

SAGA
Spartanburg-Anderson Gay Alliance

Interview with Bishop George Hyde, August 30, 1975.

Personal Statistics:

Full Name: George Andrew Hyde
Born: July 2, 1923, Chattanooga, Tn.
Father: James Thomas Hyde
Mother: Bessie Kile (Hyde)

Schools: Jerome Jones Elementary School, Atlanta, Ga.
Hoke Smith Junior High, Atlanta, Ga
Tech High School, Atlanta, Ga.
Central High School, Elbereton, Ga,

1926: Afflicted with Infantile Paralysis (Polio)

1927: Family relocated to Atlanta, Ga.

1931:

Began treatment and therapy, and the first of three operations, to correct deformity of right leg and foot crippled by Polio. Three or four months out of every year (from the age of 8 years up to about the 14th year) was spent with leg and foot in a corrective cast. During this period and up to the age of 16 years (1939) attended a Southern Baptist church. In 1939 became a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

1941

"In 1941 (at the age of 18 years) I began studies toward becoming a cleric within the Roman Catholic Church. I entered the preparatory seminary as a student sponsored by the Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta. It was during these seminary years that I became knowledgeable of persons having a "same-gender affectional and sexual orientation." Concurrently I learned that society-at- large- including the church - seemed to generalize about these people, using some rather unchristian terminology in speaking of them. I questioned, how is it that "pious Christians" are repulsed by such person(s).. Should not the Christian attitude be one of concern, compassion and love.....a concern more for one's spirituality than one's sexuality? To over-emphasize the negative is what makes the Church a place that such persons do not want to attend".

"But going back a few years: during my junior high and high school years my life was rather uneventful. During this period in my life (from about the 8th grade to completing the 12th grade) I was somewhat of an isolationist. I did not go in for the usual teen-age/high school parties and sports events. During my high school days in Atlanta I was a member of the "Atlanta Youth Symphony" where I was "first chair" french horn. I also played in the high school marching band (being a nut for every march ever written by Sousa). The nearest I ever came to high school sports was when I played french horn in the school band during the half-time of a football game. As much as I loved and enjoyed music even this was a big bore, all of which did not endear me to my fellow students".

"At one particular point in time (when I was about 16 years old) my Baptist pastor engaged me in a rather deep conversation about life in general and our relationship to God. In the course of this rather in-depth conversation I brought up the subject of unexpressed emotional feelings, and how one's thinking could be unbalanced if one's feelings about oneself, about one's interaction with others, and with God were not in balance and harmony. I touched but lightly on "spirituality vs sexuality". and the pastor went bonkers! . He quickly remembered another meeting and that he was late, and terminated our interaction. The man must have had a "loose tongue" for following that experience I heard several people making snide remarks about me being "a faggot", "a queer" and "a festive person". Yes, all of these terms and expressions were used. Given that Elberton (my city of residence at that point in time) was a small town of about eight thousand people "gossip" was rather common. A cousin of my same age who attended the same church, whose father was a senior deacon, and whose mother was volunteer secretary to the pastor, began occasionally to make aside comments within my hearing (and within the hearing of others) about "queers". This was usually accompanied by a "joke" or "funny" story about gays. Is it possible that "cousin Mac" had gotten his ideas from the pastor via his mother and/or father?"

"But back to the seminary experience. I found the seminary atmosphere to be one of a tempest of legalistic self-righteous modern pharisees. In time, through reading in the seminary library, I became aware of the (Eastern) Orthodox Church and made inquiries which responses indicated to me that the Orthodox Church was less legalistic and pharisaic than the Roman Catholic Church, and that in both doctrine and structure the Orthodox Church was more representative than the Roman Church of the Church of the first millenniumbefore a series of estrangements from the ninth to eleventh centuries drove a wedge between the eastern and western churches..

