

## Report of the Chancellor

*Protopresbyter Robert S. Kondratich delivered the Report of the Chancellor to the 14th All-American Council at Plenary Session III, July 18, 2005.*

*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratitude in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him [Colossians 3:12-17].*

Recalling the Apostle Paul's words of admonition and encouragement to the Colossians, with an awareness of my own weaknesses and need for forgiveness, and with the hope that everything we do be done for the sake of Christ and His Church, it is once again my honor to come before you as chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America to present this report on the life and work of our Church and the work of the Chancery since we last met in Orlando, Florida, for the 13th All-American Council.

Preparatory documents were distributed in the weeks leading up to this Council. These will assist us as we reflect on our theme – “Our Church and the Future.” We have identified five “pillars” which will support and inform our common reflection during the Council:

1. Our vision and identity as the Orthodox Church in America.
2. Our relations with others, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox.
3. Clergy formation and development.
4. Parish health.
5. Evangelization in North America.

As we consider the Council's overall theme and draw upon discussions built on these five pillars, it will become clear that serious thinking about the future of our Church requires honest reflection on our past, our history, and our roots. And we cannot look to the future of the Church without a sense of our current life and mission. It is within the context of this past/present/future dynamic that I offer my report as chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America.

**Recalling our past.** This year has provided us with a number of opportunities to consider our history in North America. We have received many blessings in the course of our history. And we are also challenged by it.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery, South Canaan, Pennsylvania. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, the members of the Holy Synod, and the entire episcopate of our Church gathered in South Canaan with thousands of clergy and faithful to mark this significant milestone in the life and history of the Orthodox Church in America. The monastery was founded in 1905 by Archbishop Tikhon, who was later elected Patriarch of Moscow and became a grace-bearing confessor of the Faith. As archpastor in America, he recognized the important role that the monastic life could play in the life of the very young Church. He established

the monastery in the heart of Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains so that the blessings of ascetic prayer and witness would be easily accessible to the greatest concentration of Orthodox believers at that time. For 100 years, the monastic brotherhood has faithfully maintained the cycle of divine services, implored the Lord to bestow His blessings upon the Church in America, provided a spiritual haven and place of comfort for generations of Orthodox Christians, and borne faithful witness to the life of the world to come.

The heart of Archbishop Tikhon's pastoral ministry was his desire to establish a full and stable Orthodox Church life in North America. This full and stable life would be the foundation upon which the young Church in America could grow and flourish. The monastery was an important part of this vision, as was the establishment and building up of parish communities. The great leaders of this period of our Church life – before, during, and following the years under Saint Tikhon – shared his vision and purpose. Early photographs and documents point to the tireless building activity of Archbishop Tikhon, as well as Bishop Nicholas (later Metropolitan of Warsaw), Saint Raphael of Brooklyn, Saint Alexis Toth, Saint Alexander Hotovitsky, Saint John Kochurov, Archimandrite and later Archbishop Arseny, Father Leonid Turkevich (who later became our beloved Metropolitan Leonty), and so very many others. They established communities and consecrated churches from one coast to the other. They established institutions, blessed organizations, and provided direction and resources to meet the challenges of the Orthodox mission. It was a remarkable time. They traveled by train, horseback, carriage, and automobile over an under-developed highway system. They communicated through letters and telegraph and, as the possibility presented itself, by telephone. They accomplished this pastoral and evangelical work in a land whose language most of them did not speak fluently. Although they were burdened with obstacles and difficulties, they persevered – even at great personal cost. And yet, what great works they accomplished! Building upon the heritage received from the first missionaries to North America, they laid the foundation for our Orthodox Church in America – the Church we serve, the Church entrusted to our care at the beginning of yet another century. May their extraordinary dedication serve as an inspiration to all of us and stir up in us a greater zeal in our own times – zeal for the Gospel, zeal for the Kingdom of Heaven, zeal for the Orthodox Church in America.

This year, at the spring session of the Holy Synod, we commemorated the 35th anniversary of the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in America. We prayerfully remembered those whose vision and commitment made the granting of our autocephaly a reality. Among them we recalled those who have gone before us: Metropolitan Iriney, Metropolitan Nikodim, Archbishop Kiprian, Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann, Protopresbyter John Meyendorff, Archpriest John Skvir, Archpriest John Turkevich, and Mr. Stephen Kopestonsky. We also gratefully remembered those who are still among us – Metropolitan Theodosius, Protopresbyter Daniel Hubiak, Archpriest John Nehrebecki, and Dr. Constantine Kallaur – who were present when the Tomos of Autocephaly was formally presented to the Orthodox Church in America. While this 35th anniversary reminded us that we are still a young Church, it also reminded us that the gift of autocephaly calls us to greater things.

Within a few short weeks, we will celebrate another profoundly significant anniversary – the 35th anniversary of the glorification of Saint Herman of Alaska. Saint Herman was the first saint glorified by our Church. The celebration of this anniversary is an invitation to all of us to renew the zeal and enthusiasm present in Alaska and throughout our newborn Church at the time. By the prayers of our Father among the saints Herman, may we take up the cross of his apostolic labors!

And so, although we are a young Church, we are also a Church with a rich history and heritage – a legacy. It is a legacy that compels us to be energetic in the work of proclaiming the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this land. As we recall our great spiritual and missionary legacy, I wish to note that this fall, with the concurrence of the Holy Synod of Bishops and the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Nikolai, the wonderworking Sitka Icon of the Mother of God will begin a two-month pilgrimage throughout the “lower 48.” This pilgrimage will include visits to over 600 parishes, monasteries, and Church institutions. Although unknown to some of the clergy and faithful in North America, the Sitka Icon of the Mother of God is far more than an historic or artistic treasure. It is one of our Church’s great spiritual treasures. It is our prayer that this unique pilgrimage will be a blessing for all Orthodox Christians in America and that, through the intercessions of the Mother of God, prayerful seekers will find healing, consolation and mercy. Let us all recognize and honor those holy things that are part of our unique legacy as the local Church on this continent.

I have mentioned the 100th anniversary of Saint Tikhon’s Monastery, the 35th anniversary of autocephaly, and the 35th anniversary of the glorification of Saint Herman. I can note only in passing the many parish anniversary celebrations during these past three years, including the 100th anniversaries of Chicago’s Holy Trinity Cathedral and Saints Peter and Paul Church, South River, New Jersey. Our past is a living and present reality in the historic continuity of so many of our communities.

And we continue to expand and extend the mission of the Church as new temples are consecrated throughout the continent in such places as Southbury, Connecticut; Colorado Springs, Colorado; and Palatine, Illinois. New missions have been established in Kona, Hawaii; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Pella, Iowa; Stafford, Virginia; and elsewhere. And here in Canada, new communities have been established in Toronto and in neighboring Hamilton.

Our three seminaries have witnessed the graduation of larger-than-ever classes. We are thankful that it has been possible to ordain many young men eager to answer the call to serve Christ’s Church. Our parishes are filled with wonderful volunteers engaging in various ministries and programs. A modest – but important – snapshot of the recent activities and accomplishments of our Church institutions, departments, and programs can be found in the reports distributed for this Council. There is so very much for which to give thanks!

