

Our dear Friends,

Greetings from Guatemala in this holy season of Great Lent approaching Pascha with haste.

Twenty-four years ago, we slowly began establishing the Orthodox Monastery of the Holy Trinity for women in Guatemala. Orthodox Christianity was almost unknown and unheard in our country and there was no official presence of the Orthodox Church here.

Through the years, different groups of people approached us with the desire of learning about the ancient and traditional form of Christianity preserved in the Orthodox Church since the time of the apostles. Individual persons and few families joined us during these years and over a thousand children were baptized at the Orphanage that we received fourteen years ago. Some faithful cradle-Orthodox families have also been with us from the beginning. So all these years, we have been a small Orthodox community under Metropolitan Antonio Chedraoui of the Antiochian Patriarchate.

Today, we rejoice at the news of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's General Secretariat for Latin America which has welcomed into the Orthodox Church the seekers of truth that approached them and we pray for their leaders and flock who have been in-search longer than we know them.

We rejoice with them as they rejoice because we all "...have seen the true light, we have received the Spirit of Truth, we have found the true faith adoring the undivided Trinity that has saved us".

As an Orthodox Monastery, we hope to be for all these new Orthodox Christians a "light house" where they will feel welcomed to pray and celebrate our Orthodox faith.

You will find the good news below.



GUATEMALA UPDATE

http://www.secretariat.orthodoxtheologicalinstitute.org/index.php?option=com_lyftenbloggie&view=lyftenbloggie&category=0&Itemid=50

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After months of catechetical and pastoral follow-up, the Archiepiscopal Vicar, the Right Reverend Mitered Archimandrite Dr. Andrew (Vujisić), traveled to Guatemala in January 2010 and received Msgr. Andrés Girón and Msgr. Mihail Castellanos of the independent *Iglesia Católica Ortodoxa de Guatemala* (ICOG), into the Orthodox Church. At that time, guidelines were also established to facilitate the reception of the ICOG's 527,000 members, which are overwhelmingly indigenous. The former ICOG has 334 churches in Guatemala and southern Mexico, 12 clergymen, 14 seminarians, 250 lay ministers, and 380 catechists. It also has an administrative office on 280 acres, a community college and 2 schools with 12 professors / teachers, and a monastery on 480 acres. Fourteen students from Guatemala

are now enrolled in the St. Gregory Nazianzen Orthodox Theological Institute Licentiate degree program.

In February 2010, the Right Reverend Mitered Archimandrite Dr. Andrew (Vujisić) returned to Guatemala and met with clerics and others who assist in the Church's pastoral work and outreach. He discussed mission and ministry priorities, and economic development with Msgr. Andrés Girón and Msgr. Mihail Castellanos. He met and encouraged the faithful who collaborate in the diverse ministries in Guatemala, visited schools and institutions, and spoke at length with seminarians regarding matters related to the Orthodox faith, especially the importance of the development of an Orthodox *phronema*, *praxis*, and liturgical life. His Right Reverence inspected places of worship, liturgical vessels, vestments, etc. in order to assess the needs of the Church in Guatemala. Twelve full sets of vestments for Priests were given to Msgr. Mihail Castellanos. Catechisms were distributed to the lay ministers and catechists.

In his talks with the clergy and faithful of the ICOG, the Right Reverend Mitered Archimandrite Dr. Andrew (Vujisić) reiterated the message of St. Paul: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your *nous* (mind), that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12: 1-3). He stressed the importance of formulating an Orthodox worldview through prayer, fasting, repentance, struggle against sin and overcoming the passions, participation in the Holy Mysteries, and the reading the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Holy Fathers. His Right Reverence conducted impromptu question and answer sessions everywhere he visited. Interest and excitement permeated the discussions.

The Right Reverend Mitered Archimandrite Dr. Andrew (Vujisić) also visited Holy Trinity Monastery (Antiochian Orthodox Church), where he held lengthy discussions with Abbess Inés and Mother María, and later prayed at the magnificent monastery Church, where he blessed the Russian iconographers of the Prosopon School of Iconology. He traveled to Guatemala City and visited the orphanage, Hogar Rafael Ayau, meeting, embracing, and blessing the children, and later having lunch with them. He held meetings with 'Orthodox seekers', who represent another 800,000 souls, regarding the straight and narrow path of reception into Orthodoxy. His Right Reverence will return to Guatemala after the Holy and Great Pascha of the Lord for follow-up meetings and discussions.