1945

The incident which in time was to sever my ties with the seminary and the Roman Church was an accusation made by a fellow-seminarian saying that he had seen another seminarian and myself "hugging and fondling one another in an immoral way", which was an example of the self-righteousness which saturated seminary life. This accusation was made at "Morning Chapter" (an assembly of the entire student body in chapel during which students were invited to charge themselves or a fellow student with a particular sin or violation of a seminary rule, and to ask the forgiveness of their fellow students for this offence) . The embrace was harmless and far from being an immoral act. For some weeks I had been talking to one particular friend about leaving the seminary. On this occasion I had told him that more or less I had made up my mind to leave. In response he turned and embraced me and said that he was sorry and that he would miss me, and encouraged me not to be too hasty in making such decision. That was it! From my perspective -between friends - his was a very normal reaction, not "abnormal". But given that it suited the pharisaic agenda of the higher powers it was turned into something that it was not. But this did give me occasion for pause, and a question: "why was this happening again, as it did in high school? Is there something deep inside that I don't recognize about myself, or do not want to recognize?

"In his "fatherly comments" the Seminary Superior made a veiled mention of the "sin of Sodom , and then inquired if I had any comment and if I wanted "the prayers of my brothers for the strength to rise above such temptations in the future." I was so angered at this that it took me a minute or so before I felt I could make a response without making a fool of myself. In a voice as calm as I could muster, and hopefully maintain some dignity, I disputed the accusation and the meaning applied by my "accusing brother".

"As was the procedure in such cases, I took up a position in the center of the chapel, facing the Father Superior, and after asking permission to speak (another medieval practice carried over to the 20th century) launched into a discourse which accused the ecclesiastical powers in the church, and particularly in the seminary, of being "modern pharisees" in so overemphasizing one's sexuality over one's spirituality that it had become an end in itself. I also chastised the "construction of spiritual closets" in every corner of the church for isolating those determined by pharisaic-dysfunctional minds to be violators of the moral and ethical standards legislated by God."I pointed out

possible misunderstanding of Scripture in describing a same gender affectional and sexual lifestyle as “the sin of the Sodomites” given that in Ezekiel 18:49 the sin of the people of Sodom was that “they never helped the poor and the needy; they were proud, and engaged in loathsome practices...” And while in the Book of Genesis we are given an account of the “men of the city” of Sodom gathering at Lot’s house and demanding that some (angelic) visitors there be brought out “so that we may know them”, given what is said in Ezekiel one is confused as to whether they wanted to “know them” in a social or sexual way. Generally this event is interpreted as “sexual”. A constant theme within most of the church is that homosexuality is “against nature. Different passages from Scripture are presented as proof, i.e. Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman: it is an abhorrence” (Lev. 18:22) No one should attempt to obscure the fact that there is a clear Biblical injunction against same sex behavior. Perfectly clear? No, not really. In context God is speaking to Moses to avoid the behavior of the Canaanites; to stay away from the pagan practice of same sex temple rites. Scripture is not describing a loving, committed same sex orientation. I said to the entire gathering. “It is natural for hair to grow, but each one of us - almost on a daily basis - engage in something that is against nature.....by shaving the hair on our faces. Let me give you a lesson in theology, novice that I am in this science, if our sexuality, like life itself, is endowed by God then in and of itself it cannot be against nature or abnormal. It is, I suppose, what we make of it. Sadly you make of it something that is compulsive.”

“I concluded what one friend called my “Martin Luther Outburst” by saying, “can we be “pious Christians” and not be repulsed and sickened by homosexuality? My answer to this question is that feelings of concern and love, of compassion, should come to our minds before repulsion. As a professed Christian I cannot be repulsed by any person because of his homosexual or heterosexual lifestyle, but you obviously do not understand this. Are you not aware of the Biblical admonition that all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God, and that only he who is without sin can cast the first stone?”

“I have to express my displeasure at what I have seen inside this seminary, with the many generalizations about faith, doctrine, morality, ethics. You go whichever way the wind blows, it seems. Your decidedly negative attitude and theology about “homosexuality is far removed from the caring and loving faith that we all take part in. God is a just God, as well as a caring and loving God. From my perspective you are not a fit representative of Him. You do not recognize that in both categories there are people just looking for someone to love and accept them. Please, let us not dance around a problem that we create.”

