

Address of His Beatitude, Metropolitan HERMAN
Second Annual Assembly
Diocese of Washington and New York
St. Vladimir Church — Trenton, NJ
1 November, 2006

Venerable Fathers, Matushki, dearly beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In September, we marked the beginning of the ecclesiastical year. As with all beginnings, we were given yet another opportunity to reflect on — and actively address — our future as individuals and, most importantly, as the People of God, the Church. Of course, this does not mean that we should turn our back on our past, whether in our case it be the vision that planted and nurtured The Orthodox Church in America over the last two centuries, or the painful realities we have had to face in the past few years. To the contrary, it is precisely in the visionary spirit of Saints Herman and Innocent and the luminaries who came before us that we must address our present difficulties and conflicts if we are to actively address and chart the Church's course for the future, ever mindful of our call to give glory to Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ in all things and to minister lovingly with one mind and one heart to those entrusted to our care.

There are many who would say that the Orthodox Church is resistant to change, or that the Church moves far too slow, or that the Church and her leadership fear self-evaluation, re-evaluation, and re-direction. Yet we know that change is at the very heart of the Gospel. Clearly, Our Lord's call for repentance is a call for change — a radical change of mind, heart, intention, priorities, and ultimately, action. Reflecting, as we must, on all that has transpired in the past few years can — and has — been difficult, to say the very least. At the same time, it has brought us to this point in time, in the history of The Orthodox Church in America, in which we are challenged —perhaps like never before — to evaluate where we are, to

acknowledge the circumstances that have brought us to this point, and to consider and effect those changes, those expressions of repentance, that will lead our Church into the future.

As hierarchs, clergy and faithful of The Orthodox Church in America we cannot blind ourselves — and I believe that we have not blinded ourselves — to the issues and challenges confronting us today, and at the very least, in the immediate future. I say this in full recognition of the fact that these issues and challenges are indeed painful ones. They are painful because they involve matters that we perhaps would rather not face, that we might hope would simply "go away." They are painful because they have the power to divide, rather than unite. They are painful because their resolution is neither easy, nor swift, as the last several months have clearly shown. And they are painful, above all, because they do demand a desire and willingness to change, to repent, to acknowledge failure, and to remedy our ills. And yet, if we truly believe that the Holy Spirit guides us, inspires us, and prompts us in all that we do, we must at the same time firmly embrace the challenges placed before all of us, and embrace them with humility, patience, trust, and above all, love for God, and one another.

OUR PRESENT, EVER-CHANGING SITUATION.

During our time together, we will be briefed and updated on the life of our diocese and on a variety of concerns of The Orthodox Church in America, regarding financial audits, the ongoing investigation we have undertaken, the loan, legal matters, and the like. I do wish to say, frankly and openly, that things are moving forward, even if the pace may be slower than we would hope. With equal frankness and openness, I must note that there are things that, whether we like it or not, cannot be fully discussed or revealed at this time, lest the intense efforts of the past year come to naught. We are dealing with lawyers, with financial professionals, with investigators, all of whom require time to pursue their work in what clearly has become an intensely complex situation. Here, I ask you to join me in praying for the patience necessary to see this process to the end, while recognizing that there is not, nor can there be, any "quick fix," so to speak.

As you are aware, the loan from the Honesdale National Bank has been secured. Bills are being paid. A clearer picture of the Church's financial situation, past and present, is emerging. As the year-to-date financial report indicates, spending is at a minimum, well within budget. Work on refining "Best Practices" continues. The members of the Lesser Synod, as well as the members of the Metropolitan Council, are doing their utmost to support any and every effort to effect necessary changes, painful as this can be. At the very least, it must be recognized that "things are happening," and that our pursuit of the numerous concerns we are facing is hardly being stonewalled or facing stagnation.

I must also note, again with the utmost frankness and openness, that at times it is difficult to ascertain exactly what is happening — or, to be more precise, it is difficult to keep pace with situations that can change quite rapidly. For example, as you know, a suit was brought against the Church by the Kondraticks during the second week of October 2006. By the following week, on October 17, the suit was withdrawn. I bring this to your attention for the sole purpose of illustrating the complexities of the crisis — or crises — we are facing. In the meantime, Father Kondratick has been transferred from my omophorion to the omophorion of Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South, under whom he is now serving. The residence on Martin Drive is now vacant, and its future has yet to be determined.

