

2012 SOYO Mid Winter Meetings

Bolivar, Pennsylvania

February 3-5, 2012

February 3, 2012

- I. **Opening Prayer:** Led by Bishop THOMAS at 7:42 PM.
- II. **Comments from Bishop THOMAS:** Bishop THOMAS repeats the words he said at Vespers earlier tonight: he likens the pleasure St. Symeon felt upon seeing the Lord to the joy he has when seeing us doing our SOYO work. His Eminence speaks about how we are like his children and grandchildren, and how he wants us to be able to feel close to God.
- III. **Call to Order:** By Laney Wagoner at 7:49 PM.
- IV. **Roll Call**
 - a. **Diocese of Los Angeles and the West:** Kathryn Kruse and Edward Deeb III
 - b. **Diocese of Miami and the Southeast:** Matt Shportun, Ann Thomas, and Mara Schuler
 - c. **Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada, and Upstate New York:** Alex Younes, Christian Kishfy, Karla Samman, Lina Akl, Jonathan Sourial, Caroline El-Chaâr
 - d. **Diocese of the East:** Hiba Khouri, Christine Youwakim, Kh. Hend Kevorkian, Paul Murray (later), Fr. Demetrios Makoul
 - e. **Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest:** Natalie Saliba, Katie Thomas, Sabrina Zawahri, Elizabeth Ayoub
 - f. **Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America:** Danielle Sackllah, Nicole Shadid, Jaque Wakim, Amy Wallace, Erin Learned, Fr. Antony Bahou
 - g. **Diocese of Worcester and New England:** Chris Abdelahad,Carolynn Saba
 - h. **NAC:** Laney Wagoner, Matt Shportun, Tim Markatos, Fr. Fouad Saba, Fr. Joseph Purpura
- V. **Diocesan Reports:**

- a. **Diocese of Los Angeles and the West:** Fall gathering in Arizona with service project; day retreat in December with 130 attendees; very active in Southern California, will be holding Deanery Retreat there on Catalina Island; planning benefit concert for Shelter Box; holding monthly retreats; Cathryn's goal as President is to not raise money for SOYO, but for others (their neighbors). Also: their Bishop appointed a So Cal Deanery Youth Director because there are so many teens there.
- b. **Diocese of Miami and the Southeast:** Decided to divide the Diocese into 3 regions to make it more manageable, with one officer representing each one—planning retreats for each region; had Delegates Meetings (different from regular Diocesan meeting) 3 weeks ago with Bishop Antoun's blessing—had good turnout and did service project in Atlanta; Diocese is selling SOYO hoodies (\$20); asked for dues to be paid by December 1st, got 12/15; currently planning PLC. Fr. Purpura asks us to keep Stephanie Torbey in our prayers as she prepares to undergo brain surgery.
- c. **Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada, and Upstate New York:** Had Fall gathering with good turnout, decided to include teens in discussion about fundraising ideas, two teens gave a presentation about the state of the poor in Canada—board thinks it would be a good idea to have similar teen-led presentations at future gatherings; planning their Fourth Annual Basketball Tournament to be held in Ottawa; want to keep focusing on spiritual aspects of SOYO; will be selling sweatpants. Fr. Purpura congratulates this Diocese on ameliorating their financial situation over the past few years.
- d. **Diocese of the East:** Had Fall Delegates Meeting with 100 teens in attendance; retreat in Little Falls in December with guest speaker Fr. Anthony Yazge, 90 teens in attendance; board has monthly phone conference; biggest goal currently: SELL SOYO SOCKS! (\$7/pair).
- e. **Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest:** Had Fall Meeting in Flint, MI with 70 teens, productive meeting, introduced Diocesan challenges to give parishes ideas of what to do each month; Spring Meeting/Basketball Tournament in Canton, OH, with 400 teens! Had new Youth Advisor and