I cannot help but think that the spiritual and missionary legacy that has come down to us is indeed being fulfilled in our Church life today. Although those concerned for the well-being of our Church are often tempted to think in terms of crises and problems, the truth of the matter is that, even if we are weak vessels, we are striving with God’s help to realize our vocation as the local Church on this continent. Our Council is dedicated to renewing and re-energizing our sense of this vocation. It is my hope that as we gather here, through the prayers of all the saints who have shone forth in North America, each one of us will be encouraged to return to our respective dioceses and parishes with a rekindled enthusiasm for the active support of the apostolic work of the Orthodox Church in America!

**Church life since the 13th All-American Council.** Several extraordinary events have shaped the life of the Orthodox Church in America since my report to the 13th All-American Council three years ago.

In April 2002, the Holy Synod of Bishops announced the retirement of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius. In July, the Council was convened in Orlando, Florida. The retirement of Metropolitan Theodosius became effective at the conclusion of the first plenary session. With His Eminence

Archbishop Kyrill of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania presiding at the following plenary session, His Eminence Herman, Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, was elected Primate of the Orthodox Church in America.

The Orlando Council was an extraordinary one, in that it was the occasion of the retirement of one Metropolitan and the election of his successor. Undoubtedly, because of the great interest generated by this, the number of people who participated in the Council exceeded every expectation. There was a sense that the Council expressed and generated a remarkable enthusiasm and commitment on the part of the clergy and faithful of our Church.

The enthronement of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America took place less than two months later, on the Great Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos. Twenty-five bishops, numerous priests and deacons, hundreds of Orthodox Christian faithful, and many special guests were present at Saint Nicholas Cathedral, Washington, DC, to witness the event. Joining the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church in America were over a dozen hierarchs representing many of our sister Orthodox Churches throughout the world. In greeting the numerous well-wishers, Metropolitan Herman noted that, while honoring him at the beginning of his ministry as Primate, they also were honoring the entire Orthodox Church in America. Among the Orthodox Churches represented at His Beatitude's enthronement were the Ecumenical Patriarchate; the patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Moscow, the Churches of Romania, Poland, and the Czech Lands and Slovakia; and the Autonomous Churches of Finland, Japan, and Ukraine.

The election and the enthronement of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, were accomplished in a manner that demonstrated the maturity of the Orthodox Church in America. Our place and role in North America and throughout the Orthodox world were afforded a high profile. The sincere love and respect in our Church for Metropolitan Theodosius at his retirement and Metropolitan Herman at his election and enthronement, and their shared commitment to an orderly, canonical process in the administrative transition, offered important witness in the midst of the changes and challenges facing the various Orthodox jurisdictions present in North America today, as well as those facing Orthodoxy throughout the world.

**The hierarchs and dioceses of our Church.** There have been several significant changes and developments in the episcopate of our Church in the past three years. On November 1-2, 2002, His Beatitude presided at the episcopal consecration of His Grace, Bishop Irineu of Dearborn Heights, Auxiliary Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America. Bishop Irineu had earlier been nominated to the episcopacy by delegates to the Episcopate's Church Congress. His canonical election by the Holy Synod took place during the Council in Orlando.

At the fall 2003 session of the Holy Synod, His Grace, Bishop Nikon, formerly Bishop of Baltimore and auxiliary to the Metropolitan, was elected ruling bishop of the Albanian Archdiocese. He was enthroned at Saint George Cathedral, Boston, on November 22, 2003, to the great joy of the archdiocese's faithful, who had been for many years without their own ruling hierarch. Since his election, Bishop Nikon also has continued to serve as administrator of the Diocese of New England.

The Holy Synod recently decided that steps should be taken for the nomination and election of a ruling diocesan hierarch for the Diocese of Hartford and New England. To this end, His Beatitude, as locum tenens of the diocese, recently convened a special diocesan assembly for the purpose of nominating a candidate for the office of ruling bishop, whose name would then be presented to the Holy Synod for its decision and possible canonical election. This special assembly was held in

Hartford, Connecticut, on Thursday, June 23, 2005. Because the nomination process was inconclusive, His Beatitude will present this matter to the Holy Synod for final determination.

Archimandrite Tikhon [Mollard], deputy abbot of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery, was elected to the episcopacy at the fall 2003 session of the Holy Synod. He served as Bishop of South Canaan and auxiliary to the Metropolitan until his election to the See of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania on May 27, 2005. His installation will take place on Saturday, September 10, 2005, at Philadelphia's Saint Stephen Cathedral.

Archimandrite Benjamin [Peterson] was elected to the episcopacy at the spring 2004 session of the Holy Synod. He was consecrated in our historic Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, on May 1, 2004. As Bishop of Berkeley and auxiliary to His Grace Tikhon, Bishop of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West, Bishop Benjamin also serves as diocesan chancellor.

At its spring 2005 session, the Holy Synod elected Archimandrite Alejo (Pacheco Vera) as Bishop of Mexico City and vicar of the Metropolitan. His consecration to the episcopacy took place during the centennial celebration at Saint Tikhon's Monastery, May 27-28, 2005. With the blessing of the Metropolitan and under the direct guidance of His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri, Exarch of Mexico, Bishop Alejo had served the Mexican Church for many years as dean of Mexico City's Holy Ascension Cathedral and as the exarchate's administrator. His election and consecration promise a bright future for the ongoing growth of the Orthodox Church in our neighbor to the south.

On June 8, 2003, hundreds of faithful from the Diocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania gathered to honor the senior member of the Holy Synod, His Eminence, Archbishop Kyrill, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his consecration to the episcopacy. A Service of Thanksgiving was celebrated by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman; His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius; His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas of the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and numerous clergy. Later in the month, the Bulgarian Diocese of Toledo honored His Eminence on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his ordination to the holy priesthood. His Eminence, who celebrated his 85th birthday earlier this year, continues to serve Christ and His Church with zeal and enthusiasm.

In November 2003, His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri, celebrated his 80th birthday. He continues to serve the Diocese of the South with dedication and devotion. His Eminence, Archbishop Job, celebrated the 20th anniversary of his consecration to the episcopate in January 2003, and was elevated to the rank of archbishop on March 17, 2004. His Eminence first served as diocesan hierarch of the Diocese of New England, and for the past 13 years has served as ruling hierarch of the Diocese of the Midwest.

This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the episcopal consecration of His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel. His Eminence's service as ruling hierarch of the Romanian Episcopate is deeply appreciated by all those to whom he ministers, as is his outspoken defense of Orthodox unity in North America.

His Grace, Bishop Mark, former Bishop of Boston, also celebrated the 25th anniversary of his episcopal consecration last November. We are pleased that His Grace continues to make his presence known and to participate, whenever possible, in the life of our Church.

At the October 2004 session of the Holy Synod, His Eminence, Archbishop Peter of New York and New Jersey indicated his intention to retire sometime before the spring 2005 session. At the spring session, the Holy Synod granted the Archbishop's request, which became effective on April 31, 2005. In keeping with its canonical prerogatives concerning the creation of dioceses, the Holy Synod also determined to create a new Diocese of Washington and New York, merging the territories of the former Diocese of Washington and the former Diocese of New York and New Jersey. Metropolitan Herman is the ruling hierarch of the new diocese, with the title "Archbishop of Washington and New York, Metropolitan of All America and Canada." His Beatitude has initiated the steps to begin making arrangements for the transition in the administration of the new diocese.

Last October, hundreds of clergy and faithful gathered in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, and joined the members of the Holy Synod, the entire episcopate of our Church, as well as many invited guests, to honor His Beatitude on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his ordination to the holy priesthood. This celebration honored His Beatitude's life of service to the Church as an example of the dedication and love by which those who follow Christ are known.

