



Documents

Address of the Primate at the 12th All-American Council His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius

My beloved brother bishops, fellow priests and co-workers, beloved delegates, faithful sons and daughters in Christ!

"Through the Cross joy has come into all the world. ... This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. ... Let us forgive all in the Resurrection. ..." When we hear the hymns of the Resurrection of Christ we know with certainty the meaning of the Christian faith and the significance of our mission as Orthodox Christians. My central purpose in this "state of the church" address to the 12th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America is to emphasize the centrality of the Gospel message for the mission of our church.

Serving the Cause of the Gospel

Too often, our thoughts about Orthodox mission are limited to Orthodox "self-promotion." We tend to make our iconography, our liturgy, our spirituality the center of our message, rather than preaching the Christ to whom iconography, liturgy, and spirituality bear witness. Too often, our plans for the Orthodox Church in America are confined to projects for the institutional growth of our dioceses and parishes and seminaries, rather than presenting challenges to us in all our institutions to be true apostles and preachers of the crucified and risen Christ.

When our perspective is so small, we forget that the primary work of the Orthodox Church is the salvation of human souls, the redemption of the human race, the transformation of cultures, and the transfiguration of the cosmos. Our work is nothing less than the work of Christ, our gifts are nothing less than the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Orthodox Church is the Way, and not the goal. Our vocation is not to protect our identity as Orthodox, but to preach what Christ preached, to practice what Christ practiced, and to offer, in the name of Christ, the "amazing grace" of repentance, forgiveness, holiness, and eternal life and peace and joy in the Kingdom of God.

Thus, neither the Orthodox Church in America, nor Orthodoxy in America, nor world-wide Orthodoxy are ends in themselves. The mission of Orthodoxy is nothing less than the faithful preaching of the Gospel of Christ.

This means that our task as a Council is to be clear about the priority of the Gospel in every dimension of our life as a Church. If the Orthodox Church in America is not an end in itself, then no part of our Church can be an end in itself. The calling of the Holy Synod of Bishops, the Metropolitan Council, every diocese and parish, as well as every seminary and monastery and every organization and institution of our Church is to serve the cause of the Gospel, to build up the Body of Christ, and to minister to the humanity which God loves and for which Christ suffered crucifixion and death.

Challenged by the Gospel

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We are gathered in council to affirm one another in the name of Christ, to challenge on another in the spirit of the Gospel, to place all in the life of our Church under the Judgment of God. Our accountability to one another is ultimately our common accountability to God.

As Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, I preside at the Holy Synod of Bishops, chair the Metropolitan Council, head the Central Church Administrations, and serve as President of our three seminaries. Since my election as Primate in 1977, I have dedicated all my work towards the building up of our Church. In this ministry I have done my best to affirm my fellow bishops and the clergy and laity of our Church in their ministries. At times, I have found it necessary, in accordance with my conscience, to challenge my fellow ministers and co-workers, whether bishops, clergy, or laity. And, in turn, I have received affirmation of my ministry, and have been challenged and corrected as well. There have been many, many occasions of joy in my service as Primate. I have witnessed much goodness and love in our midst. There have also been times of pain and suffering. I have witnessed occasions of ill will and malice in our midst. I have tried to offer both joy and pain to Christ with thanksgiving, asking God to transform both my joy and my sorrow into something useful for the building up of the Body of Christ.

My long years of ministry in our Church-as acolyte, priest, bishop, and primate-I believe give sufficient basis for sober, realistic judgment on my part on the state of the Orthodox Church in America. Where do we stand more than two hundred years after the first Orthodox missionaries began to do their work of evangelization in Alaska? Where do we stand after nearly thirty years of our Church's autocephaly? Where do we stand at the threshold of the twenty-first century and the third millennium after Christ?

The foundations and principles on which the Orthodox Church in America stands are sound. The vision and hope by which the Orthodox Church in America is inspired and motivated are fully alive.