Bishop speak at this Meeting; have been continuing with No SOYO Left Behind

- f. **Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America:** Have kept up with website and Facebook page regularly; recently held Basketball Tournament with approx. 80 teens participating, had Lindsey Buhler from St. Katherine College speak, topic for Tournament was “Unity in the Life of the Church,” with guest speaker Alex Younes; held Advent Retreat at Houston, TX with theme being “St. Nicholas”; are selling SOYO Shades and giving a percentage of their revenue to Al-Kafaat; are holding Winter Camp at Camp St. Raphael on February 20th. Alex Younes suggests a National effort to fundraise for Al-Kafaat (Laney will put this under New Business).
- g. **Diocese of Worcester and New England:** Diocese now has its first Bishop, His Grace, Bishop JOHN—celebrated liturgy with him on Feast of Epiphany with each parish presenting him with a gift, and the teens will present him with a walking stick at their Annual Youth Day; had successful fall meeting and did much planning for future events; Village at Home in November with guest speaker Marek Simon; will have Annual Lenten Retreat in March with guest speaker Katrina Bitar.

VI. Executive Reports

- a. **Secretary:** Tim Markatos presents Leadership Training Minutes from Chicago. Cathryn Kruse motions to accept the minutes, Hiba Khouri seconds. All in favor. Secretary monthly check-in – everyone is in favor to keep the monthly check-in.
- b. **Treasurer:** Matt Shportun presents the Treasurer’s Report and the Special Olympics Financial Report (submitted by Fr. Anthony Yazge). Fr. Purpura talks about this year’s deficit (due to extra expenses from the 30th Anniversary of the Special Olympics Camp), which was paid for from a reserve fund; he proposes that we aim to not spend any more than \$56,000 in the future—Fr. Anthony Yazge is okay with this suggestion. Christian Kishfy motions to accept the Treasurer’s Report; Edward Deeb seconds the motion; passes unanimously.

- c. **President:** Laney Wagoner talks about NAC's goings-ons: monthly conference calls (really helpful); Melissa will be arriving later and presenting her report on the Unity Committee tomorrow; we created a "Past SOYO Projects" Committee to help organize information on the history of our projects; NAC has a new website (teensoyo.org) that has all of the binder contents and will later contain links to all of the Dioceses' websites and Facebook pages.
- VII. **College Bound:** Different than OCF, DVD provided from OCF called "Transitions". Information on the website with links on the tab College Bound. Mara suggested transition from SOYO to the Fellowship. College Bound can be focused on transition from SOYO to OCF and to the Fellowship. Mara Schuler, Christian Kishfy, Lina Akl, Danielle Sackllah, Nicole Shadid, Cathryn Kruse, Hiba Khouri, and Laney Wagoner – are willing to work on the committee. College Bound will consist of FAQ.
- VIII. **Fr. Joseph Purpura's Words:** Fr. Purpura briefly says he is pleased with what SOYO has been getting accomplished so far this year, mentioning that the teens and advisors are all working well together. Fr. Purpura also says he is happy with this year's NAC officers—particularly in that we have kept up good communications (especially the monthly online conference calls). Finally, Fr. Purpura mentions advancements in Orthodox Unity via the Assembly of Bishops, which convened and established the Committee for Youth. Bishop THOMAS also comments on the advancements in Orthodox Unity and says that this will not be a real success until we bring all the youth together.
- IX. **Fr. Fouad Saba:** Laney introduces Fr. Saba, our new NAC Spiritual Advisor. Fr. Saba asks us to take the time to reflect and refocus our goal. He asks us to keep the real meaning of SOYO in our minds so that we aren't simply wasting other peoples' money to be here this weekend. He bases his talk around the Bible, which governs the authority of the church. He shares a passage (Joshua 1:1-9) and shares the historical context. God told Joshua thrice to "Be strong and of god courage"; he has given Joshua and his people the task of being his people, and he compares their situation to SOYO. In 5 years, none of us will be in SOYO, so what are we doing here now? We're setting up for someone else we're here on behalf of other teens and soon-to-be-teens; SOYO is just a tunnel. No moment

will ever be duplicated; the most precious thing in life is time, and we are currently learning how to better spend our time and be young adults, so that we may in turn take the Bible and do as is written in Joshua 1:8. God is our only source of power, which is why we come together in Liturgy to hear what He has to say (via the Bible). The greatest sin is when you lead others to sin; the greatest blessing is when you lead others to a blessing. We have that power, as leaders, to lead to life or death—choose life.

