



IRINEJ

BY THE GRACE OF GOD
BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA
OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Most beloved Clergy and Monastics, Sons and Daughters,
faithful Children of the Eastern American Diocese of our Most Holy Church!

It is with abounding gratitude emanating from a paternal heart,
that We greet you on this most solemn and auspicious occasion
in our collective ecclesial history:

**THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF EPISCOPAL CONSECRATION
OF BISHOP STEFAN OF EASTERN AMERICA AND CANADA
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
13 JULY 1963-2023**

*“He who is greatest among you,
let him be as the younger,
and he who governs as he who serves.”*
(Luke 22:26)

On the solemn commemoration of this, the 60th Anniversary of the Election and Consecration to the Holy Episcopate of His late Grace, the Right Reverend Bishop Stefan of Eastern America and Canada, We offer due tribute to one of Our most esteemed predecessors on the Throne of the Bishops of Eastern America. Elected by the Holy Assembly of Bishops on May 11, 1963, this wholly dedicated servant of God, heeded his apostolic summons: *‘He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves’* (Luke 22:26). As such, Bishop Stefan, who reigned from his consecration on the Feast of the Synaxis of the Holy Apostles, July 13, 1963, to his untimely death on May 10, 1966, dutifully served in fulfillment of the same.

At the time of his election to the Episcopate, the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States of America and Canada found itself in utter turbulence. With three nascent Dioceses having been formed out of the singular American-Canadian Diocese, the express task at hand was the consecration and enthronement of three worthy candidates to their Episcopal Sees. Of the three Dioceses, only one Diocese, the Eastern American and Canadian, found itself without a See, and only trust in God, that the guiding Archpastoral Right Hand of their new bishop would ensure a certain future.

The historic election of the first Bishop of Eastern America and Canada fell upon the shoulders of Protopresbyter Stefan Lastavica, at the time, parish priest in Windsor, Ontario. By his election, the Holy Assembly of Bishops chose to elevate a man of great dignity, a renowned musicologist, whose resonant voice marveled all who heard the same, an avid educator and,

among numerous other admirable qualities, a proven and capable administrator. Summoned to join the 'Table of Hierarchs', with neither residence nor diocesan center, nor even administrative personnel, his was, indeed, the daunting task of reconstituting a fragmented group of parishes, with an insufficient number of clergy to service them, and establishing functional diocesan bodies. Thus, constituting the Diocese of Eastern America and Canada, come Diocese of Eastern America.

Bishop Stefan, took to heart the advice of the Holy Apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy: *'Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress'* (I Tim. 4:14-15). He set about organizing all necessary diocesan bodies and, in due time, succeeded in filling vacant parishes by ordaining four candidates to the holy priesthood. Through his diligent labors and efforts, a new church-school congregation was established in London, Ontario. Bishop Stefan blessed three churches, three schools, five parish homes and two church halls. After three years, he moved the See of the Diocese from Clairton, Pennsylvania to Cleveland, Ohio. Thereby, proving that progression and stabilization were proceeding in all areas of diocesan life. Soon, Bishop Stefan's health began to decline. Afflicted with great concerns, stress, and, most of all, by the unfortunate situation in which our Church found itself on this continent, he passed from this life, in hope of Resurrection, to Life Eternal at the age of 53.

His remarkable episcopate, albeit only three years in duration, fulfilled a lifetime of service, leaving behind a stable local Church – the Diocese of Eastern America and Canada. His good deeds, truly, will live on to the close of the Age. Assured that he has, in verity, heard the words of our Savior: *'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: Enter into the joy of your Lord'* (Matt. 25:23). May Bishop Stefan remember us before the Throne of Almighty God, as we prayerfully remember him with profound and abiding appreciation.

May his Memory be Eternal!

With Archpastoral blessings and paternal love,

+IRINEJ

BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA

E. No. 226

On the Sixth Day of the Month of July in the Year of our Lord, 2023

On the Feast of the Wonderworking Vladimir Icon of the Theotokos

Given in our Episcopal See in the God Protected City of New York