”I have made an effort to conform to the doctrinal, moral and ethical standards legislated by Christ and the Apostles, but realize that I come up short, and certainly I am not in a position to cast a stone at anyone else. But you..have surrendered any right to cast the first stone..”.

“The “Queers” and “faggots”, as you elect to describe persons of a same gender sexual and affectional orientation, in their hearts are no different from any other poor sinner in our midst. We “pious seminary people” – allegedly celibate, ways “natural” to our orientation, far removed from the drastic sin of homosexuality”. I think it is safe to say that Christianity....the Church....has often ignored the homosexual, except to constantly remind him of a coming judgment. They do not need such constant reminder, nor do they need any special invitation to repent, but they do need the Church to be that hospital that God made for themand for all others, irrespective of “sexual orientation”. We know that Christ and the Apostles legislated for “the faith once and for all delivered”, for doctrinal, moral and ethical standards for our well-being; to keep us well-guided on the road to salvation. Those who treasure the sacramental life of the Church know this to be true. The sacramental grace given through penance, the sacramental life of the church and pastoral counseling certainly has brought miraculous healing to the lives of many faithful — homosexual and heterosexual. But the opportunity to receive this grace must be presented better to those who really need it, in ways they can understand. They must be presented and preached as real communion with God and fellowship with fellow Christians must be given to the struggler, as the thing he has been longing for.”

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"If you suspect or think that I have such "sexual sin" as implied by a brother-seminarian, instead of chastising me, instead of condemning me, instead of slamming the church door shut in my face, instead of pushing me into a "spiritual closet" that you have constructed in some corner of the church, you should open wide your arms and embrace me as a pilgrim in quest, as your brother in the Fatherhood of God.....who like yourself, has a soul in need of nourishment. But, alas! After today's experience I feel moved to dedicate myself to tearing from their hinges all of the doors of the "spiritual closets" which you have constructed in every nook and corner of the church for the purpose of shutting away those who do not measure up to the standards of your dysfunctional self-righteousness.. I have nothing more to say except, perhaps, to pray that the Spirit of the Living God will Fall Afresh on You and Your Pastoral Outreach."

(Here it was pointed out that a seminarian took down in shorthand this dialogue and later sent a typed copy to Hyde. He admits that this transcript rather than his memory is the source of such detail of what was said on this occasion).

" After a brief stay in nearby Saint Louis I returned to Atlanta, Ga. intent on returning to my interest in teaching. In 1945 following correspondence with ecclesiastics of the Orthodox Catholic Church, I was formally received into Orthodoxy by a confession of faith and chrismation (anointing) by Archbishop Christopher Contogeorge of Philadelphia on January 7, 1946, during one of his several "mission trips" into the Southern States.

1946

In early 1946 (March?) I took up the cause of an individual who had been denied communion by the pastor of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Atlanta, because he declined to follow the directives of the priest to admit in confession that his same gender affectional and sexual orientation was a "grave sin and an abomination" which endangered his salvation. This incident started when this person had been denied absolution (forgiveness) after soliciting spiritual guidance from the priest before whom he had made confession. A lengthy verbal encounter followed during which the priest demanded that the person admit that homos4exuality was a sin of abomination unto God, or else he would be denied Holy Communion. When he declined to submit as was demanded the priest screamed at him: "get out of my church".