X. **Closing Prayer:** Led by Fr. Anthony Yazge at 10:11 PM.

February 4, 2012

XI. **Opening Prayer:** Led by Fr. Joseph Purpura at 10:10 AM. Laney Wagoner called the meeting to order at 10:13 AM.

XII. **Constitution 101:** Tim Markatos presents via Prezi on the history and details of the SOYO Constitution. Importance of having voting regulations because SOYO would be chaos without the constitution. Any officer can vote at a meeting. Any officer not present cannot vote in elections. NAC council is referred to as all officers and NAC officers. With the new constitution, if there is a tie a revote is in order rather than the president voting to break the tie. For voting on a motion, instead of re-voting, the president votes to break the tie. Proper ages for NAC officer election are between 16-20 years old – Parish level are 13-19 years old – Diocese are 15-19 years old. Metropolitan PHILIP elects the NAC Spiritual Advisor and NAC Archdiocese Youth Director. Metropolitan PHILIP is the final decision for all SOYO matters. The Local Senate consists of all of the diocesan Bishops with Metropolitan PHILIP. To make an amendment for the constitution, a written proposal needs to be written and sent out 60 days before the next meeting. The secretary would have to send out a written copy of the amendments and proposal to all officers 30 days before the meeting. If NAC SOYO were to dissolve, properties and funds would go to the Archdiocese trust funds and would be saved. When SOYO resumed, all funds and properties would resume. Diocesan bad standing: not paying dues, wouldn't be able to vote, automatically go on Bad Standing. Each diocese is responsible for sending at least 2 officers per meeting. Special Olympics is a permanent partner with

SOYO for life. Authorized signers for checks are treasurers, Archdiocese Youth Director, and president. Fr. Purpura and Fr. Saba stress the importance of the constitution. Fr. Saba commented on how wonderful and useful Tim Markatos's presentation on the constitution was. It will be posted to the NAC SOYO website, teensoyo.org.

-5 Minute Break to Observe the Snow-

- XIII. **Past SOYO Projects Committee:** Laney explains how she had been wondering why we have all of our SOYO programs and what their histories are. She emailed a few officers and asked them to individually research each project; she now calls them up to present their findings.
- a. **Special Olympics:** Edward Deeb. (Fr.)Anthony Yazge and his cousin Ken, as Teen SOYO officers, with Fr. Anthony Bashir, defied adult expectations and met with the head of Pennsylvania Special Olympics to offer the Antiochian Village as the site of the training camp. First year: 1980, started as small group but has grown significantly. Reason for establishment: to live up to our platform of Mission, and to give teens a hands-on outreach program. The idea first came up at a Mid Winter Meeting (~1980). The fundraising aspect was initially a big challenge; Special Olympics Awareness Day was developed to ease this along. This is the second-longest running program Special Olympics has, after the games themselves. Fr. Purpura adds that we have raised over \$1 million to date.
 - b. **Great Friday Vigil:** Jonathan Sourial. The practice of the Vigil itself has existed for centuries, but the Teen SOYO version was created by Fr. Joseph Purpura, who brought the practice to the Eastern Region from St. Vladimir's Seminary in the late 70s. The Vigil is a natural experience of love for teens and the church—it is one of the ways we show our devotion to God. Jonathan testifies to the spiritual and educational value of the Vigil. It is customary to read the Book of Psalms over the course of the evening and night. Brief discussion of the tradition of the Great Friday Vigil follows.
 - c. **Good Samaritan Project:** Matt Shportun. This project embodies SOYO's commitment to Worship, Witness, Fellowship, and Service. Was created by the officers of the Diocese of Miami and the Southeast with the goal of

having each SOYO chapter prepare a scrapbook page about their service projects to be shared at the Parish Life Conference. Has since been introduced to the rest of the Archdiocese. The Miami Diocese set up the project so that each chapter was sent the materials to make a scrapbook page or two along with contact information for mission/charity groups. Was a way to chronicle their history, and also a way to encourage young and old people alike to do good works.

Laney tables the discussion for now so we can finish it after lunch. Her hope for this committee is to produce a series of flyers chronicling the history of each project to put on teensoyo.org. Fr. Purpura would like for us to have an explanatory paragraph and flyer for each one.