Our Church was born of the mission imperative and therefore is blessed with apostolic grace and the evangelical vocation. The Russian Orthodox monastics who came as missionaries to evangelize the native peoples of Alaska in 1794 forever gave our Church a missionary vocation. We continue our struggle to be faithful to our missionary calling. The streams of immigration from Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East, beginning at the end of the 19th century and continuing in various forms until our very own day, have given us the vocation of ministry and mission to immigrant communities. We continue to face the challenges of this ministry. In the complex setting of America's religious pluralism as well as America's secularism we present and interpret the Orthodox Christian faith and receive many seekers of the Orthodox Way. The seminaries of our Church are energetic and faithful in their theological and educational mission, and our monasteries offer the monastic life and challenge.

The Orthodox Church in America is a diverse body. The three ethnic dioceses serve the Romanian, Albanian, and Bulgarian communities, the diocese of Alaska continues its ministry among the native peoples of Alaska, the dioceses of the various parts of the United States and the Archdiocese of Canada and Exarchate of Mexico serve parish communities of diverse backgrounds and identities in various

languages, including English, Yupik, Aleut, Russian, Romanian, Albanian, Spanish, and French. This diversity is, in itself a healthy sign of life and vitality.

There are, however, symptoms of unhealthy contradictions and difficulties in our ecclesial life as well. It sometimes appears that the whole of the Orthodox Church in America is less than the sum of its parts. On occasion, we witness the reality that our diversity is not lived within unity, but is rather a manifestation of disharmony and lack of cohesion and common purpose.

Questions are also raised concerning the way resources are used in a church with a limited demographic base. Are three seminaries too many for the number of parishes we have? Is the present structure and distribution of the dioceses of our church the most effective for our needs?

I believe that we must not shrink from asking difficult questions, that we must not fear open discussion. Only an honest and forthright approach to our real situation will enable and empower us to find together the most appropriate answers and solutions.

A saying of the desert fathers comes to mind: "To see yourself as you really are is a greater miracle than raising the dead." And we must see ourselves as we really are!

In my ministry as Primate I rely on the synergy of the Holy Synod of Bishops. We share the episcopal ministry. We do our best to act together in a conciliar manner. We are all conscious of our responsibility before God for holding together the full community of the Church, and are fully aware that the ministries in the Body of Christ are comprised of the ministries of bishops, priests, deacons, and laity.

In my pastoral visits throughout the Church, again and again I am encouraged and strengthened by the parish priests accomplishing their daily pastoral ministry with faithfulness and love. I am grateful to God for the laity, so many of whom are not only pillars of their parish communities but also witnesses of Christ in their lives in the world.

In my ministry as Primate I also rely on the good advice and sound insights of the Metropolitan Council and the Boards of Directors and Faculties of our seminaries, and I am upheld by the prayers of the monastics of our Church.

In the Central Church Administration the person who is my greatest support, wise and sober counselor, steward of my time and resources, and trusted co-worker is Protopresbyter Robert Kondratich. Fr Bob, as we all affectionately know him, has my deep personal gratitude, and richly deserves the gratitude of this Council and of the whole Church.

My other co-workers in the Church Administration also bring their personal and sacrificial dedication to their tasks and responsibilities. I am grateful to Protodeacon Eric Wheeler, our Treasurer, Paul Hunchak, our Secretary and Secretary of the Preconciliar Commission, Father Joseph Fester, our Director of Development, Protodeacon John Hopko, my Secretary, and each and every member of the Chancery staff.

Personal words of gratitude from me, and expressions of thanks from the whole Church, are also meet and right regarding Serge Troubetzkoy. His life has been a long and faithful service to the Orthodox Church in America. For many years Secretary to the Metropolitan, he also served as Archivist of the Church. Upon relinquishing his position as Archivist, he continued on a part-time basis to offer his services in the Church's Archives. Last year, he relinquished this work as well due to illness. I am greatly indebted to him for the nobility, generosity, and loyalty of his character. May God grant him health and joy, and may God's love always uphold him.

