

**Metropolitan Methodios' Address to Fr. Anthony Evangelatos
St. Athanasius, Arlington, MA—January 17, 2018**

My dear brother in Christ, Fr. Anthony

By the providence of Almighty God, you begin today to offer priestly ministry in this community.

Today is a day of joy and gladness. It marks a new beginning, the opening of a new chapter in the history of this parish. It is a day of dreams and visions, of new hope and renewed commitment. You begin today a ministry which must be guided by the tenets of our Holy Faith, its history, its traditions, its Holy Canons, its Ecclesiology and Polity.

I commission you today with the responsibility of leading a transfiguration in this community. Dedicate your Priesthood towards bringing about a spiritual renewal. Your every effort must be Christ-centered. It is my prayer that every Parishioner will heed the encouraging words of Saint Paul treasured in his epistle to the Romans—"be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may do what is acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12, 2).

Father Anthony, you are the head of this Community responsible to exercise the priestly function. You are not an employee, not a hireling. Leadership presupposes a willingness to serve. Christ said that He came "to serve, not to be served." He told His disciples, "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be the first, must be your slave." Be a good pastor, following the example of our Lord and Savior. Remember His words: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10, 14-15) Wherever you have served the Archdiocese – in Seattle, Washington, Eugene, Oregon, Newport RI and Brockton, MA, you have been a loyal and dedicated priest in God's army. You never placed yourself above the church. You were always respectful of church order, never putting your own interests above those of the Church. You never forgot (as have some) that **IT IS JESUS CHRIST WHO IS THE MESSAGE AND YOU THE MESSENGER.**

Your ministry here is to shepherd the flock I entrust to your care tonight. Your task is to direct in an orderly fashion the entire life of the Parish. You are to preserve the unity of the Faith, to see to it that the Parish is faithful to its purpose. And its purpose, Father Anthony, is Divine. It is to keep and proclaim the Faith and traditions in conformity with the doctrine, canons, worship and customs of the Church. See to it that the diakonia of this parish be the proclamation of the message of Jesus Christ—the message of love and forgiveness, of reconciliation and salvation. I speak to you the same words addressed by Saint Paul to his disciple Timothy: "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it, some have missed the mark as regards the faith." (I Timothy, 6, 20)

Transfigure this Community into what a Church Community must be. And that definition is given to us by St. Paul. "The Church," he writes, "is the Body of Christ and we are members of that Body." This is an Orthodox Christian Community, not a secular club,

not an organization, and certainly not a cult. Utilize the pulpit to teach the Faith. We live in an age in which everything is questioned. The eternal values that natured generation after generation are rejected. We live in a world where the tenets of our Faith, its basic teachings and its very Phromema are misunderstood –and worse— adapted to conform with worldly philosophies and personal agendas. Saint Paul predicted this would happen one day. He writes to his disciple Timothy the following, “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but... they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings and will turn away from listening to the Truth and wander into myths. As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist.” (2 Timothy 4,2-5). This community must be governed according to the ecclesiology, the Holy Cannons and Holy Tradition of our Church as defined by the Fathers of the Church in the Ecumenical Synods and local Councils. It is a tradition nourished by the blood of its martyrs. This church, indeed every church, must be a modern day Jacob's well—a refreshing oasis where life's travelers may quench their spiritual thirsts.

Father Anthony,

Be a dedicated Priest, a tireless worker, a leader who understands that clergy and laity must work harmoniously for the welfare of the community; that church administration is a shared ministry. Every aspect of community life must be inspired by the Holy Spirit. I know that you will labor day and night for the glory of God and His Church, never expecting anything in return.

Father Anthony, I said that leadership presupposes a willingness to serve. As you know, leadership also requires the courage to stand for what you believe in – Rather what the Church believes, what the Church proclaims and what you have been taught from your childhood. You may be misunderstood; you may be reviled. During those difficult times which are bound to happen (to you, as they have to every Priest,) pray all the harder. Remember what our Lord said to His disciples, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you are of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.....If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also." (John 15, 18-21).

You must teach the Faith pure and undefiled; you must defend the Faith. The Church can never sacrifice on the altar of expediency what She stands for, what the Saints have taught. She cannot compromise Her principles. If She does, She is not worthy of the blood shed by the martyrs in defense of truth. To you and to the congregation I address the words Saint Paul wrote to the Christians living in Rome, "I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissension and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering words they deceive the hearts of many." (Romans 16, 17-18)

As you assume your responsibilities, I commission you to undertake a missionary effort. Visit the homes of the parishioners as Christ visited the home of Zaccheus. Listen carefully to their concerns. Visit also the homes of those who have not been active in the life of the community, encouraging them to return to the parish. Share your faith and your visions for the future of this Community.

Use the pulpit to teach the Faith. We live in an age in which everything is questioned. The eternal values that nurtured generation after generation are rejected. We live in an atmosphere where the tenets of our Faith, its basic teachings and its very Phronema are misunderstood and worse adapted to conform with worldly philosophies and personal agendas

Prepare sermons which will address the vital issues confronting Christianity today. Discuss the Church's teaching concerning the social and moral issues of society---drug abuse, pornography, crime and violence, euthanasia, abortion, divorce, single parent families, morality in the media, and many more. Your every sermon should make the Bible come alive. It should be a teaching tool. When you discuss the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, perhaps you will want to deal with the immorality of Christians indifferent to the millions throughout the world who die of starvation—of Christians blind to the thousands in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and throughout America—who live homeless and hungry. This community must be a beacon of faith and concern and commitment. It must reach out as Christ demands in the Gospel, "to these, the least of my brethren."

When you preach about the Parable of the Rich Fool who planned to tear down his old barns in order to build larger ones to store his many riches (not knowing he would die that night), perhaps you may want to reflect upon Christian communities that have built large edifices or who spend thousands restoring them only to find that they remain empty because they are spiritually dead. Speak about the tragedy of a spiritually bankrupt Christianity.

Father Anthony, reach out to everyone. Love everyone. Embrace everyone without exception. Be especially mindful of the young.

Model your priesthood after the patron saint of this parish, Saint Athanasius. Though small in stature he was a spiritual giant. He faced many challenges. Five times he was exiled from the Patriarchal throne of Alexandria, but he never lost faith. He would reassure those who were concerned for him. He would say, "don't worry about me, what I am experiencing is like a cloud in the sky that will shortly dissipate."

Like Saint Athanasius, you too, Father Anthony, are short in stature but a deeply spiritual priest of God. Over the recent past, storm clouds have filled the skies of this parish. They will soon pass so that the light of Christ may shine again in the hearts of all who believe.

May the history you write as the Priest of this Community be filled with pages of accomplishment. May Almighty God bless your ministry with much spiritual fruit.