XIV. **Parish Life Conferences:** How do we get people interested in doing the Oratorical Festival and Bible Bowl? Laney opens the floor for discussion. Natalie Saliba talks on behalf of the Diocese of the Midwest about her Diocese's efforts to increase participation (which proved very successful); via No SOYO Left Behind, their board spoke to the priests from the various parishes and urged them to encourage participation. Fr. Saba asks each Diocese to share their numbers from the past year's PLCs. For example: Eastern Region had 7 senior Oratorical participants, down from 28 the year before. Bishop THOMAS extols us to remind people constantly—bombardment is not a bad thing. Mentorship is necessary—Oratorical Participants should not be working by themselves. Fr. Saba tells us we need to concentrate, and it is up to us if we want others our age to learn. Let's turn a negative into a positive in the following ways:

- 1) Basic common sense—advertise in bulletins, bombard!
- 2) Presentation, presentation, presentation!
- 3) Ask our clergy how to get involved/participate.
- 4) As officers, we should push to get parents to urge their teens to be involved.

On the issue of partying problems at PLCs: Fr. Purpura reminds us what Metropolitan PHILIP spoke to us about at Leadership Training in Chicago (Fr. Purpura digresses for a moment and extols us to avoid weasel words). We go around the room and share our thoughts and experiences, including how we have dealt with these types of problems. Bishop THOMAS then speaks to us. This is

nothing new: this problem is older than dirt. The only way we can change things is if we get involved in the process and distinguish what side of the fence we're on. Fr. Purpura gives a few closing remarks.

- XV. **Break for Lunch:** Fr. Antony Bahou leads the closing prayer at 1:04 PM.
- XVI. **Meeting Resumes** at 2:05; reopening prayer led by Fr. Fouad Saba.
- XVII. **PLC Wrap-Up:** Laney asks if anyone is interested in having a further conversation about PLC partying problems (new committee: Cathryn Kruse, Katie Thomas, Sabrina Zawahri, Natalie Saliba, Chris Abdelahad, Danielle Sackllah, Nicole Shadid, Mara Shuler, Amy Wallace, Edward Deeb III, Jonathan Sourial, Kh. Hend Kevorkian). Laney adds a closing remark from her experience on the board of DOWAMA. Let's create enthusiasm to get teens involved in PLCs—convert negatives to positives.
- XVIII. **Consecration of New Bishops:** Fr. Purpura shares pictures and introduces us all to the new Bishops in the Archdiocese. Additionally, Bishop Joseph was elevated to Archbishop. Fr. Purpura then recounts his stay in Lebanon and shares some comments the Patriarch made.
- XIX. **Farewell to Fr. Fouad:** We all say goodbye to Fr. Fouad before he leaves to go back to his new parish.
- XX. **Diocesan Breakout Sessions:** Laney has us refer to our Diocesan Goals (which each Diocese drafted at Leadership Training). Laney wants each Diocese to meet and revise their goals within the hour.
- XXI. **Officer Meetings:** Following the Diocesan Breakout Sessions, we break up by office for short discussions. Afterwards, Laney mentions a few things from the Presidents' Meeting: trouble getting people involved with PLCs; transitioning from younger SOYO ages to older ages—Cathryn Kruse had the idea of pairing 17-,18-,19-year olds with the younger ones in a sort of Big Brother/Big Sister approach.
- XXII. **Past SOYO Projects Committee:** We continue with presentations.
 - a. **Youth Month:** Paul Murray. Established by Metropolitan PHILIP in 1963 as a way to raise teen participation in the Church, especially in the Liturgy. Teens encouraged to chant, sing in the choir, pass collection trays, read Epistles, etc. We know this has been successful based on increased teen participation in the life of the Church even during the rest of the year.