Orthodox Unity: Gift and Mandate

While we are accountable for the whole of our history as a Church, it is probably most useful to consider our situation, and the situation of the whole of American Orthodoxy, in the light of the nearly thirty years of our Church's autocephaly.

During the first ten years or so of our autocephaly we faced many challenges, yet we did so in the hope and urgent expectation that the road to the unity of all Orthodox in America within one canonical Church was open to us. We received the Tomos of Autocephaly from the Church of Russia in 1970 as a gift and a mandate. The gift represented recognition of our maturity as a Church, our vocation to chart the appropriate course for the development of an authentic American Orthodoxy.

The mandate was to chart the future of Orthodox unity in America together with the other Orthodox churches, maintaining eucharistic communion with them, respecting their canonical presence in America, and laboring with them to fulfill our common Orthodox ecclesiological and missionary calling in North America. We sought to accomplish the "unity in diversity" that would overcome the canonically illegitimate jurisdictional pluralism undermining our witness and mission. We never regarded autocephaly as a tool for dominating others. Rather, we regarded autocephaly as an obligation to be servants of Orthodox unity.

As the decades unfolded, our Church maintained the vision of Orthodox unity and mission in America. It seemed, indeed, that this vision was becoming the vision of Orthodoxy as a whole in America and around the world.

It was profoundly significant that Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios, during his pastoral visit to America in 1990, in his addresses and statements showed a lucid awareness of the needs and challenges of American Orthodoxy. In his address at our Church's St Nicholas Cathedral in Washington, DC, he spoke candidly and clearly. While he expressed his critique of the autocephaly of our Church, he nonetheless affirmed the fundamental commitment to Orthodox unity in America and Orthodox mission in America which we also affirm and fully share. And in 1993 Patriarch Aleksy of Moscow visited America in commemoration of the bicentennial of Orthodoxy in America. During this visit he gave strong support to the creation of a fully-united, multi-ethnic, dynamically missionary Orthodox Church in North America.

In 1994 a historic assembly of the Orthodox bishops of North America was convened by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the

Americas (SCOBA) at the Antiochian Village in Ligonier, PA. A remarkable consensus emerged. The Orthodox hierarchs of America were of one mind that Orthodoxy was in America to stay, and in this sense was not a diaspora, that Orthodox in America must build effective structures of canonical unity for the sake of mission and witness, and that we must together ask the Ecumenical Patriarch, and all the Patriarchates and Churches of the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe to lead us towards the canonical unity in America which the Orthodox ecclesiological tradition requires. We all looked towards the Ecumenical Patriarch and all the Orthodox patriarchs with hope and expectation.

The reaction from "across the seas" was not one of encouragement and engagement. Instead of correcting what was imperfect, instead of encouraging what was appropriate and timely, "mother churches" sought to discourage and prohibit. The veto was, of course, successful. And the late 1990s have become a time of stagnation in the quest for Orthodox unity in America.

It is sad to say that even the Standing of Bishops was preserved with difficulty. In 1996-1997 two conflicting visions came into confrontation. According to one, the Chairman of the SCOBA is, ex officio, the Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch. According to another, the Chairman of the SCOBA is elected by the hierarchs of the SCOBA. The "visions in conflict," very nearly brought the SCOBA to an end.

I describe these things only to demonstrate how difficult even the smallest accomplishments are in the quest for the canonical unity of the Orthodox churches in America. In the 1990s, even the simple protection and preservation of the achievements of the past forty years has been threatened.

Yet, the decade of the 1990s has also given us significant progress towards an authentic unity in mission. I have in mind the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) and International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC).

The Orthodox Christian Mission Center is a genuinely inter-Orthodox mission center promoting and supporting missionary activity abroad. This Center was established on the firm foundation of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese's mission department. During the 1990s the work and funding of the Center slowly became inter-Orthodox. Today, the Center does its important work for mission with the full involvement of the various Orthodox churches in America.

