

Summary Team Report to the Holy Synod of Bishops

The Summary Team was asked to be attentive to as many presentations and discussions as possible during the 14th All-American Council. This included sermons, plenaries, floor discussions and workshops, luncheon forums and personal conversations.

From these, and from the handwritten notes that participants submitted at workshops and forums, the Summary Team made lists of people's ideas, concerns, and aspirations, meetings each evening to go over the notes and their own observations from the day's deliberations. The team helped David Wagschal and Valerie Zahirsky to put together a daily summary for the Holy Synod and then for the Council participants.

The team's final and most significant task was to synthesize and "distill" the information gathered on Monday through Thursday, and to present as priorities, first to the Holy Synod and then to the body, the salient concerns and ideas that came forth from the Council proceedings. The result was the three priorities described below, which constantly and clearly emerged. Suggestions for meeting the goals of two of these priorities were divided into actions for the next 5-10 years, the next 3 years, and the next 3 months. The 5-10 years ideas represent the "big picture" or the "dream" goals, which while the 3-year goals are somewhat more immediate, and the 3-month goals are things that people hope to see implemented right away, so that momentum is not lost. They are as follows:

Priority One – MISSION

The Preconciliar papers tell us that well into the 20th century, Metropolitan LEONTY referred to our Church simply as "the Mission." It became clear, in the Summary Team's work, that people still see our Church's identity as being centered on the missionary imperative. This cut across all groups and all ages.

- **5-10 year Goals:**

1. A concrete plan to create 50 new missions and 50 revitalized established parishes.
2. A conscious allocation of a larger part of our Church's resources (financial, human, educational) to the work of mission.

- **3 year Goals:**

1. Intentional mission outreach to various cultures in our society, particularly the Hispanic, Asian, and African American populations.
2. A national evangelization program for both clergy and laity, which would involve producing materials and programs to teach people how to evangelize effectively.
3. Modification of our seminaries' curricula to include greater, specific emphasis on mission and evangelization.
4. Establishment of active mission directors, either on the national or diocesan levels (or appointment of more such directors where a few are already working.)
5. Giving a "high profile" to, and putting special focus on, the annual Mission Appeal.
6. MISSION to be the theme of the next All-American Council.

- **3 month Goals:**

1. The Department of Mission to study ways of implementing the 3-year and 5-10 year goals.
2. The All-American Council presentation on evangelization, and the video on the dioceses of The Orthodox Church in America, be posted on the website of The Orthodox Church in America or made generally available in some other way.

Priority Two – EDUCATION and FORMATION

It seemed, as the team's work progressed over the week, that Church members see many of the problems and needs we face as being fundamentally issues of education and formation. People realize that we all – not just the clergy – must know and be able to articulate, explain, and sometimes defend our Orthodox faith. We also realize that the keep riches of Orthodoxy call us to keep learning throughout our lives. This learning is seen as being practical, experiential, and “lived rather than purely theoretical. It was noteworthy that the formation of our clergy, while not the sole focus of our educational efforts, is clearly seen as being central to the life of the Church.

The following goals emerged:

- **5-10 year Goals:**

1. That full financial support for an Orthodox seminary education should be provided to all young men studying for the priesthood.
2. Development of materials and programs that reflect technological and methodological advances. Person-to-person education, continuing education, and skill-based education are all seen as valuable complements to traditional seminary or church school training.
3. Establishment and support of programs for mentoring of younger clergy by experienced (perhaps including retired) clergy, and substantial clergy internship programs.

- **3 year Goals:**

1. Establishment of annual conferences for families and clergy that would have different “tracks” of study, and different activities, for various groups. These would include workshops, skills training, and study of specific issues as well as common prayer and worship. They might be modeled on, or possibly conducted in co-operation with, the Parish Life Conferences sponsored by the Antiochian Archdiocese.
2. Development of a program and program director of Ongoing Pastoral Education and Care. This encompasses two common concerns for continuing education and for the care and support of clergy.

- **3 month Goals**

1. Revitalization of the Summer Internship Program
2. The Department of Christian Education to continue developing materials, specifically those that will accomplish the goals listed above.

Priority THREE – UNITY

A common theme in the notes received by the Summary Team, and in conversations, was that real progress in any area of the Church's life implies increased co-operation with other Orthodox Churches present on this continent. But this priority did not seem to fit into a time frame as naturally as the first two. So the goals are listed without regard to any period of time in which they might be accomplished.

1. A reaffirmation of The Orthodox Church in America's role as a leading voice for Orthodox unity in North America.
2. A call to faithful of The Orthodox Church in America to prayerful recommitment to the goal of Orthodox unity.
3. Development of inter-Orthodox collaboration as a principle of action in all we do as a Church.
4. A strong effort to restart the Bilateral Commission with the Antiochian Orthodox Church in America, looking toward a "Multilateral Commission" in the future.

The clear desire for real efforts at unity was heartening. His Beatitude Metropolitan HERMAN certainly was giving voice to the feelings of Council participants when he quoted Patriarch IGNATIUS of Antioch at the Council banquet by saying that "we should follow Christ into the future as one Church."

Respectfully submitted,

David Wagschal and Valerie Zahirsky