

Extracts from the Report of the General Secretary of “SYNDESMOS”

6th General Assembly, Punkaharju, Finland. 30/07-03/08 1964

Father Stylios

[...]

The General Assemblies of Syndesmos are stations of a holy procession, a pilgrimage on the road of Ecumenical Orthodoxy. The convention of these Assemblies in the several local Orthodox Churches, is a possibility that God's Spirit offers to us so that we could feel the Ecumenical dimensions of our Church. They are the sacred guides in the house of the Orthodox family all over the world, in order to know and to be known by our family. Because, as characteristically Saint Irineos teaches us. “although the Church is scattered all over the world, she very carefully keeps the faith received of the Apostles and their disciples, as if it resided in the same one house. Likewise the Church believes us having one soul and the same heart and, accordingly, proclaims and teaches and offers as if possessing one mouth. And although the dialects all over the world, are unlike, nevertheless, the power of tradition is *one and the same*”.

With this feeling we begin our work and we believe, that, by the supplication of the Holy Apostles from the Seventy: - Silas, Kriskontos and Epenetos, whose nameday we celebrate today, this Assembly will be one more considerable station in the life and history of the Orthodox Youth.

[...]

2. Essential Elements

Now, if one wished to penetrate into the spiritual foundation of Syndesmos, he could distinguish in its structure, the following elements:

a) *The Pan-Orthodox element.* The founders of Syndesmos represented mainly three currents of Orthodox tradition: 1) The Greek current, which especially carries with itself the values of tradition and integrity; 2) the current of the Russians of the Diaspora, who, by an expression and education especially French, carry mainly the values of progress, of mysticism and of an opening to the world; and 3) the current of the Arab Orthodox of the Antiochene Patriarchate, whose presence contributes to the powerful relations of the great spiritual families of Orthodoxy. This very powerful composition of the Orthodox traditions inside the nucleus of Syndesmos has given Syndesmos from the very beginning, as its essential element, the Inter-Orthodox and Pan-Orthodox element.

b) *The Spiritual and missionary element.* Syndesmos, is not interested in all kinds of Movements of Youth (as for example in friendly clubs, athletic groups, etc...) but in the Movements of spiritual renewal and mission inside the Church, in the Movements which especially are occupied with spiritual education of the young people. And it is interested in co-ordinating the Movements whose members feel their responsibility as members of the Church and they translate this feeling of theirs in missionary work. Thus Syndesmos, gets the characteristics of an authentic and

renewing Movement inside the Church, a Movement, however, which recognises completely the Ecclesiastic hierarchy and its relation with the faithful.

c) *The Ecumenical element.* Syndesmos constitutes the ecumenical opening of the local Movements. It is born in an ecumenical encounter and brings out as its basic element the tendency and quest of unity and co-operation of all Christians. Syndesmos, constitutes also the natural road towards the inter-confessional relations of Orthodox Movements. These inter-confessional relations are up-to-date now, but they are not easy things. In order then to be fruitful, they must take place in the proper way. In Syndesmos we believe that the way towards inter-confessional relations pass, first from the area of inter-Orthodox co-operation. And that the natural outlet of the Movements to Ecumenism must be made through Syndesmos. Syndesmos, therefore, is an essential means of helping the Orthodox Young people in their relations with the non-Orthodox. Because in these relations, we must proceed as Orthodox, conscious of the Ecumenicity of Orthodoxy, living the catholic Orthodox tradition and not as single members of a local national Church or Movement.

And all these elements are bound in a basic one: *The Youth element.* The Movements of Syndesmos are Movements of Youth. This is an element of vitality. And it is encouraging to have the young generations of the Church undertake the Movements of renewal within the Church.

[...]

6. Church and Youth

[...]

b) *The practical line.* This spiritual effort, in order to be successful, needs, of course, the help and assistance of the appropriate practical means. Such means could be:

- i. The creation in every Orthodox Church of a special “Youth Office” for the study and organization of the Church among the youth.
- ii. The foundation of Youth Centres in every parish or, at least, in every import district of the big cities, for the education and guidance of the youth.
- iii. The reinforcement and the utilization of the existing Youth Movements. The Youth Movements could and ought to be the bridge by which the Church would come nearer to the young generation.

I suggest that these points - and every similar point that will come up during our discussion - be proposed to the competent Church authorities by a special message of the present Assembly.

The main theme under discussion in this Assembly is: “The Orthodox Youth in the Modern World”. In other words, we have come here, from all parts of the earth in order to discuss and find out the ways for the young men and women living in our present world. We have come here in order to open ways to the young men and women living in our modern world. We have come, also, in the hope that we should be able to help the Church understand and carry out better its duties towards the contemporary youth. This is the reason, why our Assembly could be called in a most special way: “An Assembly of Responsibility”. In fact, in our age of space-travelling, of rapid social change, but also of the great inter-Church movements and

conversations, we are called to say something important and substantial. We have to bear good witness to Orthodoxy. We have to kindle a light. We have to bring a message of life. And this we can do, only by preaching in an effective and, at the same time, practical way the eternal gospel of Faith, Hope and Charity. Let us pray God, the Almighty, the Father of all grace and Lover of mankind, to grant us this light and strength so that we may prove worthy of this great work, of this great responsibility.