International Orthodox Christian Charities was established from the very beginning on an inter-Orthodox basis. It is the humanitarian agency of Orthodox Christians in the United States and Canada. Until it came into being, there was no professional and recognized Orthodox humanitarian agency anywhere in the world. The experience of IOCC in doing humanitarian work in Russia, Bosnia, Yugoslavia, and Georgia has established its credibility. Pilot projects have been initiated in Albania and in the Middle East. Now, both the United States Government and non-governmental organizations turn to IOCC as an indispensable Orthodox partner in humanitarian work.

Both the OCMC and IOCC do their work with the blessing and approval of the

Standing Conference of Bishops. They already represent the best a future united American Orthodoxy has to offer. Thus, while the quest for effective structures expressing canonical "jurisdictional" unity fell into hard times during the 1990s, the practical cooperation of the Churches in OCMC and IOCC has reached an amazing and effective intensity. In these two organizations, American Orthodoxy's commitment to mission and to humanitarian work is expressed as if Orthodox in America have already come into full ecclesial unity.

The Orthodox Church in America is fully committed to the development of a strong and effective SCOBA. We strongly support the work of OCMC and IOCC. We encourage every worthy effort to express in practical inter-Orthodox endeavors the unity in faith and sacraments that holds us together in one hope.

Above all, the Orthodox Church in America is committed to the full canonical unity of all Orthodox in America. Our Orthodox understanding of the Church demands this. Our history as Orthodox mission in America requires this. And we believe that this mandate and calling is shared by every Orthodox Church and every Orthodox Christian.

There are some who suggest from time to time that the Orthodox Church in America's task and calling are only in America. Putting it in the blunt language which Americans like, we are told that "we have no business" developing relationships with the Orthodox patriarchates and autocephalous Churches. "Our business," it is suggested "is only in America."

My response to this is unambiguous. The obligation to maintain the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3) is an obligation that knows no boundaries of nation, or culture, or language. And indeed, as an autocephalous church, we carry the direct responsibility for maintaining eucharistic communion, mutual understanding, moral and charitable solidarity with the other Orthodox churches in the world.

The Orthodox Church in America, must strengthen its relationships with the other Churches as part of the calling and mandate of autocephaly. Even the document establishing us as an autocephalous Church, the Tomos granted by the Patriarchate of Moscow in 1970, states clearly that the Orthodox Church in America is to be in communion with the entire family of Orthodox Churches. Autocephaly is not to be understood as a charter for isolation, but rather as a charter for responsible relations, as a charter defining the canonical terms according to which Orthodox churches "bear one another's burdens, thus fulfilling the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).

It is in this spirit that we should understand and appreciate my visits as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America to the Churches of Constantinople, Russia and Ukraine, Georgia, Poland, and the Czech and Slovak Republics. It is this spirit which motivated my assignment of Archbishop Herman, as my representative, in the funeral services for Metropolitan Basil of Warsaw and Metropolitan Theodosius of Tokyo. It is in the same spirit that we should understand and appreciate the visits to our Church by patriarchs and primates of other Orthodox Churches. In 1995 the visit of Archbishop Anastasios of Albania strengthened the ties of solidarity between the reborn Church of Albania and the Orthodox Church in America. In October 1997 the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew addressed an academic convocation at St

Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. He was received with affection and honor, saw our Church's deeply felt commitment to Orthodox mission and theology, and gave his patriarchal blessing. And in May 1998, Patriarch-Catholicos Ilia of Georgia visited the Dioceses of Washington, DC, New York and New Jersey, and Eastern Pennsylvania, as well as St Tikhon's Monastery and Seminary and St Vladimir's Seminary. He clearly stated his support for the Orthodox Church in America's witness for canonical Orthodox unity in America. For Georgia, the Patriarch's visit to the United States represented an important nation to nation connection with the United States. And we renewed and strengthened our traditional ties to the Church of Finland through the visits of Metropolitan Leo of Helsinki to the United States, most recently in May and June of this year. In addition, Patriarch Ignatius of Antioch is visiting the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America now. In public addresses and personal conversations he has yet again given his strong support to the quest for Orthodox unity in North America through patient and persistent effort, and through love and mutual support.

