



Remembering the Life of Father Eusebius Stephanou

by Joseph Abbate, President

Father Eusebius had left in his personal will that the Ministry of St. Symeon the New Theologian continue into the future. I would like to share with you what Father Eusebius had written in his will

and which Symeon McKnight had read out loud inside the church where Father's funeral was held. It reads:

(As I prepare my Last Will and Testament, I feel it is incumbent upon me to ask forgiveness from anyone whom I might have offended in the course of pursuing the objectives of the Ministry of Orthodox Evangelism and Spiritual Renewal. If I was unthoughtful and insensitive to anyone's personal needs, I trust he or she will forgive me.

On the other hand, I forgive fellow-priests, members of the Church Hierarchy and lay people who unjustly opposed the Renewal Ministry and to which God had called me to initiate and who could not find anything positive in it since its inception, or who have tried to malign and discredit this labor of faith and love that has been all consuming for me and for which I became a burnt sacrifice before God.

I forgive those who through the years have either ignored my sound recordings and books, articles and generally the extensive writings I have authored, or have unjustly passed biased judgment upon them.

As a founder and director of the St. Symeon the New Theologian Orthodox Brotherhood and Ministry, since its inception in 1968, I encourage my disciples and all



faith-partners, especially the officers and members of the Board of Directors and those who will succeed me in leadership positions **to continue the Ministry of Orthodox Evangelism and Holy Spirit Renewal as a Pan-Orthodox outreach**, where I leave off at my

death.

I charge those who will exercise leadership after my demise with the responsibility of continuing to adhere faithfully to the traditional doctrines, practices and sacramental teachings of our Holy Orthodox Church, avoiding any deviations therefrom.

I further caution them against compromising the spirit and letter of the word of God and spiritual principles and teachings I have expounded and articulated from the day of the birth of the Ministry:

- 1.The perils of religious formalism and spiritual lukewarmness, the letter of religion “that kills.”
- 2.The mandate of Christ for an Orthodoxy of the Spirit “that gives life.”
- 3.The centrality of the lordship, headship and preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ, our soon coming Bridegroom and King.

I further charge those who will come after me to focus emphatically in the word and deed on:

- A.The centrality of the salvation message, namely the message of the Cross of Calvary.
- B.The End-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as foretold by the prophet Joel.
- C.The need for the extraordinary provision of the Holy Spirit Baptism that comes directly from Heaven for infusing in believers a nuptial love for the Divine Bridegroom in preparation for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).
- D.That the evangelical and prophetic thrust of the

Brotherhood and Ministry be preserved and perpetuated so that the end-time message of salvation, deliverance and healing can be trumpeted as widely as possible within and without the Orthodox household of faith, demonstrating apostolic power and in the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

I am mindful in a special way at this time of the exemplary commitment to the Brotherhood and Ministry expressed by the late Nick Paschalydis at the Board of Directors meeting on October 13, 2003, and I quote verbatim from the recorded minutes of that meeting:

"For my part I swear my life and health and whole being to the dedication of seeing your vision, Father, carried out even after the Lord takes you from us."

May such a stirring resolve be an inspiration to all my co-workers and brethren I leave behind).

Father Eusebius †

I would personally like to greet you, the supporters and faith-partners of the Ministry, to give you a report regarding the last few years that Father Eusebius was with us. I know that I was humanly unable to call or write all of you in the fashion that I wished to, but Father's health had deteriorated quickly to the point that he was only on Hospice care for one week. Please forgive me if I had not been able to fill you in completely.

I had tried to keep all of you updated on his health through the years in the newsletters and thank you letters, and sometimes, over the past year, his condition had fluctuated from day to day to the point that we did not know in what frame of mind to find him. He had suffered through several recurring urinary tract infections, which would often effect his memory and mood.

Of course, Father Eusebius had a couple of years earlier suffered a stroke. Though, after spending a few months of being in a wheel chair and at a rehabilitation center to recover. He was never really the same after that. I thank all of those who called or visited him at that time. It was truly a blessing for him.



After he regained his ability to walk, he was able to take a stroll across the street to be with me at the Ministry office. I felt it important for me to leave my full time job and to invest that time at the office where I could watch over Father and to operate the Ministry there. Symeon McKnight was always with Father and became his full-time care-giver. We would often take Father for walks to get some exercise, but when he had been diagnosed with esophagus cancer and went in for radiation treatments, his appetite and health had decreased.

