

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST 46TH DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY
OCTOBER 1-3, 2007
CLEVELAND, OHIO

CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Your Eminence Archbishop JOB
Very Reverend Archimandrites and Archpriests
Reverend Priests and Deacons
Diocesan Council
Diocesan Faithful.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Once again, after another year of extreme frustration concerning the situation in our Orthodox Church in America I make my report to you as Chancellor of the Diocese of the Midwest. It is another year of frustration for many reasons; frustration because I, like so many, can't understand why it is so difficult for the Metropolitan and the Holy Synod to forthrightly address the past and current situation which increasingly demoralizes and divides our Orthodox Church in America; frustration because the situation of the Orthodox Church in America has consumed so many of us to a degree that hinders our own Diocesan and Parish ministries to a state, in some cases, of near paralysis. It claims numerous hours of time from our Beloved Archbishop and because of that, his support staff also. Please understand, I don't fault him in any way for his efforts to bring resolution but believe me, not an hour passes when he isn't confronted with the issue at hand. I state these things in my report so that you may understand the nature of our situation. Our state of affairs has not only affected our Archpastor and his staff, but pastors, lay leaders and faithful. It has been a constant distraction to so many, who could or would be devoting more time to growing Christ's Church, from their God-given vocation to bring the Gospel to all men. I realize that the time spent by so many in this matter is important so that we might present Christ's Church as a beautiful Bride; nevertheless, I often experience this frustration because I also often consider how wonderful it could be if we were devoting this same time and energy to growing the Church in "normal" times!

In light of this, I have continued to try to relieve His Eminence of concern by dealing with as much of the diocesan affairs as I can, i.e.; those things that do not necessarily require the immediate or actual presence of the hierarchy. I spend many hours of every day on my cell phone and office phone dealing with such tasks. I try to go to the Chicago Chancery office once a month and His Eminence and I converse regularly. Thank God for modern technology, I think.

In spite of the overwhelming presence of the OCA scandal, our Midwest Diocese continues to function. Except for a small number of parochial issues, the diocese is stable.

There are no immediate glaring problems. We still have a good mission outreach and the Missions Committee, facilitated by our Parish Health Facilitator strives to improve our mission efforts and strengthen our existing missions. This is not always an easy task and some may not agree with decisions or direction but I can assure you that this is a dedicated group of lay and clergy who do put a lot of time and concern into their work. They approach their work prayerfully and seriously.

Over the past year, as you will see in the report of the Parish Facilitator, Joseph Kormos, we have attempted to develop materials and resources that can be used by our parishes in the ministry of Church Growth and Development. There are a few parishes that are growing and some, over the years, have actually replenished their membership with new souls. There are, however, a significant number of parishes that continue to decline in membership. We are attempting to find tools that will help these parishes to reach out and bring the Gospel of Christ in the Orthodox Way to those who are our neighbors. I have worked very closely with Joe Kormos and others in the past year to help facilitate this process. We have only just begun this work and I pray that this assembly will allow us to continue its development. We are really trying to provide realistic tools for our parishes. Since many will give their opinion on this issue, I personally believe that this is some of the best work that we have done as a Diocese since I came to the Midwest sixteen years ago. We have tapped the resources of many who have done good work for many years and are grateful for their cooperation and valuable time and talent over the past year.

I know that some are unhappy that our own Diocesan communication is not as good as it should be. Welcome to my world of frustration. As I stated earlier, zeal for Christ's Church has consumed us! We are an office of one more-than-full-time Hierarchy, one more-than-full-time Administrative Aide, one more-than-part-time Chancellor and one more-than-part-time Parish Health Facilitator. Dn. Joseph Matusiak finds himself wearing the many hats of Aide to the Archbishop, Communications Tech for our website, Chancellor's Aide, Special Commission Secretary, receptionist, etc., etc. As more of the parish resources develop we will have various others posting resource information to the website. Maybe this coming year?

Our Diocesan Finance Committee and Bookkeeper, Fr. Luke Nelson, under the leadership of Rob Koncel, Diocesan Treasurer have labored hard to stay in budget and to develop the proposed 2008 budget. The venerable Deans of our Diocese are an indescribable, invaluable asset for our Diocese. I personally wish to thank them for their assistance, their advice, their prayers and their devotion to our Diocesan Church. There are many others who labor in the diocesan vineyard. I thank all of them for their unselfish efforts.

His Eminence has expressed in the past that we must strive to make our Midwest Diocese exemplary in every way. We have attempted to do this as well as we can, given our current situation. We welcome constructive criticism so that we might better accomplish the task before us. Constructive meaning, that in addition to the criticism you might also present an idea for solution. Please, never hesitate to contact me with your insight. I welcome your help and assistance.

This Diocesan Assembly will be asked to address the position of Parish Health Facilitator. I know your concerns concerning finances. I am also the Dean of the Cathedral Parish of St. Theodosius in Cleveland. Our parish community pays \$36,000 annually in assessments. I am tempted, like so many others, by the thought of what that money could do in my parish. I only ask that you consider this proposal as a member of the entire Diocese of the Midwest. As one who also wishes our Diocese to be the exemplary Diocese that His Eminence, our Archbishop, desires.

I again thank His Eminence Archbishop JOB for his confidence and support for me in my work as the Chancellor. In addition to those I mentioned above, I thank so many who have been honest and open and a great help to me as advisors, listeners, and true friends who speak the truth in love. I am extremely grateful to my wife Cindy and my son Sasha who, like so many priests' families, endure my absence so many times. I remember the words of my seminary professor Fr. Thomas Hopko, who's children coined the phrase; "even when you're home Dad, you're not home". I thank our merciful God and pray that He forgive me for my shortcomings and strengthen and enlighten me to serve Him and His Holy Church. I thank all of you for your trust and support and beg your prayers for me a sinner.

May God correct, guide and preserve His Church and have mercy on all of us!

Respectfully,
Archpriest John Zdinak
Chancellor
Diocese of the Midwest