

Diocese of New York and New Jersey
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

October 12, 2016

It is with joy and thanksgiving that we, the diocesan clergy, lay delegates and observers, gather for this Diocesan Assembly: the highest administrative body of the diocese.

Our gathering begins not just as general meeting, but as a Eucharistic assembly. It is the Eucharist that makes our gathering the church, and sets before each of us the gift of ascension of each of us with unity in Christ and one another.

His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, began the seventh-year of His Episcopacy on May 8th, 2016. It is theologically clear and pastorally evident to us that it was God who chose him for this office. The prayer for the elevation of a bishop given in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus reads in part, “You, who know the hearts of all, bestow upon Your servant, whom You have chosen for the episcopate, to feed Your flock.” God has chosen him and His will is evident in the hearts of the faithful who have embraced His Eminence. Having a laid aside desire for personal gain, his devoted service to our Lord and His Church is of unquestionable. He has labored not for the vain things, but for that which does not perish. His labor and vision is reflected daily in the continued development of various ministries within the church, and his archpastoral love and labor.

Several items under new business require our attention: election of members of the Diocesan Council and delegates to the Metropolitan Council, adoption of the Proportional Giving Resolution, adoption of the 2017 Budget, and the “Statement of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America on Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs Regarding Marriage.”

The Proportional Giving Resolution is the result of two decades of evaluation by All American Councils, Diocesan Assemblies and parishes on how to fund the work of the Church according scriptural and ecclesial precepts. Proportional Giving is scriptural and has the approval of the previous All-American Council. The previous “head tax” never fostered a scriptural and ecclesial vision for giving. It justified a minimalistic level of giving and parishioner responsibility.

The “Statement of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America on Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs Regarding Marriage” is necessary in light of societal changes which pose a challenge to our parishes.

The 2017 Proposed Budget is minimal in light of the work detailed in the budget. This budget does not include the work that is accomplished through the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors and the financial resources of its voluntary supporters.

The administration of His Eminence is assisted by the Deans, the Diocesan Council Members and Metropolitan Council Representatives, who will be elected at this Assembly.

Let our Assembly accomplish good of our Church and let us enjoy of our fellowship.

We prayerfully wish His Eminence physical strength, good health and peace, and may He multiply the days and years of his life.

In Christ,

Archpriest Joseph Lickwar

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