Over the past several months Father Eusebius became so weak, that he was no longer able to carry

on conversations for more than just a few minutes, or not at all. I had updated everyone on his health in several issues of our newsletters and our monthly thank you letters. I am sorry that I was unable to call or write everyone that I wished to, but since Father Eusebius had declined quickly within only one week's time, my plate was full. We placed him on Hospice care in his home. Symeon and I were with him when he had gone home to be with the Lord. He departed at 2:55 Monday morning on the 23rd of May.

I then had to arrange his funeral. It is customary for the Bishop to set the date for a funeral of a priest, and Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta had set it up for the weekend of the 27th. He then had to fly to the island of Crete for the International Church Council which had already been scheduled. Since it was Memorial Day Weekend, which is the busiest time of year for the Destin area, it was nearly impossible for people to travel here or find a hotel room. I warmly wish to thank Father Thomas Guerry for his caring and helping conduct the funeral service at the neighboring Greek Orthodox Church of Sts. Markella and Demetrius. I also wish to thank Father Matthew Carter from Pensacola, Florida and Father Elias Stevens from Mobile, Alabama who also took part in the service. Special thanks to Father Mark Hodges from Lima, Ohio, who drove non-stop all the way.

Metropolitan Alexios had written a letter which was read out loud in the Church after the funeral service. He stated that: *"Father Eusebius was someone who lived his life with the love of Christ in his heart, and left the world a better place by having been with us."* He also had commented that: *"Father Eusebius' legacy will be a lasting one, even to those who never met him, because of the zealous love with which he pursued thinking and*

THE ORTHODOX EVANGELIST

Vol. 50 Summer 2016 No.2

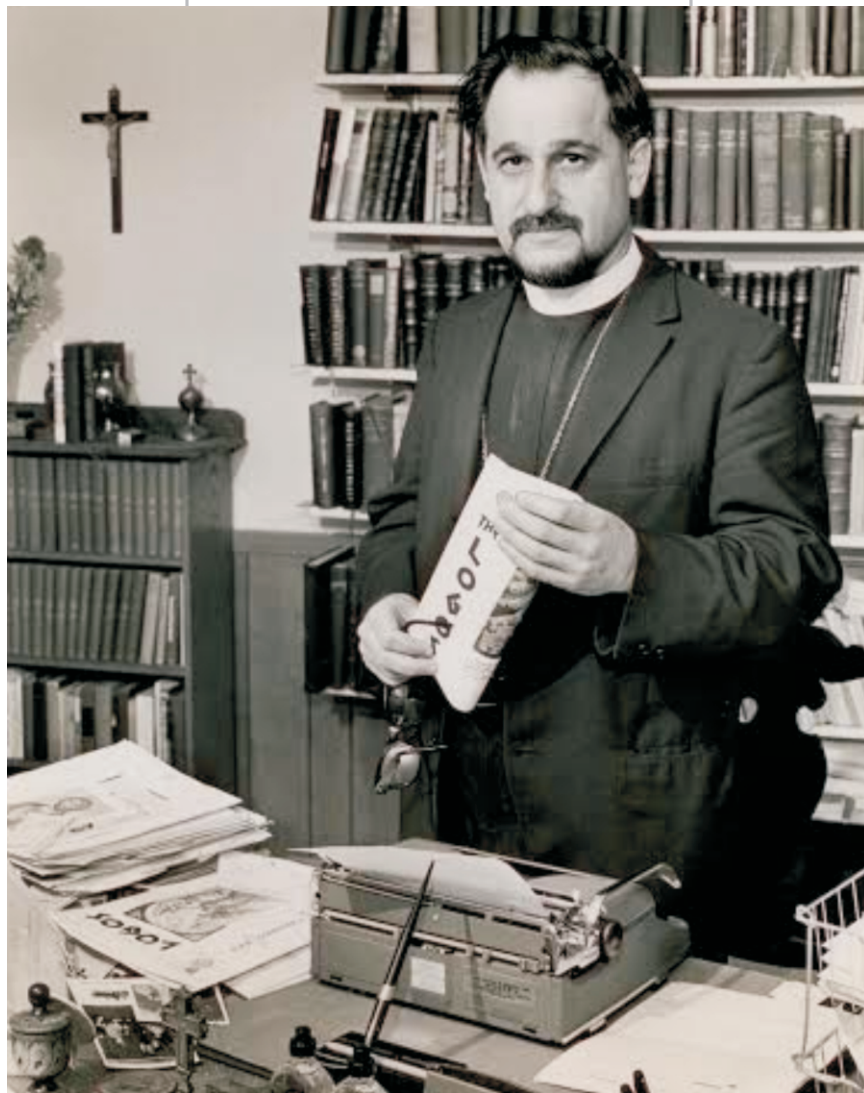
A Newsletter for the promotion of Orthodox Renewal. Published by-monthly by the Orthodox Brotherhood of St Symeon the New Theologian, Inc. Founder-Editor: The Very Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Eusebius Stephanou, Th.D. 276 N. Holiday Road, Miramar Beach, Florida 32550. Phone: (850) 837-1771. St. Symeon Office: 329 N. Holiday Road, Miramar Beach, Florida 32550 Phone: (850) 654-2771. Email: st-symeon-nt@cox.net—Web site: www.stsymeon.org. Articles may be reproduced only with permission. This Newsletter is sent regularly to all those who make a contribution in support of the St. Symeon's Renewal Ministry. Past issues available upon request.