Other matters are also moving along rapidly. For example, several weeks ago a task force to review Chancery operations and staff was put into place. Members of the task force set out immediately to interview members of the Chancery staff, to familiarize themselves with their respective duties, and to use this information to recommend appropriate changes. Last week, the members of the task force completed their work; they are now in the process of drafting recommendations with regard to the wisest use of our time, talents, and treasures in maintaining and strengthening the work of those working in our Chancery in Syosset.

Again, I note these examples for the sole purpose of assuring you, as I noted above, that "things are happening." Other processes, while moving at a somewhat slower pace, are nevertheless "in process" and being actively addressed and pursued.

OUR ONGOING MINISTRY.

It is clear that we cannot limit our attention to the difficulties we are facing. We must turn our attention to the many positive things that are happening in our Church, in our dioceses, in our parishes, and among the faithful of The Orthodox Church in America.

Despite limitations with regard to funds available in The Orthodox Church in America, the Church ministries — the departments and offices — have not only continued their efforts, but in some cases have expanded them. Here I would like to highlight their good work.

The Department of Christian Education sponsored a skills building conference at Saint Tikhon's Seminary and Monastery on September 30, 2006. Among the approximately 100 participants were a large number of seminarians. A variety of workshops were conducted by members of the department. Two workshops also were conducted by the Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministries. The conference was held at a minimal expense, with some speakers funding their own travel and lodging, requesting no reimbursement. During the same weekend, a departmental meeting was held, during which department members planned ongoing projects and programs.

The Departments of Military Chaplaincies and Institutional Chaplaincies will have a major conference at Saint Tikhon's Seminary and Monastery November 2-4, 2006. The conference will address the unique ministries pursued by our military and institutional chaplains.

Three seminarians served as interns under the direction of our Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministries this past summer. Through a generous \$9,000.00 grant provided by the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America, the internship program was made possible.

The Department of Liturgical Music and Translations continues to post resources and musical scores. Its liturgical music chat room attracts a growing number of participants and has met with extremely positive reaction.

Meanwhile, the Department of Evangelization recently announced that five missions have been awarded Church Planting Grants for 2007. The Department of Pastoral Life is pursuing the means to provide summer seminarian internships in 2007. It is also planning to make a variety of pastoral resources available on-line to our clergy. The Department of Christian Witness and Service is planning a series of conferences in 2007 on bioethics, lay ministry, and other topics.

In addition to producing "The Orthodox Church" news magazine and overseeing the ever-expanding OCA web site, the Office of Communications is in the process of developing the means by which audio files can be downloaded from the OCA web site — a resource not available on most other Orthodox web sites in North America. The Office of Development and Stewardship is pursuing a number of options aimed at increased voluntary giving to the Church, as is the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards. The Archpriests John Dresko and Eugene Vansuch continue to visit parishes in an effort to increase visibility for the Church's needs. At this point, I must note that their work has not been easy, and in a few instances their efforts have been met with hostility. In light of the current reality, this is to be expected to a certain extent; at the same time, the work of the departments is funded exclusively through voluntary gifts to the Church. As such, it is imperative that interest and donations continue to be realized. This is especially critical in light of the fact that the many individuals who offer their time and talent to Church ministries do so on a purely voluntary basis, thereby making the ongoing work of the departments a reality with little available funding and other resources at their disposal.

Matushka Michelle Jannakos and Mr. David Lues continue to coordinate the work of the various Church ministries. A major conference call of all department chairs was held in September. Despite financial limitations, department personnel are pursuing the aforementioned projects, and numerous others, undaunted. Plans for regional skills building workshops during 2007 also are being explored.

I pray that you agree that the many volunteers who continue to pursue Church ministries, despite the limitations they have had to face, deserve our deepest gratitude. And again, I urge you to be mindful of the many positive things that are happening in the life of our Church and the many clergy and laity who faithfully discharge their ministries as a true labor of love.

OTHER MATTERS.

The 15th All - American Council.