My selection of just a few visible highlights in the life of the episcopate of the Orthodox Church in America clearly reveals that the Lord continues to bless our Church with dedicated and caring archpastors. They are absolutely committed to nurturing the ongoing life and future growth of Christ's Holy Orthodox Church in these lands. We are truly blessed by the dedication of our hierarchy. Their common ministry represents literally hundreds of years of combined service to Christ. By their example and through their prayers – and with their blessing! – may we all continue to serve the Lord in accordance with the unique call given to each one of us.

**Interchurch and ecumenical relations.** We are a self-governing Church. This means that we are canonically self-reliant (autocephalous) while maintaining the bonds of unity with all the local Orthodox Churches. As an autocephalous Church, it is incumbent upon us to nurture our relationships with these sister Churches. These relationships strengthen our witness to the Orthodox Faith, not only here in North America but throughout the world.

As Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, His Beatitude bears the responsibility of representing the Orthodox Church in America in its relations, both public and private, with all the autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox Churches. It is his role to be the focal point and sign of unity between our Church and the rest of the Orthodox world. Following the time-honored custom for newly elected Primates to visit the heads of the other Orthodox Churches, His Beatitude has initiated an ongoing series of visits to our sister Churches.

- ***The Church of Russia.*** In June 2003, at the invitation of His Holiness Aleksy II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, His Beatitude made his first official visit, as Primate, to the Orthodox Church of Russia. The Orthodox Church in America continues to maintain a strong bond of faith and love, of shared history and common practice, with the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian Church, having brought the Orthodox faith to North America, is both our mother Church and our sister. During this visit to Russia, His Beatitude concelebrated with His Holiness and visited the Holy Trinity-Saint Sergius Lavra, where he venerated the relics of Saint Sergius of Radonezh and Saint Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow and Apostle to America. His Beatitude also addressed the students of the Moscow Theological Academy and visited a number of other monasteries and holy sites in and around Moscow, including the Donskoi Monastery, where he venerated the holy relics of Saint Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and Enlightener of North America. His Beatitude served the Divine Liturgy at Saint Catherine the Great Martyr Church, representation church of the Orthodox Church in America in Moscow.

His Beatitude visited Russia a second time in July-August 2003, as a guest of the Russian Church, for the celebration of the centennial of the glorification of Saint Seraphim of Sarov. At the invitation of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine, His Beatitude then traveled to Ukraine and participated in the annual pilgrimage to the Pochayiv Monastery. During this visit, he was also welcomed to western Ukraine, the native land of the forebears of many members of the Orthodox Church in America, by His Eminence, Metropolitan Onufrey of Chernovtsy and Bukovina. The visit included visits to many monasteries and Church-sponsored social service institutions. His Beatitude's travels throughout Ukraine were highly publicized as a means of supporting the canonical Church in Ukraine, which suffers from large-scale schismatic and sectarian opposition. The presence of His Beatitude afforded very visible support to Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev, bearing witness to the unity of the Church through adherence to proper canonical order.

In February 2004, His Beatitude participated in the celebration of the 75th birthday of His Holiness, Patriarch Aleksy. His Beatitude expressed not only his personal best wishes, but those of our entire Church, and honored His Holiness for the instrumental role he has played in the Church's growth in Russia since the fall of the communist regime. I would like to stress that Patriarch Aleksy, from the first days of our autocephaly and well before his election as Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, has been a very dear friend of the Orthodox Church in America and a strong supporter of our role within the communion of Orthodox Churches.

In June and July, 2004, His Beatitude participated in the long-awaited return of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God to the Russian Orthodox Church. This beloved icon, so widely venerated in Russia before the 1917 revolution and throughout her long sojourn abroad, including a 55-year stay in America, was welcomed by literally hundreds of thousands of clergy and faithful. The return of the icon began at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Chicago. His Eminence, Archbishop Job, hosted His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, and His Eminence, Metropolitan Vladimir of Saint Petersburg, who traveled to the United States to accompany the icon on its return journey. From Chicago, the icon traveled first to Riga, Latvia, accompanied by Metropolitan Vladimir and His Grace, Bishop Seraphim. Metropolitan Herman and our OCA delegation welcomed the icon in Moscow and formally returned the icon to His Holiness, Patriarch Aleksy, and the Russian Orthodox Church. Among those present on this historic occasion were Archbishop Job and Bishops Seraphim, Nikolai and Nikon. Archpriests Sergei and Alexander Garklavs were instrumental in arranging the return of the icon. Father Sergei, the guardian of the icon since he first received it from his adoptive father, the ever-memorable Archbishop John of Chicago, led the Garklavs family and a number of OCA pilgrims in the festive events, culminating in the icon's return to its original home, the Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery in Tikhvin, a city within the Diocese of Saint Petersburg.

In December 2004, Saint Catherine the Great Martyr Church celebrated its 10th anniversary as the Orthodox Church in America's representation church in Moscow. Archimandrite Zacchaeus (Wood), organized the celebration, at which His Beatitude, Archbishop Nathaniel, Bishop Seraphim, and Bishop Nikon were present. His Holiness, Patriarch Aleksy concelebrated the Divine Liturgy and was present at the banquet which followed. His Holiness expressed gratitude for His Beatitude's support of the work of our representation church in Moscow, as well as his appreciation for the presence of the other hierarchs representing our Church at the anniversary celebration. In light of this 20th anniversary celebration we must commend Protopresbyter Daniel Hubiak, the first representative of the Orthodox Church in America to the Moscow Patriarchate; Archimandrite Nicholas [Iuhos], who succeeded him; Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky, who served as temporary

representative for a brief period; and Archimandrite Zacchaeus [Wood], the current representative, for their work in Moscow on behalf of the Orthodox Church in America.

- ***The Church of Constantinople.*** At the beginning of July 2003, His Beatitude was warmly received by His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, at the patriarchal complex at the Phanar. While there, His Beatitude made a pilgrimage to Nicea, site of the First and Seventh Ecumenical Councils, and to Ephesus, the site of the Third Ecumenical Council. Many other shrines and historic sites were also visited. His Beatitude was able to tour the theological academy at Halki, closed since the 1970s by the Turkish government. During his visit to Constantinople, His Beatitude was received by the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, His Beatitude Mesrob II. His Beatitude also made courtesy calls to the Ambassador of the United States to Turkey, the Honorable W. Robert Pearson; Dr. David Arnett, United States Consul General; and various Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim leaders. The following year, His Beatitude also joined in welcoming His All-Holiness on his visit to the United States at a reception at the Chancery of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

- ***The Church of Poland.*** At the invitation of His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland, His Beatitude visited the Polish Orthodox Church in September 2004. The Polish Church numbers over one-half million Orthodox faithful. Many of the faithful of the Orthodox Church in America can trace their ancestry to Poland, including the late Metropolitan Iriney and Archbishop Kiprian. Saint Tikhon also served the Church in Poland. Metropolitan Herman's visit highlighted the warm and close relationship that has developed between our Churches in recent years. As is customary for most official visits abroad, His Beatitude was also welcomed at the United States Embassy and the Canadian Embassy.