The next day (Sunday) when this individual approached the altar to receive communion he was by-passed by the priest. Caught a bit off-guard this individual seemed at first to be in shock, and remained standing at the communion rail for a minute or so after the administration of communion had been completed. During the following week news of this incident reach me via a friendly assistant priest at Sacred Heart Church who was aware of my own "rebellion" against the attitudes of the Roman Church and its clergy. After my priest friend got his permission, I was given the identity and phone number of this particular individual and arranged a meeting with him. We discussed what response, if any, he should make to the attitude and actions of the Roman priest. We more or less agreed that some sort of response was called for, and agreed that the next Sunday we would stand side by side at the communion rail, and if either or both of us were by-passed we would continue standing until the end of the mass. As we anticipated not only was he by-passed but I was also, apparently deemed by the priest to be "guilty by association". The fact that by then I had bolted the RC church for the Orthodox Catholic Church probably influenced the actions of the priest in addition to all else. "

"Through my interaction with both lay friends and clergy at Sacred Heart Church we learned somewhat of comments being made pro and con about what was going on. Interestingly, about a half dozen "closeted individuals" contacted one of us directly and voiced their support for our cause. Subsequently we met with these supporters and solicited their opinion as to what our next move should be.

My first approach was to the Bishop of the Diocese (with whom I had a long time fraternity). The Bishop did not take any corrective action, though he expressed some empathy. Next I encountered the parish priest (at Sacred Heart Church), who had been my mentor in my earlier preparation for joining the Roman Church., and was solidly rebuffed.

“Subsequently I proposed to those making up our small band that we should close ranks and together function as an independent, reformed Faith Community, given that the “institutional churches” preferred to close their doors in our faces rather than to invite us in with open arms, as Christ taught was the due of those in quest. There was unanimous agreement for this provided I would agree to function as the interim Coordinator.”

“A group of seven initially met on Saturday evenings and/or Sunday afternoon at the apartment of one or the other of the participants. While a modest Bible study and discussion took place, most of our meeting time was taken up with the expression of opinions of how to coordinate in a harmonious doxology spirituality and sexuality. I shared with our constituency that in my opinion of Christianity, as legislated by Christ and the Apostles was that every person in quest should be received and accepted with Christian -love, and as far as “sins” were concerned to exhibit toward them the same kind of compassion that Christ Himself exhibited toward the woman caught in adultery and the Samaritan woman at the well. . In fact this became our “standard”a concern more for one’s spirituality than one’s sexuality, At this point in time I was engaged as a music teacher (band and orchestra) in the Atlanta School System where I met John Augustine Kazantks, formerly a Bishop of the Orthodox Church in Greece, who had been deprived of his Office when he admitted a same gender sexual and affectional orientation (although he had been faithful to the vow of celibacy taken at the time of his ordination). Kazantks had immigrated to America and was employed by the Atlanta Schools system as a teacher of Greek. Bishop Kazantks soon began to take part in the activities of our group and early on began to lend his expertise to our further development and stability. By early June 1946 the group had grown to 19 participants....four of whom were supportive non-gays. The balance was made up of ten men and five women. At this point Bishop Kazantks was asked to accept the role as pastor of the group and to mold it into a functioning parochial congregation. He declined because of his unfamiliarity with English and because of his age. He did, however, recommend to the group to accept me as their spiritual leader, and he would ordain me to the priesthood. And thus it came about on July 1, 1946 that I was ordained to the Orthodox ministry by Bishop Kazantks. The service of ordination took place in a meeting room of the Winecoff Hotel in Atlanta, set up as a chapel. The cost of the meeting room was paid by the management of the Cotton Blossom Room, a gay bar in the same hotel”

“As a parish entity the group selected the name, “The Church of the Blessed Sacrament”, being a reference to the Sacrament of the Eucharist Shortly we learned that both the Roman Catholic and Protestant Episcopal churches had congregations operating under the name of “Blessed Sacrament”. In response our group changed its name from “Blessed Sacrament” to “Holy Eucharist” – again in reference to the Eucharistic Communion denied to gay persons Over a period of time we came to be known in common usage simply as “the Eucharistic Catholic Church”. Corporately the organization was identified as the “American Catholic and Apostolic Church”. During the month .of December 1946 a total of 33 people (formerly aligned with the Roman Catholic, Protestant Episcopal, and various other Protestant confessions of faith), received the Sacrament of Chrismation (anointing with oil) thus becoming organic and spiritual members of the Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Confession of Faith. This group formed the charter membership of the Holy Eucharist Congregation “

