

May 25, 2005

Dearly Beloved in Christ:

Christ Is Risen! Indeed He Is Risen!

On behalf of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman and the Holy Synod of Bishops of The Orthodox Church in America, and on behalf of the entire Preconciliar Commission, I am greeting you now, as the Chairman of the 14th All-American Council Preconciliar Commission. Preparations for the Council are well underway; and with this mailing, an important preparatory part of the Council is being shared with the parishes and institutions of our Church.

With the blessing of His Beatitude, Metropolitan HERMAN and the members of the Holy Synod of Bishops, the Preconciliar Commission is providing for the delegates and observers to the Council the enclosed Pre-Council papers, which are designed to accomplish the following goals:

Present a brief working history of our Church in North America,
Offer documents that can also be used in discussion groups within parishes, and
Provide materials in support of the activities at the plenary sessions, discussion workshops, and luncheon forums of the 14th All American Council.

The theme, **“Our Church and the Future”** and all activities supporting it will be discussed in the topic areas of **Vision and Identity, Orthodox Relations, Clergy Formation, Parish Health, and Evangelizing North America.**

Under the guidance of His Beatitude and the Holy Synod of Bishops, the Preconciliar Commission identified these five areas as essential components of a healthy churchly life, and therefore as key elements requiring the attention of the entire Church. Of course, such a listing is not intended to exclude other areas that one may feel essential. But we are confident that many sub-areas naturally fit into these five areas; and every effort will be made during the Council to be sensitive to all contributions offered by the participants.

The Pre-Council papers represent the contributions of forty bishops, clergy, and laity from inside and outside The Orthodox Church in America. They were asked to contribute their thoughts on specific concerns in the various areas listed above, and to address an issue from the perspective of the past, present, or future.

We are asking that delegates and observers to the 14th All-American Council take the time to read these documents. Parish leaders may also wish to use the documents with the faithful for consideration together of topics that directly affect **Our Church and the Future.** These papers can also be used as the basis for Deanery and Diocesan discussions, as we continue to meet the mission of The Orthodox Church in America after the Council.

Please note, that the enclosed Pre-Council Papers **will not be printed again. Thus you must bring these with you to Toronto.** The papers will also be available online for download from the Orthodox Church in America website at www.oca.org.

The papers, and discussion questions throughout the papers, will also be used as “lead-in” material for the plenary sessions, and the Council workshops. It would be most beneficial for delegates and observers to read the material prior to their arrival at the Council, and thus be prepared to participate in the activities that focus on the theme, **Our Church and the Future**. Please take the time. Many people have invested a lot of their valuable time on our behalf, in order to help us do our God-given work.

May God Bless each of you as we prepare to participate in the 14th All-American Council; and may He guide our work, as we strive to live a Christ-centred life as members of The Orthodox Church in America.

With love in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, I remain yours,

The unworthy

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read '+SERAPHIM'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S'.

+SERAPHIM
Bishop of Ottawa and Canada
Chairman
14th All-American Council Preconciliar Commission