- ***The Church of Georgia.*** Metropolitan Herman paid a nine-day visit to the ancient Church of Georgia in April 2004, at the invitation of His Holiness and Beatitude, Patriarch-Catholicos Ilia of All Georgia. His Beatitude visited many shrines, parishes, and monasteries, and met with numerous Church, religious, and political leaders, including Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili. Patriarch Ilia will be the guest of the Orthodox Church in America in October of this year. During his visit, he will meet with the members of our Holy Synod, as well as with other Orthodox hierarchs, religious leaders, and leaders of civil society and government. We anticipate that the visit of the Patriarch-Catholicos will further strengthen our ties with the Church of Georgia and encourage the large number of Georgian faithful participating in the life of our parish communities, most notably in New York City and Washington, DC.

- ***The Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia.*** In September 2004, His Beatitude made an official visit to the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, the homeland of so many of our ancestors. He was welcomed by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Nikolaj, and he visited many parishes and monasteries. Metropolitan Herman addressed students at the Presov Orthodox Theological Seminary, and met with a number of civic and religious leaders. Throughout the visit, His Beatitude distributed humanitarian aid to Church-sponsored institutions providing various forms of social service. The generosity of our clergy and faithful in their humanitarian support for such projects is always deeply appreciated and strengthens our ties of faith and love with our sister Churches.

- ***The Church of Finland.*** In December 2004, after the celebration of the 10th anniversary of Saint Catherine the Great Martyr Church, His Beatitude visited the autonomous Orthodox Church of Finland. His Beatitude was accompanied by Archbishop Nathaniel, Bishop Seraphim, and Bishop Nikon. Graciously hosted by His Eminence, Archbishop Leo, this visit served to further strengthen the warm ties of friendship between the Orthodox Church in America and the Finnish Church, dating

from the days of the ever-memorable Archbishop Paul. Archbishop Leo will return this visit at the end of July 2005 to participate in the 35th anniversary celebration of the glorification of Saint Herman of Alaska. He will be present at the monastic gathering to be held at Saint Tikhon's Monastery in conjunction with the centennial of its founding. As a special blessing, His Eminence will bring with him the wonderworking Valaam Icon of the Mother of God. This wonderworking icon, originally from Valaam in Russia, has not left Finland since it was first brought to New Valamo Monastery by the monks during the Winter War of 1940. We are extremely grateful to Archbishop Leo and the Finnish Orthodox Church for this special blessing, as well as for the continuing good relationship we enjoy with them.

In addition to visiting our sister Orthodox Churches, His Beatitude has also received several primates and hierarchs from abroad. In February 2003, he welcomed His Beatitude, Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania, to Saint Vladimir's Seminary and bestowed on him an honorary doctorate. His Beatitude has also welcomed other guest hierarchs from the Churches of Russia, Romania, Serbia, Georgia, and Jerusalem.

- ***The Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.*** We are all grateful that talks have begun between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). As relations have improved between the Moscow Patriarchate and ROCOR, so have relations between the Orthodox Church in America and ROCOR. His Beatitude has met with Metropolitan Laurus, First Hierarch of ROCOR, and representatives of Metropolitan Laurus were present at the celebration of the 40th anniversary of His Beatitude's ordination to the holy priesthood and the centennial celebration of Saint Tikhon's Monastery. Good relations and mutual cooperation between our respective seminaries – and parishes and clergy in many parts of the country – are encouraging signs of a normalizing of relations and the possibility of common witness. We anticipate a fruitful resolution of canonical issues in a manner that will be beneficial to Orthodoxy in America.

His Beatitude is often invited to represent the Orthodox Church in America at various significant celebrations in the life of the other Orthodox Churches. Given his responsibilities, His Beatitude is not always able to accept these invitations personally. In his place, he has sometimes asked members of the Holy Synod to represent him and our Church. Bishop Seraphim, vice-chairman of the Department of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations, and Archpriest David Brum, secretary to the Metropolitan, represented our Church at the consecration of the new Holy Trinity Cathedral in Tblisi, Georgia. Bishop Seraphim and I were present for the enthronement of His Holiness, Patriarch Theodoros II of Alexandria. His Eminence, Archbishop Kyrill, and Father David Brum represented His Beatitude at the celebration of the 90th birthday of His Holiness, Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria. Bishop Seraphim and Priest Alexander Rentel were also present in Rome for the funeral of Pope John Paul II. His Grace, Bishop Tikhon of Eastern Pennsylvania, and Father David Brum represented the Orthodox Church in America at the installation of Pope Benedict XVI.

Our need to maintain and foster our relationships with our Sister Churches is often unappreciated, and even disparaged, by some in our Church. They see the nurturing of such relationships as an unnecessary exercise. Some are critical because they are afraid of “foreign” influences upon our Church. Others are concerned about the expenses related to fostering and preserving these relationships. Although we are sensitive to these voices, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, and the Holy Synod of Bishops are firmly committed to maintaining and developing effective relationships with our Sister Churches throughout the world, even those – most especially those – that do not recognize our status as an autocephalous Church. This is not a time to become isolated.

With so many real and potential factors working against the unity of the Church in America and abroad, the Orthodox Churches are in greater need than ever of supporting one another. Our official presence and participation in the wider Orthodox world continues to allow the Orthodox Church in America to make significant contributions to the ongoing conversation about critical issues affecting the Orthodox world today. These are matters with real impact on the life and witness of our Church.

We recognize, of course, that while maintaining and fostering our relationships with the Orthodox Churches around the world, we must remain true to our fundamental pastoral and evangelical vocation in North America. I pray that our celebration of the 35th anniversary of the granting of our autocephaly and the 35th anniversary of the glorification of Saint Herman of Alaska, our Church's first saint and fervent intercessor, will refresh our shared memory and allow us to reclaim and renew our common commitment to who we are as the Orthodox Church in America and our unique place among the Orthodox Churches.

**Dioceses of the Orthodox Church in America.** Within weeks of his election, Metropolitan Herman traveled to the Diocese of Alaska, the mother diocese of the Orthodox Church in America and the guardian of the relics of our Venerable Father Herman, wonderworker of Alaska and All America. At the invitation of His Grace, Bishop Nikolai, he participated in the annual pilgrimage to Kodiak and Spruce Island, leading the clergy and faithful in venerating the relics of Saint Herman and challenging them to reclaim the spiritual and missionary heritage brought to North America in 1794.

In January 2003, His Beatitude made his first official visit to the Mexican Exarchate, accompanied by His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South and Exarch of Mexico. His Beatitude presided at the Divine Liturgy and the Blessing of Water at Holy Ascension Cathedral in Mexico City. While in Mexico, His Beatitude met with Metropolitan Anthony [Chedraoui-Tannous] of the Antiochian Orthodox Church, as well as with representatives of the Mexican government, including Dr. Javier Montezuma Barraga, Cabinet Officer of the Mexican Government, and Dr. Alvaro Castro Estrada, General Director of Religious Associations. Throughout his visit, Metropolitan Herman praised the tireless efforts of the clergy and laity alike in their work to build up the Body of Christ in the capital city and beyond, and he encouraged them to bring the Light of Christ to other regions of this large nation.

During these past three years, His Beatitude has been present at many diocesan assemblies and celebrations, including the assemblies of the Diocese of the South, the Diocese of the Midwest, the Diocese of New England, the Archdiocese of Canada, the then-Diocese of New York and New Jersey, and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania. His Beatitude will also be present for the assembly of the Diocese of the West in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in October.