And, finally, it is in the same spirit of Orthodox unity and solidarity that we must understand and appreciate the creation of a permanent representation of the Orthodox Church in America in Moscow.

Seven years ago, Father Daniel Hubiak, our Chancellor Emeritus, accepted assignment as our Church's representative to the Moscow Patriarchate. This assignment was made, of course, with the blessing and approval of the Patriarch of Moscow, and with the understanding that a church in Moscow would become the official representation or "embassy" of the Orthodox Church in America. When, in due course, the Church of St Catherine the Great Martyr was identified as our representation church, it became evident that considerable effort and resources would be needed to make the church usable. For some decades, the church had been used as an icon restoration workshop of a famous institute. Even though much work remains to be done, and the entire church property has not as yet been handed over to church use, in June of this year His Holiness Patriarch ALEKSY II and I consecrated St Catherine's Church in a moving ceremony attended by many Muscovites as well as more than one hundred pilgrims from the Orthodox Church in America. I am grateful to Archbishop Herman and the many clergy and laity who joined the pilgrimage for their participation in the consecration service.

I would like to express deep appreciation to Father Daniel Hubiak, and his wife, Evdokia -- whom all of Moscow now knows as "Matushka Dunia" -- for the important labor of love they have accomplished being our "representative team" in the Church of Russia during the past seven years.

In our relations with Orthodox Churches abroad, we encounter numerous humanitarian, missionary, education, and medical needs, as well as much personal hardship. The process of establishing and building up our own representation church in Moscow has also presented many urgent needs. Our Church's financial resources, extremely limited and stretched as they are, normally do not allow any significant response. It is a credit to our Church's integrity and good reputation, and a special credit to Fr Robert Kondratich's successful efforts, that extraordinary gifts and grants have enabled me, at my personal discretion, to respond to a broad range of needs abroad, and on occasion at home.

My beloved co-workers in the Orthodox Church in America! Our task and mission in America presuppose and require relations of good will, mutual understanding, and mutual affirmation with the other Orthodox "jurisdictions" in North America. Our task and mission as an autocephalous Church presuppose and require relations of good will, mutual understanding, and mutual affirmation with the patriarchates and autocephalous and autonomous churches around the world.

Our vocation cannot be fulfilled and our calling cannot be accomplished in isolation from sister churches, in isolation from Orthodox brothers and sisters. We cannot invite others to unity, we cannot challenge others to promote unity, if we ourselves prefer to live in isolation, defining what is "our business" in narrow terms.

Nor can our vocation be fulfilled in isolation from other Christian bodies. In the area of ecumenism we are in the midst of a difficult time, a time of debate and discernment.

The formal ecumenical event that stands out during the last four years is the convening of the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe, in December 1998. In the months before the Assembly, Orthodox around the world reconsidered their involvement in this event in particular, and in the ecumenical movement in general. Two churches withdrew their membership from the WCC in the face of growing concerns about the direction and focus of that organization. The Moscow Patriarchate continues to participate in the work of the WCC, but for the time being does not participate in voting. A special commission, whose membership is equally divided between the Protestant and Orthodox member churches, has the urgent mandate to consider the new situation of the WCC in the light of Orthodox objections and challenges.

One event of significance in the period ahead is the fiftieth anniversary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC). The Orthodox Church in America at this time continues in membership of that organization, together with other Orthodox churches of the United States. The NCCC -- most conscious of Orthodox concerns about developing trends in the NCCC -- has convened in the past year a special consultation of Orthodox Churches. On the basis of recommendations by this consultation, a permanent "liaison committee" has been established to assist the NCC in addressing concerns raised by the Orthodox.

