



Address by Metropolitan Cyprian
at the Second Recognition Dinner for the
Association of Volunteers of our Holy Metropolis
Monday, November 22, 2016 (Old Style)

Solidarity, Volunteerism, Ministry:
Safeguards

My beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ;
Co-ministers, Assistants, and Fellow Travellers;
Clergy and Laity:

I bow down and noetically kiss the prints of your feet, with sincere gratitude for the divers ways in which you cultivate your charisms, offering them to the glory of God and the alleviation of the pain of our neighbor.



This is our second recognition dinner honoring the association of volunteers who, with sacrificial love and self-denial, assist the ecclesiastical, charitable, and cultural work of our Holy Metropolis.

The Orthodox Church never separates the **spiritual** needs from the **materials** needs of Her members, and of all of humankind in general.

It would be akin to *monophysitism* [from *monos*, “only, single” and *physis*, “nature”]—that is, heresy—were we to concern ourselves solely with that which pertains to the **soul** or spirit, while disregarding all things pertaining to the **body**: the *social aspect of our existence*, our responsibilities to our neighbor, and our concern for the common good.

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Hence, my beloved co-ministers, assistants, and fellow travellers, you are worthy of **honor and gratitude**, in that you did not choose *evasion and indifference* in the face of the drama of our neighbor.

The *social problem* and our multifarious *interventions* in every aspect thereof have always been at the **heart of the immediate interests** of the Orthodox Church.

Our stance, our sensitivity, concerning everything pertaining to the *social drama* constitutes a criterion of the *genuineness* of our application of the *precepts of the Gospel*.

We must make clear, however, and stress that our active participation in dealing with this multifaceted *drama* **does not constitute an end in itself**, but rather a genuine expression of the *social aspect of the Gospel* and active love to one's neighbor.

The **Way and Truth and Life**, that is, Christ our Savior, guides us to a heroic and self-sacrificial *exodus* from the *prison* of our own selves, in order to *encounter* our brother, and, through him, our Lord and God, in an **eternal communion of love**.

Ministry and the **Cross** are at the *heart* of the **Evangelical ethos**; they are the quintessence of the Gospel; they are a source of inspiration and strength; they are at the essence of the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come...on earth as it is in Heaven."

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My beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Co-ministers, and Assistants:

Our Concerted Ministry of Volunteerism constitutes an initiation into the **Mystery of Solidarity** and of **Social Responsibility**.

Solidarity is a *resolute commitment*; it is an *attitude of life*; it is a *genuine encounter* with our neighbor; it is a sense of *responsibility* for our neighbor; it is *loving-kindness and tenderness in Christ* for our neighbor; it is the *Crucifixional-Resurrectional experience* of writing the *bright side* of history together with the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the naked, the imprisoned, the ailing, the strangers, the refugees; together with the **victims** of the frightful modern-day slave trade, of the violence of fratricidal wars, of the horror of drug addiction, and of the corruption, perversion, and degeneration of human dignity.

This burden of **social responsibility** requires **constant vigilance, in prayer and repentance**, for therein lurk the dangers of **adulteration**: the danger of losing our Christocentric **vision**, and of our **ministry**, which should be in imitation of Christ, deteriorating into one of **domi-**

nation; the danger that the humble spirit of washing our brother's feet be replaced by a **love of primacy, self-admiration, self-promotion, the appropriation** for ourselves of the Work of God, and **self-idolization**.

This deadly danger arises when we forget the Apostolic, Patristic, and Synodal Teaching of our Holy Church:

● “Let the **Bishop** have the care of all the matters of the Church, and let him administer them as under the scrutiny of God” (Thirty-eighth Apostolic Canon).

● “Let not the Presbyters or Deacons do anything **without the sanction of the Bishop**; for it is he who is entrusted with the people of the Lord, and of whom will be required the account of their souls” (Thirty-ninth Apostolic Canon).

● “Do nothing **without the Bishop**” (Epistle of St. Ignatios of Antioch to the Philadelphians, 7:1); “Let no man do anything pertaining to the Church **without the Bishop**” (*Ibid.*, Epistle to the Smyrnaeans, 8:1); “He who honours the Bishop has been honoured by God; **he who does anything without the knowledge of the Bishop, does [in reality] serve the Devil**” (*Ibid.*, 19:1)

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My beloved Brothers and Sisters, Co-ministers, and Assistants:

With profound gratitude and affection, I embrace each of you individually and all together, in the **Theanthropic Embrace** of our Church.

It is my wish that we continue our voluntary and self-sacrificial offering to our neighbor, working together peacefully, with the following *safeguards*:

1) Always serve with the **knowledge, blessing, and consent** of your Bishop and be in spiritual **unity** with him in Christ;

2) Let us always have in our mind's eye Christ our Savior, **kneeling and washing the feet of His Disciples**;

3) Let us constantly hearken to the exhortation of our Lord that we be, by means of love and humility, “**the last,**” “**ministers,**” and “**servants**” of all.

4) Love is the **common factor** in all of our **ministries** in the Church; hence, it is not possible for the practice of our ministries to occasion *divisions, superiors and inferiors, masters and servants, psychological dependency, fear, and anxiety*.

5. The hierarchy of **ministries** is a **hierarchy of love**, which is crowned by the **ministry of the Bishop**, who should be a paradigm of

love, emulating the *self-emptying* love of Christ our Savior.

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With these humble thoughts, we humbly invoke upon all of us the blessing of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, through the intercessions of the All-Hymned Theotokos and of all the Saints.

May the blessing of our Elder and Father, Metropolitan Cyprian of blessed memory, ever be for us a source of **strength, guidance, and protection.** Amen!

I thank you!

Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle,

November 22, 2016 (Old Style)

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To God be
Glory and Thanksgiving!