During his visits to the dioceses and parishes of our Church, His Beatitude has been able to witness firsthand the growth in the number of our missions and new parishes. We are pleased to note today that the Orthodox Church in America has established or received 35 new missions and other institutions since the last All-American Council. For several years, a new surge of church construction and renovation has been seen in such diverse places as Santa Rosa, California; Las Vegas, Nevada; Wheaton, Palatine, and Burr Ridge, Illinois; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Dallas, Texas; Campbell, Cleveland, Dayton, and Rossford, Ohio; Bethlehem and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and elsewhere. The construction and renovation of churches is a sign of our Church's health, a sign that growth is continuing, and that the commitment to the Church's life and mission remains strong. As a sign of mutual love and our unity as the Orthodox Church in America, His Beatitude participated in the consecration of a number of new church temples, including Saint George

Cathedral, Rossford, Ohio; Saint Alexis Church, Clinton, Connecticut; Holy Transfiguration Church, Livonia, Michigan; and Christ the Savior Church, Southbury, Connecticut. Holy Resurrection Church, Palatine, Illinois, was also recently consecrated.

**Ecumenical witness.** The Orthodox Church in America continues to bear witness to the Orthodox Faith and Tradition in various ecumenical forums. While we are clearly aware of the tensions that arise in connection with Orthodox participation in ecumenical events, we must stress that our own Church is always represented in a manner consistent with Orthodox teaching and governed by the Holy Synod's *Encyclical on Christian Unity and Ecumenism*. Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky continues to serve as our principal representative to the World Council of Churches (WCC), the National Council of Churches (NCC), and the newly-formed Christian Churches Together (CTT). CTT is the result of a movement to create a new ecumenical organization, composed not only of the Orthodox Churches and the mainline Protestant churches, but also including the Roman Catholic Church and the conservative evangelical Protestant churches and bodies. Among the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches that have also joined CTT are the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, the Armenian Church, and the Syrian Orthodox Church.

Father Kishkovsky, a senior priest of the Orthodox Church in America, is a respected Orthodox voice at conferences and seminars hosted by our sister Orthodox churches, in our relations with government and diplomatic officers and non-governmental organizations, and in inter-faith dialogues and multi-faith organizations. He is vice-moderator of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, and Moderator of Religions for Peace USA and a trustee of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation.

Prof. Richard Schneider, a member of our Archdiocese of Canada, is currently serving as president of the Canadian Council of Churches and, together with Mr. David Wagschal, strives to make the presence of the Orthodox Church in America known within that forum.

Other representatives of our Church at certain ecumenical events are the Archpriests David Brum and Joseph Fester, the Priest Alexander Rentel, Dr. Paul Meyendorff and Dr. Peter Bouteneff, as well as many other clergy and laity on national, diocesan, and parish levels.

**Government and societal relations.** Metropolitan Herman represented The Orthodox Church in America at the second inauguration of President George W. Bush in January 2005. He also was present for the national prayer service in the National Cathedral, attended by the President and the leadership of the Senate, the House of Representatives, and other government bodies and agencies, as well as members of the diplomatic corps. In October 2002, His Beatitude met Canada's incumbent Prime Minister, Jean Chretien. As I have already noted, His Beatitude met with government officials in Mexico in 2003. Such meetings are usual in the course of his official visits to the local Orthodox Churches. We also maintain relations with foreign embassies and embassy staff in America, and our own American embassies abroad. Our presence at government events and meetings with representatives of governments enables us to make Orthodoxy in general – and our Church in particular – better known. This is a time-consuming ministry that demands flexibility and creativity. We are very grateful for the extraordinary dedication of our Chancery staff in developing and maintaining these important contacts in the interests of the Orthodox Church in America.

His Beatitude continues to be a leader in the pro-life movement. Every January, he participates in the March for Life in Washington, DC. His Eminence, Archbishop Job, was also present this year. Our hierarchs have consistently made the march an occasion for Orthodox witness, and many of our

clergy, seminarians, and faithful are regular participants. Orthodox support of the dignity of human life is widely recognized, primarily due to His Beatitude's many years of personal commitment to the cause. By means of this witness, as well as by public statements on biomedical and bioethical issues, in discussions of ethics in our publications and on our web site, and in our pastoral practice, we remain perhaps the most prominent Orthodox voice in the United States to speak out in defense of the unborn and for respect for human life at all stages, from conception to natural death. Under the guidance of the Holy Synod, Archpriest John Breck, chairperson of our Church's Medical Ethics Commission, and the other members of the commission provide appropriate Orthodox counsel on developments in medical science and bioethics, as well as the various moral and ethical issues faced by Orthodox Christians today.

**The Standing Conference.** Shortly after his election, Metropolitan Herman hosted a meeting of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) at the OCA Chancery. This was the first of several SCOBA meetings that have taken place in the past three years.

The work of SCOBA continues, mostly through its Study and Planning Commission, in which the Orthodox Church in America continues to play a key role. On behalf of the SCOBA hierarchs and with their blessing, the commission oversees the work of the various commissions and organizations endorsed by SCOBA. The commission also supports various ecumenical dialogues, such as the Orthodox-Lutheran Dialogue and the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue, and maintains relations with the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches (SCOOC). Most visible among the SCOBA-sponsored agencies are the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), and the college-based Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF). We participate directly in these agencies.

Our Church is often asked to act as a bridge between the various jurisdictions present in North America. It is our hope that the relationship between its member hierarchs will allow SCOBA to reclaim the positive influence on Church life in America that it once had. Regrettably, apart from the work I have noted, SCOBA activities have diminished to the point where the original goals of cooperation and unity are generally experienced only on a liturgical level, such as annual sponsorship of the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and shared sponsorship with SCOOC of the annual United Nations Prayer Service. This latter event was hosted by Metropolitan Herman in October 2003, in the form of the celebration of Vespers at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in New York City, with responses sung by a combined choir from Saint Tikhon's and Saint Vladimir's seminaries.

**The ongoing task of evangelization.** Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself gave us the Great Commission to evangelize when He told His apostles, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you" [Matthew 28:19-20].

This mandate has been taken to heart by Orthodox Christians in North America throughout the past 200 years. It is a mandate we take seriously as the Lord's disciples in this place, at this time. We believe that the Orthodox Church in America is uniquely committed to the task of evangelization, following the spirit and tradition directly handed down to us by the first Orthodox missionaries in Alaska, who brought the Orthodox Faith to these lands, proclaimed the Gospel, made disciples, baptized, and taught.

As part of this missionary task, we continue to teach and evangelize within our established parishes, as well as in places across this continent in which people have yet to hear the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed and the new life in Christ made tangible in the worship and mutual care of the Church. A review of parish statistics for the past triennium demonstrates a trend toward growth, and testifies that our missionary efforts have continued to bear fruit. Many new missions and parishes have been established. Older parishes are being revitalized. As already noted, 35 new missions have been opened. Two which had previously been closed were reopened. It is true that six missions and monastic institutions were closed during this period. We truly regret that things can come to the point that closure is necessary, and we trust that we may learn important lessons from such circumstances. Indeed we take seriously, as a mark of maturity, learning from mistakes or miscalculation, adapting to change, and integrating lessons learned into our future plans. With God's help, such wisdom will support the overall growth of evangelization and the mission of our Church.

**Conferences.** In order to enhance, encourage, and support the work of evangelization and other parish ministries, the Orthodox Church in America sponsored three special conferences in 2004.

The Third OCA Pastoral Life Conference took place at Saint Tikhon's Monastery and Seminary June 2-4, 2004. Attended by nearly 125 clergy, it focused on the unique challenges encountered in the priestly ministry. The conference provided an excellent opportunity for our clergy to pray, study, reflect, and engage in fellowship.