“While press releases announcing the formation of the new congregation were sent to the Atlanta Journal. they were not printed. Empathetic “insiders” reported to us that the influential RC and Episcopalian churches in Atlanta had threatened the local papers that if they gave publicity to our organization they might cancel their church notices which made up the bulk of the Saturday Church page of the local papers. I never put much stock in this story. Simply, I think, our press releases were not printed into a new story because they were not “news” in the sense of what the publishers considered to be “news”. For the most part our congregational growth was dependent upon “word of mouth”. For the most part our congregational growth was dependent upon “word of mouth”.

"When news of what was going on filtered down to the First Methodist Church of Atlanta, located on Peachtree Street just across the street from Sacred Heart Church, the pastor initiated a meeting with his Roman Catholic counterpart to discuss how to deal with a "common enemy".....the "homosexual lobbyists". According to a junior priest at Sacred Heart (a friend of many years) the Methodist pastor asked of the RC pastor, "why do you think it took you so long to recognize that this man (meaning myself) was both a 'queer' and trouble maker? I recognized that in him the first time I saw him." When this conversation was revealed to me I wrote a letter to the Methodist pastor questioning his pastoral outreach and saying that I had been told of his branding me as "queer". I closed the letter with these words: "it may be that the old saying is true, that it takes one to know one". That was the only time in all of my years as a priest and later as bishop that I made such rebuttal or retaliation"

November-December 1946

"Although ignored by the local press, the "word" about who we were began to spread. Every now and then someone would ask: "are you the pastor of that queer church?" To this day I cannot understand why we were automatically assumed to be a "gay church" simply because we had a pastoral outreach to gays. We also had a pastoral outreach to blacks, but no one ever called us a "black church". We also had heterosexuals in our congregations - non-gays,, both white and black – but they did not call us a "heterosexual church". And equally, total strangers (plus a few acquaintances) would ask: "are you queer, too?" My standard response to this was, " are you asking for information or asking for a date?" No more questions out of that person. " Later on I altered that to, "is that a question or a proposition?" (don't remember from whom I borrowed that)

" In early November 1946 the Eucharistic Catholic congregation was able to rent a residence near downtown Atlanta which provided space for a chapel that would seat about fifty people plus a couple of meeting rooms and living quarters for the pastor. The first formal congregational service was officiated here on Christmas Eve 1946. We had 85 people in attendance....standing room only! As we exited the service about 1:30 A.M. we were confronted by a half-dozen rather loud and undisciplined persons who "cat-called" to us with such gems as, "you're going to burn in hell" and "you are an embarrassment to humanity". Obviously through some source they had heard of our midnight Christmas Service and felt obligated to "protest". As they began to climb back into their car one of them bent down to pick up a small stone which he threw into our midst. This stone hit me about an inch from my right eye. One of our people, standing slightly behind me bent down and picked up the stone and readied himself to return the throw. I detected this and quickly stopped his movement and took the stone from him. At some point in the confusion I dropped the stone into my shirt pocket, since later on I detected it there when I was preparing for bed. For whatever reason, I put that stone on the top of my dresser and thus it has been preserved all of these years. I have a skin blemish where the stone hit me in the face.....my "mark from Cain" as one person has said."