Our Church is constantly assessing and reassessing our involvement in formal ecumenical activities. Nothing is taken for granted, but all is measured against the rule of faith and our Church's continuing ability in any given context to bear witness to the fullness and catholicity of the Orthodox faith, and to the unity, through the ages, of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic faith.

Witness in Society

And what of the engagement of the Orthodox Church in America with difficult social and political issues? Is our mission to preach the Gospel and to promote the Orthodox faith isolated from the difficult life and death choices human beings must make? As we witness to the Orthodox Faith and offer the Orthodox Way are we to turn our backs on injustices and violent conflicts?

For me, the answers to these questions are self-evident, and flow from the very nature of God's compassion. Certainly, the Gospel and the Orthodox Faith are not political tools in the context of partisan and party politics, But engagement in social issues and political debates from the moral perspective is a simple duty for us as Orthodox Christians. We cannot be indifferent to the life and death choices human beings must make. We do not have the moral right to turn our backs on injustices, violent conflicts, and policy debates affecting men and women, children and adults - human persons created in the image and likeness of God.

Clergy and laity in numerous parish communities have raised their voices to promote justice, to protect life, to make a moral witness. Bishops, priests, deacons, monastics, and laity of the Orthodox Church in America have gone beyond "speaking the word of truth" to "doing justice." Thus, in communities across the continent, in quiet and effective ways, Orthodox Christians have reached out to the hungry, homeless, sick, imprisoned, abused, and lonely, and have embraced them in the name of Christ. May the God Who is Love multiply through them and through all of us the gifts of love and compassion, healing and reconciliation.

And there are times when the Orthodox Church in America as an autocephalous Church is called upon to make its moral vision and moral commitments known. Our insistent and powerful affirmation of the right to life is known at the national levels in the United States and Canada, complementing the right to life activism of many of our bishops, clergy, and laity.

When the State Department formed a special Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad for the period 1997-1999, Orthodoxy was represented by Archbishop Spyridon of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and Fr Leonid Kishkovsky of the Orthodox Church in America.

When an inter-religious mission was organized and to go to Belgrade in April-May 1999 in order to effect the release of three American Prisoners-of-War, I wholeheartedly expressed our Church's commitment to a peaceful resolution of this tragic conflict and designated Fr Leonid Kishkovsky to participate in this courageous effort. Fr Leonid was one of several Orthodox representatives from the United States participating including Bishop Dimitrios from the Greek Archdiocese and Bishop Mitrophan and Fr Irinij Dobrejevic from the Serbian Church. This mission, led by the Reverend Jesse Jackson and Dr Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, with God's help did obtain the release of the American soldiers by President Slobodan Milosevic. It also did what it could to draw world attention to the witness for peace and justice in Kosovo and in Yugoslavia both for Albanians and Serbs by Serbian Patriarch PAVLE. This mission of religious representatives, upon returning to the United States, presented its views to President Clinton, Secretary of State Albright, and National Security Adviser Berger at a meeting in the White House. About a month later, at the end of May, Fr Kishkovsky joined a small delegation of four Christian representatives on yet another mission to Belgrade. Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk, the General Secretary of Conference of European Churches, and a Lutheran leader from Germany, together with Fr Kishkovsky met with President Milosevich, Patriarch PAVLE, and Special Envoy Victor Chernomyrdin to appeal

for progress toward the cessation of violence and an end to atrocities. On both occasions, the delegations to Belgrade were in that city during severe bombings by NATO. We are grateful to Fr Kishkovsky and the other members of these delegations who courageously traveled in the midst of an armed conflict as agents of peace to seek an equitable and swift resolution of the violence in that region.

I mention these recent events only to emphasize that our Church is not indifferent to the critical issues faced by our nation and by the world. We have a place at the table. Our voice is heard.

