine Rite because they wanted to be involved in FOCUS which, in their area, requires the Byzantine Rite.

* The mission in Mountain Home, AK, has left the Archdiocese and been accepted by ROCOR. In 2015 they had been told that their pastor, the former Anglican Bishop Samuel Siemens would be ordained sometime in 2016. He complied with everything he was asked, but his ordination was indefinitely postponed. Unable to get a commitment to either ordain their former pastor or send a permanent pastor from our archdiocese, the community in frustration voted to seek acceptance and ordination from ROCOR. They were released with the blessings of our Metropolitan. The community was mentored by Frs. Michael Keiser and Kenneth DeVoe and was visited by Bishop John and Fr. John Finley.

A few years before Fr. Paul Schneirla retired from the Vicariate, he appointed a committee to study the possibility of preparing our own Altar Missal for use in our parishes. Three years ago, as a result of ongoing study, Bishop John appointed Fr. John Fenton as project coordinator to finish the Missal. In January of 2016, he engaged Alex Taylor to typeset the text and make it into a set of workable altar books: a requiem missal for funerals and memorial services, a holy week missal for holy week, and an altar missal containing everything for all masses throughout the year.

In a similar way, Fr. John has worked to prepare a comprehensive *Ritual* which will contain all of the occasional sacraments and blessings used in parish life. He has begun to work with Kevin Mellis to typeset this and prepare it for publication.

Both of these projects are still underway, but progress is slow since the two typesetters and graphic artists have been slow to proceed. Fr. John is contacting a third artist to see if he can move these projects along more quickly.

Our Bishop John has made more than 15 parish visits since last year, visiting ten different parishes, some of them several times, as well as attending the annual Men's Retreat in New Hampshire.

3/13, St. Stephen, Springfield, MA
4/10, St. Paul, Houston, TX
5/22, Emmanuel, Warren, MA
5/22 Annual Men's Retreat, Contookook, NH
10/16, St. Peter in Fort Worth TX
 Our Lady of Walsingham Mesquite TX
 and Christ the Savior in Jacksonville TX
11/13, Mountain Home, AK
12/11, St. John the Baptist, Lewiston, MD
12/26, St. Stephen, Springfield, MA
1/3, St. Patrick, Bealeton, VA
1/17, Springfield, MA
1/24, St. Gregory the Great, Silver Spring, MD
2/12, Emmanuel, Warren, MA
3/9, St. Patrick, Bealeton, VA
3/13, Springfield, MA
3/26, St. Benedict, Wichita Falls, TX

I visited and spoke at three parishes and the Holy Monastery of Our Lady and Saint Laurence.

8/12-15, Monastery feast-day event. Tallahassee Creek, CO
12.1-5, St. Benedict, Wichita Falls, TX
12/9-12, St. Michael, Whittier, CA

Metropolitan Joseph and Bishop John are scheduled to visit the Monastery before the Archdiocese Convention.

For 2017-18

The *Ordo* will be prepared and published for each year.

Fr. John Fenton is planning on continuing to prepare this each year.

Credo will be prepared and published bi-monthly for each year.

The annual liturgical wall calendar will be prepared and published each year

Fr. Bernard Kinnick is planning on continuing to prepare these each year, even if he retires from active ministry as parish pastor.

Ad Clerum will continue to be sent out as needed.

Fr. John Fenton and I plan on continuing to prepare this as required.

We will continue to provide pastors and clergy to communities as needed.

Bishop John and I will continue to work with the Metropolitan, the St. Stephen's Course of Studies, and the Ordination Review Board to provide clergy as needed. We need some help to expedite these requests and remove obstacles where they arise.

The *Ritual* might be ready for publication at some point this year.

The type-setting and graphic design are underway already. Kevin Mellis is doing the work with Fr. Fenton. Fr. John is contacting other designers to see if they can help.

The Altar Missal will continue to be made ready for publication.