"On Easter weekend in 1947 or 1948, I don't remember which year it was, the Sunday morning Atlanta papers announced to its readership that the evening before the Atlanta police had raided a homosexual party at Atlanta's rather prestigious Cox-Carlton Hotel. The names, home address, and work place of those arrested were revealed. I don't remember what was given as the "charges". I think it might have been "disorderly conduct" or some such. Whatever the rhyme or reason, I do recall that the reporter used the word "homosexual" a couple of times. In consequence of this article many jobs were lost. An example: the manager of Atlanta's most prestigious jewelry store not only lost his job but was asked to vacate his apartment, which was located in a private home. My newspaper clippings of this story have long since disappeared. Relatively recently I sought to get a xerox copy from the archives of the Atlanta paper, but was unsuccessful. "

"In somewhat of a response to the police giving out to the newspapers the place of employment of those arrested we decided to "picket" the home of Mayor William B. Hartsfield. About a dozen of us went to his home in the Grant Park section of Atlanta and simply stood on the sidewalk in front of the house. No shouting, no signs, just us. In a few

be doing. I need to point out that we did not want to sully the ministry in which we were engaged by becoming involved in "politics".

"The members of the Eucharistic Catholic congregation immediately stepped forward to lend assistance to those who lost jobs and/or were evicted from apartments. The conference rooms were converted into sleeping quarters with cots and floor pallets being brought in. Some of those who lost their jobs took temporary positions as ushers in local movie theaters, counter workers in drug store lunch room, line servers in a local cafeteria, and assorted other low-paying jobs. The owner of a Funeral Home in Decatur, Ga. - a small town adjacent to Atlanta - also owned a neighborhood movie theater, and provided several jobs at both his funeral home and movie house, in appreciation (he said) for the positive turn around for the better of a gay son after he became affiliated with the church. During all of this turmoil Dr. Venice Bloodworth, an Atlanta psychologist, stepped forward with an offer of free counseling not only for those denigrated by the newspaper article but to any gay person-at-large traumatized by the institutional church. For the next year or so we frequently referred persons to Dr. Bloodworth. Interestingly, as time passed this weekend came to be called "Black Easter".

"During the period from 1947-1950 the emerging Eucharistic Catholic Congregation was a frequent victim of harassment from several sources.....ranging from vandalism of property by the "butch-type heterosexual" to rocks through windows by segregationists who were offended by a racially integrated congregation, as well as the wagging tongues of otherwise responsible heterosexual "professed Christians". It is to the credit of those constituting this "gay-oriented religious community" that they never retaliated nor responded in kind to such detractors. Again, we took pains to did shy away from being political and from turning our church interests-activities into a "civil (or human) rights" movement."

By 1950 the membership of the Holy Eucharist congregation in Atlanta was about 10% black which 'invited' two or three demonstrations by the KKK. It was most unacceptable in 1940-s Atlanta, Ga. to have whites and blacks sitting together.....even in church At the time we did not consider that we were doing anything "special".....but rather were only being ourselves, and so we did not maintain any detailed records. I would estimate that prior to our merger with the Orthodox Catholic Church of America in 1957 our membership was about 75% gay, with congregations in six States and twelve cities, for a total membership of about 2, 500 people."

"Interestingly, we never found a wide-acceptance from within the larger "gay community". With the advent in the 1960's and subsequently of such entities as "Integrity" (Episcopalian), "Dignity" (Roman Catholic), "Evangelicals Concerned", and the "Metropolitan Community Church" we more or less ran into a "retaining wall". While individually and collectively these organization addressed and served some needs of the so-called "gay community" their appeal to gays was somehow different than ours. The difference, I think, was that we emphasized one's spirituality rather than sexuality and set the same moral standards for our gay constituents as we did for our non-gay members.. Our feeling was that if one could come to terms with his spirituality his sexuality would take care of itself. We also placed great emphasis on striving to live within the spiritual, moral and ethical norms or standards legislated by Christ and the Apostles for all people. This, of course, was "death" to the practice on Saturday nights of multiple sex partners in the men's room and bushes. At the risk of being misunderstood, I must say that a considerable number of individuals making up these different organizations thought of their sexuality as little more than a series of glandular experiences punctuated by a cigarette.