discussing the future of the Orthodox Christianity in these United States of America."

In November of 2014 Metropolitan Alexios had awarded Father Eusebius the "Metropolitan's Award." He truly had a great respect for Father Eusebius and even had him speak in a couple of his parishes under his jurisdiction. This was in a stark contrast to the earlier years that Father Eusebius had struggled in, including the previous Bishop Philip who wanted the deed to the property of the St. Symeon Ministry.

Of course, certain times in the life of Father Eusebius Stephanou had been filled with frustration and discouragement. He had great credentials of being not only a priest, but a Theologian as well as Sub Dean of the Holy Cross Seminary. He also taught at Notre Dame University as associate professor. Having the rank of an Archimandrite and being a prolific and gifted writer, he gained the attention of Archbishop Iakovos who was grooming him to be the very first American born Bishop in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. All this had changed in 1968 when Father Eusebius had embarked on a Ministry of Orthodox Renewal and evangelism as well as initiating the publication of the "Logos" Newsletter. Being one who never beat around the bush, Father Eusebius ruffled a number of feathers among the Orthodox clergy. He had himself witnessed the people

in the pews of the churches not being spiritually challenged and remaining unchanged in their lives. He discerned the situation of the people as being **Sacramentalized but not evangelized**. For him, it was not enough to be Orthodox in name only. Though the Orthodox had the true faith and doctrines, the people needed to know Christ personally. He would personally



tell me that he was grieved that there were no Orthodox teachers and evangelists on the TV and over the radio. He was convinced that it was the Orthodox who would be able to have the greatest impact on the world. Yet, he knew that this could never be achieved in human strength, but only through the same power which enflamed the lives of the Apostles. The life-changing

power which comes from the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In the early 1980s he discovered the writings of St. Symeon the New Theologian and it was as if the heavens were opened. St. Symeon wrote about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and stressed the importance of a personal relationship and consuming love for Jesus Christ. His discovery also demonstrated

that other figures of renewal in the Orthodox Church had preceded Father Eusebius. Father named his chapel in Destin, Florida St. Symeon to commemorate this illustrious figure of the Church.

Father's calling took him around the world. Even though he traveled and preached in such countries as England, Venezuela, Australia, Kenya and others, he always felt a strong moving in his spirit to minister in Greece. During his missionary itinerary there, miracles began to break out in the audiences while he would be speaking. Even though many people were healed and blessed there, sadly, the main

reaction from the clergy there was opposition and ridicule.

The Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Athens was furious with Father and told him that "he caused an earthquake in Greece." Father replied that "*Man cannot cause earthquakes, only God can.*" There was so much of an outcry from the Chancellor there that he wrote Archbishop Iakovos who

called him back to the States. It was always Father's regret that he left Greece.

After traveling and preaching extensively for several years, he pastored the Holy Trinity Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The years of pressure had taken a toll on him, so he asked to be transferred to the Florida Gulf Coast, so he could take it easier during his later years.

