

PATRIARCHAL GREETING

To the popadias and deaconesses of the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox diocese of the USA, Canada, and Australia on the occasion of their meeting on July 14 - 15, 2011 in Boston, MA.

Most honorable popadia Junia Tolbert,
Beloved in the Lord popadias and deaconesses,

We greet you with fatherly love on the occasion of your annual meeting on July 14 - 15, 2011 in Boston, MA.

We are glad that after your meeting you will all remain in Boston to participate in the 36th Diocesan annual convention which is hosted by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church "Holy Resurrection".

From the correspondence of popadia Junia Tolbert, we understand that your meeting in Boston is memorable because it marks the seventh year of your fellowship with the popadias and deaconesses of the ethnic Bulgarian parishes in your diocese. It is also memorable because you will rejoice with the new deaconesses Vera and Oana from the hosting parish, who, as we have heard, are some of the most active organizers of this meeting.

Those of us in Bulgaria also live and labor according to God's mercy and generosity. This year, on April 4th, God blessed us to canonize the new martyrs of Novo Selo and Batak, who were killed by the Turks in the quelling of the April uprising in 1876. Their memory will be celebrated each year as is fitting: the martyrs of Novo Selo we will celebrate on May 9th; and those of Batak on May 17th. In the great fight between light and darkness, between good and evil, between Orthodoxy and Islam, they decided on their spiritual destiny and instead of the turban they received the halo of sanctity.

Although we do not know all of their names, they have been written in the "Book of life" (Phil. 4:3). They all, most of them women and children, carried in themselves a united spirit of holiness and philanthropy.

We would like to call your enlightened attention to this holiness at the opening of your meeting in Boston. In your daily lives as wives of our priests and deacons in the diocese, you are also called to holiness and should strive towards it by fulfilling God's will. And God's will for you is that together with your husbands, you serve the people of God according to the needs of the times in which you live. The needs of the people in our parishes are well-known: faith, striving for spiritual perfection, helping people to overcome their weaknesses to rise to a higher moral level and to express the nobility of the Orthodox-Christian enlightened soul.

This is how we must serve our people – with love towards God and man – if we want to be on the right path to holiness.

You are fortunate that you have gathered in the name of our Lord with the good will to encourage one another and to recharge your spiritual batteries for an even more zealous service to God's people on the road to salvation.

Therefore you have our patriarchal blessing to grow spiritually through prayer and to achieve holiness so that through it you may serve God and our diocesan members of the USA, Canada, and Australia, together with your beloved husbands, our clergy, for the good of our church and for your salvation.

May God's blessing be upon all of you. Amen.

+ Maxim

Patriarch of Bulgaria