In recent years the most vivid and moving story of the involvement of Orthodoxy, and of the Orthodox Church in America, in the human tragedies of our time has been the story of Dmitri Petrov and Dmitry Penkovski, two Russian staff of International Orthodox Christian Charities. In 1995, IOCC undertook deliveries of humanitarian aid to refugees of the Chechnya war in the Caucasus region of the Russian Federation, Dmitri Petrov, a resident of Moscow, and Dmitry Penkovski, a resident of Vladikavkaz, were instrumental in the effective delivery of aid directly to refugees in the war-torn region. On September 20, 1997, they were taken captive in Ingushetia by criminals and bandits. During most of their captivity they were held in Chechnya, in an underground bunker. Dmitri Penkovski was held in captivity until March 24, 1998. Dmitri Petrov was liberated on August 11, 1998.

These two faithful Orthodox Christians did their work of delivering humanitarian aid with courage, honesty, and compassion. Their suffering in captivity, and the suffering of their wives and families, was suffering for truth, for humanity, for charity. Both in their humanitarian work and in their suffering Dmitri Petrov and Dmitri Penkovski were following the Orthodox Christian Way. In our support of IOCC, and in the support of American Orthodoxy for IOCC, all of us have been direct participants in this story of Christian faith and Christian charity.

Dmitry Petrov and Dmitri Penkovski are here as our guests, together with their wives. During this Council, at a later session, they will be invited to address you. I ask you to greet Dmitry Petrov and his wife Elena, and Dmitri Penkovski and his wife Galina.

Our engagement with the challenges and issues of our society extends also to an engagement with the culture as a whole. The Orthodox Faith and our commitment to the Gospel of Christ compel us to look deeply into the heart of contemporary culture. What are the values of our culture? What are the main inspirations and tendencies of our culture? As Orthodox Christians of North America, and as the Orthodox Church in America, it is our task not only to make Orthodoxy known in our culture, but also to challenge America when America's spiritual motivations may be going wrong.

Now as North Americans many of whose ancestors came as immigrants, we are traditionally among the first to affirm America as a safe haven, as the promise and reality of freedom and democracy. This does not mean that our families and communities have not known hard times. This does not mean that immigrant ancestors did not know discrimination. But we have confronted the challenges we have faced, we have put to use the opportunities we have been given, and have overcome social disabilities through hard work, education, and full involvement in

American society.

We know that Americans are generous, charitable, and anxious to respond to human need. We know that Americans are a religious people and that participation in religious life is much higher in North America than it is in Western Europe and many other parts of the world. As Orthodox communities we have joined readily in American society's religious and charitable volunteerism.

We see today the great impact made by the United States on the world. The United States, as the leader of the West, possesses immense power. Military, economic, technological, cultural, and media power make America the world's key nation, the sole super-power.

We know that the United States has great power to be an influence for the good. Often, we use this power well and wisely.

Yet, there is a very serious threat to the moral, spiritual, and political sanity of the United States. We face the danger of the "arrogance of power." In our well-intentioned way, we run the risk of presenting ourselves as the teachers and instructors of the world. We fall into the delusion that there are simple formulas that will solve difficult problems with relative ease and at little cost. We forget that the achievements of America required many years to mature. We also forget that moral failings and hypocrisies of America are readily visible to the naked eye, and that other countries and cultures are not blind.

While I am convinced that the moral voice of the Orthodox religious community in America must be raised to warn Americans against the "arrogance of power," I am equally convinced that we Orthodox Americans must be self-critical. Is it not true that the nations and cultures of the Orthodox Churches in the Middle East and in Central and Eastern Europe are also prone to arrogance, moral blindness, and hypocrisy? And even more seriously, is it not true that Orthodox Christians easily slip into the "arrogance of traditionalism" and the "arrogance of true faith" and the "arrogance of ethnicism"?

We cannot be a prophetic voice warning against the "arrogance of power" if we are oblivious to the temptations of arrogance we ourselves face.

Following Christ: From this Council to the Future It is appropriate and necessary that our work together in this Council be concentrated primarily on our Church's internal life, programs, and institutions, We are here to assess and evaluate, to discuss and debate, to project and to plan. Our purpose must be to assist the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Metropolitan Council to improve and perfect our Church's life and work, to make choices, and to set priorities.