1950

"During the first five or six years I was joined by several priests who left the Roman Church in order to become a part of the pastoral outreach to the gay community as practiced by the Eucharistic Catholic Church. In 1950 I centered our ministry in Washington, DC where I established a group of "lay ministers" and priests known as the "Society of Domestic Missionaries". One unique feature of the Domestic Missionaries was that they supported themselves and

their ministry in secular jobs , and by exercising good work and social habits exhibited that gay people were basically good, decent and responsible persons. In brief, they took the church into the work place....to where people spent a goodly portion of their day. The Domestic Missionaries were at least moderately successful, although not infrequently confronted with some radical opposition. One group of detractors made it their business (when they learned of a Domestic Missionary working for a particular employer) to mail letters to employers outlining in great detail that (1) they had a gay person in their employ (although not all of the "Domestic Missionaries" were gay.) and (2) that they and their "organization" would blackball this particular business so long as it gave "refuge to such individuals whose lifestyle was an offence to God. " An example: the Washington Hospital Center employed three Domestic Missionaries (2 as admitting clerks and 1 as a community relations clerk), and upon receiving such "resume" as mentioned suddenly, without prior notice, notified the three employees that their jobs were being done away with, and that at the moment there were no vacancies (other jobs) for them to fill."

"During this general period a young man appeared at the door of the residence of the Domestic Missionaries. He said that he had "heard" about the Eucharistic Catholic Church and its positive outreach into the gay community. He revealed that his father had killed his mother and that he had been living with a married sister who made life miserable for him because of his sexual orientation. On his own he had left her residence in Detroit and come to Washington to seek me out. He was taken in and after a few days of getting settled I sought to enroll him in the District of Columbia schools but was denied because I was not his legal guardian. This initiated a confab between me and the Board of Education. I questioned why it was that at the present time the Board of Education was paying (the current minimum wage) to high school drop outs to return school, but a boy who wanted to attend school without such hand out was denied the opportunity. When my appeals seemed to continued to fall on deaf ears via letter I placed the matter before President John Kennedy. While my letter to the White House was never acknowledged, I did shortly thereafter receive notification from the School Board that our "student" could be admitted. This boy graduated from high school in Washington and later entered college. Today he is a Ph.D on the faculty of a highly acclaimed University. About this same time a Juvenile Court Judge gave us (the Church) custody of a teen- (diagnosed as having conflicts with his developing sexuality) who had been very much a problem in an assortment of foster homes and in a District of Columbia facility for teens who were a disciplinary problem. We tried to keep this from the press but somehow it leaked out. I mention this only to show that in some quarters we were respected Unfortunately over the years the newspapers articles about this have disappeared."

1945-1957

"Through Bishop John Kazantks I was able to establish contact with several "ethnic Bishops" of the Eastern Orthodox Church: Archbishop Joseph Klimowicz, Russian Orthodox Bishop of Springfield, Mass., Archbishop Fan Noli, Albanian Orthodox Church in America, Bishop Konstantine Jaroshivch, Albanian Archdiocese, and Archbishop Clement Sherwood, the Orthodox Catholic Church of America. These prelates agreed to set up a program for my further theological education. Archbishop Fan Noli became my instructor in theology and pastoral outreach; Archbishop Klimowicz was my instructor in doctrine, Bishop Jaroshivch was my instructor in ecclesiology, and Archbishop Sherwood my instructor in diocesan and pastoral administration. Generally I engaged in self study plus instructional letters from each bishop as the need indicated. My schedule was set to devote four hours per day, three days per week to study Each three months I spent a long weekend in the company of one or the other of the bishops, engaging in "practical experience" and oral examination. This more or less "extension program" was the forerunner of a later, more formal, seminary program of the Orthodox Catholic Church of America." I went to New York on May 7, 1957 to be elevated to episcopal dignity within the Orthodox Catholic Church of America (which had conceded provisional membership status to our Eucharistic Catholic Congregations in 1955). I met on May 6, 1957 with Michael Itkin who had been corresponding with me for a couple of years, expressing a desire to become a priest with a pastoral outreach to gays in New York City. Itkin presented me with authentic-looking documents which attested to his having been received into Orthodox Christianity by Abp. William Ernest James Robertson of the African Orthodox Church and licensed by Robertson as a "lay missionary". Allegedly he was at the time the lay minister or coordinator of a small