It is estimated that this will take another two years of type-setting and graphic design work before it is ready for publication. The work is currently underway, Alex Taylor has been working with Fr. Fenton. Fr. John is contacting other designers to see if they can help.

We will have a meeting during the Archdiocese Convention in Miami this July. Bishop John and myself will be addressing concerns arising from feelings of insecurity and anxiety arising in the Vicariate especially because of the events in Mountain Home, AK.

How we are staffed

Bishop John (Abdallah) is our Auxiliary Bishop who attends to the needs of each parish.

Fr. Edward Hughes is the Vicar General. I work with Bishop John to oversee all of the work of the Vicariate as outlined above.

Fr. John Fenton is the administrative assistant. He helps to handle almost all of the logistics involved in our various projects and on-going ministries. He prepares the *Ordo* annually. Fr. Bernard Kinnick publishes *Credo* and the calendar. His wife Karen is the managing editor. Mr. Dale Crakes provides research and support for any and all of our projects as needed. Fr. Michael Kaiser, Fr. George Morelli, and Mrs. Elaine Hyder serve on the Western Rite Commission. This body was established in 1962 by Metropolitan Antony Bashir to be made up of "Byzantine Rite clergy of proven academic standing" to "Assist the Vicar General in all possible ways, especially in reference to the liturgical rite." Each of the 33 priests and 13 deacons of the Vicariate staff the individual parishes and missions. They are responsible for carrying out our goals in the parishes.

Budget 2019, 2020, 2021

Our Budget allocation is \$12,000 for 2017.

- \$3,000. Reimbursement for the assistant @ \$250 per month.
- \$1,000 Mailing for *Credo* magazine
- \$2,000 Convention expense, including travel & lodging for Hughes & Fenton
- \$4,000 Travel & lodging for parish visits.
- \$1,000 Travel & lodging for other meetings throughout the year.
- \$1,000 Typesetting for publications.

We would like to increase the budget to \$15,000.

We would like to keep all of the categories as is, except for typesetting which is expected to cost us at least \$5,000 over the course of several years for the two projects underway.

The *Ritual*: \$2,500 total

- \$750 for design
- \$1,600 for printing
- \$150. For incidentals, overrun.

The *Missal*: \$2,500 - \$3,500 all for design. Does not include printing.

- Requiem Missal in 2018
- Altar Missal in 2020
- Holy Week Missal in 2020

So we are asking to increase that line item to \$4,000 So that we can complete these projects.

What happened in Mountain Home, AK, has raised a lot of questions within the Vicariate. Our program for bringing in parishes which dates back nearly sixty years was developed by Archbishop Anthony and maintained by Metropolitan Philip because it works. When an existing community seeks admission to the Archdiocese through the Vicariate, after an initial period of mutual discovery, if both we and the community agree, the community is received as a “provisional mission.” They continue to hold services as before, but they begin to use our forms of the services, and they commemorate our heirarchs. During this period, a priest or priests are assigned to catechize the community and train the pastor to serve according to our customs. The pastor is also requested to enroll in the St. Stephen’s Course of Studies and attend the Antiochian House of Studies residence weeks. When the catechizing priest(s) believe that the parish is ready, they are chrismated all together. At this point, the pastor no longer functions as a cleric, although he may remain the parish administrator. Priests are assigned to visit and serve the community sacramentally during the period until the pastor is ordained. Every attempt is made to keep this period as brief as possible because delay will certainly damage the community. As soon as the pastor is ordained, the mission begins to function in the normal fashion.

If we cannot continue to bring communities into the Vicariate as we have, then we can no longer be a place of refuge for communities fleeing the chaos of the modern religious scene and looking for the security and peace of Holy Orthodoxy. This would most certainly seriously diminish our credibility and viability as a serious option for Western communities seeking Orthodoxy.

We sincerely beg the Metropolitan to continue to bless us to receive existing communities which are seeking Orthodoxy and to provide for them a home in our blessed Archdiocese.

Respectfully submitted,
V. Rev. Edward Hughes