When you hear the Report of the Chancellor, Fr Robert Kondratick, be sure to understand that he presents to you the second half of my own report. When you hear the reports and presentations from the Church Administration, be sure to appreciate that everything done by the Church Administration is done under my direction and authority. And just as I insist on affirming the many accomplishments and achievements of our Church since the last All-American Council, so must I accept

responsibility for any shortcomings and failings.

At the very center of the Church Administration's attention at all times is the "internal" life of Church. What must be done to strengthen parish life? How do we provide pastoral and personal support to the parish clergy? What can the Church do for the Christian education and upbringing of our youth in the life of the Church? What is necessary to make the Church a true community of support for the elderly? What must we provide to our people in order to strengthen the family as a "small Church" and the parish community as a "large family"?

The answers to all of these questions in due course require some planning and some programs. And planning, programs, and administration require resources. But, for me, what motivates and inspires and guides our responses to the needs of our parishes and people is affection and love. As Church, as the Church's bishops, clergy, and laity, are we not moved by affection and love for children and youth? For the elderly? For families? For the lonely and the sick and the suffering?

It is affection and compassion which provide texture and given expression to the love of Christ and to love in Christ. In the life of the Church, those who "administer" are called to serve the community in humility, and with the love which "is patient and kind, not jealous or boastful, nor arrogant or rude...does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor 13:4-7).

As we do the work of this Council, we must not forget for even one moment, in the midst of all the necessary administrative, financial, and legislative details, that our essential tasks are the building up of our Church as the Body of Christ, the affirmation of Orthodox unity in America and around the world, the strengthening of Orthodox witness and mission. Our Church is not an end in itself. If it were an end in itself, it would be an idol. Our Church is the community of believers who honor the name of Jesus Christ and follow the way of Christ. What we must do together during our days together is perfect our Church's life so that we may be more worthy of performing the mission Christ has given to us.

This mission will be ours in the twenty-first century. It is our calling to pass on the Holy Tradition from this generation to the next as the second millennium after Christ passes into the third. In our faithfulness to this calling we are not oriented towards the past. The content of the Holy Tradition is Jesus Christ, the risen Christ. And we know from the Gospel that we should not seek the living one among the dead. To follow Christ is to go forward, to the future, and not to go back, to the past. It is to orient both our life and our death towards the hope of the resurrection.

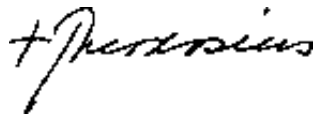
My urgent hope for our Church in America, as we enter the twenty-first century, is that we will be faithful and vigorous in our witness to the Orthodox faith, that we will be a Church fully Orthodox and fully America, that the American challenge will move Orthodoxy energetically into the future and that the Orthodox challenge will transform North American Christianity through an encounter with the fullness of the Christian Tradition.

During the service of baptism and chrismation, we ask God to make the one who is baptized "worthy of his high calling." We have a two-fold vocation. Our Christian

vocation has two dimensions. Each one of us has a "high calling" in our personal Orthodox Christian life and commitment. Each one of us must engage in the spiritual struggle for prayer, for purity, for humility, for patience, and for love. And as a community, as the Church of Christ, we have the "high calling" to be the Body of Christ, to make the Gospel known in its fullness and purity, to be a community which is worthy of its vocation of mission in the name of Christ and charity in the name of Christ.

If this Council serves as a reminder of our high calling, both personally and corporately, it will be a successful council. If we leave Pittsburgh at the end of the Council strengthened in our spiritual struggle, we will be blessed and fortunate people, and a blessing to our society. If we return to our parishes and dioceses, our monasteries and seminaries, to our organizations and institutions renewed in the faith, strengthened in love, and equipped for witness and mission, we will be able to move mountains.

With God's blessing and grace, may it be so!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Theodosius", with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

+ THEODOSIUS
Archbishop of Washington,
Metropolitan of All America and Canada