



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST
Office of the Archbishop

May 31, 2007

Afterfeast of Pentecost Apostle Hermias of the Seventy
No. 113

*Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear my voice. (Psalm 129:1)*

To the Reverend and Esteemed Clergy of the Diocese of the Midwest

A SORROWFUL EPISTLE

My Beloved in the Lord,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

I address this letter to you my co-workers in the Vineyard of the lord – The Diocese of the Midwest – and my friends and brothers in Christ, during this Feast of Pentecost, when we most especially and fervently pray that the Holy Spirit will “come and abide in us and cleanse us from every impurity...”

Using the words of the holy Apostle Paul,

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your communion in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very good thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ...” (Philippians 1:2-6)

I make these words my own, and I offer them in utmost sincerity.

In my letter of 28 November 2005, to His Beatitude, Metropolitan HERMAN, I stated, “ I do not claim to be a good man, but I like to think that I am an honest man.” This crisis in our Orthodox Church in America has made me painfully aware of the fact that I **cannot** claim to be a good man. Yet, from the beginning of this struggle, which for us in the Midwest began nearly two years ago when our Diocesan Council dared to request transparency and fiscal accountability from the Central Church Administration prior to the Toronto All American Council, I have prayed, again and again, that my motives remain pure and objective. That remains my prayer to this day.

Permit me to share with you a sad but sobering story. On Holy Saturday evening, as I was preparing to leave my apartment for Holy Trinity Cathedral to help celebrate the Feast of

Feasts, I put on a beautiful ivory Panagia which I had worn on every Pascha night since it was given to me many years ago by an old friend. I looked in the mirror and then, with great sadness, I took it off, placed it in its box, and chose another. I could not wear it, not out of any spirit of self-righteousness, but because I question whether or not it was a genuine gift or something other than that. Fifty-some days later I still don't know if I am simply playing the fool. But the beautiful panagia remains in its box. I cannot wear it again until I make restitution to the Church for its approximate worth as well as for other "gifts" that I have received. You see my friends, that I am baring my soul to you. Forgive me. I realize that critics will label this letter as "melodramatic" or "obsequious." When I wrote a very personal letter to each of you a few years ago, it was labeled, I am told, "Sappy" by the former chancellor. It wasn't. It was genuine, heartfelt and sincere. But we know that these qualities have not been held in high esteem for many years in "Syosset."

God knows, and all of you know, that this crisis has taken its toll on all of us, affecting some more than others. There have been ups and downs, glimmers of hope followed by utter devastation. To read the chronology of the crisis is, in the words of one commentator, like reading "a bad novel." We have witnessed transfers, rescissions of transfers, rescissions of rescissions, suspensions, reversal of suspensions, disregard for decisions of the Synod and Metropolitan Council, and now Byzantine intrigue and controversy concerning due process in an ecclesiastical Court (as though this were the first Church court convened in the 37 – year history of the Orthodox Church in America!)

On May 4, 2007, I placed a call to Metropolitan HERMAN, seeking direction for the Special Commission, since I had arranged for a conference call with the Commission members for later that evening. I also informed His Beatitude of our approaching Diocesan Council meeting which would render a decision on the "Palatine Resolution." I told him of our parishes that are already withholding assessments. He inquired as to their reasons for doing this and I told him that it appears that nothing is being done by the Central Church Administration because there is no communication. I then asked for his help and his guidance. I received nothing except that one of our attorneys would contact me. A few hours later I receive the devastating letter about the suspension of the the Special Commission (which has since been made public.) I had shared it only with the Commission members, our Deans and the Diocesan Council members.

For the record, in spite of the impression that the Commission is "dead" I assure you that it is not! Its members remain frustrated, defeated and demoralized, for much time is being wasted. But we are determined to continue our work as endorsed and directed by both the Metropolitan Council and Holy Synod. And our work must include genuine investigation followed by thorough reporting. I ask your prayers that our work be permitted to go unhindered.

I reported all of this to the Diocesan Council at its meeting on May 9, which was for me an inspiration. The various opinions about the Palatine Resolution were exchanged in an open, honest and respectful way. In a nutshell, as they say, some spoke in favor of withholding as a Diocese the assessments to the Central Church Administration. I found myself agreeing with them. Others spoke against withholding. I found myself agreeing

with them, too. A vote was taken. The resolution was defeated. More discussion followed. The arguments were convincing, but because of the “gray area” in question, no one, I believe, was entirely convinced. The vote was rescinded and “part two” of the meeting was scheduled for June 26. I regard this as the more responsible approach to a difficult situation. I left the meeting energized and encouraged, but unfortunately this was short lived.

In the short time since Pascha, serious and tragic mistakes have been made, the suspension of the Special Commission being, in my judgment, one of the worst. My friends, we have a crisis of leadership. I had stated that I stood in support of the Metropolitan in this crisis. I should have clarified this and should have stated that I support the positive decisions that he has made – and there certainly have been some. But there have been far more poor decisions, made unilaterally, without consultation and communication, which, as we see have had devastating results. At the Diocesan Council meeting I described myself as being “at the end of my rope.” Now I find myself in a worse state of mind. I ponder on such things as “Desperate situations require desperate measures.” I am persuaded that I am not alone, because I have heard that there are those who were against the Palatine Resolution who have now changed their positions. Fathers and Brothers, souls are at stake! We cannot forget that.

A few days ago, I read a comment by someone on the ocanews.org website. It concluded with, “God, save us from our bishops!” and I confess that I cried. Never would I have imagined that such a statement could be made. Now it appears that it is held by many. God help us!

By next week, I will announce a special day of prayer and fasting for our Church. A service of prayer will be made available to be celebrated in all our churches. Meanwhile, let us continue to strive for truth and righteousness. Let us continue to work together to make our Diocese of the Midwest the best that it can be. Let us remember the good things and rejoice in them.

Once again I state, “I thank my God for every remembrance of you...”

Always relying on your support, and asking your prayers for my unworthiness, I remain

Faithfully yours in Christ,



+JOB
Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest

cc. Diocesan Council Members