Nearly 100 clergy and laity participated in the parish ministry "Faith in Action" conference sponsored by the Department of Christian Witness and Service at Saint Vladimir's Seminary July 28-31, 2004. This conference featured 25 workshops over a three-day period. Those who participated returned to their home parishes revitalized and enthusiastic for the work with which the Church has entrusted them.

A conference addressing the needs of older parishes and parishes with declining membership was sponsored by the Department of Evangelization at Saint Vladimir's Seminary August 30-September 1, 2004. Almost 40 clergy and lay participants discussed various aspects of parish renewal and growth. This was the second conference hosted by this department, the first having taken place in 2003.

We are grateful for the presence at this Council of so many of our youth and young adults. The Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry continues its strong program of educational, service, and fellowship activities, encouraging youth to be actively involved in the life of the Orthodox Church in America. A highlight of the past three years has been the participation of so many of our young people in helping with "hands-on" work in the Diocese of Alaska and with Project Mexico. The Priest Michael Anderson, who has served as youth director for the past 11 years, will complete this phase of his ministry later this year, as he takes on a parish assignment in the Diocese of the West. We are grateful for the commitment and enthusiasm he has brought to this key area of Church life and ministry. Cheryl Morris, department chairperson, aided by Joseph Matusiak, will oversee the department's work until a full-time director is appointed sometime next year.

**Theological education and pastoral formation.** The great importance of sound theological education and appropriate pastoral formation for our clergy cannot be stressed enough. This is true in some measure for all of those who will be engaged in church leadership. This All-American

Council calls us to reflect upon the manner in which our clergy are educated and prepared for parish ministry. From the time of the establishment of our first seminary in Minneapolis 100 years ago, our Church has consistently made theological education a priority. Our institutions have been blessed with visionary leadership, excellent faculties, and sound scholarship. Theological education and pastoral formation continue to be the basic work of the three seminaries serving the Orthodox Church in America. Last year, Saint Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary was granted full accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary also has had its accreditation re-affirmed. Saint Vladimir's Seminary also continues its capital campaign and is in the process of constructing new housing for married students. Saint Herman Orthodox Theological Seminary continues to expand and develop a unique program that prepares clergy and Church workers in and for the Diocese of Alaska. A total of 52 students graduated from our seminaries in 2005 – a record number! Saint Herman Seminary graduated four students, while Saint Tikhon's Seminary graduated 19 students and Saint Vladimir's Seminary graduated 29 students. Although not all graduates are or will be ordained, we believe that the general increase in the size of incoming classes is a positive sign of the health of our seminary programs and bodes well for the Church.

**Church ministry departments.** The reports of the Church ministry departments were distributed well before the Council. These reports provide an update on the work being accomplished in the many and varied aspects of our Church life. Our Church has 21 departments, boards, and commissions, served by over 200 clergy and laity, for the most part on a volunteer basis. Our departments are committed to serving the needs of our dioceses, parishes, clergy, and faithful. They are constantly seeking to improve communications among departmental members, with those they serve directly, and with the broader Church membership. The minutes of department meetings and all reports are forwarded for review to the members of the Holy Synod, the Metropolitan Council, and the diocesan chancellors. We are grateful to Michelle Jannakos, Church ministries coordinating secretary, and David Lucs, assistant to the chancellor, for the attention and care they give to coordinating and distributing these materials on a regular basis. As you review these reports, we hope that you will be impressed by the many things we have been able to accomplish on a very small budget and with a limited number of staff. Taken together with news and articles published in *The Orthodox Church* newspaper, and the extensive, growing amount of information on our web site, these reports point to an active church supported by dedicated volunteers. These volunteers are to be thanked for their laudable and consistent dedication to our mission.

- ***The Department of Communications.*** The missionary effort of Saint Herman and his monastic brethren inspires us. The apostolic zeal of Saint Innocent, Saint Tikhon, Saint Raphael, and Saint Alexis, and many others, known and unknown, challenges us. In their dedication, we see the most sublime example of commitment to Christ and His Church as they utilized every means at their disposal to advance the Church's mission. Following their example, we are always trying to find the best possible means to "get the message out."

Our Department of Communications has grown substantially since the last All-American Council. Over 32,000 families now receive *The Orthodox Church* newspaper. Thanks to the Archpriests Leonid Kishkovsky and John Matusiak, editor and managing editor respectively, the paper continues to serve as the most important of our Church's printed communications.

Our Church's web site ([www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org)) continues to be the most widely utilized of all English-language web sites providing information on the Orthodox Faith. It is a fundamental resource for the history, life, mission, and message of the Orthodox Church in America. We currently receive an

average of 105,000 visitors, or 1.2 million “hits,” every month. A new design was introduced earlier this year with a more effective and user-friendly format. We constantly receive favorable comments on the web site. We are grateful to John J. Mindala II, assistant to the chancellor for communications and graphic design and our webmaster, for his dedication to this important form of outreach and education.

In addition to providing Orthodox educational materials and information about the Orthodox Church in America, and our dioceses, parishes, and institutions, the web site provides coverage of a wide range of events in the life of our Church. Photo documentation of events taking place on the diocesan and parish levels, as well as coverage of the international activities of the Metropolitan, are extremely popular. We attempt to post photos and commentary on these events in a timely manner, but we are sometimes limited by the small size of our staff, which consists of Father Matusiak, John Mindala, and David Lucs, and the demands of multi-tasking at the Chancery.

The fact of the matter is that the work of the Department of Communications is growing. It continues to expand the services it provides to members of the Orthodox Church in America, as well as to countless others who utilize our web site. The Department publishes the annual *Sourcebook and Church Directory* and the annual *Church Desk Calendar*. I wish to note that it is our intention to post the 2006 *Sourcebook* on our web site. It will be printed only in limited number to meet our foreign distribution needs and the needs of those who may require desk copies.

The Holy Synod of Bishops is keenly aware of the importance of communications in this day and age. They support the work of this department and anticipate its continued growth and development. As we look ahead to future expansion and improvement, we are naturally concerned that our budget will reflect communications as a priority.

Electronic mail will soon become the most usual and primary means of regular communication between the Central Church Administration and the parishes and clergy of the Orthodox Church in America. We have yet to use e-mail for any significant mailing because we are concerned that someone may inadvertently not receive important information. It is still the case that maintaining an up-to-date database of e-mail addresses is a challenging task. Nonetheless, as the general population becomes accustomed to e-mail, we will be exploiting the cost reduction and time-saving features of electronic communication. We currently have a list of 680 clergy e-mail addresses, representing 69 percent of our clergy. In the meantime, those who do not have e-mail services will continue to receive mailings in the customary manner.

The use of internet forums by some of our clergy and faithful is of ongoing concern to us. We have witnessed several instances in which the wonderful potential of electronic communication has been used to destructive and malicious ends. The fact of the matter is that ease of communication has not improved the *quality* of our communications; at times, sadly, it has given miscommunication, false information and provocation an even wider circulation. Instantaneous communication, without the nuances of personal encounter or space for reflection, can easily arouse fallen passions. I feel I must comment on this because, as clergy who have been ordained to preach the Word of God and to set an example to the faithful, we are all too often found speaking against one another and undermining the dignity of the priestly office. We must reflect on the sins of bearing false witness, argumentativeness, and disputation. I respectfully ask my brother priests to use the internet for the cause of the Gospel and not in any manner that would subvert the mission entrusted to us.