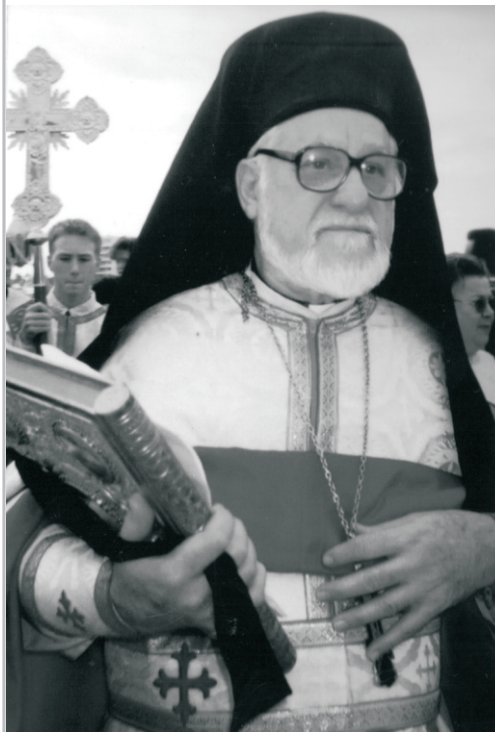
Even though he had a letter from Archbishop Iakovos in which he lauded Father's qualifications for the local parish church, Father Eusebius found the doors of the church locked. The Board of Directors of that church which locked the doors, did not even bother to contact the members of the church who also found themselves locked out. Father decided to conduct the Liturgy on the front steps and told the congregation that *"we were not the only ones to be lock out, because Jesus was also locked out."*

The Lord comforted him when he arrived back at his home to find that an Icon of Jesus in his prayer room had given unction throughout the bottom half of the Icon. The Lord was reassuring him of his obedience and calling. Father Eusebius, who was too tired to travel anymore, decided to build a private prayer chapel in his back yard. But the city of Destin did not allow him to construct one in his back yard, so he had one built a few miles away from his home.

After a good number of supporters of the Ministry would continue to visit him, they convinced him to purchase the lot next door to the chapel and to have a hall put up to meet for fellowship after the services. Father was convinced that it was a sign from the Lord that it was not time for him to retire yet. Then a neighbor in the local area had donated the land behind the chapel in which a guest house was built and the rest was history. A series of Conferences began to be held at the Center which was named after Saint Symeon.

Through all of this, he still was living a life of isolation and rejection which he would share about in the Newsletters. I would often see him behind his typewriter, even into the evening hours. Father Eusebius was never one to slow down, but I believe that all of the years of stress had taken a toll on his body and in 2012 he suffered from a stroke. Though it took several months for him to regain his ability to walk, he never fully recovered.

Since many of the supporters began to pass away or stop visiting, things began to slow down and a couple of Conferences had to be



cancelled. After a long dry spell at the Center, Father had a difficult time of having such a large Center with the insurance expenses, that he actually pondered selling the Center. He used to tell me that *"God was not interested in constructing larger buildings, but building up temples made without human hands"* (Acts 7:48). This was in reference to reaching people abroad with the Gospel.

We talked about the future of the Ministry during various times. It was his will that the Ministry

would continue, even if this meant for those in the Ministry to travel and preach. If they could not come here, then we would could go to them. For us on the Board of Directors of St. Symeon Ministry, we know that the messages which Fr. Eusebius had both delivered on audio recordings and his written messages are too important to lay in silence! Therefore it was agreed that we would not only continue the Ministry which Fr. Eusebius had left behind, but also expand it.

For me personally, I can never forget the very first time I had seen Fr. Eusebius while he was speaking in Chicago. Even though I was only eight years old, I still remember it as though it were only yesterday. I had a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit. God's move there was felt by everyone in attendance.

I can attest that our work in the Ministry was far more difficult than I ever could have imagined. The sacrifices which had to be made were great. Yet, through it all, it was a tremendous honor for me to stand by the side of Father Eusebius Stephanou. His exhortation to the Church was simple. To return to our first Love, Jesus Christ. For this zeal he had and the conviction which his messages brought about, he went the way of all prophetic voices who preceded him. He was ridiculed, rejected and ultimately abandoned by the very ones he was trying to reach. I know of no other person who would have endured to reach out to the Orthodox people which he often said: *"were content with living on spiritual crumbs, when God wants them to live on the whole loaf."* On his Tomb-stone the passage from the Bible is engraved, *"And they shall know that a prophet has been among them"* (Ezk. 2:5). He was truly a prophet for our time!