In consideration of the proposal of the Lesser Synod of Bishops, it was decided that the 15th All - American Council will be convened in the fall of 2008. In light of numerous requests, the council will be of a more modest means, lasting about three days.

Joint meeting of the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Metropolitan Council.

Having heard a request from the members of the Metropolitan Council for a joint meeting with the members of the Holy Synod of Bishops, it was decided that a joint meeting will be convened by me on December 12-13, 2006 in New York.

As reported at the recent meeting of the Metropolitan Council, I have received a number of invitations to visit sister Orthodox Churches, as well as enquiries on their part to visit North America. As an autocephalous Church, we must maintain contact and good relations with our sister Churches throughout the world; at the same time, present realities do not permit us to pursue such invitations, and it is my strong feeling that we must maintain and strengthen our contacts by other means. Simply stated, it is not possible to send or receive delegations, yet we must develop alternative means to maintain good relations with our sister Churches. This is especially important in light of rapidly changing developments within world Orthodoxy.

In the meantime, I, together with several other members of the Holy Synod, attended the conference of North American hierarchs held in Chicago during the first week of October. As you know, this is the third such SCOBA-sponsored gathering, the first having been held in Ligonier, PA in 1994 and the second having been convened in Washington, DC in 2001. Approximately 30 hierarchs attended the conference, which included a number of workshops and presentations on a variety of issues. Despite calls from many circles to the contrary, the matter of administrative unity was not included on the agenda. We continue to participate in the work of SCOBA, however, and support the common ministries under its aegis, including International Orthodox Christian Charities, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, the Orthodox Christian Fellowship, and so on.

At this point, it is important for us to consider that, despite our present crises, we cannot become isolated from our sister Churches throughout the world or from the North American jurisdictions. In times of crises, there is a tendency, often involuntary, to retreat inward. I pray that you agree that this would not be in the best interest of The Orthodox Church in America as an autocephalous Church, nor in line with the vision we have received from our forebears, especially the Holy Patriarch and Confessor Tikhon, who exactly 100 years ago articulated his vision for a unified Orthodox Church on this continent. One of the issues we face is the best way to pursue this vision, here and abroad, despite our limited resources and somewhat controversial image. Clearly, we cannot be a voice for unity if we appear to be disunited.

In those things that continue to bring us pain, may we grieve together; but may we also rejoice together in those things which have been done, and continue to be done, for the building up of the Body of Christ and for the equipping of the saints to labor in the vineyard of Our Lord and for His glory.

IN CONCLUSION.

The Orthodox Church in America is at a crossroad in its 212 year history. We continue to stand in the intersection of our past, present, and future. Things are changing, albeit more slowly than many, including myself, would hope, but they are changing. Honest attempts to address the many issues that face us — financial and spiritual, individual and corporate — are being made, even if the intensity with which they are being pursued is not always to our liking, often due to the proverbial circumstances that are sometimes "beyond our control." While, as I have noted, we remain in an intersection, we are moving to a resolution, to closure, to the point in which we will be able to devote our full attention and energy to where we are going as The Orthodox Church in America.

I offer my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to each and everyone of you — Father Joseph Lickwar for his dedicated and excellent work as Chancellor, Father David Vemak, as Secretary, Lawrence Tosi, Esq., as Treasurer, the Deans, all who serve our departments and institutions and all of the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of Washington and New York. You have made a great contribution for the building-up of our parishes, our diocese and The Orthodox Church in America.

And, while I ask you to forgive me for my shortcomings, I also assure you that I will continue to fulfill my Archpastoral responsibilities to the Diocese of Washington and New York and to do that which must be done to restore The Orthodox Church in America to good order — a task that we can only pursue together, united as we must be in the grace of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, and under the guidance of and submission to the Holy Spirit. May God continue to strengthen us in our common sorrows and joys as, together, we labor in the one vineyard of our Savior.

Through the intercessions of our Father among the Saints, Herman of Alaska, and of all the Saints of North America, may this Second Annual Assembly of the Diocese of Washington and New York continue to bring about a new beginning in the life of our Church now and in the days, months, and years to come!

Submitted this 1st day of November 2006,

+ HERMAN
Archbishop of Washington and New York
Metropolitan of All America and Canada Primate of
the Orthodox Church in America