congregation. Subsequently I learned that his documents were false with forged signatures. Itkin "talked" a good story and I was completely "taken in" – at least momentarily. The next day, May 7, 1957 I was consecrated Bishop at the hands of Archbishop Clement Sherwood (Orthodox Catholic Church of America), assisted by Bishop Maurice Parkin of Philadelphia and William Ernest James Robertson, of the African Orthodox Episcopate....the same who allegedly licensed Itkin to organize a mission group in New York. Abp. Robertson provided me with some background information on Itkin which completely invalidated all that he had told me. It serves no purpose to go into detail about this and how in time all ties with Itkin were severed. Let it suffice to say that in my opinion Itkin was an "ecclesiastical con man". It is possible that from time to time he did sincerely quest after God, but if so it is my opinion that it was only a passing fancy."

"My elevation to hierarchical dignity on May 7th took place at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in New York. In addition to Bishops Clement Sherwood, Maurice Parkin , and William Ernest James Robertson, four other Bishops participated: Bishop Joseph Klimowicz, Russian Orthodox Bishop of Springfield, Ma.,, Archbishop Fan Noli, Albanian Orthodox Church in America, Bishop Nicholas Jaroshivch, Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and Bishop Konstantine Jaroshivch, Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese."

"In early 1960 we acquired a ten room Victorian house on Park Road in Washington which became our "chancery" and also housed three seminarians and three "worker-ministers" of the Society of Domestic Missionaries". During our first year we had some rather notable visitors — a representative of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston, Cardinal Cushing visited. The Cardinal, I was told, was interested in our "unique apostolate". Several other ecclesiastics from various of the mainline Protestant Denominations made like-visits. About a year after the death of President John Kennedy we had two other visitors....from the FBI. They made inquiry about a David Ferrie who allegedly had interacted somehow with one or more persons then being investigated relative to events leading up to the death of the president. All I could tell them was that previously we had several written inquiries from Ferrie asking for information about the Church, and that upon one occasion he had visited with us. Two or three times since then I have had inquiries from different persons who, apparently, learned of this visit and inquiry via the "Freedom of Information Act".

I have never thought of using the "Act" to get information about how we might be mentioned in the FBI files. "In 1965 I relocated to Hartwell, Ga. A small town of about ten thousand people, where we purchased a church building and adjacent residence to house a new outreach called "Mission South".. From this center w worked out into the mountain regions of North Georgia and several small towns along the Interstate 85 corridor from Athens, Ga. to the Greenville-Spartanburg, S.C. Area. After about three years at Hartwell we had organized mission groups in Gainesville, Ga. , Clayton, Ga. and Anderson, and Gaffney, S.C. These were small groups ranging from as few as ten people up to 30 or 40.....some of whom were gay, some of whom were not. More often than not the congregations met in the home of one of the members. Our largest congregation in the North Georgia mountains region was near Clayton. Almost the entire congregation, including the pastor, of the "Fire Baptized, Two-Seed in the Spirit, Church of Jesus Christ on the Solid Rock of Faith" converted to the Orthodox Catholic Faith. Formerly this group was classified as a "Pentecostal Snake-Handling" church. I don't remember the identity of the persons involved, nor the dates, but the South Carolina Department of Humanities" did a TV documentary on these "Snake-Handlers". Although it was not made a matter of public information (there was no need,) the "Domestic Missionary" playing the major role in the conversion of this group was a professed homosexual. But back at the "Hartwell headquarters" things were not going along that well. On three different occasions our "Holy Cross Orthodox Catholic Church" building suffered acts of vandalism.....ranging from broken windows to locked front doors being kicked in. In time, given that the local congregation was very small, the decision was made to close down the church and to sell the property. The Hartwell operation , therefore, was moved to nearby Anderson, S.C. A town of about 55 thousand, about 30 miles north of Hartwell.