- ***The Office of Humanitarian Aid.*** The Office of Humanitarian Aid has continued to call upon parish communities, chapters of the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America, Church organizations, Church schools, and individuals to raise funds for holiday gifts for children around the world through our Christmas Stocking Project. Funds collected are used to purchase filled stockings or similar gifts for needy children in eastern and central Europe, Albania, Alaska, and elsewhere. The office also continues to distribute substantial amounts of medical and other aid to those in need around the world. The past three years have seen an increased number of parishes participating in this meaningful form of outreach. It is through this department that the Orthodox Church in America reaches out with loving support to those in need. Our charitable endeavors over the past three years have been quite significant and have included assistance to survivors of the terrorist attack in Beslan, those whose lives were affected by the hurricanes in Florida and the heavy storms in central Pennsylvania, and those whose lives were changed forever by the tsunami in Southeast Asia.

- ***The military chaplaincy.*** The entire world was affected by the events in New York City on September 11, 2001. Chief among these effects has been the resulting military conflicts, first in Afghanistan, and now in Iraq. In two separate statements, the Holy Synod of Bishops called upon the faithful of the Orthodox Church in America to pray and fast for a speedy conclusion of the war in Iraq. Although the hope for a speedy resolution of this war has yet to be realized, we continue to pray for peace in Iraq and the Middle East. In the words of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, “we continue to pray... that by Our Lord’s supreme goodness, that which is evil might be transformed into that which is not only good, but godly... for our nation’s leaders and the leaders of other nations, that they will be moved to bring about an end to the conflict in a speedy manner, focusing their attention on producing a just and lasting peace... and for the countless innocent people, Christians and Muslims alike, whose lives are, and will continue to be, torn apart by untold suffering.”

As the war in Iraq continues, and as the armed forces of the United States and its allies continue to work for peace throughout the world, the Orthodox Christian men and women in the armed forces and their families are ministered to by the Orthodox Church in America’s military chaplains. With His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, and the Holy Synod of Bishops, we offer our gratitude to and commend the efforts of our military chaplains. Like the military personnel they serve, they leave their families and communities to perform their duties. They faithfully and courageously provide pastoral care and guidance to our brothers and sisters serving in the military.

- ***The Orthodox Church in America’s Benefits Office.*** The Orthodox Church in America’s Benefits Office continues to serve the needs of those clergy and lay employees who participate in the Orthodox Church in America’s pension plan. As indicated in the department reports, the pension plan remains strong, and it effectively serves those who participate in it. The benefits office also watches over the services provided through the Personal Assistance Program, a program that has seen increased participation in recent months. We are grateful for Elizabeth Kondratich’s dedication to the pension plan and benefits office and her attentive care for the clergy and employees who seek her assistance. All newly ordained clergy receive information concerning the benefits available to them.

I am also pleased to inform you that this past October, the Loyal Christian Benefit Association honored His Beatitude on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his ordination to the holy priesthood by providing life insurance coverage to all our Church’s seminarians and, if married they are married, to their spouses and children, during the time of their enrollment in the seminary. We

are deeply appreciative of this gift, which represents approximately two million dollars in insurance coverage.

- ***Sexual misconduct issues.*** There is an understandable growing public concern over cases of sexual misconduct by clergy and other Church workers associated with various denominations across the United States and Canada. The Orthodox Church in America is vigilant in these matters and fully committed to prevention, due process, and pastoral care as appropriate. The Holy Synod of Bishops, at its March 2003 meeting, issued a comprehensive set of *Policies, Standards, and Procedures of the Orthodox Church in America on Sexual Misconduct* and directed that this policy be implemented in all parishes, missions, and institutions of our Church. The Holy Synod also created an Office for the Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations. This office is under the direct supervision of the Metropolitan. We are thankful that we have had only a few instances requiring action. Nonetheless, the standard of vigilance inherent in our policies cannot be relaxed. It must be maintained for the spiritual and physical well-being of the faithful and for the safety and stability of our communities. It must be maintained for the good reputation of the Church, so that our proclamation of the Gospel will not be compromised or suffer from distractions. In addressing allegations of sexual misconduct, the hierarchs of our Church are guided by a true pastoral concern for their flock.

The Orthodox Church in America requires background checks of clergy and lay workers. This is a policy that is implemented in each parish at the direction of the local bishop. Background checks have also been made on every member of the Holy Synod and all of the Chancery staff, beginning with me. We are arranging to have in place a mechanism to ensure background checks on all candidates for ordination, as well as on the clergy of other Orthodox Churches petitioning to be received into our ranks. It has been proposed that at some point in the admissions, matriculation, or graduation process, our seminarians will undergo confidential background checks.

***The challenge of finances.*** Finance continues to be a challenge on all levels of our Church life. This is true in many parishes and dioceses. It is especially true for the Central Church Administration, where we have witnessed a decrease in voluntary free-will gifts through bequests and special donations. It must be noted that, although there has been an annual increase in gifts received, the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards (FOS) has been unable to meet its budgeted income for the past several years. The Chancery has managed to meet its payroll expenses and is current in payment to the various benefits programs, including hospitalization insurance, the Personal Assistance Program, and the Orthodox Church in America pension plan.

We adhere strictly to the budget approved by the Metropolitan Council and the Holy Synod of Bishops. Prior to its approval, and while still in draft form, the budget is subject to a line-by-line review by His Beatitude, the Holy Synod, the Church Administration Committee, the Metropolitan Council, the Office of the Treasurer (which includes the comptroller and auditors), and the chairpersons of the Church ministries departments. The membership of each of these bodies is encouraged to ask questions and offer suggestions for changes, all of which are taken seriously. Having been reviewed, the budget then receives approval from the Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Council.

We have often heard the claim that the administration of the Orthodox Church in America – the various bodies I have just mentioned, comprised of almost 200 people representing dioceses and Church institutions – is not fully accountable or transparent in its management of the Church's finances. However, the members of these bodies, particularly the diocesan representatives on the

Metropolitan Council, are encouraged to keep their respective diocesan councils informed regarding the Church's budget and finances. It is our hope that this is taking place regularly, so that the people who are interested in this aspect of the Church's life may be kept fully informed.

Parish priests regularly make announcements from the amvon. However, on any given Sunday, there will be persons who either do not listen to the announcements, or who fail to understand them fully, and who, as a result, leave church on Sunday with no information - or misinformation that can then be relayed to others. This happens in many areas of Church life, including the area of finances, even though reports are provided regularly.

However, to maintain the budget it is also necessary to receive the income that is budgeted! Because of current income limitations, we cannot implement everything that is provided for in the budget, and we are thus faced with the challenge of prioritizing the services the administration is able to provide to the dioceses, parishes, and institutions. This challenge is not unique on the Church-wide level, but is also experienced on the level of the dioceses and parishes. Indeed, dioceses often find it necessary to increase assessment levels in order to meet their growing needs.

The decrease in free-will gifts is not unique to the Chancery and departments of the Orthodox Church in America. This also has had an impact on the diocesan and parish levels, and is not unique to the Orthodox Church in America. All Orthodox jurisdictions in North America have reported a drop in income, as have most religious and not-for-profit organizations. This decrease in voluntary contributions must also be seen in the context of the proliferation of so many appeals from so many different Church institutions and areas of Church life.

As we think about the future of our Church, it is important to connect our enthusiasm and commitment with our responsibility to support the programs we need and want. The Fair Share resolution is offered in good faith as a step forward in our search for appropriate and equitable ways for everyone within the Church to share in supporting its work.