Other themed months followed (ie, Fellowship Month, Ladies' Month, etc.). **Next year is the 50th Anniversary of Youth Month!**

- b. **Sacred Gift of Life:** Amy Wallace. Chris Shadid, NAC President in 2006-7, wanted teens to make something by teens, for teens (there was an existing informational packet written by adults). Covers not simply abortion, but also such things as Stem Cell Research, assisted suicide, etc. Sacred Gift of Life Sunday is in January; teens can talk about it, we can give sermons, etc. Fr. Purpura suggests that the packet be updated soon. The main goal is to raise awareness of the Church's teaching on these subject areas. Several years ago, the teens wanted to participate in the March for Life in Washington DC, but Metropolitan PHILIP preferred that they not go and instead challenged them to teach their parishes the Church's teachings.

XXIII. **Unity Committee:** Melissa Khoury presents a powerpoint. To refresh, we decided to form this committee at Leadership Training in Chicago. The main year for the committee this year was to raise awareness. Members of the Committee visited Orthodox churches from other jurisdictions (also stay updated on Assembly of Bishops: <http://assemblyofbishops.org/committees/youth>). Matt Shportun shares how at his Dioceses' Delegates Meeting, the teens went to an OCA church, where the priest spoke to them about relics and other members of the church introduced themselves; the teens who went said this was the highlight of their weekend.

XXIV. **Leadership Training 2012:** Elizabeth Ayoub addresses the commonly-asked question, "Can other teens from our Dioceses attend Leadership Training?" The advisors are opening up the option of inviting parish presidents to join us at Leadership Training; she opens up the floor for feedback. Many teens voice their agreement that this would be a good idea, in large part because it has the potential to give parish presidents a glimpse at the work their Diocesan officers do, in addition to being a valuable leadership experience for these teens. May also encourage more teens to run for Diocesan office. We would hopefully send out packets in the next couple months inviting the presidents to attend and encouraging earlier chapter elections.

XXV. **Leadership Training Survey:** Erin Ghata presents Fr. Philip Rogers' data from the post-Chicago Leadership Training survey we all took. Based on our

recommendations, the youth and spiritual advisors had numerous conversations to make a new schedule for next summer reflecting our feedback. The main gist is to separate the SOYO business meeting from Leadership Training, since the two are very distinct, different things. We will be having our business meeting first, with the goal of taking care of all of the business the first evening (with spillover the following morning if necessary). That afternoon will be devoted to Diocesan meetings. An entire afternoon has been dedicated to the Ropes Course; the subsequent evening will be the formal beginning of Leadership Training with the Keynote of “What does it mean to be a leader?” Each night, the officers will have time together to meet. At the end of the week, there will be a time to reconvene and discuss what each group of officers spoke about. We will also be having “seminar” sessions—15 minute presentation+15 minute discussion.

XXVI. **New Business**

- a. **NAC Arrival Time** – next year, shall we have the NAC officers arrive at the Village a day early to prepare for the meeting? General agreement.
- b. **Al Kafaat** – Alex Younes suggests we incorporate a part of our budget for Al-Kafaat. Fr. Purpura suggests that if other Dioceses want to follow the lead of DOWAMA (see Diocesan reports), we coordinate our efforts through the Archdiocese (as opposed to sending checks directly to Lebanon). He also suggests that Dioceses that want to raise money for Al-Kafaat can grab SOYO Shades order forms from DOWAMA.
- c. **Jacque’s Amendment** – Jacque Wakim thought about adding an amendment to the Constitution providing for the idea of Orthodox Unity as one of the goals of SOYO. Fr. Purpura suggests that those who are interested in working on this draft the wording for such an amendment and then share it with the NAC board, Metropolitan Philip, and the Unity Committee (the big one).
- d. **SOYO Sweatpants** – Karla Samman shares the mock-ups of “Orthodoxize Your Life” sweatpants (and potential clothing line) that her Diocese is planning on producing.
- e. **Fr. Purpura** – there are leftover materials (from the Youth Workers’ conference) about drug and alcohol abuse that we can pick up at our own discretion.

- f. **Chris Abdelahad** – Chris feels that Dioceses shouldn't be hiding fundraising ideas from one another; some Dioceses could benefit from more open sharing of ideas.

XXVII. **Motion to Adjourn:** Carolynn Saba motions to adjourn the meeting at 4:57 PM; Jacque Wakim seconds the motion; unanimously passed.

XXVIII. **Closing Prayer:** Led by Bishop THOMAS at 4:58 PM. His Grace closes by telling us we are awesome.