***FOS, development, and special appeals.*** Upon the resignation of Archpriest Joseph Fester from his position as executive director of the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards, (FOS), Metropolitan Herman appointed Archpriest Eugene Vansuch as the new FOS executive director. We are grateful to Father Joseph for his dedication to the work of FOS and continuing the tradition of his predecessors, the Archpriests Sergei Glagolev and Basil Summer. Father Eugene has the urgent task of increasing membership and revenues. We must remember that the work of our Church ministries departments, based on the resolution passed at the 11th All-American Council in 1995, depends exclusively on FOS and other voluntary contributions. We also look forward to the appointment of a full-time development director in the near future. The reality is that the funds needed to support the work of the Church on all levels are available "out there." We need to identify sources for these funds and make our case in the context of competing appeals. We know that a full-time, committed development director would be able to do this, and that the benefits of having such a director would be felt at all levels of Church life.

***Our Church and the future.*** In concluding this brief overview of the life of our Church and the activities of the Chancery since the last All-American Council, I wish reflect for a moment on our theme, "Our Church and the Future." I am optimistic as we look ahead. Just as we have a rich history and legacy of mission and evangelization, so too we have a future which promises continued blessings for us in our work of preaching the Gospel. These blessings may take on unexpected forms. Our cultural assumptions may be shaken to the very foundations. But if we are faithful to the

Gospel, we will find that the Lord will provide for us and present us with new opportunities for living our life in Christ and sharing our faith with others. This is the experience of our past. The early missionaries of Orthodoxy in North America were presented with enormous challenges, great changes, and even reversals in the circumstances of their ministry. They remained faithful to the Lord, and the Lord was faithful to them, always guiding, consoling, and renewing them in doing His will.

I view everything our Church does within the context of our past history (what we have been and what we have accomplished), (of our present who and what we are as the local autocephalous Church in North America), (and of our future what we are called to be and do in the future). As we commemorate the 35th anniversary of the glorification of Saint Herman of Alaska, we recall that he was a man of his times. He lived out the very real difficulties of life in a distant outpost in a foreign land. But he accepted the challenges of the mission, and even the contemptuous manner in which his fellow Russians treated him and the isolation in which he lived. By God's grace he refused to allow circumstances to overwhelm him. His zeal and enthusiasm did not wane. To read through his existing letters is to have this zeal and enthusiasm kindled in our own hearts. In our reading of the letters, diaries, articles and other accounts of the missionary laborers in North America, we find ourselves spiritually refreshed and deeply moved. Are we not moved? Is our heart not warmed? Do we not yearn to follow in their steps? Their common witness over the centuries constitutes a legacy for us – the legacy of Saints Herman and Innocent, Saints Jacob and Alexis, Saints Tikhon and Raphael of Brooklyn, the holy martyred priests John Kochurov and Alexander Hotovitzky, Archbishop Arseny and Metropolitan Leonty, Metropolitan Theophan Noli and Bishop Policarp Morusca, and of so many others, known and unknown – a legacy we believe comes down to us through them from our Lord Himself and His apostles. By their prayers and through their example, may our Orthodox Church in America live the faith we have received in a God-pleasing and fruitful manner!

***Words of gratitude.*** I have now served as chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America for 16 years. I count each of these years as a special gift from God. With the support and blessing of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, I strive to do all within my ability to serve our Church. I view my labors as chancellor as being in service to the Primate, to the Holy Synod of Bishops, and to all the clergy and faithful of our Church. While the role of chancellor is not without its own unique challenges – sometimes disheartening – and responsibilities that are often difficult to implement, the day does not pass that I do not thank God for being entrusted with this ministry. All of us will face unwarranted and cynical criticism; nonetheless, we are open to honest, constructive criticism and any advice that will help us in our ministry of service to Christ's Holy Church. Above all, I wish to express my gratitude for the many ways in which I am supported and assisted in the work I am called to do as chancellor of The Orthodox Church in America.

First of all, I thank God for the profound commitment to Christ and His Church of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, and the members of the Holy Synod of Bishops. They provide us with a generous measure of spiritual guidance and archpastoral leadership. As our fathers in Christ, they assure that we remain faithful to the mission entrusted to us. May their fidelity to the Orthodox Faith and their love for their flock continue to inspire us in our own service to Christ.

I also wish to express my thanks to all those who have labored to make this Council possible: His Grace, Bishop Seraphim, episcopal moderator of the Preconciliar Commission, and our host; Archpriest Myron Manzuk, Council manager; Dr. Alice Woog, project manager; Joseph Kormos, commission facilitator; the members of the Preconciliar Commission; Archpriest Dennis Pihach,

chancellor of the Diocese of Canada and clergy co-chair; Dimitry Chernomorsky, lay co-chair; Sophia Kolaroff, secretary; Alexis Troubetzkoy, treasurer; and all the members of the local committee. Special thanks, as well, to the members of the Chancery staff in Syosset for the long hours of additional work assigned to them.

I would also like to thank the Church officers – Archpriest Dimitri Oselinsky, treasurer, who is about to retire from this office as he takes up a new parish assignment in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Archpriest Paul Kucynda, secretary, for their devoted service and their friendship. I am grateful to Archpriest David Brum, secretary to the Metropolitan, and to every clergy and lay member of the Chancery staff. Once again, I would like to express my personal gratitude for their commitment. They work long hours – far beyond the hours for which they are compensated. And these long hours of work are offered in the spirit of loving service to the Orthodox Church in America. I wish to note that all the members of the Chancery staff have a loving and positive approach to the work they do for the Church. This is a source of great encouragement for me, and an example to us all. We are all aware that those who work on behalf of Christ and His Church are inevitably subject to negative comments and criticism, very often from the very people they strive most faithfully to serve. I am very pleased that the members of the chancery staff manage to rise above such pettiness and remain focused on the work entrusted to them by His Beatitude and the Holy Synod.

Throughout my many years of service to the Church, first as a parish priest, then as a member of the Chancery staff, and now for 16 years as chancellor, I have been supported and encouraged by my wife Bette. She is a living example of an Orthodox Christian who knows what it means to give of oneself and to sacrifice for the sake of the Church. Without her patience and understanding, her great love and deep faith, and her own personal commitment to Christ and the Orthodox Church in America, I would never be able to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to me as chancellor. I give thanks to God daily that He has blessed me through her and through our children, Robert, James, Lisa, and their families. In expressing my appreciation to my wife and family, I would also like to express my sincere gratitude, and the gratitude of us all, to all clergy wives and families. May the Lord bless and reward them for their own commitment to Christ and for the sacrifices they make on behalf of the Church.

Finally, I must take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my brother clergy for their compassion and love, for their support, and for all they accomplish on behalf of the Church, often in the hidden and unheralded struggles of pastoral ministry. Priesthood cannot be exercised without the presence of the Cross – and so many of you carry the Cross of Christ with faith, with love, with dedication, and without complaint, always aware that the One we serve has called us into His own wonderful Light, for “through the Cross joy has come into all the world.” I also wish to thank all of you gathered here, who are dearly beloved in Christ. The work we accomplish on behalf of the Church does not belong to any one individual – it is not mine, it is not yours – it belongs to Christ, Who has called us to serve Him. In accepting this call, may we always remember the words of the Apostle Paul to the Church in Ephesus, and pray that we may grow “into a holy temple in the Lord, in Whom [we] also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” [Ephesians 2:21-22].

Respectfully submitted,

Protopresbyter Robert S. Kondratich, Chancellor  
The Orthodox Church in America